

Inside: Breaking Bread with Cornel West and bell hooks

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# DEMOCRATIC Left



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## Our Common Future Social Justice in the Americas

- ◆ *Struggles for Democracy and Workers' Rights* ◆
- ◆ *Reports from Chiapas, Canada, and El Salvador* ◆

Also  
inside: **Stonewall 25** A Quarter Century of Lesbian and Gay Politics



# Inside Democratic Left

## SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE AMERICAS

### An Interview With José LaLuz

by Chris Riddiough . . . 3

### Hope and Struggle in Chiapas

by Al Rojas . . . 6

### Steps Toward a North American Social Charter

by Bill Dixon . . . 8

### Canada: The Left Rebuilds and Reaches Out

by Mike Martin . . . 9

### Forward Motion in El Salvador

by Karen Marie Gibson . . . 10

## On the Left

by Harry Fleischman . . . 12

Commission Notes . . . 13

## Breaking Bread

by bell hooks and Cornel West . . . 14

DSAAction . . . 16

## Stonewall 25: A Quarter Century of Gay Politics

compiled by Dorothee Benz . . . 18

Janie Higgins Reports . . . 24

cover photo: Alain McLaughlin/Impact Visuals

## EDITORIAL

# WHITewater AND THE MEDIA

BY HAROLD MEYERSON

Here, class, is a list of three presidential scandals. Which one does not belong?

A) Watergate was about the clandestine intervention of a sitting administration in the affairs of its political opposition.

B) Iran-Contra concerned the Reagan White House's funneling money to a war whose funding Congress had expressly prohibited.

C) Whitewater concerns the dubious, possibly illegal, practices (though his 1980 trial ended in acquittal) of Bill Clinton's onetime business partner, James McDougal, in the years between 1978 and 1985, a period that preceded Clinton's presidential inauguration by eight to fifteen years. It's about whether McDougal illegally channeled money from his troubled S&L to cover losses on the Whitewater real estate investment he shared with the Clintons, whether he used S&L funds to help Clinton's gubernatorial campaign or otherwise gave Clinton special treatment, and whether Clinton's regulators -- and Clinton himself -- were in turn soft on McDougal's failing S&L.

If you answered C), don't pat yourself on the back just yet. The more serious question is why Whitewater has been so

ludicrously inflated. It's certainly true that Arkansas's is an oligarchic political culture, where the country-club boys have been running everything for the past century; and it's also true that as governor Clinton accommodated the Arkansas oligarchy in a succession of deals and appointments that were hardly models of statecraft. Yet most of these deals, and most certainly Whitewater, were reported on at some point during the '92 campaign. Why, then, have these stories returned, nearly crippling a president who survived them when he was merely a candidate?

One reason is that the administration's bunker mentality hasn't deflected allegations, but instead raised suspicions. But a broader reason lies in journalism's increasingly narrow focus on personal scandal. The reporter's task today is to uncover the private history underlying the public career: the deals, the scandals, the compulsions. That's the stuff that matters -- and it follows that such concerns as ideology and rudimentary political distinctions are mere surface appearances a reporter pursues at the risk of boring his or her reader and to no discernible end.

According to the Tyndall Report, the nightly news broadcasts of ABC, CBS, and NBC have devoted 220 minutes to covering Whitewater since January 1 -- roughly *three times* the coverage they've given to the health-care wars. The personal has not only become the political, it has all but supplanted it. No wonder a recent poll showed that Americans rank seventh out of eight Western nations in their knowledge of current affairs.

Into this media vacuum have walked conservatives, who are eager to generate enough public revulsion at the Clintons' transgressions, real or imagined, to overcome the public's desire for social change. They fear that health care reform could re-invent the Democrats, could bind them to the electorate as the party of a newly responsive, if chastened, government. Against that dread possibility, they play the Whitewater card in hopes that some combination of lucky revelation and American moralism will derail an incipiently liberal decade and ratchet us back to the brutal comforts of the Reagan age.

Harold Meyerson, a Vice Chair of DSA, is executive editor of *L.A. Weekly*, in which a longer version of this essay originally appeared.

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# Social Justice in the Americas

## *An Interview with José LaLuz*

**T**he U.S. left faces huge challenges in the wake of the fight over the North American Free Trade Agreement. Now more than ever, we must work across borders to nurture international movements for workers' rights and environmental protection. In early April, Chris Riddiough, the chair of DSA's Global Justice Task Force, sat down with DSA Vice Chair José LaLuz to discuss these issues. LaLuz, who is the Associate Director of Education at the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, has met extensively with trade unionists and other progressive activists throughout the Americas.

**Chris Riddiough:** First of all, what is your general sense of where things stand politically in North America and the Western Hemisphere generally?

**José LaLuz:** The future presents enormous challenges as well as opportunities. To a large extent the democratic and progressive forces in this country failed to capture the moment during the debate on the North American Free Trade Agreement to clarify what was really at stake. It wasn't a question of whether or not there should be increased trade with Mexico, with Canada, and the rest of the countries in the hemisphere, but what *kind* of trade and investment policies we need to increase the standard of living and to democratize the institutions that affect people's lives. Most people see NAFTA as something that happened — but the truth of the matter is the economies of the countries throughout the hemisphere are being restructured, and citizens and people are not participating in any meaningful way in determining what kind of economies, what kind of societies we need.

Right now what we seem to be witnessing is a process in which people are being pitted one against the other. Men and women from the north are being pitted against men and women from the south of the hemisphere in a mindless race to the bottom, as to who is going to give up

more standards, more rights, more of the things that have made each of our respective societies better, in order to compete. And that is the code word that is being used: We have got to be "competitive."

The people in Mexico are faced with this, people in Brazil, people in the Caribbean and Central America, as well as those who reside here in the United States. And the key to this will be somehow coming together with men and women throughout the Americas to forge a common investment in the hemisphere.

**Riddiough:** You mentioned that you saw progressives here in the United States fail in the struggle against NAFTA. Aside from NAFTA's actual passage, how does that shape what can happen now, and what do we do to overcome that?

**LaLuz:** I think that we needed to have our own vision of what kind of trade for North America would have been good for all, and that's where we failed. It was a lot more of, "We are against this thing," as opposed to, "Here's the kind of agreement that we have to offer that will benefit the many as opposed to benefiting the few."

But we have got to make sure now that we build on what is there, and in order to do that, we're going to have to put what exists to the test.





**August 1993:**  
Anti-riot  
police  
confront  
striking  
workers at a  
VW plant in  
Mexico.

For instance, if environmental rights and regulations are being downgraded in any of the three countries in order for one of the countries to become "more competitive" at the expense of people, then somehow we're going to have to denounce that, to expose it. But we must also offer our own alternative vision of what it would mean to protect the environment in the three nations. We're going to have to engage men and women in Mexico and Canada because the fact is that our economies *are* integrated. We also have to reach out to men and women in those other countries to make sure that we've got a common view and a common strategy.

**Riddiough:** One of the things that has been talked about is the concept of expanding NAFTA to other countries in the Western Hemisphere. That suggests that we also need to be thinking about what do we do as those efforts move forward. What are our next steps in terms of that broader picture?

**LaLuz:** In negotiations for the Mercosur agreement to create a common market in the Southern Cone of South America, there has been significant participation by many of the social actors, not only trade unionists but several im-

portant social and environmental organizations as well. We have got to figure out a way to connect with that process, to learn as much as we possibly can about how they have advanced what we refer to as the social dimension of economic integration -- or, as the Europeans refer to it, the social charter -- and see how some of those things could be tailored to our own needs and reality in North America. We have got to figure out a way of connecting with these social actors and sharing experiences. I'm afraid that sometimes we lack imagination in terms of how to do something like this.

