

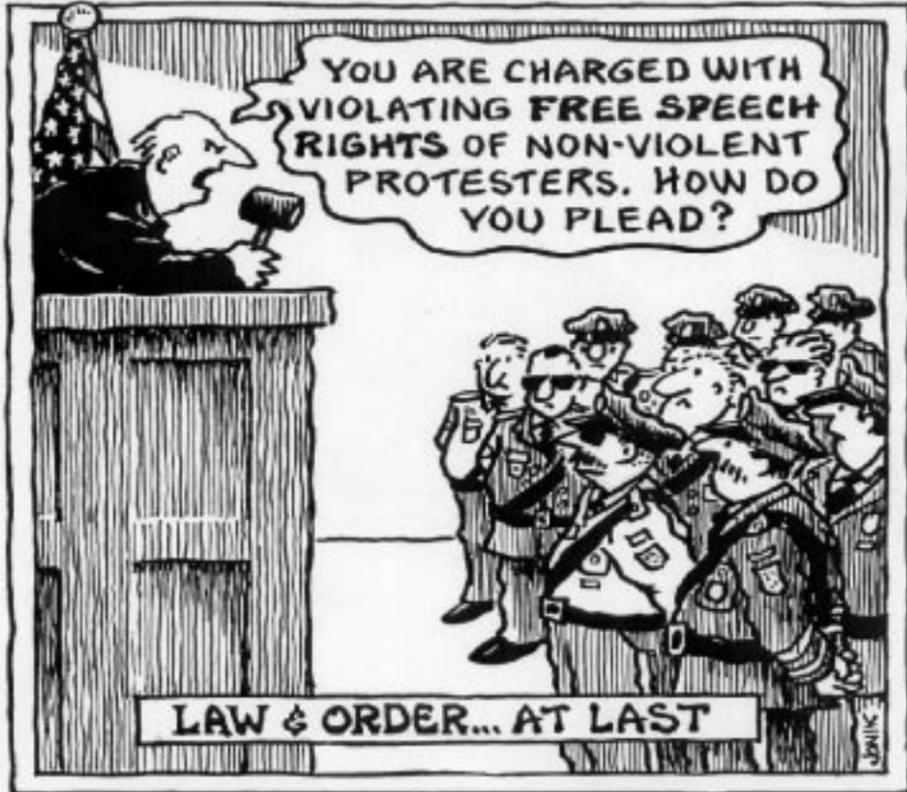


The Prism

Community alternative news and views

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In Organic Agriculture, Cubans are Leading the Way

by Robert E. Sullivan

Earth Times News Service

HAVANA—The Cuban revolutionary threat is back. In an innocuous-looking, unmarked building in the Miramar suburb of Havana technicians from Fidel Castro's communist government are training cadres from all over Latin America.

The ideology of the new movement is being exported, along with equipment, to nearby Venezuela, Columbia and Jamaica, other Latin American countries, and this time, as far as Europe. Americans, so far, have been protected by the embargo from the product of the Cuban revolution: clean food.

The food is clean — largely free of chemical fertilizers and poisonous pesticides and herbicides — because since the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba can't afford them.

And, necessity in this case being the mother of nature, Cuba may be producing the most chemical free, organic, clean produce in the world. According to the way they tell it, Cubans are getting so good at this organic business that agronomists from all over Latin America come to study it at the Institute for Crop Protection (INISAV) a low profile center housed in a former private home in the quiet residential section of Miramar. Trained at INISAV, and sent out again to the world to agitate, have been

agronomists from Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Spain, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala and Jamaica. At least a half dozen other countries have signed up, but the discrete directors at INISAV won't reveal their nationalities because, they say, the trainees think their home countries will suffer retaliation from the United States.

The institute has developed a line of completely biological herbicides and pesticides marketed throughout the island under the brand name Biasav.

This year Cuba, next the world. Exports of Biasav have begun — not to America of course, but to most of the above countries and others. And in Cuba almost 100,000 small-to-medium sized urban gardens have sprung up to provide an ever increasing percentage of the country's vegetable needs. One hundred per cent of the produce if these gardens is 100 per cent organic — simply because of a central dictate: no pesticides are allowed inside any city limits. Period. And this comes from the Castro government, which is committed to clean food.

What happened?

Ask any ten Cuban agronomists — they have 140 Ph.D.s in the Agriculture Ministry alone, plus 10,000 graduate agronomic engineers — why has Cuba gone organic and

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Radical Triangle Newspaper reaches 10th year

Grassroots paper takes a break to reassess

by Jeff Saviano

With this issue, *The Prism* reaches its 10th year. This achievement is nothing short of remarkable.

