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Building Social Movements While Challenging Politics as Usual

an open letter to the U.S. Social Forum
from the Democratic Socialists of America

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the nation's largest socialist organization and a direct descendant of the Socialist Party of Eugene Debs, Norman Thomas, and Michael Harrington, is thrilled with the energy that exists here, upbeat about the possibilities for joint work, and glad to be part of a movement that knows another world is not just necessary but possible. DSA is proud to stand in unity with so many determined activists to radically change the world.

The U.S. Social Forum's emphasis on grassroots organizing of – and with – working class people and communities of color, of training organizers, of building for the long haul, and of fighting for economic and social justice at home and globally is welcome. So is, as the USSF call says, creating “an ongoing process to contribute to strengthening the entire movement, bringing together the various sectors and issues that work for global justice.”

DSA believes – as socialists committed to true democratic politics – that the fight for reforms is as much about empowering and positioning and preparing working people for the next fight as it is about winning any particular election or enacting needed legislation. Direct action, involvement in electoral campaigns, lobbying or even protesting and ending any one horrific government policy are all tactics in the...

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Letter to the Social Forum

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battle to empower the powerless. They need to be part of a seamless, joint effort to control the state and end its codependency with corporate crimes. The road to empowering people goes through the fight for reforms in social and public policy, too.

In the 1960s, the nation was prosperous, though not humane. Even as the Civil Rights movement crested and the US boasted record low levels of unemployment along with high levels of attendance at low-cost colleges, the U.S. government sharpened its sword in preparation for a southeast Asian bloodbath. Lyndon Johnson's "War against Poverty" was barely a skirmish when compared to the full-scale and murderous assault that was the Vietnam War. Even as Richard Nixon remarked that "we're all Keynesians now" and that government existed to actively help citizens, the privatizing and profit-maximizing legal theft known today as "neoliberalism" had already taken on a dangerous monochrome bipartisanship. Mainstream political discourse now accepts corporate domination of civil society as natural, short-run profit maximization as the only marker of success, a shrunken and fiscally starved public sector as good government and a "war on terror" as a foreign policy. Global neoliberalism (aka, global capitalism) is the name of the system we fight.

Today, with more than 45 million Americans lacking access to health care, with illiteracy rising, with mounting personal debt the only sure outcome of a college education, with union membership below 8 percent of the work force and with the gap between the rich and poor soaring, the U.S. is neither prosperous nor humane.

Changing the U.S. for the better means being involved in politics as well as social movement building. The two go together. Politics makes the state a target for social movements, and strong social movements engaging in direct action keep the politics focused and honest, too. Being effective in fighting for social change means more than wishing to be free of domination, or espousing sound libertarian ideas or operating out of a gut desire not to dominate others and to end human suffering. What needs doing is empowering people while challenging corporate domination of the state. It's building organizations that can be effective catalysts in working people's fights against corporate America and its political handlers. And this means, in part, the revitalization of a democratic labor movement and a progressive bloc in electoral politics that can alter who rules America and the policies of those rulers.

DSA knows well that the world isn't changed by winning elections or enacting good legislation. Even seizing power in those rare instances where a weak state functions largely through repression and has no popular support or legitimacy is no sure

model for a good society. Contesting elections or seizing power is at best part of a process, the necessary but insufficient actions that begin to place real power in ordinary people's hands. At worst, insurrections can lead to the Soviet gulags or the Cambodian killing fields, while a purely electoral focus falls into the liberal trap of ruling capitalist societies in a kinder, gentler, more rational but no less inequitable way.

But the opposite notion, that you can "change the world without taking power" – the title of a book by the always thought-provoking sociologist John Holloway – is in the end equally fanciful. The social movements both Holloway and we prize need an organized electoral and legislative face. Political operations without organization end up losing their politics, too. Either they duplicate – but never add much depth to – the social movements they support or else their activists adopt a series of ethical stances, righteous though they may be, with no capacity to change the policies of the state – policies that profoundly affect the daily lives of those struggling for self-empowerment. Worse, social movements, absent an electoral and legislative strategy, cannot neutralize their enemy's capacity to use the state for its own ends. DSA knows you don't need a vanguard party – and every organization that calls itself a vanguard is just operating under a self-styled conceit – but you do need organization and cohesion and strategy. You do need politics and alternate policies. You do need an electoral face, too.

That doesn't mean every activist has to morph into a precinct captain or political operative, with or without cigar. It's not even presidential politics itself that matters. What matters is using elections and lobbying as leverage to challenge the state and imperialism and contest for state power. Politics is an expression of class and social struggle, not a substitute for it. Winning reforms from government is one measure of success, but only so long as they empower people to go on to the next fight. Single issue organizing, no matter how necessary, is not sufficient. Refusal to confront the state politically is suicide – or something only the most privileged among activists can afford. Both movement building and politics by themselves are necessary but insufficient to remake the world. To make real change, the two need to be joined at the hip.