For instance, how do we respond creatively to job migration? Gigantic pharmaceutical firms in New Jersey are now finding ways of operating more freely in many of the countries in the southern part of the hemisphere; many manufacturers like General Motors and Ford and others are now expanding their operations in places like Mexico; many of the apparel and textile firms have practically relocated their entire operations to the Caribbean Basin -- they're here already, these companies, so this offers us opportunities to make these struggles into meaningful struggles that have local application. If there is going to be a plant shut down in some city or small town in any of the states of this country, that will become an opportunity for us to do education that will bring people together. We have to say, look, these Mexican men and women are not our goddamn enemies who are taking our jobs, as we heard sometimes in the anti-NAFTA fight, but instead, how can we shape a community of nations in the Americas where those men and women down there have jobs but it doesn't have to be at the expense of mine -- and that's going to take a hell of a lot of creative thinking. And in order to do that we cannot allow the corporations to be the only ones that are dictating the pace and the needs here.

**Riddiough:** I was in Santo Domingo two and a half weeks ago for a Socialist International Women meeting, and many of the parties from our hemisphere were represented there. One of the things that I found is sort of an increasing sense of trying to explore the particular role of women in some of these issues, in terms of work, the environment. One woman from the Mexican Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD)





Ernesto Mora/Impact Visuals

was there and talked about the role of women in Chiapas, for example. Have you found much of that as you've been talking to people?

**LaLuz:** Absolutely. The question of the role of the sectors of the population that have been historically disenfranchised throughout the hemisphere and throughout the world becomes critical now. And that obviously means women and indigenous people, who are now finding their voice — not only in Mexico but throughout many other countries in the Americas, and not necessarily in partnership or in conjunction with our traditional democratic and progressive forces. The explosive growth of the so-called informal economy -- which involves primarily women and children -- raises the question of how can we articulate responses that engage and give these disenfranchised people their own voice: They are the ones who are being exploited in these free-trade zones that are expanding throughout the entire hemisphere.

**Riddiough:** The other thing that I've run into is discussions of development and the environment. Many environmental organizations, I think, are beginning to see some connections between poverty and inequity, but it's a new area for environmentalists, and while it's a little different from trade, it seems like there are connections. What's your sense of what's going on?

**LaLuz:** Yes, there are huge connections. At the summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, many

people raised this very question: How do we shape an environmental policy that addresses people's most basic needs, for food, for shelter, for clothing? This triggered a lot of tension with activists from the more developed nations. They may say, for example, "Well, I'm just concerned about shutting down that nuclear reactor near my house." But for people in Brazil, this may mean how do we strike a balance between preserving the rain forests, for instance, and making sure that our population has enough to eat, particularly those thousands of children that are abandoned in the streets.

This challenges once again many of the basic premises of those of us who thought we had all the answers; it becomes an exercise in which we have to realize that, wait a second, it's important to protect that particular species of bird that is becoming extinct, but also to make sure that people have enough to eat, and to put clothes on their back, and shelter, and so forth. Environmental as well as development-oriented organizations are recognizing the need to bridge this gap. And women's organizations are going to play a fundamental role, because we're talking about development policies that affect the overwhelming majority of the people that are carrying the burden right now -- women and children. **DL**

*Chris Riddiough is a Vice Chair of DSA and a member of the National Political Committee. She also chairs DSA's Global Justice Task Force and co-chairs the DSA Feminist Commission.*

**Young maquiladora workers in the Dominican Republic earn roughly four dollars (U.S.) per day manufacturing goods for U.S. apparel companies.**



# Hope and Struggle

*A Human Rights*

*Delegation Visits Chiapas*

BY AL ROJAS

**T**he New Year's Day uprising in the southern Mexico state of Chiapas caught many people by surprise. But anyone truly familiar with the authoritarian record of the Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI), which has governed Mexico for 65 years -- or with the far longer history of the oppression of indigenous people in southern Mexico -- should not have been too shocked.

Especially in rural areas like Chiapas, the working people of Mexico have slowly lost all faith in their government and the rule of law. Vote-buying is a regular feature of life, and so are campaigns of intimidation against dissident political figures. When ordinary citizens seek justice, they usually find that the police and courts are too entangled in the corrupt PRI networks of power. Mexico is currently going through a tremendous period of evolution, which is usually credited in the press to the allegedly "reform" government of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari. In fact, the credit for the impending breakdown of the old order should go to the hundreds of grass-roots democratic groups throughout the country.

In April, I had a chance to witness social conditions in Chiapas directly when I traveled there with a human rights delegation including ten other California activists and scholars. We spent ten days documenting rights abuses and meeting with leaders of the Zapatista rebels. After interviewing hundreds of Chiapas indigenous people whose homes have been lost through deforestation and whose lives are chained to the will of local large landowners and other elites, we had a much deeper understanding of why social conflicts here have come to the point of armed rebellion.

The land in Chiapas is mostly rain forest but, as in Brazil, local cattle ranchers have been

burning and clear-cutting forest areas in order to create grazing land. This process has forced thousands of indigenous people from their rural homes. In the town of San Cristobal de las Casas our delegation visited a squatter encampment where over four hundred families have occupied public land as a protest against the government's position on the distribution of land to indigenous people. Although the encampment has been brutally attacked several times by the Chiapas state police, the families have tenaciously held on.

It was during this visit that our delegation got its most vivid taste of the character of Chiapas politics. While we were speaking to the encampment's leaders, two helicopters landed across the street. Javier Lopez Moreno, the governor of Chiapas, was paying a visit to the town. Governor Lopez Moreno, like fifteen other governors in Mexico, is an "interim" governor, appointed by President Salinas and not directly elected by the people. As his helicopter touched down, hundreds of people from the encampment crossed the street and demanded to speak with him in the presence of our human rights delegation; Lopez Moreno flatly and coldly refused in a way that would be unimaginable in the U.S. I was later hassled by the local police for videotaping this scene.

The most chilling day of our journey was a visit to Ocosingo, a town that was the site of one of the bloodiest conflicts in the January fighting between the Mexican army and the EZLN guerrilla soldiers ("Zapatistas"). On January 4, the Mexican army surrounded a group of Zapatista fighters in the marketplace in the center of Ocosingo. Using helicopter gunships and tanks, the army slaughtered not only the Zapatistas but also many civilians who happened to be in the marketplace. People we interviewed estimate that between 350 and 400





Juan Carlos Rojas/Impact Visuals

people were killed in the marketplace that day; most of the corpses were removed by the army and have not been found.

As we approached Ocosingo in April, the military presence was still very visible; our Volkswagen van was forced to make several very long stops at military checkpoints. When we finally entered the town and walked through the marketplace, there was an incredible atmosphere of solemnity. There were numerous machine-gun posts on rooftops, and tanks and other heavy equipment still sat in the town. Bullet holes were still visible everywhere, including some wide-diameter holes that had cut through thick steel beams. People avoided making eye contact with the soldiers patrolling the town, and when we asked the *tenderos* (merchants) about the events of January 4, every one of them denied being in town that day. Only in the evening, out of sight of the army patrols, did a few people come back to us and offer their stories.

The last stage of our journey took us deeper into the forest, into the area controlled by the Zapatistas. Word had somehow gotten to the Zapatista leadership that a human rights delegation from California would be visiting. We were met by a small group of people and led to a set of temporary barracks, where we were housed with a pair of Chilean journalists who'd been waiting for days for a chance to meet Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos.

We finally arrived at a point where we met the Zapatistas, who were heavily armed; they led us to a village. This area of the rain forest was one of the most beautiful places I have ever visited. Children from the village showed us where it was safe to bathe, which plants and

berries were safe to eat, and how to cook snail soup. Later in the day a group of eight Zapatista leaders wearing ski masks arrived. Since I was the person in charge of the delegation, I was the first person invited to speak with them. I was led into a clearing and introduced to a man known as Major Mario.

