

Inside: Cornel West on the L.A. Riots

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Women & Politics

*with Ruth Sidel, Christine Riddiough, Lisa Foley,
Loretta Williams & Saskia Sassen*



DSA Demands Reproductive Freedom

March For Women's Lives ♦ April 5, 1992 ♦ Washington, DC

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EDITORIAL

A RESPONSE TO L.A.

BY CORNEL WEST

The rebellion in Los Angeles has much more to it than the vicious attacks on people and property (although that is very real, especially for too many of our Korean brothers and sisters). It's not simply an expression of the voice of the people, the masses of blacks -- no, there's no such thing as one voice. Invoking the masses and claiming a unified expression, usually has managerial politics in the background. Rather, we must consider the broader political, cultural and economic transformations of the last twenty years.

The post-industrial city has been fundamentally transformed by the shift from manufacturing sector to service sector. The city is no longer a center that processes goods, rather it processes information; the de-industrialization that has occurred has led to the devastation of the industrial working class. Look at South-Central 30 years ago, there was significant manufacturing, significant numbers of black folk, especially black men, did have jobs. It's gone now.

This is a large structural, institutional process, characterized by declining productivity after 1973. Dur-

ing the economic boom that was characteristic from 1945 to 1973, there was a 3.3 percent increase in productivity every year. And from 1973 to 1991, we see not a recession but a slow-motion depression, a silent depression: 19.1 percent decline in inflation-adjusted real wages. That's 19 years of social slippage, downward mobility. It disproportionately affected the black industrial working class, no longer making \$26 to \$27 an hour; you're lucky to get a job, and if you get a job, you make \$6 to \$7 an hour.

There is now a silent depression, coupled with massive, unprecedented redistribution of wealth from working people to the wealthy people: Americans in the top 1 percent income bracket own 37 percent of the country's wealth, an increase from 31 percent in 1980.

As that redistribution of wealth upward took place, the public sphere was being underfunded, and public services undermined. By public sphere, I mean public education, public transportation, public infrastructure, the sewer system, highways, and subways. Public services have become increasingly associated with people of color. And it's very important for us to realize that suburbanization in the United States is the version of residential racial segregation -- with the result that suburbs can pay for good services while cities cannot. Simi Valley was created by federal policies that promoted a segregated suburbanization. A society

cannot sustain itself without a vibrant public sphere that benefits everyone.

The refusal of the populace to sustain that public sphere, i.e., pay taxes, is understandable because they are paying a greater share of those taxes, while corporations which paid 31 percent of all taxes prior to 1980, now pay 9 percent.

The transformations are also cultural. Post-modern culture is a culture that promotes narcissism, careerism, and privatism. It's a culture that is so suspicious of the public sphere, that it feels as if only the market can provide some conception of the good life. Stimulation is the basis of cultural life, like so much our TV and movies: stimulation, through foreplay and orgiastic intensity, as if

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DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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DSA Marches For Choice

Democratic Socialists

America



DSA Honorary
Chair Gloria
Steinem
speaks at
DSA's post-
march
reception.

Doug Wialick



Over 100 DSA'ers marched as a contingent in the April 5 March for Women's Lives in Washington DC. DSA'ers also participated in actions in Seattle and San Francisco -- demanding not only choice but reproductive freedom. DSA's presence at the DC march was highlighted by the appearance of DSA Honorary Chair Gloria Steinem at the DSA post-march reception. Steinem's remarks to the crowd of DSA marchers and friends was a little different from her speech at the rally a few minutes earlier. The feminist writer and women's rights organizer encouraged a democratic-socialist emphasis on reproductive rights, particularly stressing the concept of "bodily autonomy" -- an ideal and a right which she said perished for women under Soviet and Eastern European socialism.

Steinem, whose recent best-selling book *Revolution From Within* has been drawing long lines at her book-signings, was recently featured with *Backlash* author Susan Faludi on the cover of *Time* magazine. Although Steinem did stop to sign a few autographs, many among the DSA group were impressed that she spent most of her time organizing. After brief remarks, she invited dialogue with the audience and solicited

views on politics and social issues. To close, she called for announcements -- "What's going on? What are you doing?" "Anything you want to tell each other?" she asked. A discussion ensued about women as candidates and workers in electoral politics; the need for a broad women's health agenda in the pro-choice movement; and Ross Perot's rotten record on labor.

There was more to the April 5 weekend than the traditional DSA demonstration activities, i.e., more than making poster-board signs with socialist-feminist slogans, marching with the rose-and-fist contingent, and talking about politics with Gloria Steinem. Members who could stay an extra day were invited to participate in the first DSA Washington Lobby Day. Organized by Feminist Commission Chair Christine Riddiough, the Monday Lobby Day sent democratic socialists into the halls of Congress, pushing for passage of the Freedom of Choice Act, which would codify *Roe v. Wade*; arguing the merits of a single-payer health care system; and insisting that democracy demands DC statehood. DSA lobbyists joined hundreds of other pro-choice activists from across the country who also stayed in town to make visits on Capitol Hill.

--Lisa Foley

Women In Poverty

In Their Rhetoric of the "Middle Class," the Candidates Are Ignoring Issues of Race and Gender

BY RUTH SIDEL, PHD

This issue of *Democratic Left* on women and politics appears at a critical moment -- during a national election and during a time of severe recession when the economic hardship suffered by millions of people in the U.S. highlights the necessity of rethinking our social and economic priorities. One of the crucial issues largely ignored by virtually all of the candidates in this year of political attention to the "middle class" is the economic status of women and children.

It is important to note that while many women have moved into a wide variety of professional, managerial and entrepreneurial occupations in the U.S. during the last quarter century nonetheless a dual labor market continues to exist and the majority of women continue to work in low-paid, low-status jobs doing primarily clerical, service and sales work. Moreover, while women's wages, particularly those of young women, have risen in recent years, full-time, year-round female workers earn only about 70 percent of the earnings of comparable male workers. This gap is a central factor that keeps a vast number of women -- and their children -- in poverty in the U.S.

Rising Poverty Rates

In 1990, 13.5 percent of the U.S. population -- 33.6 million people -- was officially classified as poor -- that is, as living below even the unrealistically-low Federal poverty line. The number of poor people and the poverty rate have declined somewhat since 1983 when over 15 percent of all Americans lived below the poverty line, but the number and rate rose sharply in 1990. Between 1989 and the recession year of 1990, 2.1 million additional Americans, particularly children and the elderly, fell into poverty.

Moreover, the composition of poor families has changed significantly over the past thirty years. In 1959, 23 percent of all poor families were headed by women; by 1989 that figure had risen to 51.7 percent. Today nearly 40 percent of the U.S. poor are children and over half are members of female-headed families.

The situation of families headed by African-American and Latina women is even more bleak. They continue to be at greatest risk of poverty. Among poor black families in 1989, nearly three-quarters, 73.4 percent, were headed by women with no husband present; among poor families of Latino origin, nearly half, 46.8 percent, were headed by women.

Life Chances

In comparing the poverty rate of married-couple families with that of female-headed families, the significant differences in economic status and therefore in life chances become clear. Among white married-couple families, the poverty rate in 1989 was 5 percent; among white female-headed households, the poverty rate was five times higher, or 25.4 percent. While the same differentials are apparent among black families and among families of Latino origin, these groups suffer from the additional burden of significantly higher poverty rates for all households. Among black families, for example, 11.8 percent of married-couple families lived below the poverty line in 1989, while 46.5 percent, nearly half of female-headed families, lived in poverty. The statistics for Latino families are equally disturbing: 16.2 percent of married-couple families lived in poverty, compared to 47.5 percent of female-headed families.

The poverty rate for children continues, as it has since 1975, to be higher than that of any other

age group. In 1990 the poverty rate for all children under eighteen was 20.6 percent. In other words, over thirteen million -- one out of every five American children -- lived below the poverty line. In 1989 14.2 percent of white children, 34.9 percent of Hispanic children, and 43 percent of black children lived in poverty. Among children under the age of six, over five million, of 22.5 percent, were officially poor.

