

## ***NAFTA: destitute workers, economic hegemony, violence, ethnic and socioeconomic turmoil***

### **Resolving it through a methodology that builds peace and justice through the renewal of an ethics of accountability, solidarity and care**

Production in the *maquiladoras* of Mexico's border towns peaked in the year 2000, and has since declined due largely to the fact production moved to cheaper labor countries, especially China.

- In Baja California, two hundred and thirty-seven maquiladora factories closed in 2001.
- In Tijuana, a thirty percent contraction in *maquila* jobs occurred between 2000 and 2001
- By early 2002, the Mexican maquila sector, as a whole, had declined twenty-one percent over its 2001 size.
- By 2003, six-hundred maquila factories still operated in Tijuana, which employed 150,000
- Until the recent discovery of even cheaper labor in China and elsewhere, Tijuana was preferred site for Japanese and Korean capital doing assembly for the US market.
- Ninety-eight percent of the finished products of *maquilas* go to US markets
- Tijuana is the world's largest producer of TV sets; the second largest producer is Ciudad Juarez
- The medium income of Mexican workers has dropped by twenty-five percent
- Twelve million current undocumented Mexican workers in the US
- Fifty-thousand NAFTA refugees enter the US each year
- 4,000 have died at the border between 1986-2000 (US count)
- Mexico was largely rural and agrarian until circa 1990
- The right-wing Mexican regimes had to change Article 27 of Mexico's Constitution to force Mexico into NAFTA
- Since the Mexican Revolution in 1917, private property carried with it the social responsibility to entrust the land to the landless

- Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution of Mexico protected the *ejido* (peasant farmer) within a cooperative collective land ownership provision
- The *edijeros* received government loans at lower interest rates
- With NAFTA and the revision of the Mexican Constitution, the right-wing regime backed by the powerful owner elite class, drove the *edijeros* off their lands, thus denying their protected status
- Tariff protections and price supports for staple crops gradually fell to the NAFTA rules of engagement
- Until as recently as 1990, 28,000 *edijos* owned—were entrusted with—49% of the land
- NAFTA began in 1992 with Mexico ready for full membership, which included it lax environmental protections
- The Mexican state privatized two hundred and fifty-two publicly-held services
- 78% of all the maquiladoras lies within a two hundred mile border corridor with a cost of living for the maquilas comparable to the US border communities
- Contradiction of the system: cheap imported goods with high profits for the owners of production versus low-wages for the workers with a high cost of living
- The enclave economy of the maquiladoras in “remote islands” within Mexico has little or no effect upon the Mexican economy per se
- One third of all maquilas employed in early 2000 faced layoffs by the middle of 2001 due to recession and capital flight to mostly China
- Twelve thousand US workers lost their jobs due to the capital flight to Mexico by these apparel corporations:
  - Levi Straus, Sun Apparel, Action West, Lee, Wrangler, and Farrah

\* Sources: US General Accounting Office and *Business Mexico*, a Mexico-based English language trade publication.

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