

Garifuna youth brigade members remove a fence post in the area planted by narco invaders of the land prior to 2012 land recovery.



OFRANEH coordinator Miriam Miranda.

It's time for every human being in the global North to take up his or her responsibility in respect to the use of resources, responsibility relative to waste and to consumption. The standard of living that you all have in the U.S. is unsustainable. You are the button-pushers. The time has come."

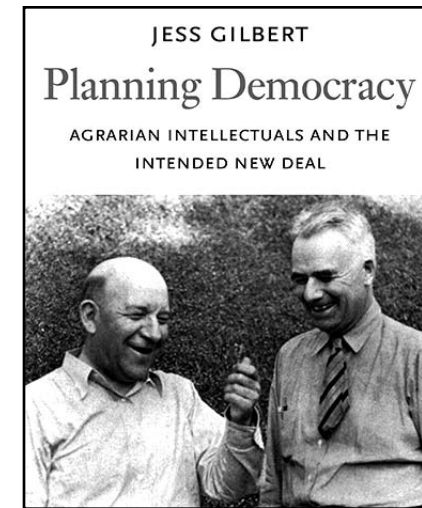
For more information, write to sbartlett@ag-missions.org and/or check out the website and blog on a recent Honduras delegation. Also check out the OFRANEH website and their blog.

Regardless, OFRANEH plans to recover and keep Vallecito and transform it into a center of Garifuna renewal. All community members dislocated from their lands, for whatever reason, will be able to resettle there. Strengthening traditional Garifuna agriculture, aqua-culture, and culture in general will be an integral part of the resettlement. Immediate plans include the construction of a Garifuna ceremonial/cultural building. Youth leadership development is another part of the plan, so that urban youth and young adults can learn the same skills and knowledge as Garifunas living in remote rural locations.

Like other indigenous and non-indigenous Hondurans standing up for their rights, the Garifunas suffer continual violence, threats, and human rights abuses. Both the land grabs and the violence surrounding them are part of a political climate resulting from a coup d'état against President Manuel Zelaya on June 28, 2009. Then, with the help of the U.S. government, a clique of the top oligarchs of the nation swept to power. The U.S. government has played an enabling role with a series of post-coup regimes, providing political cover and military and police aid, and looking the other way as human rights violations and impunity mount. Hundreds of assassinations of opposition organizers and their family members have marked Honduras in recent years, bringing to mind the death squads of the 1980s.

In addition to the government's impunity and corruption, the illegally imposed congress has conceded land and minerals to foreign investors. Beyond what is happening in indigenous communities, campesino land across the country is being grabbed by agribusiness - often owned by Honduras' richest man, Miguel Facussé - particularly for African palm plantations planted to feed the craze for biofuel in the North.

OFRANEH coordinator Miriam Miranda says, "If the problem is global, we have to have a global response.



Planning Democracy
Book Review of Jess Gilbert's New Book on the Agrarian Intellectuals and the Intended New Deal (Yale Univ. Press 2015)

By: John E. Peck,
FFD Executive Director

Having first met Jess Gilbert when I was a graduate student at UW-Madison, I must admit I was excited to pick up his latest book on a little known later phase of FDR's New Deal that if implemented would have radically transformed U.S. agriculture and possibly prevented the current food/farm crisis we now face. In fact, many of the grassroots struggles we face today - valorizing farmer-driven research, fostering popular education for grassroots empowerment, and defending local democratic control - had their antecedents in the social turmoil of the 1930s.

Gilbert's book focuses on several early 20th c. agrarian intellectuals - often born and raised on Midwest farms - who went on to become visionaries within their land grant colleges and government agencies, challenging the

emerging ideology of technocratic industrial agribusiness. These figures included the likes of Henry A. Wallace, M. L. Wilson, Howard R. Tolley, L. C. Gray, Carl C. Taylor, and Bushrod W. Allin. It's hard to imagine USDA officials today publicly describing capitalism as "the venom of unrestrained competitive greed" or writing articles of "Disadvantaged Classes in American Agriculture," but that was the radical window that was forced open by those keen to organize rural folks to surmount the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl.

Many others have written eloquently about the degree to which the state can corral and exploit the masses in the interest of elites - James Scott, Charles Tilly, and David Graeber come to mind - but what is refreshing about Gilbert's book is that it chronicles a forgotten historic episode where the government was inspired enough to implement policies that aligned with the interests of the people themselves. This bold effort which began in 1939 and lasted until 1945 went far beyond the commodity supply management, land reform efforts, rural electrification, co-op development, soil conservation programs, and farm security loans that characterized the FDR administration's earlier forays into triggering a national rural renaissance. In order to tackle "the social erosion that came with soil erosion" and to uproot the paradox of "poverty in the midst of plenty," it aspired to enlist over three million people in one of the largest exercises in democratic decision making

and grassroots collective action ever undertaken in U.S. history.

Built around the premise that education could lead to transformation and clearly inspired by Jefferson and Dewey, this "Third New Deal in Agriculture" aimed to overturn the patronizing stifling hierarchy that deemed farmers too stupid to be experts in their own profession or leaders in their own community. The USDA's *Farmers in a Changing World: Yearbook of Agriculture* 1940 probably best captured this spirit of critical thinking behind rural praxis. Participatory research led to community mapping and eventually cooperative land use planning in two thirds of all rural counties in the U.S.

Sadly, power politics sabotaged the intended New Deal before it could really bear fruit, and - surprise, surprise - the primary antagonist was the Farm Bureau! Empowered rural communities threatened the control of corporate agribusiness, and thus had to be stopped. Relentless budget attacks and bureaucratic reshuffling at the USDA left the agrarian intellectuals adrift and their radical rural development project capsized. Domestic political debate descended into the communist paranoia of the Cold War. But many of these ideas were successfully transported abroad and germinated elsewhere - for instance, inspiring land reform in post revolution Cuba. Who knows - perhaps they can find more fertile ground in the U.S. now that popular interest in reclaiming our food/farm system has returned?