

the magazine of the
**Democratic
Socialists of
America**



Organizing against Corporate Globalization

- Defending the European Welfare State
- Creating New Socialisms in Latin America
- Organizing in the U.S.

DEMOCRATIC

LEFT

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U.S. Social Forum Comes to Atlanta

Milton Tambor

The first-ever U.S. Social Forum (USSF) will be hosted by Atlanta this June 27-July 2. Inspired by the 1999 mass anti-globalization action in Seattle and the 2001 World Social Forum (WSF) in Brazil, 150 Social Forums have been held throughout the world. This will be the first forum to occur in the United States. The call to the gathering, "Another World is Possible," directly challenges the injustice of the global corporate economic system. The WSF is intended to forge international links among organizations, individuals, and movements in order to foster a shared vision of social and economic justice. The WSF is a people's alternative to the World Economic Forum and the attempts of corporate elites to impose austerity programs on developing nations that harm the poor while creating huge debts for those countries to the international banks.

The U.S. Social Forum is expected to draw thousands of activists for the five-day gathering. The gathering will include activists from the labor, community organizing, immigrant activist and indigenous communities, as well as evacuees from the Gulf Coast disaster. These diverse activists will share strategies and address key issues such as the continuing Gulf Coast crisis, immigrant rights and environmental and economic justice. A broad-based USSF National Planning Committee drafted the original call to the forum in early 2006. The national planning committee includes solid representation by youth and labor; organizations represented on the committee include the Service Employees International Union, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, Jobs With Justice and United Students Against Sweatshops.

It is precisely because of the broad range of progressive and labor organizations involved in the Social Forum that DSA is planning a high level of participation. The Social Forum model in other countries provides an opportunity for activists to share experiences and discuss common perspectives that enable activists to build a political community with similar demands. In the United States, it is particularly difficult to bring communities together to discuss their common future.

Many of us believe that we are at the beginning of a new political period in which there is more space for the left to push its agenda. The just-released Pew Foundation Report on Political Trends and Core Values confirms that support for the Republican Party has dropped significantly. But what is the left's agenda? After a 30-year ice age for left politics, followed by ten years when only the most basic defensive politics was possible, the critical question is what are we demanding, what are our priorities for this Congress and the next? The Social Forum is one of a number of important venues for progressives to work on developing a common agenda.

DSA will be presenting a perspective at the Social Forum that we are labeling *Towards an Economic Justice Agenda*. We will be presenting it for discussion, as something that might be the basis for a common agenda for the next few years (DSA members will be getting copies of the first draft in the mail in the next few weeks). The Social Forum is one of a number of progressive venues where we will be presenting this draft over the next few months.

Atlanta local organizers with roots in Southern activism welcome the challenge to host the USSF, as it provides the opportunity to help build a vibrant social justice movement in the South. The Atlanta local organizing committee has begun formulating a schedule of events, including an opening march and an outreach concert. The next three days will include plenaries and workshops relating to the themes of developing consciousness, connecting visions, and drawing up strategies. A unity soccer tournament, involving Latino, Caribbean and African immigrant communities, is also being planned. Events will take place at the Atlanta Civic Center, downtown hotels, and at cultural and civil rights centers throughout the city.



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Democratic Socialists of America share a vision of a humane international social order based on equitable distribution of resources, meaningful work, a healthy environment, sustainable growth, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships. Equality, solidarity and democracy can only be achieved through international political and social cooperation aimed at ensuring that economic institutions benefit all people. We are dedicated to building truly international social movements—of unionists, environmentalists, feminists and people of color—which together can elevate global justice of brutalizing global competition.

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Social Forum

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Atlanta DSA has become very involved in the process of supporting the Social Forum. Following a presentation by the USF lead organizer at a membership meeting, the local decided to be an organizational endorser. A dozen members immediately registered on line. DSAers are focusing their participation on two of the USSF planning committees: outreach and communication. Labor outreach committee members, working with the leaderships of the Atlanta AFL-CIO, have secured support and participation from the national AFL-CIO, as well as commitments from locals and organizations representing labor educators and union activists. DSA's presence at the Social Forum will be jointly organized by the National Office and Atlanta DSA and will include a number of forums as well as a reception during the Social Forum. DSA members are encouraged to participate in the Social Forum, and members who are attending should let the National Office know.

Activists can help build the USSF by doing the following:

- 1) registering and mobilizing their friends and co-workers to attend the USSF;
- 2) lobbying their local union or community organization to become an endorser;
- 3) creating a solidarity fund for those who may need resources in order to attend; and
- 4) submitting specific proposals for workshops.

Information regarding registration, transportation, accommodations and criteria for workshop proposals can be found at the website ussocialforum.org.

Save the Dates Now!

DSA National Convention
November 9-11, 2007
Atlanta, Georgia

Globalization and European Welfare States

By Evelyne Huber and John D. Stephens

It is worth opening this article on European welfare states by reminding the readers of *Democratic Left* of the achievements of the generous welfare states of Northwestern Europe – spanning from Switzerland and France north to the four Nordic countries. The low levels of income inequality reached by the Nordic countries have only been matched by the Communist countries of Eastern Europe before the fall of the Berlin Wall. The low levels of poverty, even among vulnerable groups like the aged, families with children, and, above all, single mothers were (and are) unmatched internationally. Our favorite statistic in this regard is the comparison of poverty levels of single mothers in Sweden, 5 percent, and the United States, around 50 percent, in the early 1990s. The welfare states of northern Continental Europe, Germany and the Benelux countries, though not matching the Nordic achievements, were not far behind. Complementing the generous welfare states were macro-economic policies that up until the first oil crisis of 1973 delivered very low levels of unemployment and high levels of growth compared to other advanced industrial economies.

This model seemed to unravel on the Continent in the 1980s and, with the unemployment crises in Finland and Sweden, in the Nordic countries in the 1990s. After decades of expansion, these countries began to trim entitlements in various programs and re-orient others. A common diagnosis (hereafter the *globalization thesis*) from both the left and the right was that the advent of the era of welfare state retrenchment was a byproduct of globalization – decreases in barriers to the movement of goods and capital across borders (such as tariffs and capital controls) and increased volume of the actual flow of goods and capital.