Let's be clear. We are socialists, and we reject the idea that socialism means simply changing the ownership of the state. Replacing the bad shepherd with the good shepherd is a paradigm we do not embrace. The great trade union leader and socialist Eugene Debs made it clear that "I would not lead you to the

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DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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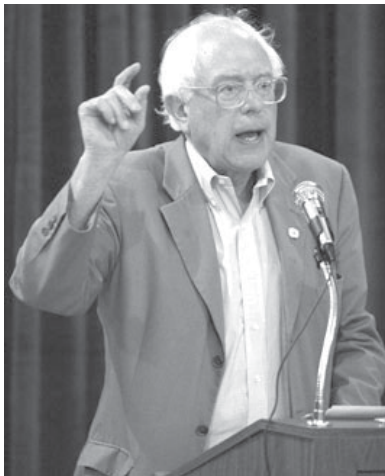
Democratic Socialists of America share a vision of a humane international social order based on equitable distribution of resources, meaningful work, a healthy environment, sustainable growth, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships. Equality, solidarity and democracy can only be 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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Sanders to Address Convention



Senator Bernie Sanders will be a featured guest at DSA's National Convention this November 9-11 in Atlanta. It will be the first time that a sitting United States Senator has participated in the convention of an American socialist organization.

DSA members are encouraged to participate in the Convention. Every member has the right to

seek delegate status or attend the convention as an observer. The convention will be held in the union hall of the IBEW in Atlanta, located near Turner Field. Three nearby hotels will offer room rates ranging from \$85 to \$105 per night for a single or a double (plus 15% tax) to convention participants. Starting in July members will receive notices about the convention that will include complete details.

We expect that any member who wants to be a delegate will be able to serve. The national convention sets the direction of the organization for the next two years. Among the decisions of the last national convention was an instruction making work on Bernie Sanders Senate campaign to become the first open socialist in the U.S, Senate a priority. This convention will adopt an Economic Justice Agenda and consider organizing and political perspectives for the election and what we hope will be a dramatically improved political situation in 2009.

If you know now that you want to serve as a delegate to the convention please send a note of self-nomination to Frank Llewellyn, National Director, DSA, 75 Maiden Lane #505, NYC, NY 10038

Save the Dates Now!

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

Letter to the Social Forum

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promised land if I could. Because if I could lead you in, someone else could lead you out.” Even in a scenario where a radical party was elected to office and survived the inevitable coup attempts, it could only function through the open and active support of masses of people. And that support could only be secured by formulating and enacting a radical program in office, while democratic social movements continue to mobilize to pressure even the most progressive of legislators or governments.

Socialism then is not “an act,” but a process, what the German radical Rudi Deutschke called “the long march through the institutions.” A protracted battle over real gains, in which victories over health care, unemployment, military intervention, free education for all, affordable housing and other progressive measures are signposts, springboards for further actions.

That’s why passing the Employee Free Choice Act matters: it will level the playing field between unions and employers and make it harder for bosses to squash union-organizing drives. Reforming banking regulation to canceling generational debt matters. Job creation matters. Ending outsourcing matters. Breaking the Right’s stranglehold on the Supreme Court matters.

We know that working in mainstream politics – even as its sharpest critics – is a hard point to validate. There have been too few successes for too long. No one under the age of 43 was even alive when the federal government passed the Voting Rights Act of 1964 and Medicare, the last great moment in expanded democracy and human rights. Since then, it’s been a slow retreat or a rout, with even the Clinton years victories for global capital and lost opportunities if not betrayals (such as “ending welfare as we know it”) for working people at home.

Both conservative Republicans and moderate Democrats lie when they say they want to shrink the state. Corporate and militarist domination of the state *is* the form of domination we face today, and challenging capital means challenging its stranglehold on government, too. There’s ample reason to despise government but not to give it a free pass.

Politics is a way of making appeals to real people living in the moment. Talking – as some anarchists do – as if technology and its modern division of labor were itself the problem is wrongheaded. Using modern technology in principle is no less emancipatory than discovering fire, domesticating animals or inventing the printing press. Nor is technology in itself any more or less responsible for alienation. The question isn’t whether technology is good or bad, but who controls it and for what ends is it controlled. Modern men and women do not live in some abstract system, some technologically-determined hell, but amid a specific and historically conditioned system of class relations, power relations that determine how technology is used and

abused. The environment isn’t being despoiled by industrialization but by the ends to which industrialization is put. Environmental degradation can be reversed if society puts alternative energy-efficient technology to use. But doing so will involve severely constraining the prerogatives of corporate power. In short, democratic society must make industry its servant, not its master.