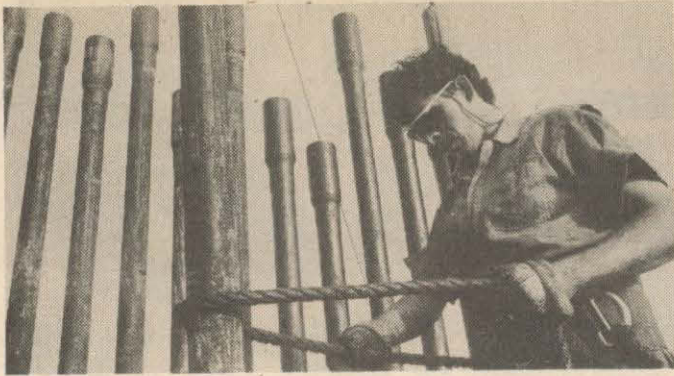
Before he would answer any of my questions, Major Mario wanted to know who we were. As I described our work, he asked me, "Are you the group that shut down the Mexican consulate in Sacramento?" (A coalition including the DSA Latino Commission led a series of pro-democracy demonstrations at this consulate in January; on two occasions our rallies became so large and militant that the consulate chose to close for the day.) "Because I want you to know," said Major Mario, "that that kind of international solidarity is what has kept the Mexican army from just marching in here and committing great massacres. We owe you a great debt." **DL**

**On January 12, a hundred thousand people marched in Mexico City for democratic reforms and against the bombing of Chiapas.**

*Al Rojas is a member of the DSA National Political Committee and a co-chair of the DSA Latino Commission. He is president of North Americans for Democracy in Mexico.*

*The DSA Latino Commission is collecting funds and in-kind donations to support El Tiempo, a small newspaper in Chiapas that is one of the few independent and democratic news outlets in the area. El Tiempo currently strains to publish on a printing press that dates from 1895. For more information, or to make a donation, contact the DSA Latino Commission at P.O. Box 162394, Sacramento, CA 95816.*





## Border Crossing

### *Toward a North American Social Charter*

BY BILL DIXON

With last year's debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement, politics traveled to an obscure frontier of the modern nation-state, a ground contested by a broad range of commercial and public interests.

Following NAFTA's arrival will be an historic visit from NAFTA's global counterpart, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Because of the enormous jurisdiction these trade agreements establish for commerce policies, NAFTA and GATT force us to at last acknowledge the importance of transnational politics. Against elite fantasies of a continent-wide corporate park, where wages are low, state regulations weak, and the environment up for bid, U.S., Canadian, and Mexican citizens must finally put forward an internationalist vision for a just and democratic future.

In Western Europe, public debate over what is now the European Union (EU) has progressed for over forty years. In particular, North Americans could look to the Socialist-led strengthening of the European Parliament and the victories for the EU's so-called "social dimension," partially realized in the Social Charter of 1989 and the Maastricht Treaty.

Obviously, massive differences between Europe and North America divide feasible Left strategies toward transnational policy. Appeals to world-federalism aside, political and economic integration on the order of the Maastricht Treaty isn't immediately conceivable for Mexico, Can-

ada, and the United States. A campaign for a broad social charter, however, is very feasible.

In May of 1992, Congressman George Brown (D-CA) introduced legislation calling for "a social and environmental charter" to be included in NAFTA. Developed with John Cavanagh of the Institute for Policy Studies, Brown's proposals provide a starting point for a Left North American transnationalism:

- Transnational rights to free association, collective bargaining, and the strike, helping unions through Canadian-style right-to-organize laws.
- Detailed standards for work place health and safety.
- Minimum age requirements for full-time workers, aimed at the elimination of child labor.
- Rights to freedom from discrimination at the work place based on factors unrelated to the performance of work.
- Guarantees of humane wages and decent working hours, which, while acknowledging differences in regional development, also mandate improvement indexed with increases in productivity.
- Environmental protection through explicit conservation laws, public disclosure of toxic discharges, and required use of environmentally sound technologies.
- Prohibition of exports from companies which fail to meet either continental or national labor, environmental, and consumer laws (whichever laws are more stringent).

As much as we could debate the particulars of the above, Brown's proposals offers a good place to begin. Of course, socialists should recognize that we can do better. To supplement (and partially correct) Brown's proposals, a socialist social charter might broadly commit to:

- Increased freedom of movement across borders.
- Detailed consumer-rights regulations.
- A continental minimum wage, raised in index to inflation.
- Continental employment and training policies.
- Transnational civil rights guarantees.
- Democratic, ecologically sustainable, regional development plans.
- Banning nuclear power as a consumer or industrial energy source.
- Developing alternative energy sources to fossil fuels.
- Facilitating worker-representation in corporate decisions,
- Helping unions bargain transnationally with employers.
- Establishing through the North American Development Bank (created by NAFTA) programs for long-term social investment, aimed at job creation, stimulating low-income consumer markets, and eliminating poverty.

For socialists, the goal of a democratic transnationalism is a specific response to elite power, answering the threats corporate profit-seeking and centralized states pose to public sovereignty and basic social welfare. Some might advocate conceding transnationalism in order to better fortify support for national and local protections. But by now we should all recognize the threat capitalism poses to even the most militant "local" politics. Our socialist internationalism, still global and utopian, but now also urgent and tangible, faces an unmistakable opportunity. **DL**

*Bill Dixon is co-chair of University of Chicago DSA and editor of The Activist, the journal of the DSA Youth Section, in which a longer version of this article originally appeared.*



# Canada After NAFTA

## *The Left Rebuilds and Reaches Across Borders*

BY MIKE MARTIN

Where are we in Canada today? Right now, permanent full-time jobs are now held by only 58 percent of the workforce; the other 42 percent work part time, or on a seasonal or temporary basis. Working women fare the worst -- only half of them hold permanent full-time jobs, and only one in five makes more than \$30,000 a year. The official rate of unemployment among young people aged 16 to 25 is now 18.8 percent, and in some parts of the country it is as high as 40 percent. Most of the jobs held by those who are employed are low-paid, part-time, insecure, non-unionized.

Since 1989, when the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) came into effect, the Canadian economy has lost over 500,000 full-time jobs. Canada's official unemployment rate, which is now above 11 percent, has stayed in double digits under the FTA and has not been below 7 percent since 1975. The real rate of unemployment, taking into account the part-time workers who want full-time jobs, as well as those who've given up trying to find work, is close to 20 percent. Those are chilling statistics for a rich country like Canada, but that's the reality of the corporate agenda at work. That's how we approach NAFTA. Where we go after NAFTA we don't yet know.

The federal elections in October brought the Liberal Party to power. The Liberals campaigned on the left in 1993 but have governed from the

right. The election quite frankly decimated and demoralized the Canadian left. The social democratic party, the New Democratic Party, won only nine seats, and does not even have official party status.

NAFTA passed in Canada without a whimper, but there are now some signs of life on the left. The Action Canada Network, a coalition of 50 national organizations and regional coalitions, has launched a campaign called *Where is the Wealth?*, which is designed to try and move the public debate away from the need for social spending cuts and public spending cuts into the whole question of who's paying their share in terms of taxation. It focuses on 93,000 profitable corporations in Canada that paid no tax at all in 1992.

The Action Canada Network plans to continue to monitor the impact of FTA, NAFTA and GATT, and we want to start defining our program for a social agenda in the hemisphere, and expanding our trilateral work in North America into Central and South America. Labor's agenda, as identified by the Canadian Labor Congress, has many similar goals. Domestically, the key areas will be a focus on redistributing work time, organizing the unorganized, organizing the unemployed, helping youth, protecting social programs, and controlling investments, and finally, fighting for a fair taxation system. Internationally, labor will be pushing for an alternative interna-

tional economic agenda, including control of speculative capital, major public investment programs, and lower interest rates.

In responding to NAFTA, Canadian labor's goal is to place the agreement within a new regional development and trade package. We want to build new links with progressive forces in the U.S., Mexico and across our own country. We want to develop a common agenda for action to build a multinational progressive coalition to fight the free trade agenda of the transnationals and the Reaganites.

This particular year is a critical one for the left in Canada, as we seek to find ways to combat the corporate agenda that has hurt our people so much. The fact that we elected a new government doesn't seem to help us; in fact, the Liberals seem quite content to co-opt the Tory agenda, and even to move it faster.

