

D'Escoto Sends Message to Linder Family

[Bryan Moore, Senior Instructor of Spanish at the University of Oregon, Eugene, forwarded to us this tribute to Ben Linder by Miguel D'Escoto. Moore has organized tributes to Linder at the U. of OR.]

Message of His Excellency Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann
President of the United Nations General Assembly
In Memory of Ben Linder

28 April 2009

Dear Elisabeth, Bryan, Brothers and Sisters,
Friends of Ben Linder and of Nicaragua,

I am moved and honored to send greetings to you in Oregon as you celebrate the life and mission of Ben Linder. I am also pleased to know that the University of Oregon has decided to make Latin American Studies a full-fledged academic department. I am certain such programs do contribute in palpable and strategic ways to greater cultural understanding among the peoples of Latin America and the United States, and ultimately among the peoples of the world. In these difficult times, I'm sure Ben would agree that we need understanding and solidarity more than ever.

Twenty-two years have passed since the murder of Ben, Pablo and Sergio while they worked in the isolated Nicaraguan communities of El Cua, San Jose de Bocay, and others -- communities that were trapped in the war zone. Ben and his co-workers were admired for performing the miracle of producing "light from water." I have no doubt these communities still remember, honor and miss Ben, in the same way his family, friends and a new generation of admirers remember him at home in Oregon.



*Engineer
Ben Linder
was also a
clown and
enjoyed
entertaining
children of
all ages.*

Today I am addressing you not as the Foreign Minister of Nicaragua, but as the President of the United Nations General Assembly. When I assumed my post last September, I spoke in my opening address of a world in crisis, indeed, of multiple converging crises, that were tipping millions of the world's marginally poor into extreme

poverty. In addition to a global economic meltdown, poor people are facing scarcity of food, water and energy as well as the calamities provoked by climate change.

I made no secret of my own belief that the current economic crisis is the result of a deep systemic crisis, and of a deeper moral and ethical failure. I underscored the need for greater solidarity, one that places at the core of our work, the many millions of our most vulnerable brothers and sisters who today are suffering, through no fault of their own, the multiple impacts of these crises. To my amazement, I was informed that “solidarity” was not part of the UN vernacular, and using the word in UN speeches would confuse the Member States.

I am happy to say that these views, which only a few months ago seemed radical to many at UN headquarters in New York, are now becoming mainstream views in every region of the world. I have no doubt Ben is as happy as we are that others are recognizing the need—indeed the imperative—for solidarity.

At its crux, the crisis we are facing stems from an all pervading system that has sanctioned, promoted and defended unbridled greed over the common good. Over the past five decades, a select few nations – those with majority voting rights or with pre-emptive veto power – have arrogated to themselves the power to define the rules of the global financial institutions. But the rule makers themselves refused to be bound by the very same rules they had created. Now under the aegis of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the brunt of the burden is being placed upon the world’s most vulnerable populations.

This means our first and overriding task must be to mobilize the necessary resources to avert a further human catastrophe. This is an undertaking that we at the General Assembly and the UN are taking seriously by convening a Summit of world leaders – from all 192 UN Member States –during the first days of June of this year. This task will require immense focus, flexibility, a shared sense of overwhelming urgency and a commitment to using every resource at our disposal– economic and political, moral and religious – to find our way forward.

But I remain convinced that the strongest forces for social justice remain within us as individuals, families and communities. Let us draw from Ben Linder’s example the inspiration to take the lead in promoting these essential values in our societies. Leadership is crucial. All of us must become leaders, advocates, and ambassadors-at-large for a more just world – one imbued with respect for the inherent dignity due to all persons everywhere.

I believe we are at a foundational moment in the history of the United Nations. We must be brave — we must have vision to fulfill the purposes for which this Organization was founded. Today, more than ever, the world's most vulnerable are in need of the global force of the G-192 present in UN General Assembly. We have the challenge of joining together in a noble mission to defend the right to full participation in our global community. Poor people can no longer be seen as scapegoats or victims, but as the legitimate stakeholders that they are. We must endeavor to ensure that relief and opportunity are not privileges reserved solely for more affluent societies, but include and prioritize our brothers and sisters in greatest need.

I am certain that together, we can and will find the moral strength and creativity that we as human beings possess, and the resolve to see this process through. Let us follow the legacy of Ben Linder. Just as Ben used the unicycle, juggling, and laughter to mobilize children and their caretakers in vaccination drives; just as Ben offered his skills and intellect as an engineer to bring development to remote areas; just as Ben offered his presence to accompany those most vulnerable during times of suffering... We must join together as members of the broader international community to harness our creativity and intellectual prowess to develop innovative paradigms based on a new understanding of prosperity and progress.

If prosperity and progress are to benefit each and all of us; they cannot be based on patterns of insatiable greed and consumption, but rather on sound internationally regulated financial and monetary institutions – and equally as important, on a profound sense of solidarity and connection with all our Brothers and Sisters.

Genuine prosperity and progress will flow from institutions that enable, not hinder, the formulation of inclusive and people-centered development policies; trade regimes based on principles of fairness and equity; food systems that are ecologically sound and sustainable, and that offer just reward to small-scale farmers; labor regimes that address the special needs of women as the baseline for judging economic performance.

I believe ardently that such a World is possible. Whether in my home country of Nicaragua (together with the Frente), here at the United Nations, or in your community, let each of us individually and collectively, make the construction of a new, vibrant vision of our global society a shared priority and our common endeavor. I am confident that Ben would have wanted this as well. Let us follow his example.

Blessings to Elisabeth and the other members of Ben’s family, and to each and all of you, my deepest and sincere admiration and affection.

Miguel D’ Escoto