Stereotyping the Poor

Since the mid-1980s several critical, often life-threatening problems that particularly afflict women and children have added to the extraordinary toll that poverty takes on their health and well-being: The crack epidemic with its alarming number of "crack babies" and the subsequent prosecution of poor, usually African-American women for the "prenatal crime" of delivering drugs to the fetus; the dramatic escalation of violence on the streets of our cities with people of color all-too-often the victims; the ubiquity of homelessness with a significant percentage of homeless families headed by women; and the continuing existence of hunger, particularly among female-headed families.

But perhaps the most disturbing phenome-

non of the early 1990s is the denigration of the poor and the blatant perpetuation of sexist and racist stereotypes. To equate people living in poverty, particularly recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), with the "underclass" is to brand them unfit, unmotivated, unwilling or unable to do their part to achieve their piece of the American Dream. In reality, such an "underclass" comprises but a small segment of the poor. During 1989 in nearly half -- 48.9 percent -- of all poor families at least one member worked full-time or part-time, and in 16.2 percent of poor families at least one member worked full-time year-round. Even among female-headed families, in which all of the familial responsibilities rest on the single parent, 41.6 percent of the householders worked in 1989 and 8.8 percent worked full-time year-round. Popular perception fueled by demagogic leaders also erroneously labels the majority of the poor as people of color and thus, the disparaging of "welfare mothers" often becomes coded language for racism. In fact, two-thirds of all Americans living below the poverty line are white.

Consequently, in these difficult economic times hostility toward the poor has led in many

Women in poverty face the double burden of pulling themselves and their children out of poverty. These women and their children are living in shelters.



Robert Four/Impact Visuals



George Cohen/Impact Visuals



This woman and her child are living in a shelter for the homeless.

states to particularly punitive cut-backs of AFDC. In 1991 AFDC benefits were reduced more than in any year since 1981. Nine states cut basic benefits below previous levels and several states attempted to tie benefits to approved social behavior. For example, New Jersey recently enacted a far-reaching if short-sighted piece of social policy. The law refuses money to support any additional child born to a mother already receiving welfare. Any such child will therefore have to share the food of the other children, share the clothing grant of other family members and reduce even further the family's standard of living.

What's Needed: A Family Policy

The question of how to provide a decent standard of living for America's poor families remains a topic of debate. A family policy with

benefits for all, regardless of income, improves the chances of appropriate legislation passing and reduces the likelihood of both the cutback of benefits and stigma to the recipients. Family policies similar to the one described here are in place in virtually every industrialized country with the exception of the United States.

To arrest the steadily widening gap between rich and poor and to provide a genuine safety net for women and children such entitlements should include comprehensive, accessible, affordable maternal and child health care within a comprehensive health care system for all Americans; paid parental leave at the time of the birth or adoption of a child; first-rate, widely accessible and affordable child care and after-school care; stronger child support legislation; and a higher minimum wage for all workers. Moreover, the U.S. should seriously consider children's allowances for all families regardless of income.

Targeted Programs

But the policies necessary for middle-class families will not alone be sufficient to help poor women and children overcome the pernicious effects of poverty. Besides universal entitlements, targeted programs for poor families are urgently needed. These include housing subsidies and the construction and rehabilitation of low-income housing; the expansion of food stamp assistance and increased funding for WIC (the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children); and finally, real welfare reform. Every state should pay benefits that will bring families at least up to the poverty line and should offer training programs and employment counseling to those recipients who are able and choose to take advantage of them.

Above all, we must recognize that life in the U.S. is too complex for families to go it alone. We must move toward greater equality and redistribute our resources more equitably in order to improve the health status of American women and their children. We must continue to organize across class, race, gender, and age lines to achieve these goals. Only through recognizing our common needs and interdependence, and by working together, can we hope to bring about these urgently needed political, economic, and social reforms. DI

Ruth Sidel, PhD, is Professor of Sociology at Hunter College and author of Women and Children Last: The Plight of Poor Women in Affluent America and On Her Own: Growing Up in the Shadow of the American Dream.

Revolution in Illinois

Carol Moseley Braun Captured the Democratic Nomination for Senate. . .

And Captured Our Imagination.



Loren Santow/Impact Visuals

Carol Moseley Braun, Democratic nominee for Senate in Illinois, greets a supporter on Chicago's South Side.

BY CHRISTINE R. RIDDIOUGH

In October 1991 millions of Americans were riveted to their radios and TVs by the U.S. Senate confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas. Millions of American women were outraged by the faces of fourteen and later ninety-six white men -- the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and the U.S. Senate, which includes only two women and two men of color -- judging an African American woman, Anita Hill. You could see it in women's faces and hear it in their voices -- men, especially the Senate, just "didn't understand" -- they didn't understand sexual harassment and they didn't understand powerlessness.

Around the country women talked with one another and called women's organizations to find out what could be done to change the face

of power. In Illinois thousands of women called Chicago NOW. That state's senior Senator, Alan Dixon, had outraged them by his vote to confirm Supreme Court nominee, now justice, Clarence Thomas. Dixon, 'Al the Pal' to his Illinois and Senate cronies, had never lost an election in forty-three years in Illinois politics and was considered unbeatable until his vote for Thomas. Even then political 'experts' predicted that Dixon would be returned to the Senate, but he reckoned without thousands of Illinois women and without Carol Moseley Braun.

After the Thomas vote and in the face of a potential Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, Sue Purrington, director of Chicago NOW and DSA member, and other women leaders approached Braun about a run for the

Senate. Braun was Recorder of Deeds for Cook County and had been a state legislator for years before that. And on March 17, 1992 Braun became the first African American woman nominated for the Senate by a major U.S. political party. Swept forward with her were dozens of other women running for the state legislature, county boards and judgeships.

Braun received 38 percent of the statewide vote compared to 35 percent for Dixon and 27

tional sources as independent and GOP women and from increased voter registration in the African American community, to put her over the top.

Purrington believes that the current excitement over Braun's candidacy has to be -- and can be -- translated into volunteers and votes. Most Democratic leaders, including Dixon, the state's junior senator, Paul Simon, and Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago, have already said that they will campaign for her.

Observers in Illinois believe that her strong support among women will be repeated in November. Purrington has said she's found "women are eager to vote for her. In DuPage County [outside Chicago] GOP women crossed over and independent women voted in the Democratic primary for the first time. They had to wait in long lines to vote Democratic, but they did it." Others suggest that having taken the first step of voting Democratic in the primary, the next step -- voting for Braun in November -- will be easier for many independent and Republican women.

And Purrington adds that, "While the initial impetus for Carol's candidacy was a negative reaction to Dixon, when voters got to know her, their response was positive. Voters are now for Carol Moseley Braun, because they believe she will be a change for the good." And another person close to the campaign said, "The best thing Carol's got going for her is how wonderful she is." Braun has been described as both very approachable and charismatic. Voters said over and over that they felt that Braun was someone who would really listen to them. That's a good part of her appeal -- she strikes voters, especially women and African American voters, as intelligent, articulate, and sensitive, as someone who really does understand and who really will do something about their problems and concerns.

Purrington worked as Braun's campaign manager in an early race for the Illinois House and later served as her legislative aide. She describes Braun as a coalition-builder, someone who was able to work with diverse groups in Springfield, the state capital, and at home. Some of her support is based in the same communities and organizations as that of the late Chicago Mayor Harold Washington who was able to bring together both many in the African American community who had been at odds and others from Chicago's diverse Latino, Asian American and white ethnic communities. Former Mayor Eugene Sawyer and others in the African American community are working to pull that community together for Braun -- a

An important task of the campaign will be registering African American voters.

percent for Al Hofield, a millionaire candidate who had spent his own money for a media blitz attacking Dixon. Braun got more than half of the votes in Chicago and 40 percent in the six-county suburban area surrounding the city. Dixon carried his historical downstate base, although Braun picked up support in several downstate areas including college town Champaign.

Exit polls showed Braun receiving 43 percent of women's votes statewide compared to 31 percent for Dixon, while she received 34 percent (compared to Dixon's 38 percent) of men's votes. In the metropolitan Chicago area and among students, Braun received close to 60 percent of women's votes. This is perhaps the most dramatic example ever of the gender gap. Braun also received overwhelming majorities in the African American community.