Over the years the Canadian left has developed strong links between the social movements and labor domestically, and it has begun to develop some links across borders. Our major challenge will be to try and build and strengthen those links over the next year and into the post-NAFTA era. **DL**

*Mike Martin is Assistant to the National President of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. This article is based upon remarks he gave at the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York on April 2.*

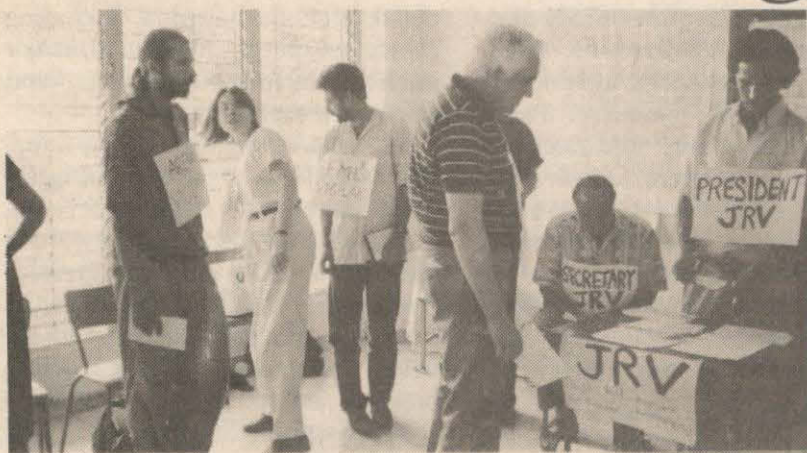


Jim Wesol/Impact Visuals



# Forward Motion in El Salvador

## *Evaluating the Elections*



Karen Marie Gibson

A polling  
place on  
March 20.

BY KAREN MARIE GIBSON

**T**he democratic left scored a victory for justice in the first round of the 1994 elections in El Salvador. Despite massive irregularities in the voting process, including the exclusion of more than 300,000 citizens who registered to vote but were "lost" in the paperwork, a coalition including the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) and the Democratic Convergence (CD) forced a run-off election for president against the ruling Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA). (The left coalition, behind presidential candidate Ruben Zamora, lost the April 24 run-off.) The FMLN, in its first effort in electoral politics, also secured representation in the National Assembly and mayoral positions in many municipalities. For hundreds of thousands of people, it was the first time they had been offered political representation in El Salvador.

These elections, held under United Nations supervision, were brought about by the negotiated Peace Accords of 1992. These Accords followed a twelve-year armed struggle and the

deaths of 75,000 Salvadorans. Although the Accords do not address the socio-economic conditions that led to the armed conflict, they do demand substantial changes in the way the government does business.

Critical reforms include the dismantling of the national police, reforms of the judicial system (which has a dismal record of bringing the death squads to justice), land transfers to ex-combatants of the war, and the reconstitution of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) to facilitate the 1994 elections.

The ARENA government has complied with the agreements only partially, which has set back the democratic process. Indeed, the left coalition faced great challenges going into the March 20 elections. Death squad activity had increased; the National Police had not been fully demobilized; and many of its officers were simply transferred to the Civil Police Force established by the Accords. Politically motivated killings have taken the lives of 36 FMLN members since the end of the armed conflict, and many people have experienced death threats and torture.



The unwillingness of the TSE to act as a neutral facilitator of the elections has been equally troublesome. Three of the four TSE members are from the ARENA party or a party in coalition with ARENA. Each party participating in the elections (there were nine) was to have a representative, aptly named *vigilante*, on an electoral oversight board. But the TSE denied resources to this board and successfully marginalized it from the process. The TSE also abandoned its responsibility to appoint an *auditor*, an independent monitor to oversee the arrival and counting of the vote, until *the night before* the election.

In a variety of ways, the TSE designed the system to discourage voter participation. Many people registered to vote but did not receive the *carnet* (voter card) in time to vote. The blind were denied the right to vote. Many people were told that they could not vote in their own communities. Transportation, which was to have been provided, failed to appear in many rural communities. At the same time, public transportation schedules in San Salvador were reduced by half on the day of the vote.

The list goes on. Thousands of people arrived with their *carnets* only to find that the identification number was off by one digit from the official list of voters at the voting site. They could not vote. Others stood for six hours or more only to find out, to their surprise, that they had already voted! One FMLN supporter in Sushitoto found the names of his dead father and grandfather on the eligible list. It was recorded that his father had voted.

It is remarkable, given that a large proportion of these inconsistencies occurred in FMLN strongholds, that the FMLN had such a strong showing in the elections. But, as the official results came in, the FMLN conceded that it had not won as many of the municipalities as it expected. Some of this can be attributed to the irregularities in the electoral process described above. Neither the FMLN nor the international observers could have anticipated all of the types of electoral fraud that could be perpetrated on election day or the number of opportunities to commit fraud that existed. For example, some U.S. observers reported that they had been unaware of the presence of participants in the death squads until members of the community quietly revealed it. This presence created an



Steve Cagan/Impact Visuals

atmosphere of severe intimidation.

The left coalition's failure to win more municipalities is damaging to its plans for decentralizing the government. The FMLN envisions community democracy and accountability, and bases its plans for improvement of education, health care, and economic development on local foundations of dialogue and decision making. This is in direct contrast to ARENA's plan for more trickle-down economics. The FMLN wants to create an alternative economy that allows communities to assess their needs and make decisions about meeting them.

In the areas where the FMLN controls the municipal government and also represents the people in the National Assembly, they have a unique opportunity to move toward these goals. And more broadly, one shouldn't underestimate the significance of the left's victories on the federal level: more than 25 percent of the National Assembly (22 of 84 seats, with more seats in dispute at the time of this writing). If the democratic left continues its grass-roots organizing effectively, these elections, tainted as they were, may help bring El Salvador toward a relatively just and peaceful period. ■

*Karen Marie Gibson is Co-Chair of the DSA Youth Section. She spent five days as an election observer in El Salvador in March.*

**The Peace Accords have allowed El Salvador to begin rebuilding. Above, work on a new teacher training center in Ciudad Segundo Montes.**



# ON THE LEFT



by Harry Fleischman

## COLORADO

Front Range DSA recently sponsored a successful fundraiser for U.S. Representative Bernie Sanders of Vermont. Sanders, the House's only independent member, is considering making a run for the Senate this fall.

## IOWA

An enthusiastic crowd of fifty gathered for Iowa City DSA's May Day potluck, co-sponsored with the Iowa City Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, and the American Federation of Teachers local 716. David Osterberg was honored for his twelve years of hard work fighting for progressive principles in the Iowa legislature. Veteran labor folksinger John O'Connor provided the entertainment, and University of Iowa labor historian Shelton Stromquist signed copies of his new book, *Solidarity and Survival*,

an oral history of the Iowa labor movement in the twentieth century.

In the crowd were four state legislators, two legislative candidates, a candidate for county supervisor, and a candidate for U. S. Congress.

## NEW YORK

Ithaca DSA held a retreat in late January at which they assessed the strengths and weaknesses of their work during 1993. The local has recently been conducting grassroots organizing training sessions, using the model developed by the Midwest Academy, to improve their activist skills. (Any other locals interested in doing such trainings? Contact Ginny Coughlin at the national office for more information.)

Over two hundred people attended New York City DSA's annual awards dinner on May 6. This year's honorees were Doris Rosenblum, a long-time housing and education activist, and Jan Pierce, Vice President of Communications Workers of America District One. In his keynote address, Harry Belafonte spoke movingly of his political hopes and fears at this difficult moment in history. In attendance at the dinner were U.S. Representatives Major Owens and Jerrold Nadler, Manhattan Bor-

ough President Ruth Messinger, and a number of other elected officials.

The West Side branch of New York City DSA has joined with twenty-five other neighborhood organizations in a coalition organized by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). The IAF is a fifty-year-old community organizing group based on the tactics espoused by Saul Alinsky; in New York City, its best-known affiliate is East Brooklyn Congregations, an extremely effective housing advocacy coalition.

