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THANK YOU!

Mail to: Rainforest Relief • PO Box 150566 • Brooklyn, NY 11215 • (212) 879-2118

Rainforest Relief welcomes Shawn Knox and the new Tucson, Arizona chapter. RR welcomes to the New York City office the new hard-working campaigners. We express our gratitude to Mara Zusman for her development work, Christine Lucas for her membership outreach and artwork, and Gabby Silverman for her canvassing. We welcome Sarah Wald to the Oregon Chapter office. Special thanks to Cindy Rosin for her layout skills and to Steve Bagley for his last minute crunch time work.



Rainforest Relief

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Rainforest Relief's **RR**aindrops Summer & Fall 2001

Indigenous Rights Caravan

In April and May 2001; through coalition building with several other groups such as ACERCA, NYC Anti-FTAA Coalition, Times Up, NY Greens and NY Direct Action Network; we at Rainforest Relief orchestrated an Indigenous Rights Caravan to provide an alternative forum to the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit. The caravan featured Juan Gualinga, a traditional healer from the Sarayacu community in Ecuador and Gina Maria Echevarry, an Afro-Colombian artist working on educating the United States and Europe on the plight of the African Colombian communities living in or on the edge of the rainforest. Gina Maria highlighted her premise by telling the story of her husband, a journalist and an inspector for Colombia's environmental agency.



At the well-attended FTAA-Reportback in New York City Christian Bello, a teen from Brooklyn, joined the panel. Christian works with Urbanmindz, a youth of color group that focuses on issues of racism and global justice. The so called "war on drugs", he said, is not about stopping drugs but about increasing wealth at the expense of minority and poor communities all over the world as resources are extracted and peoples and lands exploited. "If they cared about stopping drugs why has funding for drug treatment programs in poor urban areas in the US so drastically decreased as US funding for the Colombian military and paramilitaries increased, and why is Gina Maria's journalist-husband's life threatened by paramilitaries when he writes about the gold and oil companies' illegal mining and drilling practices in the rainforest communities of Colombia?"

September 11th

by Joan Roney, NYC campaigner

We at Rainforest Relief have been no less affected by the events of September 11 then anyone in New York City. Friends and family were near Ground Zero during the attack and many of us waited seemingly endless hours before we heard from them. Our partner organization, The Activism Center at Wetlands Preserve, out of which we did much of our organizing these past three years, was soon behind the cordon. For weeks our campaigns have been effected, our actions postponed. I myself, as many New Yorkers, bore witness to portions of that day. It began when I received a wakeup call from a friend in California, when the first plane hit. Being an activist I immediately had to do something, anything to bring forth aid. Perhaps that's just a compulsion or simply a personality trait of ours. I thought there would be lots of injured to help. I ran first to my corner pharmacist and bought as many bandages, tape and antiseptic as I could carry in my backpack – in which I had already placed Dr. Seuss's *All the Places We Will Go*, thinking those injured waiting to be treated might need comforting distractions and a kind voice.

The pharmacist from Syria, with whom I often converse on a variety of topics, had something to say to me as I left. "Maybe now the US will understand." His words horrified me, not because I haven't shared his anger but I realized the magnitude of what had happened and the sentiment behind it – all was worse then I ever thought. Pains and communication and anger had reached a breaking point I hadn't imagined.

His words made me aware of the challenges activists, environmentalists and human rights advocates would face

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Activist Climbs 30 Feet and Drops 'Road Sign' Banner to Protest Rainforest Destruction by NYC DOT

Bustling workers occasionally glanced up as Cindy Rosin, a member of Rainforest Relief, began her ascent to the top of a 35-foot streetlight pole using rock-climbing gear. The pole was located in front of the entrance to the headquarters of the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT). Once in position, Rosin released a large banner designed to look like two orange and black road construction signs: the top sign framed a silhouetted stump and the bottom one read, "NYC DOT Destroys Rainforests!" Demonstrators, dressed as a road construction crew with hard hats and orange vests held mock orange and black diamond-shaped road signs. The signs repeated the banner's image of a silhouetted stump and warned of mass extinction, tribal genocide and other effects related to tropical deforestation.

DOT is responsible for building and upgrading both the decking of the Brooklyn Bridge and the piers and pilings of the Staten Island Ferry Terminal both of which use vast quantities of rainforest wood.

