



ACJ/YMCA GUATEMALA YOUNG LEADERS MURDERED!

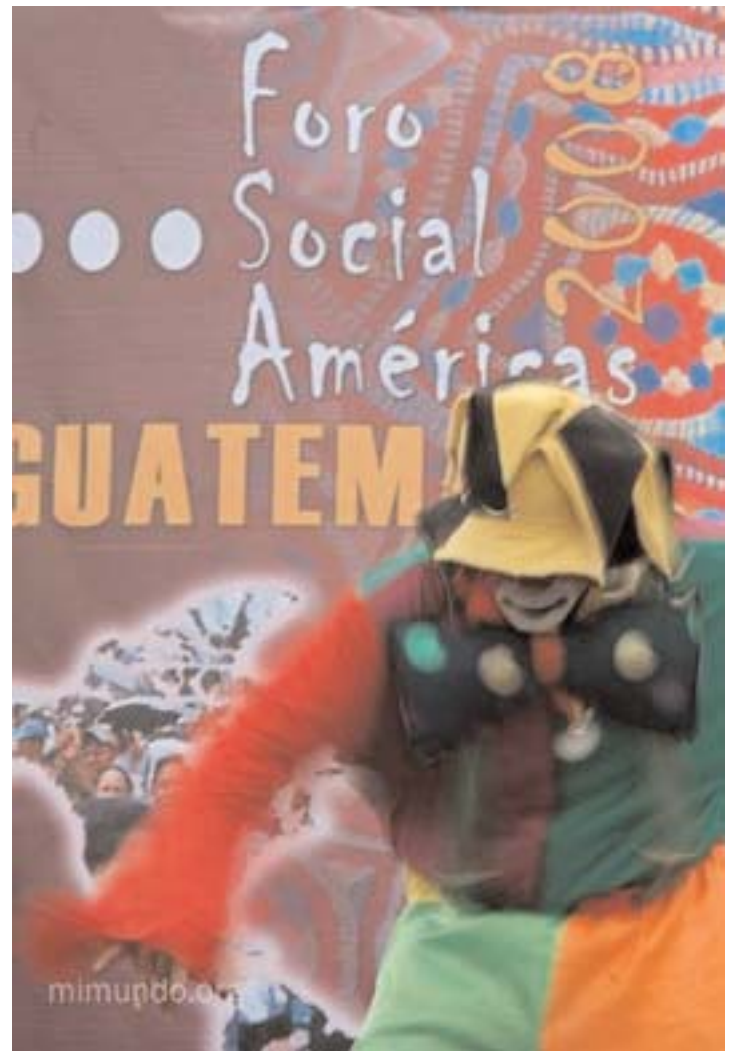
August 12 is International Youth Day; a day to recognize the important role of youth, their dreams and hopes. But it is also a day to underline the situations of violence, exclusion and violation of rights that affect youth around the world, and even here in Montreal.

It was on August 12 that we received the tragic news that 3 Youth Leaders of the ACJ/YMCA Guatemala in Amatitlan had been brutally assassinated the night before. The full details of this tragedy are not yet known, but the ACJ is working hard to ensure there will be a complete investigation. Too often, the reaction when youth are murdered is, "They must be gang members", and therefore the crime is not fully investigated.

Members of the Montreal YMCA delegation visited the ACJ in Amititlan in February 2008, and met the youth participants and leaders. The 'gang' these youth belonged to was the 'gang' of YMCA Youth Leaders who plan and lead programs for children and youth of that community.

An important focus of the ACJ's work with youth is to create a culture of peace by helping young people overcome the years of war and violence that have had grave consequences for all Guatemalans. The Youth Leaders shared their dreams and hopes with our delegation and described how, as ACJ volunteers, they are offering opportunities for children and youth to be involved in sports and other positive community activities.

International Programs of the YMCA of Greater Montreal has sent a letter of condolence to the ACJ team to share with the families of the young victims. Our thoughts and support are with them during this difficult and tragic time.



A Unique Partnership for the Americas Social Forum

Through a unique partnership between International Programs (YMCA of Greater Montreal) and AlterUQAM (University of Quebec in Montreal), a group of 50 people, including YMCA employees, UQAM students and members of civil society will be in Guatemala from October 4 -13, 2008 to participate in the Americas Social Forum (ASF).

continued on next page.....

**INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
PROGRAM
OCTOBER 1,8,15,22 & 29, 2008
WEDNESDAY 6 PM - 9 PM
(IN FRENCH)
DOWNTOWN YMCA**

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Caterina Milani, Coordinator of International Programs (YMCA) will accompany the group along with Anne-Marie Égré, a YMCA volunteer and two UQAM co-organizers, Raphaël Canet, a founding member of the AlterUQAM collective and Stéphanie Robert, a UQAM volunteer.

The ASF is part of the World Social Forum (WSF) process that was initiated in 2001 and has become the largest space for the articulation of social initiatives, the development of critical thinking, and the construction of alternatives to the neo-liberal model, with the shared belief that "Another World is Possible". The first Social Forum of the Americas took place in Quito, Ecuador in 2004, the second was in Venezuela in 2006, and the third will be held in Guatemala this fall.

Since the YMCA / UQAM group was formed in February 2008, the participants have had 8 preparatory information workshops to give them a better understanding of issues related to globalization and the Americas. Participants who chose to fundraise to defray the costs of the trip were supported in their efforts by the YMCA & UQAM organizers.

Upon arrival in Guatemala, they will benefit from a special pre-forum orientation on the historical, political, social and cultural realities of Guatemala that is being prepared by the ACJ/YMCA of Guatemala, a new partner of the YMCA of Greater Montreal. The group will also learn about the ACJ Guatemala's community and youth work in various regions of the country.

During the ASF, these delegates from Montreal will lead six workshops on the following issues ; Alternatives to Delinquency, Native Canadian Realities - an Inuit Perspective, Exclusion and Marginalization in North America, Free-Trade Agreements, Water Issues and the Impact of Canadian Mining Companies.

Upon their return, the Montreal group members have agreed to organize activities to share their experience and learnings, and to participate in the organization of the UQAM Social Forum that will take place in November 2008.

**Do you know a person or group
promoting peace locally or
internationally? If so, we are now
accepting nominations for the
2008 YMCA Peace Medal Awards.**

**Contact Benni Hodkin by email at
benni.hodkin@ymcamontreal.qc.ca to
receive more information and a nomination
form .**