Braun's campaign has now entered a new phase. She faces a little-known, conservative Republican, Richard Williamson, in November. The GOP had expected to be running against Dixon and had fielded Williamson assuming he would lose. Now it's expected that they will pour money into the race. And Illinois, always an important swing state, will be a focus of Presidential efforts by both parties.

Purrington says that "Braun has a good chance in November, but people shouldn't assume that she'll win. It's going to take work, especially in the face of GOP targeting and money."

Others note that with a base of about 46 percent Democratic votes in Illinois, Braun only needs another 5 percent, from such non-tradi-

community which had splintered after Washington's death. An important task of the campaign will be registering African American voters. Only 279,000 African Americans are currently registered in Illinois compared to 390,000 in 1988, a drop of 28 percent. Black voters had been 26 percent of the Illinois electorate in 1988, but now constitute only 19 percent. Revitalizing that electoral bloc will be central to Braun's efforts.

Braun's campaign organization represents the diversity of Illinois as well. Her campaign manager is Kgosì Matthews and her political director is Heather Booth. Matthews has been a part of the Rainbow Coalition while Booth was a founder of both Citizen Action and the Coalition for Democratic Values.

"Diversity is central to the campaign," says Purrington. "Groups are working together for Carol who never have worked together before, especially groups of women. Asian women from the Korean, Filipino and Chinese communities are talking to Latinas from the Mexican and Puerto Rican communities about how to bridge the gaps within and between their communities."

Many people, including Purrington, have been working for years to build connections among Chicago's racially and ethnically divided neighborhoods. Chicago is often described as one of the most segregated cities in the U.S. Purrington sees the Braun campaign as the catalyst for change. "The campaign has so much potential to bring the city and state together and so much potential to build a force for women. This city has kept people apart for so long. I've worked for twenty-five years to see this happen. Now I'm seeing it and I love it."

Purrington and others believe that women's groups and progressives need to make the Braun campaign their highest priority this election year. NOW endorsed her early on and leaders like Harriet Woods of the National Women's Political Caucus and Gloria Steinem came out early

for her. And more and more people are joining the ranks of Braun supporters. Last Monday the campaign received 100,000 buttons -- by Tuesday they were gone.

Braun as Senator will be a progressive voice in the highest legislative body in the nation. She'll speak out for reproductive freedom and women's rights, for a high priority agenda for civil rights and gay and lesbian rights, for social justice and for a national health program. As one Chicago leader said there are a few things that really matter right now, that signal an historic shift in American politics to either renew the democratic spirit or to further destroy it. The pro-choice movement is one and action for national health is another. The Braun campaign both symbolically and in its political agenda provides the stage for such a shift. Over the next few months it will become not just a campaign, but a crusade for women and for progressives from all over the United States, as it already has for those in Illinois. **DL**

Christine Riddiough is a DSA Vice Chair and chair of the DSA Feminist Commission.

Want to help Carol Moseley Braun become Illinois' next Senator. Send your checks, made out to Braun for Senate, to the DSA Feminist Commission, 5123 Fifth St NW, Washington, DC 20011-4040. To find out how you can do more, call us at (202) 829-6155.

Carol Moseley Braun speaks to a crowd of supporters on election night.



Loren Santow/Impact Visuals

Fighting For Our Lives

BY LISA FOLEY

The March for Women's lives in Washington, DC on April 5 was reportedly one of the largest demonstrations in history, with the U.S. Park Service estimating a crowd of half a million and the National Organization for Women (NOW) claiming a million. It is unfortunate that the political credit due the women's movement for a successful pro-choice mobilization will no doubt be spent in the short term on the 1992 national elections -- perhaps most, ironically, in the arena of Republican Party politics. For the long term, progressives face an increasingly difficult challenge for maintaining, let alone advancing, reproductive freedom in the United States.

It remains to be seen whether so-called Republicans for Choice and other pro-choice conservatives, suddenly willing to be counted, are a serious threat to the Republican Party, either as cross-over voters or party activists capable of influencing the Republican platform. It is perhaps telling that abortion is not an issue in the highly-visible Illinois Senate race, where Republican Rich Williamson is running against Democratic candidate Carol Moseley Braun, an African-American woman. Unlike many national and local elections in which women have been running, Braun's candidacy did not arise in the context of choice. Rather, Braun's upset of Democratic incumbent Alan Dixon sprang directly from the Democrats' mishandling of the Clarence Thomas Supreme Court nomination and the Anita Hill hearings. Nonetheless, opponent Williamson wasted little time after the primary in making it clear to the Republican Party

that he was not interested in making abortion an issue in his campaign against Braun. The White House gave Williamson its blessing.

On the other hand, Bush appears not to be running scared, even if other Republicans are visibly backing away from choice polemics. For instance, Bush's recent revision of the "gag-rule" was viewed as a gesture which cost him nothing politically. As originally drafted and upheld by the Supreme Court last term, the gag rule prevented workers at federally-funded clinics from counseling or distributing any information to clients about abortion. The newer version of the regulation, offered as a compromise by the Bush administration, gags all clinic workers except physicians. Among health care providers, physicians have the most powerful lobbies, but they also have the least contact, as counselors, with clients at family planning clinics.

Another sign came on the day after the march, when Bush's Justice Department filed its brief in connection with *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, the key abortion case now pending before the Supreme Court. Pennsylvania's abortion laws are the most restrictive yet -- outside of a complete ban on abortion -- including a twenty-four-hour waiting period and requirement of spousal notification. In its brief in support of the Pennsylvania laws, the administration officially renewed its call for an outright overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.

And so despite the potential strength of large numbers of marchers and voters, the focus remains on the nine lifetime appointed members of the Supreme Court. Many abortion-rights organizers believe that *Roe v. Wade* is closer to being overturned by the Supreme Court this year than it was in 1989, on the even of the retrogressive *Webster* decision upholding restrictive abortion laws in Missouri. Weary pro-choice Court-watchers have as little hope for a favorable ruling in *Bray v. Alexandria Women's Health Center*, which is also expected to be decided this term. The *Bray* case tests federal authority to prevent or punish clinic blockades by Operation Rescue and similar extremist anti-choice groups. So far, these groups have had little to fear from local or federal authorities. In fact, there was a clinic attack in the Washington area on the weekend of the March.

It is striking how little the abortion debate has moved in the three years since *Webster*. Media coverage of this year's mobilization is one indication. News editors continue to feel obligated to present "both sides" of the issue as

if public opinion on choice is evenly divided. For example, the Washington, DC local news, across the channels, gave about equal footage on April 5 to the small band of anti-choice protesters staging a counter-demonstration. The real numbers, as anyone knows who was there, were about three-quarters of a million pro-choice to about 200 anti-choice demonstrators.

Worst of all, the pro-choice agenda is still represented almost everywhere as narrowly pro-abortion, with virtually no public airing of women's concerns around issues of access to reproductive health services, birth control and education. One exception is the *New York Times* cover story on Sunday, March 15. There it was reported that up to 20 percent of women who would choose abortion are kept from that option by lack of resources, scarce providers and age restrictions. A first-trimester abortion costs between \$200 and \$300, but only thirteen states provide Medicaid assistance to women choosing abortion. Services are less and less readily available. The *Times* reported that 83 percent of U.S. counties lack clinics or hospitals that perform abortion. Every year, fewer health professionals receive formal training in abortion procedures, the *Times* article also reported.

In light of these grim facts, feminists and pro-choice activists have turned their attention to strategies for expanding access to abortion. "Underground Railroad"-type transportation networks are already forming in underserved areas and in regions where abortion is expected to be banned if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned. Other groups are talking seriously about safe civil disobedience, i.e., provision of abortion services in spite of restrictive legislation or outright criminalization.

For women who remember the state of reproductive rights prior to 1973 when *Roe v. Wade* was decided, having to create methods of safe but illegal self-help is indeed "going back." The real and pressing problem of preserving access to abortion will of course draw resources and energy away from a broader reproductive rights agenda addressing contraception,



Doug Veitch

women's health promotion, sterilization abuse and children's rights.