The branch is also conducting an IAF-style "internal organizing" campaign, which will seek to bring more of DSA's members on the West Side into the activist life of the organization.

## VIRGINIA

Richmond DSA and Virginia Commonwealth University DSA organized the seventh Campus/Labor Institute on April 16. The conference brought students and union activists from throughout Virginia together to discuss common concerns and to map out organizing strategies. Featured speakers included ACTWU organizer Anthony Romano and Katie Sanders, local chair of the Coalition of Labor Union Women.

## Crime in the Community:

## D.C./Maryland/Northern Virginia Local Co-sponsors Forum

How should the democratic left respond to the issue of violent crime? How can the urban communities most affected by violence play a role in developing public solutions to crime? These were among the questions addressed at a February 25 forum sponsored by the D.C. Left Unity Project, a loose coalition including D.C./Maryland/Northern Virginia DSA, the Committees of Correspondence, Americans for Democratic Action, and other organizations.

Clarence Lusane, the author of *African Americans at the Crossroads*, argued that in some communities, where people feel they "have three strikes against them and have nothing to lose," violence is the product of despair. He argued that we should also address the connections between urban violence and the wider U.S. cultural reliance on violence in foreign policy and other areas.

Ray Moore, an attorney who works for the U.S. House Committee

on Government Operations, and collaborated with Representative John Conyers (D-MI) to draft an "alternative crime bill," told the forum that the left must continue to insist that violent crime will not go away until poverty and joblessness are addressed.

Other speakers at the plenary included Sylvia Hill of the University of District of Columbia and Rahim Jenkins of the National Council for Urban Peace and Justice.



# Commission Notes

## EcoSocialist Review

### Nominated for Magazine Honor

The seven year-old newsletter of DSA's Environmental Commission, *EcoSocialist Review (ESR)*, has been nominated by *Utne Reader* for its annual Alternative Press Award in the Special Interest category. This nomination is all the more notable since, with a press run of 700, *ESR* is the smallest of the "zines" nominated, which included *The Disability Rag*, *Left Business Observer*, *Yoga Journal*, the national Buddhist magazine *Tricycle*, and the national gay magazine *The Advocate*.

*ESR* was started in 1987 by Chicago DSA Youth Section activist J. Hughes as a four page newsletter

encouraging DSAers to examine the Euro-American Green movements. With the creation of the Environmental Commission, *ESR* broadened its appeal to environmentalists and left activists interested in the dialogue of socialism and environmentalism. Now half of *ESR*'s subscribers are non-DSA members, and it exchanges publications with more than a hundred environmental and left periodicals. *ESR* has also extended its reach around the world, with subscribers in England and Canada, and providing complementary subscriptions and research support to left green activists in the Third World.

From the beginning *ESR* was also a project of the Chicago DSA, which has provided critical financial support, and innumerable hours of folding and stapling.

*ESR* is now published three times a year, with about 32 pages an issue. Contributions, financial and textual, are always welcome.

#### Subscription information:

\$10 \* 3 issue Sub

\$15 \* 3 issue Supporter

\$20 \* 6 issue Supporter

Checks to "Chicago DSA"

1608 N. Milwaukee, 4th fl.,

Chicago, IL 60647, 312-752-3562

## Religion Commission Leaders to Attend International Congress

Leaders of the DSA Commission on Religion and Socialism will attend the 1994 congress of the International League of Religious Socialism in England in late July.

The DSA delegates to the congress will present a report on DSA's social charter project, and will also discuss the commission's new series of commentaries on rethinking socialism. These commentaries will appear in *Religious Socialism*, the commission's publication, between now and 1996.

The commission believes that the influence of faith traditions in the socialist movement continues to be strong, and hopes that its series of commentaries will make a contribution toward rethinking socialism for the twenty-first century.

#### Subscription information:

\$7.50 per year

*Religious Socialism*, P.O. Box 80

Camp Hill, PA 17001-0080

## Breaking Bread in New York City

**J**oin Cornel West and bell hooks as they lead a discussion among New Yorkers about what divides us, what unites us, and how we may join forces behind a common agenda.

**W**ednesday, June 8 ♦ 7 pm to 10 pm ♦ High School of Fashion Industries Auditorium ♦ 225 West 24 Street (between 7th and 8th Avenues) ♦ Doors open at 6 pm; participants should arrive promptly as program will be taped ♦ For tickets (\$15.00, or \$10.00 low income), call the Learning Alliance at (212) 226-7171 or send your check or money order to The Learning Alliance at 494 Broadway, New York, NY 10012 ♦ For more information, call New York City DSA at (212) 227-2207.

**PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS** *Breaking Bread Collective* ♦ *Breakthrough Political Consulting Service* ♦ *Bronx Voter Participation Project* ♦ *Brooklyn Voter Participation Project* ♦ *Carribbean Cultural Center* ♦ *Center for Constitutional Rights* ♦ *Center for Law and Social Justice of Medgar Evers College* ♦ *Coalition for the Homeless* ♦ *Community Service Society Political Development Office* ♦ *District Council 1707 AFSCME* ♦ *Ebenezer Baptist Church of Ftushing* ♦ *Emmaus House* ♦ *Goddard Riverside Community Center* ♦ *Jews for Racial and Economic Justice* ♦ *The Learning Alliance* ♦ *Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project* ♦ *Local 1199* ♦ *Manhattan Borough President's Office* ♦ *Manhattan Voter Participation Project* ♦ *National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights* ♦ *National Women's Political Caucus of Manhattan* ♦ *New York Democratic Socialists of America* ♦ *West Harlem Independent Democrats* ♦ (List in formation)



# Breaking Bread

## A Multiracial Dialogue

**O**n the evening of June 8, the DSA African American Commission and the New York City DSA local -- in coalition with dozens of other progressive and community organizations in New York City -- will sponsor a major "Breaking Bread" forum featuring cultural critic bell hooks, who teaches at the City College of New York, and DSA Honorary Chair Cornel West. This forum is the most recent product of DSA's Breaking Bread Project, which is designed to bring together progressive activists from diverse communities. Our goal is to nurture honest, constructive dialogue about the steps we must take as individuals and as organizations to forge multiracial progressive movements. The project is inspired by the book *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life* (South End Press, 1991), a book produced collaboratively by hooks and West. In order to set the stage for the June 8 event, we present here a few excerpts from the book, with thanks to South End Press:

For more information about the June 8 Breaking Bread event in New York City, see the notice on page 13.

### ◆ Spirituality and the Struggle Against Market Values

**bell hooks:** How do you perceive the place of spirituality in Black life, in your own sense of religious commitment?

**Cornel West:** First, we have to acknowledge that there is a pervasive impoverishment of the spirit in American society, and especially among Black people. Historically, there have been cultural forces and traditions, like the church, that held cold-heartedness and mean-spiritedness at bay. However, today's impoverishment of the spirit means that this coldness and meanness is becoming more and more pervasive. The church kept these forces at bay by promoting a sense of respect for others, a sense of solidarity, a sense of meaning and value which would usher in the strength to battle against evil.

**bell hooks:** When feminists, particularly White feminists, appropriated the words of Sojourner Truth, they conveniently ignored the fact that her emancipatory politics emerged from her religious faith. People need to remember that the name Isabel Humphrey took, Sojourner Truth, was rooted in her religious faith, that the truth she saw herself seeking was the truth of

Oneness with God and her sense that, by choosing God, she was choosing to serve in the emancipation struggle of Black people.

**Cornel West:** It's important to talk about these great figures like a Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, or Frederick Douglass, to locate them within a tradition. Because, when we talk about the impoverishment of the spirit of the Black community, we are talking about the waning and eroding of the best of a tradition that transmitted values of struggle, that transmitted ways of life and being to the next generation. And our task is to keep the best of that tradition alive, vibrant.

