

Occupy Wall Street

Media Advisory/Photo Opportunity

For Immediate Release
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Grim Reaper Dances with Staten Island/Brooklyn Rep. Grimm on Day of the Dead as Human Rights Activists Hold Mock Funeral to Mourn Assassination Victims in Colombia and Protest Grimm's Vote for Colombia Trade Deal

Who: Occupy Wall Street Trade Justice, Direct Action, Arts and Culture, and Environmental Solidarity Working Groups; in association with All Souls Bethlehem Church; American Jobs Alliance; Global Justice for Animals and the Environment; Jose Schifano (Chair, NY Labor Coalition for Latin American Advancement Fair Trade Committee,); Latin American and Caribbean Community Center; NY Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador; NYC School of the Americas Watch; Reform Party of NJ; Mingas NY; Penley Global Law; Queerocracy; and TradeJustice New York Metro.

What: To mark Day of the Dead and All Souls Day, protesters will hold a symbolic funeral in front of the office of Representative Michael Grimm to mourn the approximately 3,000 union organizers assassinated by government-linked narcoterrorist paramilitary group since 1986 and other victims of human rights atrocities in Colombia. As the names of Colombian martyrs are read an activist masked as Rep. Grimm will dance with the Grim Reaper to mark Grimm's vote for the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, which human rights defenders believe will exacerbate violence against civilians in Colombia.

When: Today, Wednesday, October 2nd, 1:45PM

Where: Office of Representative Michael Grimm, 265 New Dorp Lane @ Edison Street, Staten Island.

Why: On October 12th, Representative Michael Grimm voted for free trade agreements with Colombia, Panama, and South Korea, despite widespread opposition from human rights groups, labor unions, environmentalists, family farm groups, AIDS activists, religious leaders, public interest advocates, and animal rights activists. On Day of the Dead, a holiday celebrated in Colombia and throughout Latin America on November 1st and 2nd, Colombians are often forced to mourn the victims of assassinations, and protesters intend to memorialize these victims in front of Grimm's office.

In the first ten months of current President Juan Miguel Santos term, 104 Colombian civilians were assassinated by Colombian state security forces or government-linked paramilitary groups. Victims include labor organizers, community leaders, neighborhood association presidents, gay rights activists, opposition political party activists, indigenous community members and leaders, peace community members, political candidates, farmers and peasants, human rights and peace activists, a judge in a case against soldiers accused of rape and torture, the main witness in a case against the former President of Congress for paramilitary links -- and children as young as three years of age. Victims include a 14 year old girl who was raped and tortured in front of her 9 and 6 year old brothers. The brothers were also tortured and all three were killed and dumped in a shallow grave..

Colombia is the world capital for violence against workers, with more unionists killed every year than in the rest of the world combined. Unionist murders are growing from 37 in 2007 after the deal was signed to 51 in 2010— even though Colombia has been under maximum scrutiny. Only 6% of the total 2,680 unionist murders have been prosecuted to date. Outrageously, the US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement doesn't require Colombia to end the unionist murders or bring past perpetrators to justice in order to obtain special trade privileges. Colombian unions oppose the deal and agree with U.S. unions that a recent 'action plan' will not fix the horrific situation.

Colombia has the highest number of displaced people in the world— outpacing even Sudan— because of forced displacements and land grabs, often with Colombian military involvement. The deal will accelerate displacement of impoverished Afro-Colombians and farmers and the stealing of their lands. Even the Colombian government says trade pact displacement will force campesinos into immigration or illegal drug trafficking. The pact gives incentives for mining, timber and palm oil companies to rip up the Amazon, worsening global warming.

According to the Economic Policy the Colombia FTA will boost the U.S. trade deficit by \$2.9 billion over the next seven years. This rise in the trade deficit, in turn, would cost the U.S. economy about 55,000 net jobs. However, the agreement will benefit corporations looking to outsource jobs to sweatshops or sell equipment for use in rainforest exploitation.

According to Adam Weissman of the Occupy Wall Street Trade Justice Working Group, "By voting for the Colombia-US Free Trade Agreement, Representative Grimm voted to continue human rights atrocities and outsource US jobs This may benefit corporations like Walmart, Citigroup, and Caterpillar and it will certainly benefit Colombia's cocaine producing terrorist groups but it won't help our economy.

Activists also oppose the Korea Free Trade Agreement, which the Economic Policy Institute estimates will cause the US 159,000 jobs which prohibiting reform of the financial industry, and the Panama Free Trade Agreement, which will help corporations use Panama's banking secrecy laws to hide money and avoid paying taxes in the United States..

Additional Info: <http://tradejustice.net/grimmkit>