Although these issues are clearly linked with issues of race and class as well as gender, it is less clear how to organize effectively for reproductive rights along with a general program for social and economic justice. It is a good sign that some of the national pro-choice groups and their local affiliates are increasingly vocal about the impact of the nation's health care crisis on women, and are getting involved with national health care reform initiatives. DSA has also been attempting to link its organizing strategy for national health care with strategies for expanding reproductive rights. As health care financing reform is debated in state and national policy arenas, groups like DSA could play a useful role by monitoring and responding to the treatment of reproductive health issues in emerging legislative proposals. At the same time, women's health activists have an interest in pushing the health care reform movement beyond the debate around financing, and toward a more comprehensive agenda for public health promotion, including reproductive wellness and health education. **DL**

Lisa Foley is a member of the steering committee of the DSA DC/Md/No Va local; chair of the reproductive freedom committee of the NPC; and vice chair of the Feminist Commission.

For more information, contact the Feminist Commission at 5123 Fifth St., NW, Washington DC 20011.

The March For Women's Lives was reportedly one of the largest demonstrations in U.S. history. Pictured here is the first delegation.

ON THE LEFT



by Harry Fleischman

ALASKA

Juneau DSA 'ers met to discuss a statewide strategy for single-payer health care reform and to review current health care legislation in Alaska.

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles DSA has joined the Orange County Workers for Justice and Democracy, a coalition of labor, community and religious groups fighting for workers right to organize unions. LA DSA'ers distributed 1,500 copies of the DSA pamphlet "Challenging the Democrats" by Barbara Ehrenreich and Harold Meyerson to delegates at the California Democratic Convention.

Westside LA DSA held a successful brunch meeting on "The '92 Elections and the Left."

"The Canadian National Health System as a Model for the United States" was the topic of a forum co-sponsored by Valley DSA and the Democratic Party of the San Fernando Valley. Steve Tarzynski, MD, member of the DSA National Political Committee, argued for a Canadian-style single-payer system. José Moldonado was the featured speaker at Valley DSA's monthly meeting. He spoke about the tragic aftermath of Christopher Columbus. Valley DSA'ers are helping the fight against Governor Pete Wilson's war against welfare by registering welfare recipients to vote.

Los Angeles DSA, on February 23, celebrated DSA'er Ben

Dobbs' 80th birthday and his struggle for democratic socialism and a better life for all Americans.

San Diego DSA discussed strategies for the California primary at their monthly membership meeting. DSA'ers there are participating in the San Diego Organizing Project, a voter registration drive in low-income neighborhoods.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DC/MD/NoVA DSA held a sign-making party for the April 5 March for Women's Lives and hosted a strategy session of the DSA Reproductive Freedom Committee. The local organized a contingent for the Hands Around the Capitol rally for DC statehood. At the April women's brunch, there was a discussion of religion and feminism.

KENTUCKY

Central Kentucky DSA sponsored a presentation by Julie Burns of Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. She gave a run down of bills passed by the Kentucky legislature during the past year. Kentucky DSA'ers accompanied naturalist and DSA member Sue Masek on a nature walk in April. DSA'ers there also participated in a women's speakout to commemorate International Women's Day

MASSACHUSETTS

"Weld's War on Working People" was the title of a forum sponsored by Boston DSA on Massachusetts governor William Weld's policies. The Boston DSA Religion and Socialism Commission's March forum featured a discussion of Canadian labor politics with Dr. Elaine Bernard, DSA member, director of the Harvard Trade Union Program, and past president of the British Columbia New Democratic Party. The local's socialist school is back in

session with classes on democratic socialism and the Canadian health care system.

PENNSYLVANIA

Reading-Berks DSA presented their Maurer-Stump award to James Chapin, DSA Vice Chair. Chapin is the chair of World Hunger Year on serves on DSA's National Interim Committee. Also honored was Thomas Paine Cronin.

Feminist singer-songwriter Kristen Lems performed a benefit concert for Pittsburgh DSA and its newsletter, the *Allegheny Socialist*. The evening was MCed by singer and DSA'er Anne Feeney. The concert, celebrating International Women's Day, was a success.

Philadelphia DSA organized a discussion of the urban fiscal crisis with Mark Levinson, member of the DSA National Political Committee and chief economist for DC 37 AFSCME in New York City. The local also sponsored a day of events with DSA Honorary Chair Cornel West of Princeton University's Afro-American Studies Department. West spoke at Temple University, met with student organizers there, and spoke at a general meeting after meeting with Philadelphia DSA organizers.

Villanova University DSA centered their work this semester on national health care and reproductive freedom. Student organizers their are planning counter demonstrations to the 500th Anniversary of Columbus for next semester.

WASHINGTON

Seattle DSA sponsored a series of workshops on respecting diversity within the organization. The workshops focused on the experiences of people of color, women, and gays and lesbians, and discussed ways of combatting sexism, racism and homophobia.

On The Road for Socialism

A DSA Organizer's Report

BY MICHAEL LIGHTY

It's a long-standing tradition among socialist staff to hit the road and meet with local activists. I had put off doing a local tour for too long, so with much anticipation I ventured forth.

Health care has been instrumental in maintaining and increasing the level of activity by our locals. The more health care work a local does, the stronger it is. Every local I visited is either doing on-going health care organizing, or my visit served as a catalyst to starting a health care committee, to getting involved in state single-payer organizing, or to hooking into national activity such as Jobs With Justice. Last year, the Gulf War was the main focus of most locals I visited. The tour enabled me to motivate and move forward our key political projects: health care, challenging the Democrats, reproductive freedom—the April 5th march, and the Mayors' march.

◆ *Washington, DC*

My first stop was Washington, D.C., which provided a reference point for the rest of the tour, since mentioning what Congress and the government in Washington think always generates a laugh. This visit was a whirlwind of individual meetings punctuated by a small general meeting at the Machinists building. It began with an appearance on Dorothy Healey's radio show, where Dorothy inspired me a gain with her energy and insight. We talked about "Challenging the Democrats," health care and international issues with a very so-

phisticated radio audience.

About ten people met with me for dinner and were joined by a couple more at a general meeting. Like other locals I visited I was impressed with the level of seriousness people brought to their involvement in DSA. We talked about DSA's projects and about some plans to involve young people who come to Washington for the summer for internships.

**Lexington
DSA'ers have
been the prime
movers in getting
an all-volunteer
community
coffeehouse
started.**

◆ *St. Louis*

My visit began with an informal dinner followed by a terrific social event/local fundraiser with bluegrass fiddling and much good cheer among thirty-five or so folks, including some non-members and students. Afterward I taped a cable public access show about democratic socialism and our challenging the Democrats project. The next morning I rolled out of bed and onto the airwaves, with Roy and Otis on St. Patrick's Day. Roy asks me what DSA would do if we could run amok (little

does he know!). DSA'er Bill Caspary teaches a smart and politically active group of students in a peace studies class who had me on the run about international Keynesianism and the global environment. My interview on the Fox affiliate's public affairs show was much friendlier, if less exciting. The local does weekly petitioning for national health care and is keeping the pressure on Majority Leader Dick Gephardt. They also have regular general meetings which include sumptuous sweet roles by the local's new co-chair Pat Grace. The local's current co-chairs, Julie Ford and Dave Neibert, who were wonderful hosts and terrific organizers, are moving to southern Ohio, where we expect them to continue their great work for DSA. Good luck Dave and Julie!

◆ *Lexington*

At a talk on health care, the local NBC affiliate covered it and quoted me on TV saying that the private, for-profit free market health care system cannot meet people's needs. The talk was sponsored by the Central Kentucky Democratic Socialists of America, showing how such a visit can raise the local's profile. The local co-chair, Jim Ryder, arranged a twenty minute interview on Eastern Kentucky public radio about national health care. A candidate for state representative running on health care and a liberal member of the newly formed governor's commission on health care reform participation in the health care discussion. The meet-

ing was a catalyst for the local's health care work. Lexington DSA members have been the prime movers in getting an all volunteer community coffeehouse started -- the New Morning Coffeehouse, the proceeds from which will be used to fund progressive organizing efforts in Lexington -- a great idea that should be copied. At a potluck and party on my last evening, members and

The Notre Dame chapter has done excellent work on lesbian/gay rights, the International Paper boycott and health care.

friends gathered for a great discussion on community organizing and DSA's perspectives on key national issues including reproductive freedom and the April 5th march AN Kentucky basketball).