The neo-liberal argument, typically found in analyses of European economies in the *Economist* and articles on Europe in the *New York Times* and also in the writings of academic economists, goes as follows: as markets for goods, capital, and more recently labor have become more open, all countries have

been exposed to more competition, making the liabilities of generous social benefits more apparent as they raise production costs. Furthermore, neo-liberal analysts contend that when one adds the costs of social benefits to the market wage paid to employees, the total wage costs make enterprises in these countries less competitive. In addition, generous social benefits, by raising the reservation wage, make it particularly difficult for enterprises at the low end of the wage market to compete. The low levels of wage dispersion and employment protection laws (such as seniority hiring rules and high levels of severance pay) characteristic of European economies are further competitive disadvantages, particularly for low wage employers. As capital markets have become more open and capital controls increasingly unworkable, capital in these countries moves elsewhere in search of lower wage costs. Hence, governments respond directly as they recognize the costs of generous social benefits and cut the benefits to regain competitiveness – or, if they attempt to retain benefits, growth declines and unemployment rises, and the resulting tax shortfalls and spiraling social expenditures force them to cut benefits in order to reduce deficits. Either way, the welfare state undergoes retrenchment.

The problem with the neo-liberal argument outlined above is that there is very little, if any, evidence that the generous welfare states of Northwestern Europe hinder these countries' export competitiveness. This should not be surprising because these countries have always had very open markets for goods – that is, low tariff and non-tariff barriers – and were very dependent on the competitiveness of their export sectors in the decades after World War II in which the welfare state was constructed. Moreover, trade openness, measured by barriers to trade or by the volume of imports and exports, has only increased modestly since the end of the "Golden Age of capitalism." In fact, at the very time these countries were trimming social benefits, their export sectors were doing well. So, for example, in the mid-1990s,

when both Germany and Sweden were cutting some welfare state entitlements (albeit modestly), their export industries were enjoying banner years.

The neo-liberal version globalization thesis is a commonplace among journalists and editorialists in North America and even to some extent in Europe; yet, it is striking that scholars studying welfare states in advanced capitalist democracies almost universally reject the thesis. In his 2000 edited volume,

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The New Politics of the Welfare State, Paul Pierson, one of the most prominent welfare state scholars, expresses what now has become the dominant view among welfare state scholars. Not globalization, but (1) slowed growth caused by the transition from the industrial to the service economy, (2) the expansion of welfare commitments inherited from the past, (3) demographic change, and (4) changes in family structures, above all the decline of the male breadwinner family, have been responsible for the movement to welfare state retrenchment, and reform, in the past two decades. To take an important example, in the fifties and sixties, most of these Northwestern European countries installed comprehensive earnings-related, contributory pension systems in which the working population paid for the pensions of the retired population – so-called PAYGO systems. At the time, high fertility rates and rapid wage growth made PAYGO an attractive policy. By the mid-1990s, as a result of much lower fertility and wage growth being half of what it had been in the 1960s, the working population was smaller relative to the retired population and the cross generational earnings differential was much smaller, so all of these PAYGO systems faced financial crises.

The problems posed by the growth of the service sector were highlighted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's 1994 Jobs Study that prescribed similar policies to stimulate employment growth to those of neo-liberal economists and journalists but identified the decline of manufacturing employment, not globalization, as the culprit. It identified high labor costs (due to wage compression, a high reservation wages created by generous welfare state benefits, and high payroll taxes) as the obstacle to employment growth in the service sector. The U.S. economy serves as an example of high employment in the low-wage private services sector. But developing a sector of working poor does not fit into a welfare state model designed to keep people out of poverty.

We do not mean to dismiss the important effects of globalization on the broader political economies of these countries and thus indirectly on welfare state policies. The decontrol of capital markets has had a huge impact on the macro-economic policies of all of these countries, but particularly on countries like Norway, Sweden, and Finland which used barriers to cross-border capital movements to provide low interest rates to stimulate investment and to privilege business investors over other users of capital during the "Golden Age." With the elimination of controls on capital flows between countries, governments can no longer control both the interest rate and exchange rate. If a government decides to pursue a stable exchange rate, it must accept the interest rate which is determined by international financial markets. The absence of capital controls makes the option of setting low interest rates while accepting a depreciating currency unattractive, as it results in inflation, which greatly complicates wage bargaining. As a result of the decontrol

of international financial markets, competition from non-OECD countries for investment funds, and the world wide debt build up in the wake of the two oil shocks, real interest rates increased from 1.4% in the sixties to 5.6% in the early nineties. This rise in the real cost of capital has contributed considerably to the slowdown in European growth rates.

As a result of decontrol of domestic financial markets (which was in many cases stimulated by international financial deregulation), government's ability to privilege business investors over other borrowers also became more limited. Countries, such as those of Scandinavia, which relied on financial control to target business investment were particularly hard hit as businesses moved from a situation in which real interest rates offered to them via government subsidies, tax concessions, and regulations were actually negative to a situation in which they had to pay the rates set by international markets. External financial decontrol also limits a government's ability to employ fiscal stimulation as a tool, as fiscal deficits are considered risky by financial markets and either require a risk premium on interest rates or put downward pressure on foreign exchange reserves. Finally, because of the interest rate penalty that international currency markets made countries with a history of devaluation pay, countries effectively dropped competitive devaluation as a policy tool and the twelve European Monetary Union countries went so far as to completely eliminate the possibility of currency adjustment. The European Growth and Stability pact which limits budget deficits to 3 percent of Gross Domestic Product (among other things) further narrows countries' latitude for macro economic management. Even those countries outside of the EMU, like Sweden and Denmark, have little control over interest rates and other aspects of monetary policy. Increasingly, the burden of macro-economic adjustment in European countries falls on the wage bargaining system.

The resilience of the social democratic welfare state in the Nordic countries is rooted in the high levels of employment prevalent in these societies. The dependency ratio – the ratio of all those employed to all those too young, too old, too sick, or unwilling to work or unemployed – is much more favorable than in the Continental welfare states. For instance, in Denmark this ratio was about 1:1 in 2000; for every working person, there was one non-working, or dependent person. In Belgium, the ratio was 1:1.6; for every working person there were 1.6 non-working persons. This means that many more people pay taxes to support the welfare state and fewer people make claims on it, which makes it feasible to sustain generous benefits for those who need them. In other words, Denmark can sustain a much higher level of benefits than Belgium with the same level of taxation.

