

# José Ramos Bosmediano

## Exemplary teacher and internationalist



Jose Ramos, front row, fifth from left to right. Indigenous Educators Network Encounter, IDEA Network. Cancun, Mexico

The Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA Network), and the democratic education movement of the region as a whole, lost a great teacher, philosopher and activist on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012 with the passing of José Damaso Ramos Bosmediano.

Professor Ramos was the Secretary General of the Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores de Educacion del Peru (SUTEP) on two occasions (1989-1992 and 1995-1997), which were particularly difficult times for the union under the neoliberal dictatorship of Alberto Fujimori. Later, as the International Secretary of SUTEP, he participated in the international meeting in Mexico in 1988 where the proposal to create the

IDEA/SEPA network first emerged. If memory serves us right, it was Jose himself who suggested the name for our network.

He was the main author of the IDEA network's base document: "**Alternative for Democratic Education in the Americas**", which was ratified at the founding congress in Quito, Ecuador, in October 1999.

Compañero José Ramos represented the Andean Region on the first international coordinating committee of the IDEA network between 1999 and 2001. Later, when he was no longer the national leader of SUTEP, he actively participated in the coordination of our Educational Research



Network (REI), where he contributed to the defense of public education across the hemisphere through his own writing, by collaborating with the regional research committee and as a member of the editorial committee of *Intercambio* magazine.

Jose had very clear political principles, but he was never sectarian, and while his participation in the political and pedagogical debates of the network was very lively, he was always willing to listen to others and to try and reach a dialectical consensus. He contributed greatly to the development of our perspective as an organization. All of us in the IDEA network will miss his knowledge, human warmth, commitment and international perspective.

Aside from his dedication to the continental fight for public and democratic education, Professor Ramos had a long history as a teacher, union leader, writer, philosopher and political activist in Peru. You will find some highlights of his biography below.

#### **JOSE "PEPE" RAMOS**

Professor Jose Ramos Bosmediano was born on July, 1942 in the riverside community of Pobre Alegre, in the Amazon province of Ucayali, Loreto, Peru. His mother was the only teacher at the village school where Jose first studied. Since

the Pobre Alegre school did not cover all of the elementary grades, he had to move to Contamano and live with relatives to finish his basic education.

However, because of his mother's economic difficulties, Jose had to drop out of school at age 12 and start working as a farm labourer on the Lisboa plantation. When he was 15 years old, he participated in his first strike where the workers were able to earn a salary increase in a short time.

By the time he was 17, he had saved enough money to apply to the National School of Requena, which had a boarding program for out-of-town students. Later, he moved to Yurimaguas to continue his high-school studies at the "Monseñor Atansia Juaregui Goiri" National School, where he earned the "Excellency Award" that granted him direct access to the National University of Trujillo, where he graduated as a philosophy and social science teacher. His thesis was on the pedagogical foundations of Paulo Freire.

Shortly after completing high school in 1964, he began teaching at his old Yurimaguas High School while attending university. He became one of the most outstanding teachers at the school.

When he graduated from university, he kept on working as a teacher and also emerged as a left-wing political leader and social organizer, especially with the teachers of the recently founded SUTEP (1972).

Pepe Ramos worked in the Libertad Region, at the "Victor Raul Haya de la Torre" school in El Porvenir. He contributed to the strengthening of Libertad SUTEP. Those were years of intense political and revolutionary activity in Peru.

Because of his work with SUTEP, Professor Ramos was imprisoned several times under different repressive governments, as well as losing several jobs arbitrarily. While he was in jail during the Fujimori dictatorship in the 1990s, he participated with other political prisoners in a hunger strike that lasted several weeks and left him with life-long health problems.

In 1992, during his first term as National Secretary General, he wrote the first SUTEP Educational Project.

Professor Jose Ramos wrote articles for the newspapers "La Voz" and "La Republica" in Lima. He was a tireless fighter against the Fujimori-Montesinos dictatorship for which he was persecuted, arrested and dragged into 18 trials "for crimes against the state".

His role as a national and international speaker and his political and union work allowed him to learn about the realities of many foreign countries, as well as to contribute to the theoretical understanding of the problems of our times. His articles on politics and education, which still circulate on the web, are widely known and respected.

Because of his prestige as a teacher and citizen committed to his time and to Peru, the teachers and parents of Yurimaguas named his high school after him, setting an example for present and future generations of the type of leaders needed for real transformation in the Americas.

To his wife Teresa Geldres and to the three children Jose was so proud of, we send them our deepest condolences for the loss of this great man.