◆ **Columbus, Ohio**

The local's co-chair, Bob Fittrakis, was mulling a run for Congress and has since jumped in the race for the Democratic nomination. His opponent is a LaRouchite! The local organized a public meeting at an art gallery that was showing a powerful exhibit of political poster art. The posters made a great backdrop for a cable public access show, "From the Democratic Left," hosted by Fittrakis, which taped my talk. The local is organizing opposition to the "welfare reform" effort which is cutting back general assistance benefits in Ohio to \$100 per month per family.

◆ **Cleveland**

After navigating through a snowy freeway, and getting a bit lost

on the snow covered streets (remember this is the end of March in the midwest, I was warned) I arrived at a potluck hosted by Mark and Adina Davidson. My talk about the '92 elections, health care reform, reproductive freedom, and what DSA nationally is doing, in particular the April 5th and May 16th marches, was given a very pleasant background by the roaring fire (or was that the Davidson's young son?). The local has good ties with local labor folks, some of whom I met. Local DSA'er Joe Ventura is managing the campaign for Congress of Frank Valente, the Steelworkers District leader. Meanwhile, former DSA Youth Section chair Terri Burgess is running the campaign of C.J. Prentiss for State Assembly. I also met with the local Sane/Freeze office, staffed by a couple of DSA'ers.

◆ **Detroit**

The local had not met for over a year, and though the turnout was small -- ten people -- it was the catalyst for a new health care committee that will include some UAW staff and retirees. I gave a short rap on health care and the '92 elections, and talked about free trade vs. fair trade. A youth section chapter at Wayne State may also get organized. Meanwhile, Roger Robinson, longtime DSA'er, fresh off Jerry Brown's strong showing in Michigan, was getting the Brown campaign jump started in New York.

Notre Dame

I spoke to forty people, mostly students, about lesbian and gay politics and the limitations of a purely identity politics. A reporter for the student newspaper covered it, although I'm not sure she knew what to make of the event. The Youth Section chapter there has done excellent work on lesbian/gay rights, the International Paper boycott and is now moving onto health care organizing. The student lesbian and gay associa-

tion is waging a strong campaign for recognition, an inspiring if very difficult fight.

◆ **Seattle**

Phil Bereano, a local DSAer and experienced lesbian and gay activist, hosted a small gathering of local, mostly non-DSA lesbian/gay activists for informal discussion of AIDS, national health care, and other issues. DSA'er Craig Salins is coordinating the local's health care work and put together a strategy session with local health care organizers. It was a fascinating and productive strategy discussion of initiative vs. legislative, national vs. state, a tour to British Columbia health care facilities, and possible elected officials to target. My mother and my high school principal showed at a Saturday afternoon general meeting! That was the most nervous I got during the entire tour.

LA DSA is helping to organize an African American-Latino unity event -- now more urgent than ever.

◆ **Sacramento**

My visit began with a small discussion of the '92 elections at California State University attended by a half-dozen faculty and staff in DSA or close to us, hosted by DSA local chair and NPC member Duane Campbell. I met with a state senator to talk about health care reform and push him toward single-payer reform which he has opposed. At a well-attended meeting of a newly forming health care coalition, we discussed strategy, including a state initiative and elec-

toral targeting. The local is forming a new health care working committee. Four students from UC Davis came to my talk -- they have a few more members and meet regularly and are organizing against tuition increases and for national health care.

◆ Los Angeles

Still glowing after his 80th birthday celebration, Ben Dobbs and his wife Ada hosted me for a visit to a simmering pre-riot LA. The local executive committee, which was preparing for the California State Democratic Party convention. They have a wonderful new organizer, Trish Bailey. In addition to developing their local health care project, they publish a regular newsletter and are reviving branch meetings. They are helping to organize an African American-Latino unity event -- now more urgent than ever -- and are doing a joint event with Malibu NOW. They organized a reception at the state Democratic Party convention attended by about thirty delegates. Their priority is to fundraise to keep their staff. They have also been involved in various left unity/socialist dialogue efforts, which we discussed. The health care organizing in California is a bellwether for the country as DSA, Health Access, Neighbor to Neighbor and unions and senior groups, among others, begin to build a grassroots effort that can lead to a state single-payer initiative in 1994 and/or to pressure on federal officials.

◆ San Diego

NPC member and local activist Virginia Franco took me to meet with the priest at an extraordinary multicultural catholic church, Christ the King, in East San Diego that is part of the San Diego Organizing Project, a community empowerment effort that DSAers participate in, primarily doing voter registration. At a general meeting, we talked about the local endorsements of Democratic con-

gressional candidates, what DSA national is doing, the health care organizing and the possibility of San Diego raising money to support an organizer. They set-up a health care committee and will work for two candidates running for the 50th congressional district seat. Not surprisingly, economic conversion is desperately needed among the defense-dependent industries in San Diego, and a local Machinist BA I met with talked about the need for concrete programs for conversion.

It is my pleasure to report that socialists and socialist organizing are surviving and thriving across the country.

◆ Marin

I had the pleasure of being there on election night when the former chair of the local, John Leonard, was elected to the Mill Valley city council. They have regular general meetings, did some work on Leonard's campaign, and set-up a mission/vision study group while I was there. We spoke about the '92 election, and what DSA is doing nationally. I urged them to set-up a health care committee, but that's down the road.

◆ San Francisco

It was old home week in the Bay Area. And guess what? I spoke about a socialist perspective on health care at a large public forum that the new northern California organizer, longtime DSA'er, Mike Pincus, organized with *CrossRoads* magazine and the

Committees of Correspondence. The local is continuing their media project and helping a Jobs with Justice health care coalition. They are also setting up an electoral committee. They have done a survey of Bay Area members. Their chief concern is raising money to keep on the organizer. Like many locals, San Francisco is recruiting new cadre. And the weather was fantastic!

◆ Bay Area

On KPFA, the Pacifica station, I was asked to be the optimist about the U.S. labor movement. For you non-believers, I have a tape of the programs -- it can be done!

At a new members meeting they set-up a program to revive the East Bay local. They had not met as a local for about a year but they have now formed a new health care committee, with some new members playing key roles.

◆ Stanford

At my alma mater, I gave an informal talk to twenty people, including faculty, staff, grad students, undergrads and local DSAers, on being an organizer. I spoke about my personal history and found some students who are following a similar path, (one who lived in my frosh dorm room -- ten years later). DSAers are meeting regularly and are a part of the Socialist Club at Stanford, and have been doing organizing around health care and reproductive freedom.

It is my pleasure to report that socialists and socialist organizing are surviving and thriving across the country. I'm very thankful for the chance to finally get on the road for socialism. If I missed your town, don't worry, I'm going back out in the fall. . . and after that, too.

Michael Lighty is DSA's National Director and Managing Editor of Democratic Left.

DSAAction

Resources

- ◆ The following new items are available from the DSA National Office, 15 Dutch Street, #500, New York, NY 10038.
- Reproductive Freedom Lobby Kit, prepared by the Feminist Commission. Contains lobbying hints, talking points, and legislation updates. Comprehensive and essential. \$5
- The latest issue of Our Struggle/Nuestra Lucha, newsletter of the African American, Latino, and Anti-Racism Commissions. Single issue: free. Bulk copies: 100 for \$10.
- "Abortion Rights Are Not Enough" literature piece. Single copy: free. Bulk copies: 100 for \$10.
- "Progressive Platform, Rodney King Resolution" literature piece, essential for urban crisis organizing. Single copy: free. Bulk copies: 100 for \$10.
- "Democratic Vistas," a statement for the democratic left, signed by Irving Howe, Susan Sontag, Cornel West, Ed Asner, Alice Kessler-Harris, Michael Walzer, and Frances Fox Piven, among many others. \$1
- Special Labor issue of Dissent featuring George Packer and Alice Kessler-Harris, \$6.
- Two Mission/Vision issue of Socialist Forum: Fall 1991 and Spring 1992. Terrific summer reading, with Cornel West, Todd Gitlin, Joanne Barkan and David Montgomery. \$5 each

1992 NATIONAL BOARD

Building DSA . . . From the Ground Up!