The higher employment levels are due to higher women's labor force participation rates and fewer people on disability, early pensions, or long-term unemployment. Both of these variables

are heavily influenced by social policy. The Nordic countries have policies in place that facilitate the integration of mothers with small children into the labor market, such as parental leave, child care, and part-time work arrangements with social benefits. The public sector services provided to families – not just for child care but also for elderly care, continuing education, transport, etc. – constitute an alternative path to employment generation, superior in job quality to the private service sector. Public sector service jobs provide decent wages, working conditions, and benefits, thus forming part and parcel of the generous welfare state strategy for those working in the sector as well as those receiving the services. The provision of quality public services in health and education, including pre-school education, also makes a major contribution to the “human capital” base of the Nordic societies. This is particularly true at the bottom, as shown by the fact that the scores of the bottom quintile in the OECD/Statistics Canada literacy tests were by far the highest in the Nordic countries, while the scores of the top quintile were as high as anywhere else.

When unemployment began to rise in the 1970s, the Continental countries attempted to reduce its scale by sending older workers into early retirement and easing entry into long-term disability schemes. The latter grew to catastrophic proportions in the Netherlands, for instance, supporting some 900,000 people by 1990 rather than the planned-for 200,000, so that it had to be curtailed. In contrast, the Nordic countries emphasized active labor market policies, improving their retraining and job placement schemes. They maintained high short-term unemployment insurance replacement rates and over time increased activation requirements – the obligation of recipients to participate in retraining and to accept new jobs. By the early 2000s the governments in the Continental welfare states acknowledged how counterproductive these labor force reduction policies had become and embarked on the hard road to reform, following the Nordic countries in emphasizing activation policies. But what was relatively easy to do in the 1970s in the Nordic countries was immeasurably more difficult in the Continental countries in the 1990s. What is obvious from a social point of view does not necessarily make as much sense from an individual point of view. As the former social democratic Minister of Social Affairs and Pensions in Belgium, Frank Vandenbroucke, complained at a conference we attended at Berkeley several years ago, “How do I explain to a blue collar worker who is used to seeing his co-workers retire in their late fifties that he has to keep working until 65?”

In its 1997 European Employment Strategy, the EU committed itself to the goal of employment of 70 percent of the working age population. Since the Nordic countries have consistently exceeded this target with employment rates of 75-80 percent, it should not be surprising that their activation policies and work



Paid paternity leave in Sweden encourages active male parenting and helps increase female labor market participation.

and family policies (universal high quality day care, generous parental leave, etc.) have been identified by the EU in its “Open Method of Coordination” as best practices. The only existing alternative path to high employment levels is the one represented by the less-socialistic Anglo-American welfare states, though even these countries with employment rates of 68-72 percent cannot match the Nordic countries. But the EU effectively closed the door on this path when it added the goals of reducing social exclusion and poverty as well as investing in new skills required by the information age and knowledge economy at the Lisbon Summit in March 2000. Pursuit of the Anglo-American low-skill low-wage path to high private service employment would necessarily require large increases in poverty and social exclusion that would be unacceptable to the EU.

If Nordic policies show the way forward in the long run, the next steps for many of the Continental European countries are fraught with difficulties. In the short run, activation policies, day care, and parental leave cost money. It would appear that the magic bullet for countries such as Germany and France which suffer from high levels of unemployment due to deficient domestic demand would be to increase spending on such policies, thereby creating (public) employment, stimulating domestic demand, investing in future human capital, and stimulating the supply of (mainly female) labor. However, both Germany and France are already in violation of the Growth and Stability pact on deficit levels and are constrained on the monetary side by the conservative interest rate policies of the European Central Bank.

Nevertheless, the European experience shows that while globalization presents its challenges, it need not stifle the efforts of national governments to achieve a greater level of economic justice and equality. This is a message that elected officials in the United States badly need to hear.

Evelyne Huber and John Stephens teach political science at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Their most recent book is Development and Crisis of the Welfare State (Chicago, 2001).

On Left Dreams and New Socialisms: Latin America and the Project of the Human

Corey D. B. Walker

With the ascendancy of left-leaning governments throughout Latin America, the global left has begun to take note of the strategies, tactics, and politics of an emerging alternative world. Enigmatic and iconic figures like Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia, along with less stridently leftist politicians like Néstor Kirchner in Argentina and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brazil, have placed Latin America at the center of leftist dreams as well as animating hopes for a socialist future.

Of course, this recent development is not without precedent. One would only need to look back to the mid-twentieth century to view an equally euphoric time in Latin America as leftist movements attempted to transform the relations of labor, capital, and politics only to be repelled by violent reactionary forces intent on installing and maintaining authoritarian regimes and demodictatorships in the interests of containing a communist menace.

This history notwithstanding, the recent Latin American turn to the left marks the emergence of the most intriguing phenomenon to erupt on the global scene in some years. These new political movements crystallize and concretize a new leftist political project with the potential to radically reorient the relations between labor and capital in the developing as well as the capitalist world.

This development is particularly apt when, as David Harvey notes in the new introduction to *The Limits of Capital*, “the net worth of the 358 richest people in the world [is] ‘equal to the combined income of the poorest 45 per cent of the world’s population – 2.3 billion people,” when the efforts of a retrenched and newly consolidated capitalism have supplanted the crises of capital of the 1970s, and when the ideology of the free market has colonized the social, political, and theoretical space of the democratic project.

Indeed, Latin America has come to symbolize the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of a global left that has been stalked by death and haunted by despair. But Latin America – just like previous symbolic socialist imaginaries of the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba – cannot serve as a reservoir to draw always already constructs for a global socialist future. Indeed, in order to critically analyze and engage this new political moment, the global left in general – and leftist formations in the advanced capitalist states in particular – must understand the emergence

of a much more robust possibility presented by the events of Latin America, namely the (re)construction of human being and belonging. That is, the project of the human.

Thus, the political event of Latin America in our contemporary moment must be approached by way of critically calibrating the multiple tendencies afloat within the always complex and multiply-determined field of the political along with the various social, cultural, and ideological tendencies that are reframing the very terrain of politics. Unlike most of the widely disseminated analyses of the region that focus exclusively on the formal political expressions of the Latin American left turn, we now need a considered interrogation of how the politics of an ever-evolving socialism articulate with populism, nationalism, and new political subjectivities. In turn, we must begin to unravel the complex ways in which a Latin American politics of socialism is linked with new understandings of the relations of the economics of (re)distribution that aim to give rise to new expressions of human being and belonging.

