

Athlete Spotlight

LANCE HARDEN



Andy Robertson

If you've ever been to an NCSSM home basketball game, then there's a good chance that you've seen Andy swish a three-pointer over the outstretched hands of a frustrated defender or convert an offensive rebound for an easy lay-up. After leading the team in scoring last year as a junior, he has assumed a greater leadership role this year as a co-captain (along with Doug Valchar) and has continued his scoring ways, averaging 18.0 points through five games. As the tallest player on the team this year, he has sacrificed his favorite wing position to play center and help the team in the frontcourt.

HOME SCHOOL: Person HS, Roxboro, NC

PERSONAL: 6 feet, 5 inches; lettered in basketball, baseball; daughter of Mark & Linda Robertson

IN THE CD PLAYER: "The Blueprint," by Jay-Z

FAVORITE BOOK: The Three Musketeers, by Alexander Dumas

EMOTIONAL MOMENT: Getting cut from the JV basketball team as a freshman

ATHLETICS MEMORY: Our first conference win last year on Senior Night versus Cary Academy

ATHLETICS LESSON: "Never give up your dream"

ATHLETICS ADVICE: "Doing the little things will help the big things happen"

ADD TO MOUNT RUSHMORE: Michael Jordan

FOR 30 MINUTES I'D LIKE TO BE: Dirk Nowitzki

GUEST LIST: Benjamin Franklin, Warner Grantham, Julius Caesar

LIKES: basketball, NBA Live 2005, Dallas Mavericks

DISLIKES: busy work, conditioning, ignorance

GREATEST AMBITION: To play in the NBA

COLLEGE PLANS: NC State, graduate school at MIT

COLLEGE MAJOR: Engineering

Chiapas: Human Rights Tour

ADEN VANNOPPEN AND MOLLY SWEETSER

You are walking down Reynolds breezeway and stop at a curious looking sign: "Chiapas Case Study: Globalization, Militarization, and Human Rights Tour." Perhaps you are intrigued or perhaps you see this as just another sign. However, this was an unusual event; the first of many of its kind.

The tour, which was sponsored by The Mexico Solidarity Network and The School of the Americas Watch, was traveling the country to raise awareness about the social and economic hardships existing in Latin America. The focus was on Chiapas, a southern region of Mexico where there is an

incredible amount of military exploitation of indigenous groups. The director of the Mexico Solidarity Network, Tom Hansen, gave those of us who attended an introduction into the past and present struggles of the people of Chiapas. Many of these struggles arise from conflicts between the traditional lifestyles of the indigenous groups and the modern policies of Mexican government. For example, the indigenous groups have lived on their land for hundreds of years, and the idea of a piece of paper claiming ownership to land is foreign and unnecessary. Because of this, the Mexican government is able to steal their land for purposes such as mining. In addition, there is a strong military presence in Chiapas and there are frequent, violent interactions between the military and traditionally peaceful indigenous groups.

Sadly, this situation is entirely too common in Latin America. All kinds of people throughout Latin America are being massacred. There are millions of

starving Latinos who pack themselves into dirt floor shacks

made of cardboard and scraps of tin. Latin Americans have not always lived this way. There is a common thread to their fall into disparity: First World involvement for economic gain. In reality, this thread is a much more complicated web of corruption, secrecy, and ambiguity; but the pattern is clear.

Throughout this century, the US has been particularly interested in where power lies

in Latin America. We have supported various leaders and suppressive regimes that are responsible for the violence and inequality that overwhelms Latin America. For

their economic and social structures to a point that is independent of the United States.

These issues are still very relevant, and a number of



This picture, taken in Chiapas, Mexico, demonstrates the military occupation of the area.

example, in the 1970s, the US backed a military coup in Chile, which overthrew the first democratically elected president, Salvador Allende. This destroyed their fragile democracy and instated a brutal military dictator, Augusto Pinochet. In the 1980s, President Ronald Reagan illegally backed the Contras in Nicaragua. The Contras fought with US troops to repress the Sandinista uprising. It was an uprising of the people, demanding education, health care, and land reform. It failed. In the 1990s, the US backed the efforts of Guatemalan dictator, Rios Montt, as he massacred hundreds of thousands of poor Guatemalans. Montt is currently on trial for genocide. This is only a sample of the pattern of US intervention in Latin America.

Why would the US be supporting these dictators instead of leaders who are proponents of positive change? A government that supports the poor people of Latin America would hinder the goals of the United States. Its inequality

makes Latin America vulnerable and therefore it is easy for the US to exploit farmers and workers for their products

and land. Corporations like Dole, Texaco, and Wal-Mart exist because the corrupt governments of Latin America allow them to go through loopholes to abuse workers and the environment, making Latin America a more profitable place for industry. Unfortunately, this is at the expense of human lives. Although most of the alternative governments are not perfect, they would like to move

your fellow NCSSMers have joined the movement against the injustices in Latin America. For many, it began with the Chiapas Case Study, and two weeks later, a group of eight students caught a bus from Chapel Hill to the School of the Americas (SOA) in Fort Benning Georgia. This wasn't another college tour.

The School of the Americas, now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for

Security Cooperation, is a military training camp for Latin American officers and soldiers. Along with other topics, these soldiers are trained in torture techniques, counter-insurgency, and psychological warfare. Many of the graduates have been responsible for atrocities throughout Latin America and there is a pattern of human rights violations that follows the school very closely. The victims of these massacres include religious workers, educators, union leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. Rios Montt, Pinochet, and the majority of the Nicaraguan Contras are examples of growing number of SOA graduates. Your fellow NCSSM students went to Fort Benning to participate in an annual protest of the School of the Americas and a vigil for the thousands who have been murdered. We participated in a solemn march commemorating the voiceless victims of SOA graduates. We listened to the continual recitation of names for three hours. This was also an opportunity to hear the sickening stories of the few who have survived torture at the hands of those trained at SOA.

The fight against the School of the Americas has yielded clear results. As the number of protestors multiplies every year, representatives are forced to learn more about what is really going on in the school. Because of the anti-SOA movement, the school was closed on January 17th, 2001. Unfortunately, it has been re-opened under a new name, but the fact that it was closed at all shows that we are making tremendous progress. If it was closed once, it can be closed again. In addition, the fight against SOA extends beyond our borders. In November, the newly elected Venezuelan leader, Hugo Chavez, declared that he would no longer send his troops to the school of this Americas due to its violent history. This is a tremendous accomplishment for the movement.

We will continue the fight for Latin America on the NCSSM campus. This will include bringing more speakers to open our eyes to the many injustices. Not only will they tell us of the situations,

Why would the US be supporting these dictators instead of leaders who are proponents of positive change?

but they will tell us what we can do about it. One of the most amazing ways to

get involved is to go to Latin America and experience the struggles, hopes, and cultures for yourself. We have worked with the poor of Guatemala, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, and these experiences have sparked our passion and hope for creating change in Latin America. If you want more information about how to get involved, we encourage you to come see us.

In addition to learning about the political situation, we want NCSSM to celebrate the rich Latin American culture. The first ever Latin America Festival at NCSSM will be held on January 22nd. It will include food, dancers, musicians, and other cultural activities. We would like this to be the beginning of increased awareness and action on our campus. While the issues are complex and the violence is daunting, we can not lose hope for the millions of suffering humans in Latin America. This is a fight we can win if young people like us make an effort to stay informed and be proactive.