

Friday 18 PM #169

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 6th Session
Statement by
South Central Farmers and La Red Xicana Indigena
May 18, 2007

Madam Chair, Indigenous sisters and brothers of the world:

My name is Rufina Juarez, president of the South Central Farmers of Los Angeles and representative of La Red Xicana Indigena. I would like to submit the following statement.

The corporate production of food, such as hybrid corn, soy, and wheat, has taken over the production of local high quality ancestral food (i.e., corn, squash, and beans) through the displacement of traditional agricultural communities who produce food for their own use and for trade. Corporate take over of agricultural lands forces families to flee to local and international urban areas, where they transform from a self-reliant, highly skilled agricultural society, into poor and politically vulnerable substrata of urban society. Economically dependent on low wages for unskilled labor, men, women and children loose their relationships, roles, ancestral knowledge and practices of self sufficiency. Their lack of economic resources makes them dependent on cheap poor-quality food produced by the corporations, which displaced them in the first place. Coupled with the lack of health education and basic health care they are highly defenseless to long term diseases like obesity, diabetes, cancer, and asthma, which make them life time consumers of pharmaceuticals. The rise of childhood illnesses produces long term profit for corporations. Indigenous peoples in diaspora are in fact paying for their own oppression.

For 14 years since 1992, the South Central Farm was the largest and most biologically-diverse urban farm in the US. The farm was organized within a traditional collective structure. A variety of indigenous plants, medicine and seeds from throughout the hemisphere were cultivated and preserved on this farm. Nahuas, Seri, and Zapotecos were among the farmers who brought their traditional plants, seeds and agricultural technology from their homelands, reflecting the contemporary diaspora of Xicanas/os and newly displaced indigenous peoples from México, Central and South America in the US.

After three years of political and legal struggle to save the farm we were evicted due to not having any rights as migrant and displaced indigenous peoples in the US. I am here to put on the UN record, the excessive force and police brutality that occurred in June 13, 2006 when we were forcefully removed in the mist of litigation of the right to title. 350 indigenous farmers have been made dependent on the purchase and consumption of corporate foods. Consequently, we've been denied the right to grow our traditional foods and teach our children their relationship with the land. We are an example of a dispersed indigenous population that does not have any rights to practice the continuity of our ancestral traditions outside of their homeland. We are indigenous peoples in the US who need the international protections of the Declaration.

We were evicted and more than 500 trees and all our traditional medicinal plants were destroyed in the name of economic development. This is a story commonly known through out the world, especially when it comes to the exploitation of ancestral land, territories and natural resources. However, here we are referring to a fundamental human right to grow our own ancestral foods and medicine and to pass it on to the coming generations. The nation-states refer to this as “Food Security”, however, if as indigenous peoples in diaspora we can obtain the protections and right to grow our traditional foods it would mean “food sovereignty”.

For this reason we would like to make the following recommendations:

- 1) We urge the UN member states to adopt the UN Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People as approved by the Council of Human Rights, without any addendums.
- 2) We invite the Special Rapporteur on Migration and the Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights to look into the abuse of indigenous peoples rights, especial that of children who are in diaspora in the United States and are suffering from the vulnerability of malnutrition and under nutrition, which in effect is affecting the alarming rate of chronic illnesses such as child/youth diabetes, asthma, cancer and lymphatic diseases.
- 3) We endorse the Women’s Caucus Statement on Human Rights, specifically the statement and recommendations relevant to Indigenous Women and Migration, which urges UN Member states to address the issue of large number of indigenous migrants within and beyond national borders and the particular vulnerability of indigenous women migrants.
- 4) We endorse the Caucus of Abya Ayala Statement, specifically item #6 and 7, which recommend’s that UN Agencies (such as UNESCO, FAO-Food and Agricultural Organization, CHR-Council on Human Rights, Special Rapporteur’s) work to influence and/or develop appropriate mechanisms, instruments and indicators that would allow for the collection of disaggregated data that would identify the specific conditions of indigenous peoples in diaspora within the United States.

Contact information:

South Central Farmers

www.southcentralfarmers.org

SCF Hotline: 1-888-SCFARM-1

Rufina Juarez: juarezrufina@yahoo.com

La Red Xicana Indígena

www.laredxicanaindigena.com

Celia H. Rodríguez (California): celiahrodriguez@comcast.net

Rosalee Gonzalez (Arizona): xicanista1@aol.com