**bell hooks:** In the past, you have talked about "combative spirituality" that seeks to, as you put it, "develop a mode of community that sustains people in their humanity." What do you feel is eroding that kind of dynamic spirituality in Black life.

**Cornel West:** Well, there's no doubt about it, what is eroding it is market forces. What is eroding it is consumerism, hedonism, narcissism, privatism, and careerism of Americans in general, and Black Americans in particular. You cannot have a tradition of resistance and cri-



tique along with pervasive hedonism. It means then that we must have spokesmen for genuine love, care, sacrifice, and risk in the face of market forces that highlight buying, selling, and profit making. And poor communities of course have been so thoroughly inundated and saturated with the more pernicious forms of buying and selling, especially drugs and women's bodies and so forth, that these traditions of care and respect have almost completely broken down.

When our grandmothers are not respected, so that mothers are not respected, fathers have no respect, preachers have no respect -- no one has respect. Respect is externalized, given to those who exercise the most brutal forms of power. Respect goes to the person with the gun; that's what market forces lead to.

◆ **The Responsibility of White Intellectuals**  
**bell hooks:** As long as we, Black academics and intellectuals, are doing work within the context of White supremacy, often what happens is that White theorists draw upon our work and our ideas, and get forms of recognition that are denied Black thinkers. The reality of appropriation has produced a real tension between many Black academics and those White scholars and colleagues who want to talk with us. Often Black scholars, especially feminist thinkers, tell me they fear ideas will be "ripped off" and they'll (White scholars) get the credit. Black folks are willing to share ideas, but there is a feeling now that a White academic might take your idea, write about it, and you'll never be cited. This is upsetting many Black scholars.

**Cornel West:** It's the Elvis Presley syndrome applied to the academic terrain. Internal dynamics of power make it very difficult for credits to be given where they are due, when that credit should be given to an individual who comes from a marginal, subordinated group within this country. It has to do with who has access to the legitimate and prestigious journals, who has access to the publishing houses, and so on. We have seen this phenomenon historically, and the best that we can do to fight against it is to either establish our own institutional networks that would give our texts visibility, or simply continue to bring critique to bear on the manipulation and cooptation that goes on in the mainstream.

◆ **Left Visions and Left Values**  
**bell hooks:** What about your commitment to Left politics? Where did that come from?



**Cornel West:** Presently, we have Black liberals who remain so preoccupied with race -- and race is very important -- that the issues of environment, gender, class, and empire tend to be overlooked. We then get those who present themselves as critics, namely, conservatives, who say race is not as important as the liberals think. What we have is one set of narrow figures criticized by another set of narrow perspectives.

What the Left presents is a way of fusing personal responsibility and the struggle against racism with a concern for class, gender, and environment, which locates Black people in global debates, but does not lose the global perspective when we talk about the context of our homes, about Black community. Yet this Left vision and analysis is still not available to large numbers of Black people.

**bell hooks:** How do we talk to Black people about what it means to be on the Left? Where does that radical transition take place in our own lives? And to what degree does family impact on an individual's political orientation?

**Cornel West:** For me, it means picking up where Ella Baker left off, picking up where Martin Luther King, Jr., left off, and picking up where Michael Harrington left off. All three of these individuals were leftist progressives. All three of these were democratic socialists. And to be influenced by these three legacies is to acknowledge the degree to which we have to keep alive a tradition that highlights democracy, which means public accountability especially of multinational corporations; liberty, which means resisting all forms of cultural authoritarianism, be it from the right wing church, Black ideologues, Black nationalists, or mainstream White media. DL

**Cornel West (left) and bell hooks.**



# DSAAction

## DSA On Line: Painting the Info Highway Pink

The *Wall Street Journal* recently reported that conservatives are light years ahead of the left when it comes to maintaining effective lines of communication on the InterNet and other computer networks. Well, DSA is doing its part to rectify this situation -- the national office now has newer and faster modems, and we're now using our e-mail on a daily basis. Our e-mail address is [dsa@igc.apc.org](mailto:dsa@igc.apc.org).

DSA activists have also organized an on-line forum called "dsanet" on the PeaceNet system. To subscribe to dsanet, send your e-mail address and request to: [hshore@quantum.sdsu.edu](mailto:hshore@quantum.sdsu.edu), which is the address of Herb Shore, the administrative postmaster for dsanet. Dsanet features lively discussions about the future of the left, and the national office regularly posts articles from DL, announcements of events, minutes of leadership meetings, and so forth.

## Delegation to Observe the Mexican Elections

As part of DSA's Americas Project, the DSA Latino Commission is organizing a delegation of DSA members and other labor, human rights, and solidarity activists to participate as observers of the Mexican federal elections on August 21. The rapidly changing nature of Mexican political life creates an opening for what may be the first free elections in Mexico in the current era. Delegations will remain in Mexico for four to eight days and will include high-level meetings with political and human rights leaders.

For more information, contact the DSA Latino Commission at P.O. Box 162394, Sacramento CA 95816, or call Duane Campbell at 916/361-9072.

## Dolores Huerta at the UFW March



Over twelve thousand United Farm Workers members and their supporters marched on the California Capitol building in Sacramento on April 24. The rally marked the end of a 330-mile march from Delano, in which eighty of the UFW's core activists traveled across California farm country in a symbolic act of rebirth for the union.

DSA Honorary Chair Dolores

Huerta was one of the keynote speakers at the April 24 rally. The UFW used the march to launch an aggressive new campaign to organize California's migrant labor pool.

Huerta forcefully denounced California governor Pete Wilson and other political figures for their attempts to make immigrants the scapegoats for the state's economic crisis.

## Summer Events

### ◆ DSA National Activist Conference

How can DSA and the broader left more effectively mobilize progressive activism? How can we nurture vibrant, multiracial DSA locals? How should DSA respond to U.S. foreign policy at this historical moment? These and other tough questions will be addressed during the weekend of August 12-14 at the DSA National Activist Conference (see page 17).

For the first time, DSA's national summer meeting will be held in conjunction with the summer conference of the Youth Section. Please be there!

### ◆ Stonewall 25

DSA will have an official contingent at the June 26 march on the United Nations for lesbian and gay rights (see page 18). Details were not available at press time; for more information, contact Margie Burns at the national office after June 1.

## ☎ Calling DSA?

[212/727-8610]

If you've called us during the past several weeks, you may have noticed our new voice mail system. The new system makes it much easier for callers to leave messages for us, 24 hours a day.

We're working to make the new system as human and user-friendly as possible. If you call us between 10 am and 6 pm Eastern time on weekdays, a staff person will almost always pick up the phone. Our extension numbers are:

Margie Burns, Membership Services: 21  
John McMurria, Financial Coordinator: 22  
Ginny Coughlin, Field Coordinator: 23  
David Glenn, Program Coordinator: 24  
Alan Charney, National Director: 25



# DSA Honors the African National Congress and the People of South Africa



On the occasion of the historic transition to political democracy in South Africa, Democratic Socialists of America honors the millions of South Africans who devoted their lives over three hundred years to the destruction of white supremacy. Without the extraordinary courage and tenacity of the African National Congress and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, this victory would never have been achieved.

DSA offers its strongest support and warmest wishes to the ANC, COSATU, and all other organizations that now face the task of building social and economic justice throughout South Africa.

*-- Resolution passed by the DSA National Political Committee, May Day 1994*

Paul Velasco/Impact Visuals

## The 1994 DSA National Activist Conference August 12-14 ❖ location (in the Midwest) to be announced



This conference will be an exciting chance for you to meet with other dedicated left activists from throughout the country. We'll spend the weekend considering DSA's work and debating future directions for DSA and for socialist activism around the country. Please join us!

**intensive discussions about how to create an effective socialist activism for the next century** ♦ **nuts-and-bolts skills-building sessions for local and commission activists** ♦ **debates on a left analysis of U.S. foreign policy** ♦ **plenty of free time and recreation**

Please reserve a space for me at the conference. I have enclosed \$25 (refundable) as a deposit. I understand that total costs, not including my travel, will be approximately \$125.