While specialization is an inevitable part of complex societies, the more generalists we have the stronger we are as a culture. As socialists we understand that there is no such thing as a unitary “human nature,” and that neither “sharing” nor “conflict” nor “coercion” are natural states. The nature of humanity is socially determined, appearing in different societies as expressions of what is possible. We understand that religion is not necessarily either a saving grace or an albatross, and that socialism is not a “thing,” as in a benign state replacing a homicidal one, but an evolving cooperative economy in which democratic rule and strong civil liberties characterize the nature of the economic and social system, not just the form its politics takes. We know the difference between the forms oppression takes and democratic self-governance.

We understand that terrorism as a palliative is pointless when it isn’t simply grotesque and abominable. Not that some human systems don’t deserve to be existentially ended. But the “enemy” isn’t bad people; it’s a bad system. And murder has enormous, uncontrolled and rippling consequences, because enemies and opponents are not the same thing and because, in the words of “The Internationale,” the emancipation of the working class is the job of the workers alone. Not condescending saviors, progressive hit men or glory-seeking suicides can democratize society from below. Only democratic social movements – accountable to their members – can do so.

We urge our comrades in the Social Forum to speak precisely about who are our allies. It’s not enough to say you are in solidarity with an undifferentiated mass of oppressed people, or people of color, or indigenous people or oppressed national minorities or victims of racial and gender discrimination. Our allies are specific people doing specific things and engaging in a fight back. The Egyptian trade unionists who are offering an alternative both to the global capitalists’ ruling party and the sectarian, commercially-based Muslim Brothers party are our allies. The Iraqi labor leaders fighting the class war amid U.S. occupation and sectarian violence are our allies. So are elements in Venezuela both inside and outside the Bolivarian movement who are working for economic justice and democracy. Our allies are Labour Party members in Britain who opposed centrist Prime Minister Tony Blair and will be a bane in the existence of his successor Gordon Brown, too, or the radicals inside and outside the French Socialist Party who grudgingly voted for the hapless Segolene Royal as a last ditch effort to fend off the right, but who will be fighting for workers’ rights long after the election is over. We need to embrace teachers working with parents to save public schools, doctors working

with community activists to see that primary care is available to all, and immigrants fighting for legal rights and trade unionism on both sides of the border. These are our brothers and sisters.

Instead of being haters of a world we never made, or single-issue activists, or tinkerers with a system based inevitably and fundamentally on oligarchy and exploitation, we need to think and act as what the late social critic and DSA founder Michael Harrington called “the left wing of the possible.” That means fighting for a comprehensive social and economic program using political action, direct action and movement building. Not just isolating one approach, but using all of them, together. That way the movements united *will* never be defeated.

In light of the severe constraints placed upon United States and global politics by the hegemony of neoliberal, capitalist ideology (e.g., that the private is superior to the public, that national health care cannot work, that only scarcity and competition motivate human beings), we need to legitimize the values historically associated with democratic socialism – that democracy ought to be extended from the political into the social and economic sphere. We urge our brothers and sisters at the Social Forum to consider joining in re-legitimizing the socialist project – a task worthy of a lifetime of struggle.

Forging A Radical Democratic Future

Cornel West

Cornel West delivered the speech below on March 9 at the Left Forum in New York City.

What does it really mean to be a leftist in the early part of the 21st century? What are we really talking about? And I can just be very candid with you. It means to have a certain kind of temperament, to make certain kinds of political and ethical choices, and to exercise certain analytical focuses in targeting the catastrophic and the monstrous, the scandalous, the traumatic, that are often hidden and concealed in the deodorized and manicured discourses of the mainstream. That’s what it means to be a leftist. So let’s just be clear about it.



So that if you are concerned about structural violence, if you’re concerned about exploitation at the workplace, if you’re concerned about institutionalized contempt for gay brothers and lesbian sisters, if you’re concerned about organized hatred against peoples of color, if you’re concerned about the subordination of women, that’s not cheap PC chitchat; that is a calling that you’re willing to fight against and to try to understand the sources of that social misery at the structural and institutional level, and at the existential and the personal level. That’s what it means, in part, to be a leftist.

That’s why we choose to be certain kinds of human beings. That’s why it’s a calling, not a career. It’s a vocation, not a profession. That’s why you see these veterans still here year after

year after year, because they are convinced they don’t want to live in a world and they don’t want to be human in such a way that they don’t exercise their intellectual and political and social and cultural resources in some way to leave the world just a little better than it was when they entered. That’s, in part, what it means to be a leftist.