Roughly an hour and a half later, Rosin was removed from the pole, pulled into a third floor window and arrested by police. As she was led to a paddy wagon in handcuffs, she stated the following to reporters: "It is an outrage that the DOT and other City agencies are still engaged in the destruction of rainforests when so many alternatives to tropical hardwood, such as recycled plastic lumber, exist and are in use by many other municipalities across the nation."

Since RR members initially broached DOT with their concerns, the agency has refused to meet. With litigation in the making, RR will continue to place pressure on DOT projects until they begin to utilize recycled plastic lumber



Our renegade construction crew out to protest the bridge to extinction.

or, at the very least, Forest Stewardship Council-certified wood, which guarantees ecological and social standards during logging operations.



Puzzled police debate how to down the dexterous demonstrator.

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in the coming months. I responded, saying that I'm among the first to say how disappointed I am with the business practices of the US – that I fight and struggle to stop the actions that cause environmental degradation and human suffering. I told him that I have many times demonstrated on Wall Street against the global trade in illegal and destructive tropical timber, against the desecration of indigenous peoples and lands from the Diné of Arizona to the U'wa of Colombia. But, I added, I believed this particular act would only bring more excuses to further inefficient practices that cause suffering, destruction and needless inhumanity around the world.

I hopped in a cab and headed for the direction of that incredible smoke. On the way down we heard over the radio the second tower was hit. And when we arrived at Chambers the first tower came down. I was directed to a temporary triage center at the Duane Street Firehouse not too far off from where RR did its DOT action. I guess in

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Big News from Brazil on Mahogany Imports

by Tim Keating, Executive Director

About ten years ago Rainforest Relief volunteers decided to target tropical hardwood imports as the most important and effective way to spare rainforests from destruction. Shortly thereafter, sometime around 1992, RR joined with Rainforest Action Network to target mahogany imports – which were found to be coming from indigenous lands, parks and preserves and driving massive illegal road-building into the heart of the Amazon.

The exploitation of mahogany in the Amazon is a story of murder and destruction as illegal loggers send gun crews ahead of the bulldozers to “pacify” the indigenous people who oppose logging on their customary and legally recognized lands.

At least ten indigenous groups have had family members murdered by illegal loggers in Brazil and Peru. According to the Brazilian government at least 80% of logging in the Brazilian Amazon is done illegally. This is organized crime as companies launder illegally cut wood through the mills and ports using legal documents.

Rainforest Relief has targeted a number of companies through the years for their use of mahogany (and other woods). Our first target was Barnes & Noble in 1994. B&N was using mahogany for entry doors, foyers and railings (and jatoba flooring and shorea chairs from Philippines), building about a hundred new stores a year. In a quick victory, B&N declared a commitment to end their use of rainforest woods, which they completed within a year and a half.

Other companies we converted included Brinker International (owner of Chili’s restaurants), Rock Bottom Breweries, Hilton Hotels and others.

RR also joined with other organizations to promote the listing of bigleaf mahogany on Appendix II of CITES (the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna). Appendix II is when the CITES mechanisms really kick in because if a country lacks enforcement capacity, only Appendix II brings in another country to help enforce.

By 1996, the US had become the largest importer of bigleaf mahogany. That year, RR joined with Friends of the Earth and In Defense of Animals to sign on to the US/Bolivia proposal and push the US delegation to follow through.

Again in 1999, RR joined with Friends of the

Earth UK to once again lobby the US to propose listing. Brazil decided to head off a possible vote for listing by listing its own population of bigleaf on Appendix III and vowing to convene a mahogany “working group”. At about that time, Greenpeace opened an office in the Amazon targeting illegal mahogany logging and directly confronting illegal loggers.

In June, Rainforest Relief’s director, Tim Keating, along with Action Resource Center’s John Picone, went on contract with Greenpeace to document what happened to mahogany once it arrived on US shores. The two collected evidence that showed that major US companies such as Ethan Allen, Henredon, Stickley, and even Gibson Guitars could be tied to mahogany from illegal sources.

At the end of the contract, in October, Greenpeace was set to publish its report on the illegal trade and Greenpeace US was set to publish an Annex report, authored by Keating, highlighting the US companies buying the most-likely-illegal wood.

