# Three fallen warriors

Three good human beings -Terence Freitas, Ingrid Washinawatek and Lahe'ena'e Gay- were murdered on March 4th in Colombia. A FARC guerrilla commander committed this outrageous and senseless crime, which has deserved universal condemnation. We strongly adhere to that condemnation.

The news about these deaths --which add three more inocent victims to the thousants of other inocent people murdered in Colombia-- were carried by all the main news agencies. But they omitted to say why Terence, Ingrid and Lahe'ena'e were there in the first place. They weren't there on a tourist tour, nor were they trying to steal knowledge from indigenous peoples or plants for the biotechnology industry. They were there to support the struggle of the U'wa indigenous people against a giant oil multinational. Non of this was mentioned by the multinational media.

As a sign of respect for the memory of the three people who lost their lives trying to do what they --and we-- believed should be done, it is our duty to focus our attention on the underlying situation which lead them to be in violence-torn Colombia.

The people they were supporting --the U'wa-- are totally opposed to oil exploitation in their ancestral lands. As in many other countries, the Colombian government has not legally recognized the rights of these indigenous peoples to their own territory and has consequently opened up the area for oil exploration. The US based oil corporation Occidental Petroleum applied for a permit to drill, which although still pending at the Ministry of the Environment, sparked U'wa resistance to such plans. Both the company and the government are aware about this opposition --which could even end in the U'wa committing collective suicide-- but the possibility of profits for the former and exports for the latter have been more powerful than justice or self-determination.

In order to try to counter the joint strength of a national government and a multinational oil company against the U'wa, their struggle received support from an important number of national and international organizations and also resulted in the creation of the U'wa Defense Working Group, whereTerence Freitas served as the coordinator. Both he, Ingrid and Lahe'ena'e had been working with the U'wa before leaving the area and losing their lives to a ruthless guerrilla commander.

Our solidarity to them, to their families and friends must therefore express itself through a continued and increased support to the struggle of the U'wa against oil drilling in their territory, to allow them to live in peace. We are certain that this is what the three would have wished.

We make ours the words of the The Hawai'i Statement, which says: "We extend our deepest sympathy and regards to the family and relatives of these fallen warriors, Lahe'ena'e Gay of the Pacific Cultural Conservancy International, Ingrid Washinawatok of the Menominee Nation, the Indigenous Women's Network and countless other organizations, and Terence Freitas, an environmental activist. Let us all pick up the fallen torches, let us continue the struggle. This fight is for our lands, our precious culture and life-giving sources. That is all we seek. Money and power breeds death and destruction...we do not ask for money or riches. We have our wealth in our lands

and our cultural beliefs and values. Please, let us just live in nature, it is our way, it is the only way to preserve a future for our children, grandchildren and the generations yet unborn. We answer the call by other indigenous nations to unite in a concerted effort to protect our earth mother and stop needless killing and violence".