Now, what does that mean for me? It means for me in the United States – and I go back now the 400 years to Jamestown. You all know this is the 400th anniversary of the first enduring English settlement in the new world. It was Roanoke before, but it didn’t last. Jamestown lasted, right? And what do you have at Jamestown? The Virginia Club of London, an extension of the British Empire, makes its way over, the three boats whose names we need not go into at the moment. And what did they do? They interact with another empire, the Powhatan Empire, that’s already in place, of indigenous peoples. You actually get the clash of empire. This is the age of empire.

But what are they here for? Looking for gold and silver and, secondarily, to civilize the natives. So already you get America as a corporation, before it’s a country. Corporate greed is already sitting at the center in terms of what is pushing it. And corporate greed, as Marx understood it, capital as a social relation, an asymmetrical relation of power, with bosses and workers, with those at the top who will be able to live lives of luxury and those whose labor will be both indispensable and necessary, but also exploited in order to produce that wealth.

Then there’s religion, to “civilize” the indigenous people. Now, you can’t talk about the US experience – and I think in many ways this is true for the new world experience – without talking about the dominant role of religion as an ideology. And we also know one of the reasons why vast numbers of our fellow citizens

today in the United States, one of the reasons why they're not leftists, is precisely because they have not been awakened from their sleepwalking. They have not been convinced that they ought to choose to live a life the way we have chosen, in part because we've been cast with the mark of the anti-religious or the naively secular, or what have you.

And that's 98% of fellow citizens. So no matter what kind of political organization Brother Stanley [Aronowitz] is talking about, he's going to get Gramscian about it. He's got to dip into the popular culture of the everyday people, and 98% of them are talking about God. That's 97.5% of fellow Americans believe in God. 75% believe Jesus Christ is the son of God. 62% believe they speak on intimate terms with God at least twice a day. That's who we're dealing with in terms of our fellow citizens. You can't talk about organization that's sustained over time, unless you're talking in Gramscian terms of how do you tease out leftist sentiment, vision, analysis, in light of the legacy of these dominant ideologies – Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and so forth and so on.

But then, what else happens? 1619, you've got white slaves and you've got black slaves. You have the first representative assembly that takes place as modeled on the corporation, but it is an attempt at democratic elections, the first representative assembly. They gathered July 30, 1619. They cancelled August 4, because it got too hot. And thirteen days later, here comes the boat with the first Africans. And at that time, slavery was not racialized. You had white slaves and you had black slaves.

But the white slaves, you look on the register, 1621, they had names like James Stewart and Charles McGregor. But you look on the right side and you see negro, negro, negro, negro. So even before slavery became a perpetual and inheritable structure of domination that would exploit the labor of Africans and devalue their sense of who they were and view their bodies as an abomination, you already had the black problematic of namelessness. White supremacy was already setting in as another dominant ideology to ensure that these working people do not come together.

And corporate greed would run amok in the midst of that kind of deep and profound division, which is not just a political division. It's a creation of different worlds, so that the *de facto* white supremacist segregation that would be part and parcel of the formation of the American Empire would constitute very different worlds and constitute a major challenge to what it means to be a leftist in America from 1776 up until 1963, given the overthrow of American apartheid, which took place in the '60s. And then, we now wrestle with the legacy, with the triumph of the Black Freedom Movement and all of the white and black – I mean, the white and brown and yellow and Asian comrades who were part and parcel of that Black Freedom Movement that broke the back of American apartheid in the '60s.

What am I saying? I'm saying, in part, that at least for me to be a leftist these days, in the way in which – and I take very seriously Antonio Gramsci's concern about the historical specificity of the emergence, sustenance, and development and subsequent decline of the American Empire. And when you actually look closely at that empire, it seems to me what we have to come to terms with is the fundamental role of corporate greed, religious ideologies, white supremacy, the fundamental rule of the popular culture, youth, and acknowledge that anytime you're talking about white supremacy, you're always already in some ways talking about the treatment of black women. And if you're concerned about the treatment of black women, you ought to be concerned about the treatment of women across the board. So the vicious ideologies, the patriarchy, come in. And the same thing would be true for the James Baldwins and the Audre Lordes, the gay brothers and the lesbian sisters.

Now, where does that leave us? Well, for me – and you all know about the Covenant movement of Tavis Smiley, the book that was launched last year, went number one in the *New York Times*. We sold 400,000 copies within nine months – not reviewed by the *New York Times*, not touched by the *Today Show*. Even Oprah wouldn't breathe on it. And she can breathe on books and sell half a million these days. We just ask Sidney Poitier and Brother Elie Wiesel [about] that. But this book went underground.