The day before the reports were set to go, IBAMA declared a temporary suspension of all mahogany logging, milling, transport and export. Within the next week, IBAMA, along with Greenpeace, seized about \$7 million worth of illegal mahogany logs. Many of the thousands of logs were cut from Kayapo lands.

Two months later, expecting the suspension to be lifted, IBAMA instead made the suspension permanent! The decree, issued the first week of December, shut down 11 of 13 mahogany licenses (except the two that had been on their way to independent certification) but also mandated that any logging operations next to indigenous lands, parks, preserves or biological reserves would have to be certified. Also, any logging within the range of bigleaf mahogany (about a fifth of Brazil) would be shut down until they were certified.

In effect, this decree shuts down illegal mahogany logging in Brazil – something activists have been working towards for 15 years!

The new head of IBAMA has taken a bold step to prevent further destruction of the Brazilian Amazon due to illegal mahogany logging. But the backlash in Brazil has been strong.

IBAMA and the rainforests need your letters of support. Write Mr Hamilton Casara, President of IBAMA – send us your letter and we will forward it to him.



Hundreds take the Streets in Critical Mass Ride for the Rainforest

by Tim Doody, NYC campaigner

Fuzzy bicycles, skateboards and a couple of twelve foot high pedal powered contraptions that looked like Dr. Seuss illustrations gathered around while hundreds of people were welcomed to the monthly cycling event called "Critical Mass" which meets the last Friday of every month. In New York, organizers generally give each ride a theme. Last May's Critical Mass, organized with Rainforest Relief, highlighted the City's use of tropical rainforest wood for benches, subway ties, piers, bridge decking and 8.5 miles of coastal boardwalks. Participants were promised a "Dead Rainforest Tour" of New York to be followed by a surprise after-party. Rainforest Relief estimates that the City destroys approximately 10-50,000 acres of rainforest annually.

With the loud sound of noisemakers and whistles the high-spirited ride began. The first stop on the Dead Rainforest Tour occurred as riders came within view of Gramercy Park. Two people unfurled a banner depicting a woman jumping off a park bench with the text, "Get off your butt! NYC Parks Dept. Kills Rainforests for Benches!" This highlighted the tens of thousands of benches throughout NYC that are made of ipê from the Brazilian Amazon. Similar banners greeted cyclists at a subway entrance, where the track ties are made of ekki logged from the rainforests of Gabon and Cameroon, and at the Brooklyn Bridge, where the decking is greenheart from Guayana. Flyers went to crowds along the route which explained Critical Mass and detailed NYC's "crimes" against rainforests. The final banner, which condemned the City's choice of Guyanese greenheart for piers and pilings, was displayed at the entrance to the Staten Island Ferry Terminal where the 18-piece "Hungry March Band" joined the riders for a surprise party on the Staten Island Ferry.



News from the Northwest

by Jeff Lockwood, Northwest Chapter Director

The Portland, Oregon-based Northwest Chapter of Rainforest Relief continues to work on rainforest wood and oil issues. We are working closely with the Oregon Chapter of Sierra Club and the Oregon Wildlife Federation Collective to convince the Metro Regional Government, County of Multnomah and City of Portland to adopt ordinances that would prohibit the governments from using wood products from old-growth forests (including all tropical forests) in projects they build or fund, unless the wood is independently certified. Adoption of these ordinances would be an excellent way to set an example and raise awareness on our number one issue – the destruction and degradation of rainforests by logging.

Rainforest Relief also worked with Portland Parks and Recreation Department to ensure that only independently certified ipê will be used for a planned boardwalk. We convinced the city's architectural consultant to avoid uncertified ipê being unscrupulously marketed by Timber Holdings Ltd. Uncertified ipê is being ripped from the rainforests and dry forests of Brazil and Bolivia.

We are happy to announce that several local companies have taken our pledge to avoid uncertified rainforest wood use and sales. Environmental Building Supplies (503-222-3881); Sera Architects, Interiors and Planning (503-445-7372); Rock Soft Futon (503-249-7195); Holly Hill Construction (503-554-9006); and Joseph Millworks (541-894-2347, www.josephmillworks.com) have all made this commitment. Also, The Joinery (503-788-8547) has agreed to stop using mahogany in furniture it manufactures. We urge you to favor these businesses and thank them for sparing the rainforests! If you know of a business that may take our pledge call us at (503) 236-3031.