The motley cast of characters responsible for the resurgence of the left in Latin America – peasants, indigenous peoples, African-descended peoples, working class nationals, former guerilla leaders, and critically conscious women – has fundamentally redrawn the frames of what constitutes the political, along with advancing new claims on the power and operations of the state. More importantly, these formations challenge the material realities instantiated and supported by the globalization of neoliberal economic schemes and theories. By critically linking new modes of political solidarity along lines of difference, the left tide in Latin America instantiates a much more complex notion of citizenship that supplants the homogenous and abstract citizen of traditional liberal democracies. Moreover, this motley cast of characters forces those leftist dreamers in the advanced capitalist world to recast their political desires for a properly formal political arena and a homogenous political subject who aspires only to traditional procedural reform of actually existing liberal capitalist democracy.

What these new movements bring to the fore is the necessity to think through the populist logics, residual identities, and new political formations that lie outside of the confines of the state proper. It is these *extrapolitical* logics that inform the procedures, methods, and operations of state and economy in the interests of



Bolivarian Revolution: U.S. irony?

the human. In other words, a new idea of the role and function of the modern nation-state is taking shape that seeks to challenge the apparently smooth textures of global capitalism and its political program of liberal democracy in order to bring about a much more robust flourishing of humanity.

The new openings in Latin America force those of us in the global north to recast our theoretical as well as our cartographic frameworks in linking new forms of political subjectivity with expressions of cultural solidarity and economic emancipation. Our analysis of the situation in Latin America cannot be approached outside of a critical interrogation of the political and cultural economies of the Caribbean. For instance, the imperial ambitions of United States in the Latin American region – as evidenced by the 2002 attempted removal of Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez – must be linked with similar ambitions and aspirations that have washed on the shores of Haiti with the toppling of the democratically elected regime of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004. Indeed, although there are a number of distinctions between the two regions, Latin America and the Caribbean share a number of similarities on the levels of political

economy, polity, culture, and history. The novelty of new political subjectivities, along with the challenges to this latest phase of capitalist globalization, requires that our analyses not be limited by orthodox categories that de-link these two regions.

The resurgence of the multiple socialist tendencies in Latin American represents a critical moment for articulating new forms of social, political, and economic life. Indeed, these efforts represent a radical experiment in the ever-evolving project of the human. It is an opening that raises more questions and more possibilities for human being and belonging. Instead of approaching these multiple, complex, and contradictory events in Latin America with ossified frameworks and reified categories, we must begin again to think these new material formations in all their richness and complexity that is quite suggestive for new possibilities of socialist futures.

Corey D. B. Walker teaches Africana Studies at Brown University and is a member of DSA's National Political Committee. These remarks were delivered at the 2007 YDS Conference, "Justice Beyond Borders: Democracy and Socialism in the 21st Century."

The Missing Piece of the Immigration Debate

Bill Mosley

In a nation of immigrants, immigration stood perhaps second only to the war in Iraq as the issue that most roiled the nation's political waters in 2006. House and Senate immigration bills duelled to a standstill while the newspapers, airwaves and

blogosphere filled with voices offering their own "solutions." On the right: build a wall between the United States and Mexico, hunt down and throw out (and/or imprison) illegal aliens, and institute a guest-worker program. On the left: put undocumented immigrants on the path to citizenship and help them fight for better jobs and lives here in the United States.

Seldom heard on either side of the debate was discussion of changing the conditions that force people to leave their homelands in the first place. That the right is loath to broach this idea is no surprise; that the left hasn't taken it up more forcefully is.

Finding fault with the most recent legislation to come out of Congress, especially the enforcement-heavy House bill, is easy. That legislation features the building of a wall running along much of the U.S.-Mexican border that, by some estimates, would cost more than \$7 billion – this coming on top of more than \$30 billion spent on border enforcement since 1994. The House bill also would require the expulsion of the approximately 12 million undocumented workers and their families currently living in the United States, an act of ethnic cleansing that would rival the Balkan debacle of the last decade. While the Senate bill, supported by President Bush, is not as harsh – it would offer a path to citizenship for many undocumented residents – it calls for a guest-worker program that would in fact create a class of



indentured servants with few rights in the workplace or the society at large.

As many have pointed out, enforcement doesn't work when it comes to immigration. If the economic opportunities are great enough, people will risk deportation, imprisonment, even death to come here. An estimated 500,000 people illegally enter the U.S. from Mexico each year, with some 4,000 of them dying in the process since 1994, many of them in the harsh Arizona desert.

Despite what the nativists and the demagogues in Congress who pander to them say, immigrants come to the United States not to corrupt our culture or – in one of the wildest exercises in conspiracy-spinning in recent years – to serve as an advance guard for the shearing off of the southwestern U.S. and reconnecting it to Mexico. People who make the wrenching decision to leave their homeland do so mostly for one (or both) of two reasons: to seek economic opportunity abroad, or to escape violence and repression at home.

For most of its history, the U.S. has been a magnet for peoples all over the world seeking a better life, and Mexico has long been its largest source of immigrants. That's not surprising given the proximity of the two countries and the disparities in wealth between them. For more than a decade, however, there has been an extra "push" factor sending Mexicans across the border: the economic dislocations stemming from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), ratified in 1993.

The proponents of NAFTA sold the agreement on the premise that removing barriers to trade among the U.S., Mexico and Canada would bring economic growth and new jobs. In reality, however, NAFTA was designed first and foremost as a license for U.S.-based global corporations to operate unhindered throughout the continent. One of the results of NAFTA was a flood of subsidized U.S. agricultural products into Mexico, which had a devastating toll on small farmers, forcing many to leave the land – and their homeland. The numbers speak for themselves. In 1989 just 2.5 million undocumented workers lived in the U.S.; by 2005 the number had quadrupled, the greatest number of these newcomers being from Mexico. And, in contrast to the mid- and late 20th century, when undocumented workers

were more likely to return home after earning some money, today they are far more likely to stay permanently in the U.S. if for no other reason than that stepped-up enforcement means they might not make it back here again.

