

BORDERING, from page 4

peace and solidarity in Colombia, Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela. Gibler's investigations in Mexico were supported by Global Exchange, which gave him a fellowship for two-and-a-half years to serve as a correspondent, inserting into the U.S. consciousness some of the hard realities of life in post-NAFTA Mexico. He made good on their investment by reporting for Democracy Now! and publishing in Z Magazine, among others. His new book shows the range of his investigations: he has devoured the work of other writers, from Charles Bowden on the drug trade, Noam Chomsky and Fanon and Galeano on colonialism, Robin Hahnel on the global economy, and Subcomandante Marcos on the ongoing adjustments to Zapatista policy and practice. Gibler's 12-page bibliography in "Mexico Unconquered" is as good a reading list on Mexico as you could find.

Poteet, without ceasing her WFP work, was one of the first volunteers with the Oregon New Sanctuary Movement in 2007. Nationally, the Sanctuary Movement was just getting underway, inspired by Cardinal Roger Mahony, after he announced that the Los Angeles archdiocese would continue to provide humanitarian aid to people, irrespective of their legal status, in defiance of House Bill HR4437, designed to turn undocumented aliens into untouchables.

When Poteet volunteered to work with this new movement, the first order of business was to get the word out to Portland-area faith communities. The idea was to give them time for individual reflection on the Gospel foundation of offering hospitality, as Jesus did, to all people, even society's cast-offs. However, before Poteet and colleagues Sarah Loose and Marco Mejía could get out to speak with very many groups, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (aptly, ICE) forced their hand.

On June 12, 2007, ICE raided Portland's Del Monte Fresh Produce plant and arrested 165 workers. Most were hauled off to the federal detention facility in Tacoma, but 30 special cases, most of them women alone with young children, were processed here in Portland and allowed to remain, tagged with monitoring wristbands and waiting immigration hearings. Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services, with many other lawyers and legal groups pitching in, coordinated assistance to frantic family members.

For the moment, thoughtful reflection on the meaning of sanctuary was suspended as Poteet and New Sanctuary Movement volunteers rallied religious people to help with clothing, shelter, food and comfort to the "women of the bracelet" who had been left behind to care for their children — though forbidden to work.

This story does not converge. Gibler is on a book tour, talking with people about Mexico's critical issues — drugs, torture, femicide, hunger, and the wealth built on slavery — while Poteet, now on staff 15 hours per week with the sanctuary movement here, is doing outreach to more churches, synagogues and mosques in



PHOTO BY JOHN GIBLER
Recently deported migrant waits for a meal at a Nogales shelter. Behind him, newspapers tell of migrant deaths in the desert.

Portland, building a stronger network of people who can help. "We are still walking with the women from the Del Monte raid," Poteet points out, though their numbers are down to 12. "They are public and they have immigration court hearing dates," she says. She works to line up people who will drive women to their court appearances, and she continues to provide education in faith communities. "To look at what are some immigration principles that we all agree on," as she puts it. On Gibler's book tour, he steers people to start with Mexico's history. His first chapter, "The Historical Continuity of Conquest and Revolt," is a brilliant bit of redaction that culminates in the two arguments of his book: "First, the conquest never finished, but evolved and transformed from Spanish imperialism into an internal colonialism combined with forms of economic domination imposed by the United States. Mexico's political class uses various nationalist, economic, rule-of-law, and

poverty ideologies as catechisms for converting and dominating the still uncolonized sectors of the population, both indigenous and nonindigenous, from the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas to the Raramuri in Chihuahua, from Mexico City Street vendors to the teachers of Oaxaca. Second, precisely due to the neocolonial character of internal processes of exploitation, exclusion, and repression in Mexico, compounded by a deep and continuing history of United States military, political, and economic interventions in Mexico, resistance movements take on an anticolonial dimension that challenges and threatens the legitimacy of the fundamental tenets of the state and leads to bold, creative, massive, and energetic social participation. Mexico's class war is a fight against the ongoing conquest, a social struggle for dignity and autonomy."

"Mexico Unconquered" consists of three

"The conquest never finished, but evolved and transformed from Spanish imperialism into an internal colonialism combined with forms of economic domination imposed by the United States."

— JOHN GIBLER IN HIS NEW BOOK, "MEXICO UNCONQUERED."

different kinds of texts. Gibler the scholar reads, chews and synthesizes historical material, as above; Gibler the journalist interviews people. I particularly enjoyed the fifth- and sixth-graders from Guadalupe, Guanajuato, who answer his questions about migration, and I was overwhelmed reading the interview with Gloria Arenas Agís, the guerrilla who now, after so much struggle, lives out her days in prison; and Gibler the activist shares a recipe for washing tear gas from one's eyes.

By May, when Gibler is back in Mexico (having toured San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Portland, Seattle and Austin), Poteet (wearing her 30-hour-per-week Witness For Peace hat) will be leading a WFP "Migrant Trail Walk," where participants can talk with community activists and teachers in Oaxaca, and accompany migrants on their final day crossing the Arizona desert. To prepare the delegation for this 12-day trip, Poteet could assign nothing better than Gibler's book.

In the Yucatan earlier this month, I was astonished to hear an American ex-pat argue that the presidency of Vicente Fox (2000-06) had been great for Mexico. A bit snappish, perhaps, I pointed out that, during that same period nearly half a million people were forced to flee Mexico every year, driven out by hunger.

"Oh well," she responded glibly, "all the Canadians and Americans are coming down here, so we're just changing places."

The detail she missed: in Mexico she and her friends are not hunted like dogs.

Is that too harsh, "hunted like dogs"? Consider this final reflection, again Gibler's:

"Since the arrival of the Spanish, to be indigenous in the land now called Mexico (and throughout the Americas) meant to be frozen in the grip of hunger, trapped in the condition of lack, to be children of an emaciated culture who by their very nature and constitution were seen as deficient and thus simply destined to wade through centuries of want and suffering. Imperial domination has from its beginning and through its evolution depended upon naturalizing in one way or another the horror visited upon the subjects of domination — "inferior" races, the poor trapped in cycles of poverty — to be indigenous has meant to be forgotten, at best, or to be seen as an animal locked outside the considerations of ethics, at worst."

Since we are not about to bring back the Bracero program nor legalize drugs — both of which would immediately ease suffering in Mexico — how about this: let's make it as hard to move to Baja or Lake Chapala, where boomers love to retire, as it is to get to the ConAgra plant in Kennewick, where there might be a job making french fries.

We already have the fence.

211 info ★
Need help finding help?
Dial 2-1-1
2-1-1™
Get Connected. Get Answers.
From your cell phone dial 503-222-5555.

Local news, events and commentary at your fingertips

www.streetroots.wordpress.com