Against all odds, tens of individuals (working in groups which changed over time) produced a monthly newspaper for 10 years.

No one was paid a dime for their efforts. The paper supported itself with ads from small businesses and with donations.

Night after night, and weekend after weekend, volunteers met and cranked out a paper. There were many things people may have wanted to do in a month than invest five, ten, twenty, thirty hours in producing a monthly radical newspaper. But we did it anyway.

We—and I think I speak for all the myriad volunteers over the years—did it because it needed to be done. We remembered that the world was full of people both suffering needlessly and fighting like hell to change it.

We never sold out, we never forgot our mission, and we never quit trying to do a better job.

However, there came a point at which the people who happened to be the core volunteers, at least two of whom were here from the start ten years ago, faced a coincidence of major life changes that made volunteering at our former levels of effort impossible.

While some people showed an interest in helping out, the truth is that this publication takes an awful lot of work, and if it is produced in any fashion similar to how it has been produced, it requires a core group of people able to carry on the work each month for a year or so.

For now, without a dramatic and unexpected appearance of very serious and committed volunteers, the print version of this publication will be on hold. (We will be placing new things on our website, but this is because the website costs nothing and placing certain materials on the web takes very little time at all; most of us would prefer a print version, but this doesn't seem immediately possible.)

What will and should happen now is not for me alone to say, of course. Some believe that the paper should now rest, having reached this mark. Others believe a group of volunteers will show up who will continue as we have, and the paper will jump back to life.

Personally I see this as a decision to be made by the community which produced, supported, and read this paper. Let the discussion begin, then.

Perhaps our tenth year will be one of rebirth. *The Prism* continued a worthy tradition of truly independent, grassroots media in North Carolina. If this kind of resource is still needed, this community can do it.

The Prism's "Declaration of Intent" given 10 years ago

Here's what appeared in the first, unnamed issue published in April, 1990, expressing the consensus of those who pressed forward to launch this radical paper.

Many have expressed a need for an alternative newspaper accessible to the community and response to the need for social change. The Triangle's progressive community has no forum for information, communication and analysis. This has limited the ability of activists and organizations to meet their potential and has left citizens uninformed about important matters.

The existing news media is inadequate. Important local, national and international events are poorly reported. The economic and political forces that shape the news are not challenged. Our economy is characterized by gross inequities in wealth and access to resources, while concentrating power in the hands of a small elite. Since these elites also control the major media, news and ideas that might challenge their power are not presented to the public.

A publication is needed that is free to report on the forces behind the news. It must examine the failures and biases of the mainstream media. It must offer sound ways to change life for the better, helping readers to share ideas, experience, hope, support and power. It can provide an inspiration to action and a catalyst for change.

A group has formed to begin to address this need. Our vision is of an attractive, readable newspaper, a paper that will speak clearly and directly to a diverse community, crossing lines of race, gender, class and sexual orientation.

The success of the paper will depend on the involvement of the community it serves. All those sharing a progressive viewpoint are invited to participate in any and all aspects of the paper. We will continually reach out to the large network of activists, concerned citizens and social change groups, providing a forum to report their work events and concerns.

The newspaper will be guided by the principles of economic justice, ecological responsibility, non-violence, democracy in all aspects of life, support for reproductive rights and respect for the respect for the rights, dignity and diversity of all people.

The paper will be independent, run by volunteers, not for profit and available free to the public.

Dedication of this Issue: Valeria Jean Daniels-Paddock



May 30, 1949-
July 21, 2000

Valeria Jean Daniels-Paddock was assistant principal and counselor at Grey Culbreth Middle School in Chapel Hill. During her 27-year career in Chapel Hill, she helped originate the elementary school guidance program. She earned the Human Rights award and Middle/Junior High Counselor of the Year award of the NC School Counselor Association, and Assistant Principal of the year from both Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools (1998) and the NC Association of Educators (2000). She initiated the Character Education program at Culbreth which is now being adopted by the other schools in CHCCS.

Her concern was always the children first, and the people around her. She counseled them all. She would meet with the most irate parent or the angriest student, and they would invariably leave with a smile, even a laugh.

Two memorials were announced at her funeral, one by the Culbreth principal and one by the church pastor. She will be missed. The staff, and husband Dick Paddock, a long-time civil rights activist and *Prism* volunteer, dedicate this issue to her memory.

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