Instead of spending \$7 billion on a wall to keep people out, whether or not it can work, why not invest in helping develop the Mexican economy and Mexican labor rights so that Mexicans won't be forced to emigrate? A more just model for economic development can be found in the European Union. The EU provided aid to its poorer members, such as Spain and Greece, to bring them closer to the level of the continent's more affluent countries in order to prevent harm to workers and farmers in those countries. The EU also made it easier for not only capital but workers to move across borders. While the EU has its share of economic problems – including high unemployment – its vision of an integrated continental economy is a much fairer and more workable system than the American model of militarized borders and worksite raids.

Of course, any benefits in helping Mexico to develop will be limited unless they also include tearing down the system that eroded its economy to begin with – namely, the neoliberal regime ushered in by NAFTA, the Central America Free Trade Agreement, and other unjust "free trade" agreements that have already encouraged corporations to move hundreds of thousands of jobs from Mexico to China and other countries where labor is cheaper. Immigration reform must be accompanied by a new vision of trade that respects the rights of all workers – native and immigrant – while shifting control of trade from global corporations to democratically elected governments.

Finding the political will to both dismantle the neoliberal "Washington consensus" and shift billions of dollars from enforcement to Mexican economic development is a tall order. But it's time progressive forces began offering a real alternative to the current climate of nativist fear and scapegoating – a program that, depending on the outcome of the 2008 election, could be more realistic than we might think.

Bill Mosley is a member of the DL editorial committee.

The Employee Free Choice Act – A DSA Priority

David Green

What distinguishes socialists from other progressives is the theory of surplus value. According to Marx, the secret of surplus value is that workers are a source of more value than they receive in wages. The capitalist is able to capture surplus value through his ownership of the means of production, his right to purchase labor as a commodity, his control over the production process,

and his ownership of the final product. Surplus value is the measure of capital's exploitation of labor.

The essence of the socialist critique of capitalism is that the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist is not just immoral on an individual level, but that it has adverse consequences on society as a whole. It leads to periodic recessions and a reserve

army of the unemployed. It exacerbates inequality in a society. It creates worker alienation, which subsequently manifests itself in such social pathologies as alcohol and substance abuse, crime, domestic violence and the promotion of consumption as a religion.

Our goal as socialists is to abolish private ownership of the means of production. Our immediate task is to limit the capitalist class's prerogatives in the workplace (by working for greater workplace democracy) and to tax capital assets at a fairly steep rate, the proceeds of which will be used to fund social investment. In the short run we must at least minimize the degree of exploitation of workers by capitalists. We can accomplish this in three ways:

- 1) Improve the social wage – i.e., public programs that disproportionately benefit poor and working class people. Examples of increasing the social wage include establishing single-payer national health insurance, providing free college tuition to qualified students (thereby making college affordable to poor and working class kids) and enhancing Social Security. Invariably, the social wage depends upon a robust public sector upon which the market is not permitted to encroach.
- 2) Make the political system more responsive to workers – We need to fight for public financing of elections in order to remove the influence of corporate money on the political process. We need weekend voting, same-day registration, and instant- runoff voting in order to improve voter turnout. After all, there are more of us than there are of them.
- 3) Strengthen labor's bargaining position vis-a-vis capitalists in the wage contract. We can accomplish this by promoting full employment policies, passing local living-wage laws, but *most of all by increasing the union movement's power*.

The Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) provides an excellent organizing tool (i.e., tactic) through which we can pursue our socialist strategy while simultaneously engaging the broader electorate on an issue of economic populism. A survey by Peter D. Hart Research Associates shows 57 million American workers would join a union if given the opportunity. The reasons for this are not hard to fathom. Unionized workers enjoy higher wages and greater job security than their non-unionized counterparts. Unionized workers are also more likely to have employment-based health insurance and pensions than do their non-unionized counterparts. Despite the fact that the majority of American workers support union representation, only 12 percent of those workers belong to unions (less than 8 percent in the private sector). This represents a significant decline from the mid 1950s,

when some 35 percent of the workforce was unionized. The combination of lax enforcement of existing labor laws, conservative (read "anti-worker") judicial interpretations of those laws, and the rise of anti-union consulting firms have undermined the ability of workers to organize. EFCA seeks to correct this imbalance by amending the National Labor Relations Act. The bill would allow:

- 1) Union certification on the basis of signed authorizations – If a majority of the workers in a bargaining unit sign union cards, the union would automatically become the workers' bargaining representative. This would obviate the National Labor Relations Board election process, which is slanted in favor of employers.
- 2) First contract mediation and arbitration – If an employer and a union are engaged in bargaining for their first contract and are unable to reach agreement within 90 days, either party may refer the dispute to the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service for binding arbitration.
- 3) Stronger employer penalties for violations while employees are attempting to organize or obtain a first contract.

EFCA was introduced in the House of Representatives by Reps. George Miller (D-CA) and Peter King (R-NY) and in the Senate by Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) in April 2005. In the 109th Congress, in which Republicans controlled both chambers, the bill had 215 co-sponsors in the House (three votes short of a majority) and 42 co-sponsors in the Senate (nine votes short of a majority). With the Democrats victory in the 2006 midterm elections, support for EFCA has only increased. Newly elected House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has promised a vote on the bill in the spring, and this vote may already have taken place as this issue of *Democratic Left* goes to press. However, the bill faces a more uncertain future in the Senate where 60 votes are required to end debate and force a vote. Sixty-seven votes would be required to override a presidential veto. The fact that we face an uphill battle in the Senate does not detract from the value of DSA doing organizing work around EFCA. At a minimum, we can force conservative senators to place themselves on record as opposed to EFCA. This would then make these incumbents even more vulnerable in the 2008 elections. If we replace only a few of these anti-labor senators in 2008, we should be able to pass EFCA in the next Congress.

DSA could play a role in organizing support for EFCA. We have locals and activists across the country capable of organizing successful public events – as demonstrated by our Sanders house parties. We have "notables" capable of attracting non-DSA members to public events. We have academics, writers and

speakers capable of elucidating public policy issues in clear and simple language. We have a solid relationship with several major unions (UAW, USW, IAM).

