

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatever: this is our testimony to the whole world.

~ Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God, called Quakers, presented to Charles II, 1660.

... no plea of necessity or of policy, however urgent or peculiar, can avail to release either individuals or nations from the paramount allegiance which they owe unto Him who hath said, 'Love your enemies'...

~ Epistle, 1804 and 1854, London Yearly Meeting

PEACE TESTIMONY MINUTED BY FLUSHING MONTHLY MEETING, 2002

FLUSHING MONTHLY MEETING PROPOSED MINUTE ON COLOMBIA AND SO-CALLED FREE TRADE AGREEMENT RATIFICATION

The peace testimony of the Religious Society of Friends has led the Flushing Monthly Meeting to join the many people of the world concerned about the ongoing and deepening humanitarian crisis in Colombia. The result of a decades-long conflict, Colombia's internally displaced population is the largest in the world, estimated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to range from 3.5 to 5.2 million. These Colombians – many of them peasants, indigenous and Afro-Colombian people – have left their land, which is their only source of livelihood, and have become refugees in their own country or have fled to neighboring countries.

The government of the United States has a long history of intervention in Colombia – starting with U.S. military actions to secure Panama, which was still part of Colombia until 1903. In the past decade, efforts have centered on “Plan Colombia” in which billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars have gone to the Colombian military ostensibly to eradicate coca crops. While cocaine production has not diminished, U.S. aid has served to militarize the Colombian countryside. As a result, large segments of the rural population are caught in the cross fire between the army, the guerrillas, drug dealers, and paramilitary groups. In addition, environmental groups like Earth Justice estimate that Plan Colombia has already fumigated three million acres, which has created serious ecological damage throughout the countryside.

We call on all elected officials, and especially the President of the United States, to put an end to the 'War on Drugs,' rightly named the War on Certain Drugs, invest resources domestically in prevention, education and treatment rather than incarceration.

We call on elected officials to put an end the funding of fumigation programs in Colombia and help Colombia invest in alternative life-sustaining crop production with development assistance to the peasants who have suffered the most during the civil war.

We call on the Congress of the United States to oppose the pending ratification of 'Free' Trade Agreements with Colombia, South Korea and Panama. These agreements will devastate the rural economy in these countries and undermine the ability of peasants to compete with the flood of subsidized U.S. agricultural products that will result.

We urge the government of the United States of America to acknowledge the great burden of moral responsibility for the immense harm inflicted on the people of Colombia, to invest resources in true foreign aid, to help to rebuild a broken society, and to invest immediately in programs to support refugees and victims of this decades-long war.

Furthermore, we call on elected officials to direct financial assistance away from military funding and toward programs of healing the great social rifts such as a Truth and Reconciliation process.