Rainforest Relief also is circulating a petition promoting a boycott of Chase Manhattan Bank because they are loaning money for construction of a second heavy oil pipeline in Ecuador's rainforest. The project to be served by this pipeline is located in Yasuní National Park, which has been declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO and is part of the traditional territory of the Huaorani people.

What You Can Do: Close any Chase credit card or account with a letter to the below address. Write & demand that Chase cease funding the new oil pipeline in Ecuador.

William B. Harrison, President and CEO

Chase Manhattan Bank, 270 Park Ave, NYC, NY 10017

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the first few hours if you carried supplies and a large gas mask the police thought you were an EMT in training. Anyway, once in, I was able to bluff my way through later checkpoints. Several images have stuck with me. At Stuyvesant High School, the central triage center, you could see building number seven burn and then go down further up the street.

It was so bleak and stark to be waiting and no living victims were arriving except for firemen and officers in need of smoky eye treatment. I hugged a young fireman in training who just discovered his two buddies were among those in the Twin Towers. He had moved off a ways from his coworkers. He commuted from Long Island everyday and said he hated New York. Bothered, I asked him why. He told me he didn't like the traffic. Hitting midnight fifteen of us were chosen to carry body bags to Ground Zero proper. It was nighttime and so crazy. From Chambers Street on we scuffled through a half-foot of ash, pieces of computers, twisted metal sheets and tubes and tons of papers – so many resumes and financial statements and legal mumbo jumbo highlighting hostile takeovers – floating, floating as flood lights glared, capturing each sheet of white as if it were falling snow. I went with the Black Labrador, his caretaker and a plumber from New Jersey. Now past midnight, we found very little. Hours later the dog was so tired – he had been sniffing since 2pm the day before – he just rolled over like a puppy and tugged on his long leash. He just did not want to sniff anymore. We tickled his belly. At 6am I was too tired to continue. The last victim I saw was a still-buried woman – her small feminine hand stuck out from under a long piece of scaffolding – gray and luxurious – a wedding ring on the curled ring finger – her index finger pointing up like an orchid out of ash.

This is the second time I've been involved with something like this – the first being in El Salvador ten years ago at the dump site where the US-supported Salvadoran government sponsored death squads threw thousands of bodies for many years. Strange this time searching for victims on the "side" I've often demonstrated against – many worked in establishments that have hurt others elsewhere.

I understand the rage – my rage is frustration. Now that there is a war in Afghanistan and talk of others; now that there is an increase of military aid and force in even more countries, that is, countries in which it is difficult to differentiate the "bad" players from the general population,

and in which indigenous people, minorities and ecosystems will get caught in the crossfire. Now that Fast Track was passed, civil liberties stampeded, activists called terrorists and any disagreement called unpatriotic. I think the hard part for all of us is and will continue to be the aftermath, as we try to pick up the pieces and continue the great work RR has done for 12 years. It's important more than ever that activists come together and support each other as we continue to highlight destructive policies and stop misdeeds by corporations and governments. Opposing the National Energy Bill and the Free Trade Bill, passing the good wood bill, opposing Star Wars and the pull-out from START. We must do now what we have always done – and more of it. At RR, we believe that showing our alliance with Earth – redoubling our efforts to end the assault on the world's rainforests and ecosystems and all the species and people who live within them – is the best response. In despair can be rebirth – orchids can burst out of war-like jungles. Panthers can prowl, jaguars can pounce, children can play, and the ocelot will be free in form and stealth. Though small, the ocelot is still felt by the jungle, much as Rainforest Relief is an integral part of the change.



In April 2001 in Quebec, Canada a 4km "security perimeter" surrounded a very important meeting to which NGO's were not invited. The controversial Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) was being negotiated by business trade ministers and leaders of every nation in the Western Hemisphere (except Cuba). There were no representatives of Environmental, Health, Labor or Human Rights Groups. The export-driven growth model promoted by "free trade" agreements have destroyed ecosystems around the world. Under this unsustainable model many people and countries in the Global South cut down their forests, overfish their waters, drill for oil and mine for minerals to earn hard currency. Since NAFTA, for instance, 15 US wood product companies have set up operations in Mexico – in the last eight years 40 percent of their forests have been lost leading to massive soil erosion and habitat destruction. Aerial leaflets, printed on 100 % recycled and salvaged paper, were dropped over Quebec documenting in both French and English ten reasons why to oppose the meeting and the FTAA.