DSA could organize public meetings in coalition with other groups, including the AFL-CIO's Voice at Work Department, state AFL-CIOs and central labor councils, American Rights at Work, America Votes, Progressive Democrats of America, Committees of Correspondence, ACORN, and state Democratic parties. We could invite speakers such as John Edwards, John Sweeney, Cornel West, Barbara Ehrenreich, Leo Gerard, Ron Gettlefing, David Bonior, and Bernie Sanders. We could have literature tables emphasizing DSA's low-wage justice pieces. We could invite the state's senators and urge them to sign a pledge to support EFCA when it comes before the Senate.

Each of the sponsoring organizations could distribute postcards to their members which the members would then mail to their senators urging support for EFCA. We could also circulate an on-line petition in support of EFCA through the website and e-mail list of each participating organization. We could publish op-ed pieces on EFCA in local newspapers prior to each public

meeting. Finally, the coalition in each state could organize members to lobby those senators who do not sign the pledge.

How does DSA benefit from this campaign? First, as with the Sanders campaign, a campaign on behalf of EFCA will allow us to activate our locals – giving them a project that is achievable, practical, and will bring our work to a larger audience. Second, DSA should be able to recruit new members from those attending the public meetings in support of EFCA. Third, the campaign will strengthen our ties with organized labor – allowing us to solicit resources for future activities more easily.

Our challenge is to convince the public that the ability of working people to organize unions has a direct and positive impact on everyone's wages, job security, pensions and health care. Walter Reuther once observed that powerful social forces are unleashed when altruism and self-interest intersect. EFCA offers such an opportunity.

David Green is chair of the Detroit Local and a member of the National Political Committee.

Campus Activists Organize Against War Abroad and Economic Injustice at Home

Kathryn Peterson

With the nation's attention increasingly focused on immigration policy, this past summer's YDS conference set immigrant rights as its 2006-2007 national priority. That work is already bearing fruit, with YDS creating the Immigrant Rights Project to combat anti-immigration sentiment and nativist policies through activism and education. YDS activists assembled a comprehensive and informative Immigration Discussion Guide, an educational resource on immigration policy and the history of struggles for immigrant rights. The guide not only helped foster internal education within YDS chapters, but has enabled YDS to host numerous workshops and public forums on immigrant rights, including teach-ins and counter-protests against the immigrant-bashing and violence-prone Minutemen. The project stems from YDS's conviction that all human beings are entitled to participate in democratic decision-making in the communities in which they work and live. Thus, YDS embraces the democratic vision that guided previous movements for immigrant rights: those who labor in our society should and must be – along with their immediate families – made citizens.

More than 500 activists from campuses nationwide attended all or part of February's Young Democratic Socialists' 2007 conference, "Justice Beyond Borders: Democracy and Socialism in the 21st Century." Attendees argued over politics and ideas, debated strategies and heard Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich and others speak on prospects for building the democratic left in the U.S. Held over Presidents' Day weekend in New York City, the conference attracted a healthy crowd of young militants whose numbers reflect both the growth of student anti-war and labor-support activity and a concerted YDS organizing drive on campuses this past fall.

At Saturday's first plenary session, Noam Chomsky addressed a packed audience at Bayard Rustin High School on the "democracy deficit" in the United States. Chomsky described

how corporate control of the mass media precluded any critical examination of the falsehoods the Bush administration told to justify the Iraq war. Chomsky contrasted the claim of United States elites that our nation is a model of democracy with the stark reality that the viability of mainstream American political candidates is judged in the media by how much corporate-influenced money they can raise. In contrast, the MIT linguist and prolific author reminded the audience how grassroots democratic trade unions and indigenous movements contesting for power in Latin America were upsetting the neo-liberal "Washington consensus."

DSA Honorary co-chair Barbara Ehrenreich and DSA NPC member Joseph Schwartz analyzed the sources of growing inequality in the United States. Both remarked that the neo-liberal

project of curtailing labor rights and gutting the public sector – if not reversed – would render economically insecure not only the traditional working class, but also many college-educated white collar and professional workers. Ehrenreich described her



Noam Chomsky

Photo by Daniel Mendez

recent efforts to organize increasingly job-insecure professionals through the organization United Professionals. Both speakers suggested fighting “race-to-the-bottom” economics by getting involved in living wage and trade union organizing drives on their campuses and in neighboring communities.

On Sunday, *Nation* contributors and authors Liza Featherstone and Christian Parenti,

and prominent literary critic Gayatri Spivak examined the sources of United States imperial foreign policy, as well as outlining democratic foreign policy alternatives.

Workshops held throughout the weekend ranged from building international labor solidarity and democratic socialist theory and practice to the fight for sustainable and equitable development and current prospects for U.S. unions, among others. The small-group structure of the workshops ensured that every attendee could participate and be heard.

The final plenary focused attention on YDS’s Immigrant Rights Project. Veteran labor activist and DSA Vice-Chair Jose LaLuz joined YDS national organizer David Duhalde to outline the democratic socialist commitment to building solidarity among all working people. Thus, immigrants who contribute to the collective good of American society ought to have full political, civil, and social rights. Without such rights for immigrants, all working people are vulnerable to exploitation by the “race to the bottom” model of corporate development.

David Duhalde closed the conference by thanking all those who attended and reminding them that true purpose of any socialist organization goes beyond public education to grassroots organizing and mobilization. Adding that this is a lifelong struggle and reflecting on the Latin American solidarity work his father and Jose LaLuz did together decades ago in DSA, David left clear that while his background makes him an internationalist, our duty is to build a strong left in the U.S. that can effectively conduct solidarity work.

Chapters, members and allies of YDS are engaging in numerous campaigns this spring in favor of labor and immigrant rights. In addition, YDS continues to play a significant role in building the student wing of the anti-war movement. YDS leaders look forward to strong attendance at its activist conference this summer and to building effective YDS chapters on campuses across the country.

YDS intern Kathryn Peterson helped build the conference.

YDS in the 2006 Elections

David Duhalde

Bowdoin College (Maine)

The YDS chapter, Democratic Left, was an integral part of the Bowdoin Anti-TABOR Coalition. TABOR, backed by such right wingers as the Heritage Foundation and Grover Norquist, would have forced cutbacks in social services. The YDS chapter organized or helped to organize several key events and actions, made the case against TABOR to Bowdoin students through local and statewide editorials and interviews, and helped bring a Republican and a Democratic state senator to speak to students at a teach-in.