Electoral Action Strategizing ■ Local Organizing ■ Meetings of the African American, Feminist, Latino, Anti-Racism & other Commissions ■ Health Care Action Training ■ Urban Crisis & Multi-Racial Organizing Workshop ■ Discussion of DSA's Mission and Vision ■ Reproductive Freedom Activism ■ Swimming, Softball, Socializing & Relaxation ■ Don't Miss It!

June 12-14 ■ Washington, DC
Gallaudet University ■ Northwest Campus

Media Reform

◆ A DSA media task force has been established to design and implement a democratic media model entailing deep systemic changes.

While the media are being widely and expertly critiqued, proposals to expand alternative media are being pursued, and new forms of media are being created, media activists and democratic socialists have largely overlooked the need for a systemic approach to restructuring the media to better serve democracy.

So far the project has attracted the interest of both DSA'ers and non-DSA'ers alike. Some are active in related efforts with other organizations or in academia. Hopefully this will lead towards a collaboration. The task force will meet at the National Board in Washington DC in June. The work needs researchers, writers, fundraisers, organizers, spokespeople, legislative activists, media critics, journalists, and of course, media activists and consumers. If you are interested contact Janet Kobren, 121 Day Street, San Francisco, CA 94131 (415) 282-2078.

REGISTRATION

NAME _____

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Registration Fee:

\$30 full conference

Room & Board Fees:

\$140 double occupancy, 3 nights, 9 meals (Thursday-Sunday)

\$200 single occupancy, 3 nights, 9 meals (Thursday-Sunday)

Roommate: _____

\$52 food only, 9 meals (Thur-Sun)

\$20 food only, 1 day, 3 meals,
circle day(s): F Sat Sun

For further information, call
(212) 962-0390. Return to DSA,
15 Dutch St. #500, NY, NY 10038.

DSA Condemns LA Police Verdict

DSA condemns the jury verdict in the Rodney King assault trial. Racism and police brutality have no place in a democratic society. While the arson, looting and loss of life are inexcusable, they are a result of hopelessness and rage generated by centuries of oppression and class exploitation, heightened by reactionary policies, deindustrialization, increasing poverty, and the moral tone characterizing the Reagan/Bush regimes. Urban violence and social disintegration are not the result of government efforts to end poverty, but rather are a result of a reversal of that federal commitment over the last twelve years. We support community control and accountability of police. Moreover, DSA renews its commitment to reverse the political climate of the last twelve years and to work for a society based on freedom from exploitation, justice for all, self-determination, and caring for each other.

Passed unanimously by the DSA National Political Committee

West *continued from page 2*

that's the only way to stay alive, feel alive.

But what happens in a culture in which the desire for stimulation produces addicted personalities, in which getting over and getting off, rather than getting better and making connections, holds sway? The invasion of market activity, especially commodity fetishism, has transformed communities: you got to have it, got to have it. It cuts across every nook and cranny in this society. The result is the erosion of the nurturing system for children. I'm not just talking about the one in five American children who live in poverty right now, I'm not just talking about the one in two black and brown children who live in poverty, I'm talking about the state of their souls and their minds and their hearts. We as an Americans are raising a generation of young brothers and sisters who are socially deracinated and culturally deluded. They have very few effective ways that give them love, care, concern, teach them to be concerned with others, teach them to have a whole-hearted need rather than an impoverished sense of being alive. And that's true across the board, not just in South Central Los Angeles, but also true out in Simi Valley too -- check those kids out. American young people's suicide rates have doubled, and then tripled over the last 20 years.

Last but not least is post-modern politics, the political equivalent of a market culture. Our country produces political leaders that lack any kind of broad moral or social vision, that are mediocre leaders. Post-modern politics are a politics of image and are characterized by the break down of the accountability mechanism between politicians and their constituency. Politicians spend their time running for the next election, waiting for a response from demoralized and demobilized citizens -- more and more Americans reject politics as a meaningful vehicle for change, hence the erosion of the public

trust in those institutions of government.

When the Rodney King verdict was put forth, the chicken came home to roost. It came home to roost because so much of the effects and consequences in that post-industrial city, shot through with post-modern culture and politics, have created a feeling of powerlessness. People could not put up any longer with this sense of powerlessness, and hence, an expression of outrage. The combination of politics, meaninglessness, frustration, alienation, all of these things interwoven created the tragic lives of each and every person dead from the riots. And yet these lives are now shaking the foundations of the nation such that even President Bush coming to LA at least has to say a word about race. I'm sure he hadn't planned to two weeks before. He got motivated. That's very important, because Bush, is part of a larger political discourse, since 1968, in which allusions to race have been central to the conservative domination of politics. This discourse has created division along racial lines through code words. That's associated with black folk especially, but also people of color, and gays and lesbians. For the last 20 years, 24 years, presidential politics has practiced this discourse of division. But now Bush has to talk about the legacy of racism explicitly, and about how Rodney King was transformed into Willie Horton in the perception of some.

Does Bush bear the responsibility? That's not the point. The point is to promote change. The point is to insure critical dialogue. It can't simply be a dialogue in which one comes to the table feeling one has the truth on one's side, you have to be open to critical exchange. And that's very important. Why? Because open dialogue revitalizes our public sphere and enables it to survive. There is very little meaningful talk about race in the U.S. That must change. **DL**

Cornel West is a DSA Honorary Chair and chair of Afro-American Studies at Princeton University.

Celebrate What?

Can We Use the Columbus Quincentenary To Forge A New Politics of Equality and Understanding?

BY LORETTA J. WILLIAMS

The replicas of the Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria are on display here in the U.S. After eight years of hyped build-up, courtesy of former President Reagan's Federal Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, the civic observances of the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' "discovery" of the New World have begun. For the descendants of the survivors of that invasion, the rapes and massacres of this hemisphere and the subsequent enslavements of indigenous peoples of the Americas and of Africa both, the celebratory mood is a travesty.

It's essential that the left criticize the glitz and distortions of the civic celebrations -- but that in itself is not sufficient. The role of skeptic and critic is familiar, and the founding of this nation must be named for what it was: invasion, exploitation, conquest, the attempted destruction of a people. 1492 indeed was a world-changing date.

The Quincentenary spotlight provides a window to the core realities of our culture, and an opportunity to counter the denial of the legacy of conquest that is part of being a U.S. citizen. During this year of the red, white and blue draped splendidly around Christopher Columbus, the patron saint of white America, we must do more to "walk the talk" of possibilities for the next 500 years ahead.

The Log Itself

We must begin by highlighting the racial contours of the state itself. The color line has been deeply embedded in our cultural soil from day one, and still leads to the most of the worst accruing to people of color, whether one uses

the index of infant mortality, education, access to health care, etc. Its roots? An excerpt from Columbus' log: "They... brought us parrots and balls of cotton and cane spears and many other things, which they exchanged for the glass beads and hawks' bells. They willingly traded everything they owned. . . they were well-built, with good bodies and handsome features. . . they do not bear arms, and do not know them, for I showed them a sword, they took it by the edge and cut themselves out of ignorance. . . they would make fine servants. . . with fifty men we could subjugate them and make them do whatever we want."

What began in 1492 was the violation of indigenous people -- people who looked different from the Europeans, people who were judged to be exploitable on the basis of color, language, and practices.

Among Today's "Discoveries"

Fast forward to today: a 1990s "discovery" in heartland, USA. AmeriFlora opened in Columbus, Ohio, this April as part of a series of local and national Quincentennial celebrations. It has been promoted as the most comprehensive horticultural extravaganza ever. When the city fathers of Columbus welcomed the opportunity to host this tourist attraction, they looked around the city for a location sufficiently grand. Did they find 'empty land' just waiting to be 'discovered', as in our national creation myth? No. In fact, the power elite in Columbus found the ideal spot and appropriated it: Franklin Park, a flourishing neighborhood park central to the African American community. The park was the place where parents taught teenagers

how to drive, where family and neighbors gathered for picnics. The land was commandeered. Made off limits. Iron picket fences were installed blocking the entryways.