Send me more information about the 1994 DSA National Activist Conference.

Enclosed is a donation to help low-income DSA members attend the conference.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

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*Make checks payable to DSA, and return to DSA:  
180 Varick Street, NY, NY 10014. (212) 727-8610*



# Stonewall 25

## *Reflections on a Quarter Century of Gay Politics*

COMPILED BY DOROTHEE BENZ

**U**n June 27 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion -- the birth of the modern lesbian and gay liberation movement. To note the occasion, Democratic Left asked members and friends of DSA's Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission to reflect on Stonewall's meanings in their personal lives and throughout the broad left.

### ◆ Introduction: Dorothee Benz

*DSA Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission;  
New York City DSA*

On the night of June 27, 1969, New York City police set out from the Sixth Precinct on a routine bar raid. But what they encountered at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village was anything but routine, and indeed, it changed the course of history. Crowds gathered outside the bar and jeered the police as they made arrests. Rocks and bottles were thrown, the door of the bar battered with an uprooted parking meter, the building torched. The first gay riot in history had begun.

The rebellion had an electrifying effect; by the third night, gay leaders were circulating newsletters describing the riots as "the hairpin drop heard 'round the world." (In the gay subculture of the 1960s, "dropping hairpins" was slang for dropping hints that one was gay.) Within a month after Stonewall, the Gay Liberation Front had formed; by the end of 1969, gay liberation groups had

sprung up on campuses and in cities around the country.

The Stonewall Rebellion was neither the beginning nor the end nor even the high point of American gay rights efforts, but it was unquestionably its most important moment. For those that remember Stonewall, it marks the day they began to fight back, the day they, like Rosa Parks, simply said, "No more." For those who came after, it is now an icon of the end of generations of repression that they can only vaguely imagine.

The Rebellion sparked a movement that mobilized thousands of gays and lesbians to fight on their own behalf and it marked the end of an era when gays were universally reviled and persecuted. Prior to Stonewall, bar raids were commonplace, as were police entrapment, government censorship, and the certainty that revelation of one's homosexuality would cost one's job and most likely one's family.

Today, lesbian and gay (and now queer) political organizations abound, as do social and cultural institutions. A culture and commu-

nity have been built, and for the first time in history, young gays and lesbians first coming out have role models and organizations to turn to. Measured against the social and political situation in 1969, the achievements of gay activists during the last quarter century have been extraordinary.

And yet, of course, equality for lesbians and gay men is a far cry from reality. Thousands of gays and lesbians every year still lose their jobs or their homes, are shunned by their families, are assaulted or killed, and live in fear -- simply because of their sexuality.

This year's Stonewall anniversary commemorations are an occasion to remember and celebrate, to honor and pay tribute to those that first fought back, and to rededicate ourselves to the unfinished project of ending second-class citizenship for gays and lesbians. The events will culminate in a march on the United Nations on June 26, at which more than a million people are expected to bring home the point once again that love is a human right. Join them.



## ◆ Michael Lighty

*DSA Labor Task Force;  
former DSA National Director*

I was in the third grade in 1968, one year before Stonewall inaugurated the contemporary gay liberation movement. In the middle of the school year, my teacher abruptly left. The principal resigned at the same time. No one said why. Many years later I found out that these men were having an affair. The sin of moral turpitude had been committed, and the school board saw to it that our young minds were protected. In retrospect, the injustice of it seems striking -- and yet at the same time it was a predictable response, an emblematic pre-Stonewall response.

As closeted homosexuals, these men had no chance of being themselves and being school teachers in the supposedly "liberal" college town where I grew up. The mass movement out of the closet that began with Stonewall changed that. There are gay and lesbian school teachers everywhere, and they are still fighting for the right of themselves and their students to be free from violence and hatred.

The liberation movement Stonewall spawned demanded not only personal freedom, but fundamental social change. Those '60s radicals believed that gay liberation was impossible without a feminist and socialist transformation of American society. That's an enduring legacy still meaningful for gay men and lesbians in DSA.

## ◆ Chris Riddiough & Judith Nedrow

*DC/MD/NOVA DSA;  
DSA Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual &  
Feminist Commissions*

It's hard to believe that it's already twenty-five years since Stonewall -- so much has happened, so much has changed in that time. When we were growing up in the 1950s in



Middle America, neither of us knew anyone whom we knew was gay -- we didn't even know what "gay" or "lesbian" or "homosexual" meant.

For girls in those days, the only choices were to get married and have children or to become a teacher -- or, if you were Catholic, become a nun. In high school Judy considered the convent route and Chris teaching. Stonewall -- along with the peace movement, the student movement, and the women's movement -- changed that. Since Stonewall we've become, among other things, lesbian socialist feminist activists. Stonewall was one of those critical moments through which we learned that we could change our lives and we could change society.

That has been an enduring lesson for us as socialist feminists -- the

knowledge that the changes we want to see in this country are sometimes possible. But Stonewall is emblematic as well of the ways in which socialists today need to rethink socialism. We need to think in terms of gender and sexuality, of race and class. To be an effective socialist movement for the social movements, we must learn that message well. So that as we work for a national health program, we understand that such a program must address AIDS and women's reproductive health. And as we begin our campaign for a new social charter for the Americas, we recognize that it must include gender issues as a central part of our demands. We must go beyond the Old and the New Left and "reinvent" socialism in light of Stonewall and all that has happened since.



## ◆ Peter Laarman

*Senior Minister, Judson Memorial Church, New York City*

For me as a student in far-off Providence, 1969 was primarily about ending the Vietnam War and finding ways to be focussed politically in ways that could be useful following graduation. I didn't think of the Stonewall "riot" as something that was happening to me, because I was choosing to defer issues of sexuality. Of course, I'd read my Norman O. Brown along with everybody else, and I knew that our apocalyptic dream of political liberation portended personal liberation as well. But at age 21 I was doubly repressed by a strait-laced Calvinist upbringing and by the left's disparagement of perverse sexualities as so much "bourgeois" distraction.

Now I understand the profound difference Stonewall made to me in opening up a cultural and psychological space that I could begin to occupy. It's quite possible I could have missed the political exhilaration of the gay '70s had I had an excuse to keep my politics and my personal stuff in neat little compartments. Stonewall not only removed any excuse, but the gay liberation movement it both reflected and projected virtually demanded an accounting from semi-closeted lefties like me. I have never considered it appropriate

to put my sexuality in the face of progressive colleagues -- not because of cowardice but because making an issue of it to my mind defeats the point, which is to make gayness unexceptional. Thanks to Stonewall's legacy, however, I did finally grasp in my own experience how much of the personal is political; I grasped how much of my rage against injustice actually had a profound personal edge, despite my putative white male access to power; and I grasped how a dreary socialism that makes no room for varieties of sexual attraction is fundamentally no different from the asphyxiating religion I'd been fighting all my life to break away from.

## ◆ Claire Kaplan

*Co-chair, DSA Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission; Charlottesville DSA*

I was a confused ninth grader in Long Beach, California when the Stonewall uprising etched itself into history. I have absolutely no recollection of news reports; at the age of almost 15, I barely knew what "queer" was, and wasn't even close to identifying myself as such. For others of my generation, Stonewall was a bright light of hope, of survival. For me at the time, survival was finding a way through the barriers created by sexism, sexist violence, and anti-Semitism.

Twenty-five years later, I recognize that the men and women who raised hell in Greenwich Village that summer forced sexual radicalism onto the political agenda -- in particular, onto the left agenda, where it had previously been ignored. I look forward to the day when we embrace the Stonewall rebels as our forbears, as we do the Flint sit-down strikers of 1936-37. This is not a matter of "inclusion" but a matter of understanding that socialism has many faces.

As socialists, we too often still do not face the connections between gender politics and our broad vision. We must be able to connect our politics with the joyous celebration of gender-blurring sexuality exhibited at gay pride marches. It's time we honored and recognized Stonewall as a message for all of us. Coming out as a socialist has become as hazardous as coming out as lesbian or gay or bi. We need that bold, proud, outrageous, "get used to it" attitude, and we need to have fun while we're doing it.