Meadows High School (Las Vegas, Nevada)

The Meadows New Left membership helped with canvassing, phonebanking, and getting the word out for casino union supporter Dina Titus’ campaign for the governorship of Nevada. Titus supported local schools and working on building a social infrastructure in rapidly growing Las Vegas.

New York Metro YDS

With the Columbia University Working Families Party (WFP) chapter, New York City YDS organized a teach-in on how the left should organize in the wake of the Republican Party losing majorities. YDS alumni Mike Rabinowitz (New York State Political Coordinator for UNITE-HERE), Jessica Shearer (Political Affairs Director for the Center for Community, Labor, and Policy Studies) and Peter Frase (former YDS Co-Chair) articulated the DSA vision of building coalitions that can hold elected officials accountable, regardless of their party label, and force them to legislate social and economic gains for working-class people across the lines of gender, race, and sexual orientation. New York City YDS members also volunteered their time working to defeat the conservative candidates; many worked with the WFP, which is primarily made up of labor unions and community groups.

Bowling Green State University Firelands YDS (Ohio)

The chapter assisted in voter registration of working class students and others, and members campaigned locally for Democratic candidates for the Congress and Senate, for

Governor, and in state district races for senate and the Ohio house. In addition, they organized a forum on the issues of low-wage workers in the U.S. in conjunction with the ballot issue to raise the minimum wage in Ohio. The forum also touched on the failure of the present health care system. After the elections, the chapter hosted a screening and discussion of Robert Greenwald's *Iraq for Sale* for the student body and the public.

Philadelphia, PA

YDS member Chris Maisano and hundreds of other activists associated with Philadelphians Against Santorum worked for months canvassing, phonebanking, and tabling to turn out voters against that incumbent Senator's brand of far-right politics – and they won! The fight isn't over, however, as they'll need to keep moderate (and anti-choice) new Senator Casey's feet to the fire to make sure he's part of the emerging progressive majority.

Alex Lorch, Sam Minot, Patrick Saunders, Jason Schulman, and Chris Maisano also contributed to this article.

Locals in the 2006 Elections

Compiled by Theresa Alt

Alaska DSA

Alaska DSAers mostly work within other organizations, trying to educate people about democratic socialism and get them to join DSA as well. There's the usual work in the ACLU and in the peace movement. But Dick Farris also reports:

"Presently members of the Fairbanks local of DSA are actively working to promote Fairbanks Open Radio, a progressive forum in the interior regarding alternative news. Currently we have a web site under Fairbanks Open Radio and hope to apply for a

license for a radio station in the next FCC window of opportunity.... DSA members in Fairbanks have also been working with others to develop a consumers' co-op in Fairbanks as an alternative to the big corporate giants who now have taken over small businesses there."

Atlanta DSA

In January, Atlanta DSA hosted a forum on "What is Democratic Socialism?" Panelists included three DSAers and a faculty member at Georgia State University who acted as moderator. The event attracted 40 people – the largest turnout for any of their monthly meetings. They were able to promote the program and talk about democratic socialism on the alternative radio station WRFG.

Boston DSA

The "left wing of the possible" takes a different shape in each state. In Massachusetts it's the Mass Alliance which by itself and together with member groups like Neighbor to Neighbor and Boston DSA has been successfully moving the Massachusetts State Legislature in a more progressive direction. Georgia Hollister Isman, political director of the Mass Alliance, writes in the January 2007 issue of Boston DSA's *Yankee Radical* that in last fall's elections for state legislature, every retiring progressive was replaced by a progressive, incumbents who stuck their necks out for economic justice were reelected even in allegedly conservative districts, and a few new champions of civil rights and economic justice took seats for the first time.

One of these new progressives, Steve D'Amico, running for a seat previously held by a conservative Democrat, was accused by his Republican opponent of "accepting thousands from unions, lobbyists and special interests including Democratic Socialists of America." D'Amico won.

Chicago DSA

DSAers around the country followed the story of the Chicago "Big Box Living Wage" ordinance, which would have required really large retailers to pay employees a living wage and benefits. DSA member and economist Ron Baiman had crunched the numbers that backed the wisdom of enacting such a measure. The city council passed the measure, but Mayor Daley vetoed it. Bob Roman reports in Chicago DSA's *New Ground* that in the November 2006 elections, there were "Big Box Living Wage" ballot questions in selected precincts of Chicago, targeted to embarrass certain aldermen who opposed the ordinance and encourage others who supported it. All these referenda won – and now there is talk of council members who didn't fully support the ordinance facing challenges in the next election.



DSA and YDS members at January's anti-war protest in D.C.

Right now in the suburban Village of Oak Park, DSA member Gary Schwab is running for trustee in an April 17 election on a slate backing a village Living Wage Ordinance and calling on the village to sign contracts with all its unions and accept arbitrated labor decisions. Fellow members are rounding up volunteers for the campaign.

Ithaca DSA

In Ithaca, some DSAers took part in and helped publicize MoveOn phone banks. Some in an uncontested congressional district went to the neighboring rural communities to go door to door for Eric Massa. Most citizens seemed appreciative of his opposition to the war in Iraq. When we added that he said that it would take a single-payer system to get health care to everybody, their faces really lit up. Massa's challenge to an incumbent Republican lost by a heartbreaking two points.

New York DSA

NYDSA co-sponsored a Nov. 3 debate, "Is a Progressive Democratic Party Possible?" DSA NPC member Michael Hirsch spoke for the affirmative, as did a representative from Progressive Democrats of America. A New York State Green Party leader and a speaker from the International Socialist Organization presented the negative argument. The event drew an audience of some 120. (A slightly expanded version of Hirsch's opening remarks appears as "Socialists, Democrats and Political Action: It's the Movements that Matter" in the Winter 2007 *New Politics* [Vol. XI, #2; whole #42], available online at www.newpol.org).

Greater Philadelphia DSA

Greater Philadelphia DSA members helped progressive Democrat and longtime DSA ally Tim Kearney in his second campaign against entrenched state Representative John Perzel. While Kearney did not win, his numbers went up enough for him to seriously consider trying again in 2008. Local members also worked for Bucks County Congressional anti-war candidate Patrick Murphy (who did win), progressive newcomer Paul Lang against a 20-year incumbent in the Bucks County state senate race, and others.