Where were the progressives in all this? Did they stand in solidarity with the neighborhood activists trying to hold on to a valued community resource? Not at all.

Blind Spots

Denial and evasion of today's realities of conquest are manifold in our midst. So, too, the denial that racism, rather than equality, is the defining hallmark of U.S. history. 500 years have sunk deeply the roots of whiteness as property right. Yet some have the audacity to propose the "ideal" of a color-blind society. Reality must be faced: the U.S. has always been color-struck. Race profoundly determines our political rights, location in the labor market, sense of identity, privileges or lack thereof. It's time for the left to recognize that assimilation and integration as goals are deeply flawed for they leave power and control in white elite hands.

Pandering to White Resentment

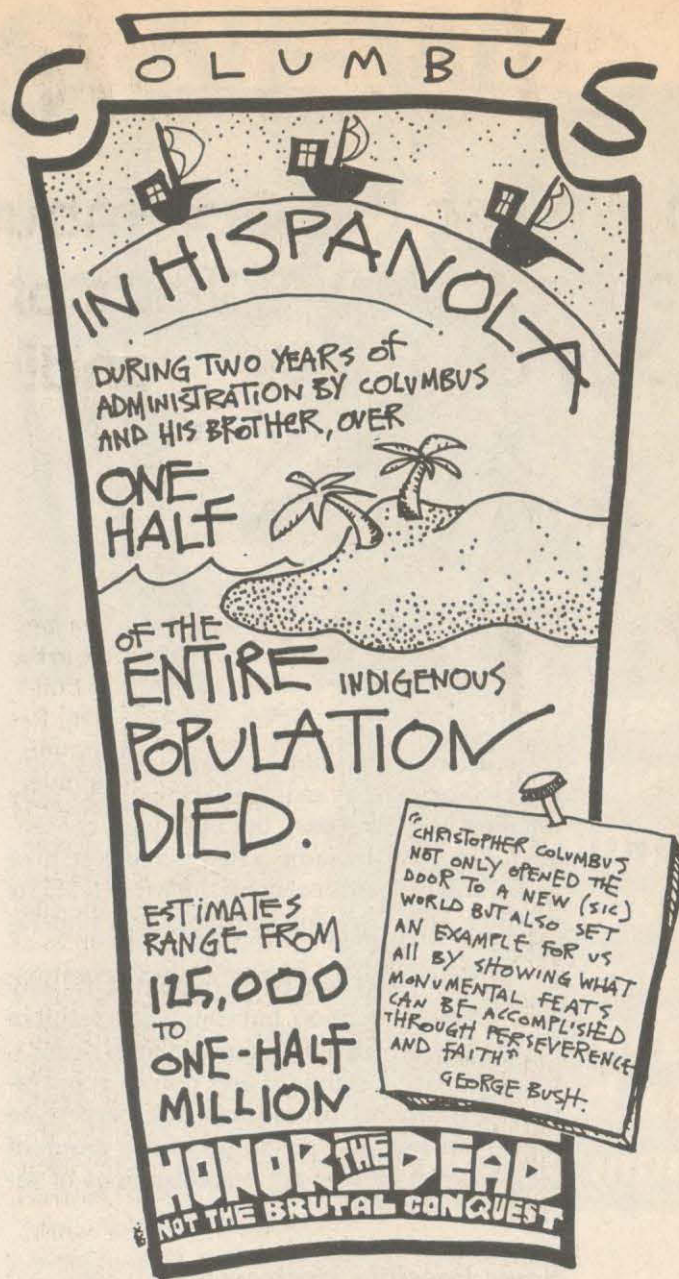
President Bush's new world order is both a continuing result of the conquest and ecocide woven into our nation's founding, and a thrashing behemoth of our continuing history. Human beings constructed, and construct, by force, "race" as a tool of oppression. That tool continues to be wielded to divide those who exploit and those who are exploitable.

The dangerous rhetoric about Christopher Columbus is augmented this year by the political posturing around the white middle class, the appeasing words and action of politicians and opinion shapers about the "legitimate resentment" of whites. Segments of the white public perceive blacks and people of color as today's savages and heathens, lesser beings whose demands on a non-inclusive "us" are illegitimate.

Anne Braden, journalist and organizer, puts it succinctly. "It seems to me that people who buy the reverse discrimination myth assume that if things are going to be rough, at least they (the whites) should get the best." The only way to generate fairness, Braden says, is to stick together, one and all.

Resistance & Mobilization

Another mobilization is occurring this year -- a continental campaign for 500 Years of In-



digenous and Popular Resistance by brown, black, red and golden peoples of the Americas. Meetings have been held in Ecuador, Brazil, Guatemala, elsewhere. People of color are organizing across national and linguistic borders for 1992 is also a time to take pride in the resiliency of people holding strong to justice for all possibilities.

Will the progressive community add justice-actions to that mix? Within interfaith circles, we speak of 1992 as a kairos moment, a teachable moment in time and space for us to problematize much more of what we have taken-for-granted in our assumptions and culture. 1992/Kairos USA, a faith based partner-



Latina girls at the Hispanic Columbus Day Parade in New York City.

celebration of the quincentenary (and its commercial variants) as an imperial liturgy not only retelling lies of the past, but building a consensus for more of the same: a two-tiered system of global and domestic economic apartheid. This is the time and place for resistance and hopeful action."

Racism need not be perpetuated by any conspiracy of intention, but simply as a result of the ways in which daily, routine things occur -- the dominating standard and norms in operation. Institutional procedures that perpetuate the advantages and privileges of one group of people over another are manifestations of racism.

Some Possible Strategies

We must plant alternative language, images and explanations that counter the myth of reverse discrimination, and the steady consolidation of institutionalized racism world-wide. We can "piggy-back" on the Quincentenary by a coordinated print media strategy. And can we establish a better grounding base for national pride in the different metaphor than conquest? We who are wordsmiths must remember to fill the hope deficit as well as the information deficit, for it is vision and hope that will sustain us for the long haul struggle.

What if we used the focus on the so-called nation's founding to unmask the talk about "special interest groups". Were the Tainos and Arawaks "special interest groups?" The term has been insinuated into popular discourse as a

"taken-for-granted." It is a cynical labeling by those seeking to maintain power and privileges in elite white hands. The far right promotion of this coded term has succeeded in dividing good "normal" people from those with unreasonable "special interests."

And what if we use a stepping-stone approach, raising how the issue of bilingualism today might parallel some happenings centuries ago when Europeans came to find persons speaking in a language different than their own. (People, incidentally, who welcomed the strangers in their midst.) Why is it that so many teachers are threatened by Latino and Latina students who are comfortable with speaking one language at home and another at school? Why isn't bilingualism and trilingualism seen as a strength and resource not a deficit? Can we shed false illusions about inclusion?

The Global Connection

We must name how racism is behind the attempts by the North (the white First World) to control the South (the dark Third World). As David DuBois, Visiting Professor at University of Massachusetts - Amherst, sees it: "Mainstream white Americans. . . must be convinced that it is right and just that their sons and daughters be prepared to take up arms against that vast sea of multicolored humanity that threatens to engulf the European, or white world. Once white America is so convinced, those forces within the industrial/military complex that set America's agenda will have a free hand to control and direct Third World emergence and development.."

1992 can be a time that progressives cut back deeply the weed of racism -- the kudzu vine of white supremacist assumptions that Alice Walker talks about.

1992 is a time to join in activities led by black, brown and golden people that bring forward the silenced interpretation of the 1492 event and its consequences, as well as highlight today's mirrored continuity in conquest and expropriation. 1992 -- "We are called to join Native Americans, African Americans, and so many others who have for 500 years refused to cooperate with oppression." "It's time, folks, that we better "walk the talk".

DL

Loretta J. Williams, DSA Religion and Socialism Commission, is a sociologist and activist working on alternative Quincentenary commemorations and commitments.

For a copy of the 1992/Kairos USA statement, send SASE to Kairos USA, Room 572, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115.

JAPAN'S NEW POVERTY

BY SASKIA SASSEN

The current round of Japan bashing leaves out a crucial fact: While its economic might continues to grow, rising numbers of Japanese workers are experiencing declining real incomes, job insecurity, chronic fatigue, and work-related illness. In addition, many will never own a home, nor be able to find more than casual or part-time jobs. Unemployment is a reality for many people and earnings inequality has sharpened.