## ◆ Lisa Foley

*D.C./Maryland/Northern Virginia DSA; DSA Feminist Commission; DSA Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission*

I was nine years old when the Stonewall Rebellion took place, and I have no direct recollection of the event. When I think about Stonewall, I think about what I now know about gay life before Stonewall -- especially that sexual minorities endured a degree of social and state repression that I have never experienced.

When I think about Stonewall itself, it also strikes me that most powerful collective actions appear, in hindsight, to have been *spontaneous* collective actions. As a social change advocate, I do not have a clear enough sense of how theory or practice ultimately plays out in actions as decisive and far-reaching as Stonewall. I would be interested to hear



Linda Eber/Impact Visuals



stories about how activists in 1969 presented a vision of Gay Liberation that actually made resistance an option for patrons and neighbors of the Stonewall Inn.

### ◆ Robert Hinde

*DSA Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Commission;  
Ithaca DSA*

Suppose that a participant in the Stonewall riots fell asleep shortly after that historic weekend, only to wake up, Rip van Winkle-like, twenty-five years later in 1994. Would she or he see many connections between today's movement and the one left behind in 1969?

Perhaps not. After all, the intervening twenty-five years witnessed: three (!) marches on Washington for queer rights and liberation; the election and re-election of hundreds of openly les/bi/gay officials at the lo-

cal, state, and national levels; passage of dozens of local anti-discrimination laws; and serious efforts to legalize same-sex marriages and to force the armed services to accept openly queer people.

And that's only half the story. In the same twenty-five years, we've seen the emergence of an epidemic disease that has decimated the queer community and killed millions around the world. The right wing has begun a national campaign to repeal those limited steps toward equality embodied in local anti-discrimination ordinances, and has attempted to enact blanket, state-wide prohibitions on similar measures.

Faced with these radical and contradictory changes between 1969 and today, our hypothetical Stonewall veteran might conclude that his or her experience in the riots carries

little relevance today. This would be a mistake. For Stonewall reminds us that a small group of people, diverse in character but united in purpose, can actually do something that will be remembered years later and will thereby lay the psychological groundwork for future activism. Of course, the rioters' intention at the time wasn't to pave the way for everything from ACT UP to the Log Cabin Clubs; they simply wanted to be treated equally, with the decency that is every person's due. As we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of that weekend when their anger spilled over into action, let's remember that today's struggles, however modest they seem right now, can live on beyond the present moment. They are truly "seeds of change," our (potentially) lasting gifts to future generations.

## Letters to Democratic Left



### The Health Care Struggle

Dear Editors,

Susan Cowell, in "Round Two: What the Single-Payer Movement Must Do During the Coming Months" (March/April 1994), urges us to "seek improvements" in the Clinton health plan and attack only the conservative alternatives. While espousing single-payer principles, she cautions against joining in the attacks on Clinton's proposed "health alliances," those bureaucratic monsters whose powers to regulate the insurance industry will, despite Cowell's claims, be anything but "substantial."

Well, we all saw what happened to that other form of social insurance, catastrophic health coverage for seniors, when the public finally understood its economics. The same thing will happen when Clinton's

monstrous new bureaucracies start sucking up huge sums from the nation's health budget, and consumers realize that the alliances' only cost-control mechanism, limiting insurance premium hikes, is driving down the quality of their health care.

By the time Clinton's insurance-company-preservation scheme fizzles, the public will be so disgusted with "big government" that it'll be another generation before we'll get another shot at real health reform.

To truly "advance our agenda," in Cowell's words, we should fight to stop the Clinton plan along with the Cooper, Michel, and Chafee bills, and keep building grass-roots support for the only way to achieve universal, comprehensive and affordable health care: a single-payer system.

*John Glasel  
Gray Panthers of Bergen County  
Tenafly, New Jersey*

Dear Editors,

I made a big mistake when filling out the DSA questionnaire on national health care. About half of the respondents, including myself, said we should support the Clinton plan, but attempt to get some single-payer aspects incorporated into it.

I mistakenly assumed that the ruling class of the United States would generally go along with the Clinton plan, not with enthusiasm, but believing that it would serve as a national compromise.

But in recent years the ruling element just hasn't operated that way. They seem to believe they can have it all! Hence the rise of the "Cooper plan," etc.

I think many of us have learned our lesson. DSA should unequivocally support the single-payer plan.

*Allan H. Keith  
Mattoon, Illinois*



# DSA Locals and Organizing Committees

## Northeast

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**ALBANY** Local, Mark Schaeffer, 518-463-5611  
399 State Street, Albany NY 12210  
**BALTIMORE** Local, Laila Atallah, 301-467-9424  
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194 Alden Avenue, New Haven CT 06515  
**DC/MD/NORTHERN VA** Local, Bill Mosley, 202-483-3299  
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**ITHACA** Local, Liza Bartlett, 607-256-5341  
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**NASSAU COUNTY NY** Local, Mark Finkel, 516-538-8246  
662 Howard Avenue, West Hempstead NY 11552  
**NEW YORK CITY** Local, Julia Fitzgerald, 212-962-1079  
15 Dutch Street #500, New York NY 10038  
**PHILADELPHIA** Local, Lisa Holgash, 215-248-9013  
125 East Mount Airy Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19119  
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**READING-BERKS PA** Local, Bob Millar, 215-944-0991  
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**SUFFOLK COUNTY NY** Local, Hugh Cleland, 516-751-0340  
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In the July/August issue of *Democratic Left* we plan to run a feature on "progressive" vacation spots -- places that democratic socialists can be proud to visit.

If you know of any vacation areas that fit this description (for political, social, or cultural reasons), please share them with us! Send us a 100-200 word description, including as much information as you can squeeze in. Deadline: Friday, June 3.

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# Janie Higgins Reports



## SLEEPING MYOPIA

Getting enough sleep lately? An article in the April 24 *New York Times Magazine* sounded some familiar warnings: Americans are sleeping too little and too irregularly, at great cost to their health, safety, and general well-being. All of this is well-taken, but don't turn to this article for any serious analysis about *why* we're sleep-deprived. Like almost all *Times* feature writing, the piece assumes a purely upper-middle-class universe (except for the predictable brief appearances by airline pilots and nuclear plant workers). The article surmised that Americans sleep too little because we're trying "to cram as much into life as possible." We cannot blame our sleepiness on "anyone but ourselves." Try telling that to the majority of U.S. workers, who in fact sleep too little because they're scrambling to cope with the decline of wages, the return of mandatory overtime, and temporary jobs whose time-shifts are reassigned on a daily basis. (For an excellent treatment of how the changing labor market has injured our everyday lives, check out Juliet Schor's *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* [Basic Books, 1991]).

## RICHARD NIXON, 1913-1994

"The association of Mitchell, Stans, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Barker, and Hunt created a terracing of elites: corporate lawyers and agents, ideological toughies, CIA veterans, underground men. Behind them stood the wealth of American business, or a large segment of it, which was being passed around with lavish abandon. If George Meany could not bring himself to support McGovern, the American corporations, with a keener sense of class realities, seem to have recognized that Nixon was their man. And they were ready to pay." -- Irving Howe in the May 1974 issue of *Democratic Left*.

## DUBIOUS BULLETS

Hot on the blades of Disney's "Anaheim Mighty Ducks" hockey team comes the Colorado Silver Bullets, a minor league baseball team sponsored by the far-right Coors Brewing Company. The twist is that The Silver Bullets are the nation's first professional all-women's baseball team in nearly forty years. The Bullets will compete against men's teams, and, it's claimed, eventually send their players to major league teams. Feminist breakthrough? Cynical public-relations ploy? Side-show exploitation? All of the above? You make the call.

# Democratic Left Labor Day Issue 1994

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 principal 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 10, 1994. Make checks payable to DSA, or pay by credit card.

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