Many members are active in Neighborhood Networks, a Philadelphia grassroots progressive organizing group that is partly the brainchild of local DSA and former NPC member Stan Shapiro. They are quite busy now, as a number of progressive Democrats – including one DSA member and one former member – are running for City Council in May's primaries.



Morris Slavin, 1914-2006

DSA honors the memory of Morris Slavin, a veteran of the "Old Left" of the 1930s and member of our organization, taken from us last year at the age of 92.

Slavin was born to parents from the Jewish Labor Bund in Russia in 1913. Emigrating to Youngstown, Ohio, in 1923, he began his political life the Young People's Socialist League, youth section of the Socialist Party of Norman Thomas. He joined the Trotskyist movement in 1934, after having read Leon Trotsky's *My Life*.

In the 1940 split in American Trotskyism, Slavin, like many of the younger Trotskyists, went with Max Shachtman to found the Workers Party, later the Independent Socialist League, which advocated a revolutionary socialism that saw nothing innately progressive in the Stalinist USSR. Unlike Shachtman, he remained on the radical left after the ISL dissolved.

Slavin became an assistant history professor at Youngstown State University in 1961, teaching there for 20 years before retiring as emeritus professor. He wrote three major books on the French Revolution after his "retirement": *The French Revolution in Miniature: Section Droits de l'Homme, 1789–1795* (1984), *Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Girondin* (1986), and *The Hébertistes to the Guillotine: Anatomy of a "Conspiracy" in Revolutionary France* (1994), followed by a collection of essays entitled *The Left and the French Revolution* (1995). He was honored with a Festschrift, *Rebels Against the Old Order* (1994), edited by Boris Blick and Louis Patsouras.

Slavin remained a Marxist throughout his life and wrote for many journals, including *Jewish Currents*, *New Politics*, *Against the Current*, and *Cahiers Léon Trotsky*. He will be missed.

Several local DSAers have given presentations at meetings of the Upper Bucks County Progressive Democrats; the two groups will be doing some work together in the near future.

California

San Diego DSA produced an email recommendation sheet for the membership covering all races and propositions on the November ballot, a popular tradition of the local that people ask for as elections approach.

Activist members there went precinct walking for Representative Bob Filner. They also worked hard for statewide Proposition 1C, a large bond issue for affordable housing, which passed. They put great effort into opposing Proposition 90, an extreme "regulatory takings" proposition – one of those measures to encourage businesses to sue government for losses allegedly caused by regulation – which, happily, was defeated.

Meanwhile, DSAers in **Sacramento** put their best efforts into a clean-money public campaign financing proposition that lost.

Midwest Tour Highlights DSA/PRD Connection

President Bush's much ballyhooed trip to Latin America amounted to nothing more than a grand photo opportunity, offering less concrete assistance to the people of Latin America than the people of Venezuela now offer to low income Americans in the form of low-cost heating oil.

The corporate-friendly president is justifiably fearful of the swing to the left in Latin America. The market-based free trade agreements trumpeted by our government for the last dozen years have failed as miserably in Latin America as they have here in the United States. The middle classes of Latin America have been devastated, poverty has increased and the gap between the richest and poorest has widened – just as in the United States, although obviously at a slower pace here.

It is no wonder that the voters of Latin America have turned to political parties opposed to the “Washington Consensus” and that even some moderate and conservative governments are looking to new forms of development. Americans are doing the same, again at a slower pace.

The message that the president delivered to Latin Americans on development was the same ineffective homily he delivered to U.S. citizens on Iraq: be patient and things will be better.



Escobar Toledo

In the spirit of genuine truth telling and international cooperation, DSA's International Commission, along with DSA locals in the Midwest, are sponsoring an 11-day, four-city tour by Saul Escobar Toledo, secretary for international affairs and member of the executive committee of Mexico's Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD). Like DSA, the PRD is an affiliate of the Socialist International.

During the tour, Escobar Toledo will meet with union leaders and workers, students, teachers and other North Americans about Mexico's foreign relations and recent shifts in the Americas. Areas for discussion will include immigration and border relations, NAFTA and globalization, the presidential election challenge by popular Mexico City mayor Andrés Manuel López Obrador in July 2006, the turbulence in Oaxaca, and reactions to Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia.

Escobar Toledo was trained as an economist at Mexico's National Autonomous University (UNAM) in Mexico City and was a founding member of the PRD in 1989. Since then he has served the party in various functions, including coordinator of political economy and fiscal reform, member of the national planning committee, and PRD representative to the Federal Electoral Institute. He has written on labor reform and the effects of globalization on Mexico and taught economics and political science at UNAM, Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Azcapotzalco, and Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia. Escobar Toledo speaks fluent English.

The tour will visit the Mid-West commencing on April 24th in the Twin Cities (contact Stephen Peter, info@twincitiesdsa.org); move to Detroit starting April 27th (contact David Green, dsagreen@aol.com); then jump to Madison, Wis., on May 1st (contacts: Patrick Barrett at the Havens Center and Mark Silberman, mdsilber@wisc.edu); and conclude in Chicago starting May 4th (contact Raoul Ross Pineda at the PRD office or Bob Roman, chiildsa@chicagodsa.org).

This tour is one of a series of events DSA is planning to educate Americans about developments in Latin America. Earlier this month, **Atlanta DSA** co-hosted a forum on Mexico featuring “rebel journalist” John Ross, who writes frequently on Mexican politics and is the author of three books, one of them the winner of an American Book Award, on the Zapatista movement. Co-sponsoring organizations included the Latin American and Caribbean Community Center.

On April 25th, **Boston DSA** joins MIT YDS in co-hosting a panel discussion, “The Pink Tide: Resistance and Regeneration in Latin America,” featuring Maria Aguiar, Grassroots International; Peter Winn, Tufts University; Jose Antonio Lucero, Temple University; and Kendra Fehrer, Martin Luther King, Jr. Bolivarian Circle (organizational affiliations given for identification only). The panel will be held Wednesday, April 25th, at 7:00 pm (sharp) in Room 4-149, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge. Further information is available from Boston DSA, P.O. Box 51356, Boston MA 02205; (617) 354-5078; <http://dsaboston.org>.

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