Although, none of these conditions in Japan are as acute as they are in the U.S., they affect a large number of people. And they point in the same direction traveled by other great economic powers in our present era: poverty and marginality for significant sectors of the population. Two great wealth-producing powers -- the U.S. and, earlier, England, have not succeeded in escaping this fate.

Although poverty in Japan has not reached the extent of the new poverty evident in such cities as New York and London, it can no longer be said that Japan represents a truly different model of growth in terms of the economy's social impact. Many analysts and commentators have put forth an image of the Japanese economic system as radically different from that of the U.S., an economy free of the failures troubling us.

Low Wages, High Profits

But although the Japanese economy is organized differently from that of the U.S., we need to recognize two realities that are mostly ignored by the U.S. press. The first is that many Japanese firms seek low wages and high profits -- just as many U.S. firms do -- and hence have set up factories in Mexico to produce auto-parts

for their factories in the U.S., and in Thailand for their factories in Japan. Second, growing parts of the Japanese economy, especially in services, fall outside the traditional Japanese economic organization, with its much noted life-long job security.

Enough time has passed since the high growth period of the 1950s and 1960s, when Japan built its industrial economy, to evaluate the long term results. Has Japan really succeeded where England and the U.S. have

failed? That is, has it created new forms of wealth without producing new forms of poverty and marginality?

The Emerging Inner City

Let's start with what is the heart of the Japanese economic powerhouse -- Tokyo. Alongside its expensive, densely built central business district, there is a broad area long occupied by the working class and small-scale factories. Not surprisingly it has suffered economic decline. But this decline has gone beyond the garden variety "creative destruction." Severe physical decay and social disintegration now replace what had been thriving neighborhoods. In the worst affected areas, such as the ward of Taino, there is also growing criminality

While its economic might continues to grow, rising numbers of Japanese workers are experiencing declining real incomes, job insecurity, chronic fatigue, and work-related illness.

and vandalism. Increasing numbers of old people are now homeless, their sons and daughters having long ago left for the suburbs and two-hour commutes. Tokyo has also experienced an enormous growth in the market for daily workers, where large numbers of illegal immigrants from Thailand, Pakistan, and the Philippines try to sell their labor.

Some of this decay is the direct result of forced displacement of factories and low-income households for central business district expansion. There has been a savage struggle within Tokyo in the 1980s to accumulate small parcels of land. Firms have resorted to using organized criminals, known as the "yakusa." Arson and terror are sometimes reported in land acquisition disputes used. Forbes magazine has estimated that real estate companies used ten billion yen in 1987 for the services of such gangsters. The overall result of economic transformation alongside forced displacement has been the emergence of what some are calling an inner city -- extreme

forms of physical, social, and economic decay such as are found in the centers of such cities as New York or London.

Hollowing Out

One of Japan's greatest sources of economic power, the manufacturing sector, is also undergoing tremendous changes. A growing number of factories moving off-shore, especially to low-wage Asian countries. Japan now has a thriving auto parts and electronics components manufacturing sector in Thailand producing for its factories in Japan. And it has about forty such factories in Northern Mexico producing for its Honda, Mazda, and joint-ownership plants in the U.S. Japanese firms have closed dozens of mines, at times emptying whole towns. While the levels involved are minimal compared with off-shoring and plant closures in the U.S. The process is just beginning. Many Japanese commentators are beginning to speak of the "hollowing out" of the Japanese economy and even of deindustrialization, a term familiar to many

in the U.S. This has all contributed to a decline in the already limited bargaining power of the large unions in the annual spring wage negotiations. This is evident in the declining rate of wage increases and in growing job insecurity. The much-hailed Japanese life-long job security now covers only about 22 percent of the workforce.

There are also signs of economic insecurity among sectors of the working and middle class. Part-time jobs make up a rapidly increasing share of all available jobs. At the same time, the gap between part-time and full-time salaries has increased -- in 1977 part-time workers earned 80 percent of full-time earnings, today it is down to 60 percent. The rate of homeownership has fallen to 57 percent in Tokyo, and the average size of apartments has fallen from 57 square meters in 1980 to 46 square meters in 1987.

A Third Way?

Being a great economic power in today's world does not ensure economic well being for all of a nation's residents. We need for governments to address the costs, many inevitable, of economic growth. But it is not enough for government to intervene only to maximize existing forms of economic growth. The Japanese government was a crucial player in the building of the Japanese economy, and it has made a large difference. But today more, or perhaps something different, is needed. Policy makers in the U.S. must recognize that Japan is not a "third way," a model that avoids the sharp failures evident in our economy. What are not indications of growing poverty and marginality in Japan may well develop into major conditions, if effective and courageous political action does not emerge.

When U.S. workers join with our government in blaming Japan's trading practices for the U.S. recession, they are on the wrong track. Top level management in much of the private sectors of both countries takes away from workers more than it gives them. And our governments are failing to take necessary long term action. Our government blaming Japan and the Japanese government blaming U.S. workers keeps the cover-up going. Workers in both countries are paying the price. DL

Saskia Sassen, a DSA member, is a professor of urban planning at Columbia University. This article is based on the author's new book, The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo (Princeton University Press, 1991).

Many Japanese commentators are beginning to speak of the "hollowing out" of the Japanese economy -- and even of deindustrialization, a term familiar to many in the U.S.

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Janie Higgins Reports



HIT OR MISS

Clarence Thomas, Alan Simpson, Orrin Hatch and Dow Corning were top award winners in the 1992 Coalition of Labor Union Women Hit and Ms. Awards. Those enemies of women everywhere won Hit awards, while Anita Hill, Carol Moseley Braun and the Pro-Choice Marchers (all one million of them!) won Ms. Awards. The awards are given each year in conjunction with Working Women's Awareness Week.

AWARDS II

After Debra Chasnoff won an Oscar for her anti-GE documentary, "Deadly Deception," GE reported that the film had had no impact and that it had only received two calls regarding the film. But if you wanted to organize against GE, who would you call? Lots of people knew that answer and jammed the switchboards at Infact, the anti-nuclear group that produced "Deadly Deception." Infact reports that it received seventy requests for the film during the morning hours after the Academy Awards. Congratulations to Chasnoff and Infact.

KUDOS TO BUSH?

So maybe George Bush isn't so bad after all. It seems he has increased Medicaid spending by 80 percent since he's been in office. So why didn't we notice? Over two-thirds of the increase went to doctors, hospitals, and drug companies. Maybe Bush is worse than we thought.

AND WHAT ARE RAMPARTS?

Americans may think they are patriotic -- but do they know what patriotism means? A recent poll shows that one-quarter of all Americans don't know what event the Fourth of July commemorates. And one in four Americans don't know the name of the country the U.S. declared independence from in 1776.

ONE SMALL STEP...

A step forward for women -- Signe Wilkinson, a *Philadelphia Daily News* cartoonist, has become the first woman to win a Pulitzer for cartoons. And two steps backward -- Georgetown has retracted official status for GU Choice, a pro-choice student group. Meanwhile, Catholic administrators at Villanova have been harassing the DSA chapter there for advocating choice.

Democratic Left Labor Day Issue 1992

The Labor Day issue of *Democratic Left* will once again be dedicated to coverage of the American and international labor struggle. Our annual Labor Day ad campaign is the principle fundraiser for *Democratic Left*. It provides an excellent opportunity for you to join with trade unions, progressive organizations, and DSA members to show your support for DSA and *Democratic Left*. We welcome advertisements and personal greetings from individuals, DSA locals, organizations and progressive businesses. We must receive ad copy by Wednesday, August 12, 1992. Make checks payable to DSA, or pay by credit card.

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<input type="checkbox"/> Full Page (7" x 10")	1250	1150
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<input type="checkbox"/> Quarter Page (3 1/2" x 4 3/4")	400	300
<input type="checkbox"/> Eighth Page (3 1/2" x 2 3/8")	250	200
<input type="checkbox"/> Sixteenth Page (3 1/2" x 1 3/16")	150	100

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