Why? Because Tavis Smiley knows that in an American culture that is so thoroughly commodified, driven by corporate greed, thoroughly commercialized, thoroughly marketized, you have to be able to communicate in such a way that you might be able then to shake people from their sleepwalking, which he's done every year now on C-SPAN, and uses his position in order to raise issues of right to healthcare, community-based policing so you can deal with some of this police brutality, especially in black and brown communities of proletarian and *lumpenproletarian* character, and so forth.

You look in the *New York Times* last Sunday: volume two was number seven. 150,000 copies sold in three weeks. Three weeks. We just got off a 21-city tour and did a 22-city tour last year. The book, not reviewed at all. Mainstream television won't touch it.

What is going on? Is the Ice Age beginning to melt? Is it the case that the thirty-five years that Brother Stanley talked about, the Ice Age, the historical period where it's fashionable to be indifferent to other people's suffering – indifference is the very trait that makes the very angels weep, to be callous toward catastrophe. And it's true, New Orleans was catastrophic before Katrina hit. Flint, New Orleans without Katrina. Places in Brooklyn, Harlem, South Side of Chicago, barrios in East Los Angeles, white brothers and sisters in Kentucky, Appalachia, wrestling with catastrophic situations. Catastrophic situations.

Meaning what? Meaning that maybe we're at a moment now where there's going to be multiple strategies going on. It's clear

that the Democratic Party remains clueless, visionless and spineless for the most part. Does that mean you give up on them? No, it doesn't mean you give up on them, but you have to be honest with them. But it does allow one to, in some way – and this is what I think Brother Rick Wolff was talking about in terms of the disintegration of the rightwing consensus, the unbelievable ways in which now rightwing fellow citizens are at each other's throats. The evangelical right wing can't stand the free marketeers, can't stand the balanced-budgeters. That's fine. Let them fight. Let them fight. Let them go at each other. They're weakened in that way.

But what kind of alternative have we? I don't have an answer to that. I don't think that the left has enough resources, has enough people to constitute a strong political organization, Stanley. We can argue over that. We just had drinks for two hours, so we've already had some discussion. I think that by raising the issue, it forces us to come to terms with who we really are. That's what I like. That's Socratic. That's provocative.

Now, what we do with it, I don't know. I really don't. And the reason why I say that is because historically for me, you know, most of the kind of leftist movements tended to actually respond to reformist activity in which the struggle against white

supremacy was a major catalyst. And so, when I think of all the work that I'm doing right now, especially in black America, but always, of course, tied to an instant coalition, leftist identity is not going to be the major means by which you get at people to wake up and come to terms with their social misery, be willing to stand up courageously, articulate a vision, and most importantly, have a slice of people who are willing to live and die for a cause, you see, because they have other stories and other narratives that they use to do that.

So I would even argue, in some way, that Martin King and Fannie Lou Hamer were much more important than the Black Panther Party. They were actually building on what Martin and the others built, as much as I love Huey and Bobby Seale. They took it further. But the door was opened by these reformist activities. And what I would love to see is the radical reformism once more become fashionable among young people, and then allow the leftists to come in and do our thing. That's what I'm looking for.

Author Cornel West is an Honorary Chair of DSA and Class of 1943 University Professor of Religion and African American Studies at Princeton University.

Health Care and the 2008 Candidates: No One Has It Yet

By Walter Tsou, MD, MPH



For progressives, and indeed many centrist Americans, January 20, 2009, George W. Bush's last day in office, cannot come soon enough. By squandering precious lives, and our nation's economic resources on a misguided war, we have saddled future generations with unconscionable debt and robbed our nation's domestic agenda of the funds needed to meet our basic needs.

Bush's domestic agenda has actually moved us backwards, as evidenced by worsening infant mortality rates, and an unprecedented reversal of fortune by young Americans who are likely to fare worse than their parents for the first time in history.

The impact of our failed domestic agenda is most acutely felt in health care, as costs have skyrocketed, personal bankruptcies have grown, and the number of uninsured is over 47 million. No surprise then, on repeated open-ended surveys, health care is the leading domestic issue. And with the presidential primaries

essentially over by February 2008, how the candidates position themselves on health care may be the best opportunity to define the direction health care reform will take for the next decade.

For health advocates, the battle for health care reform is in full swing. This battle for the hearts and minds of Americans is as broad and diffuse as any issue in America. The American public, largely uninformed about something as complex as health care financing, is often swayed by sound bites and pitchmen.

There are generally two opposing health care philosophies – one for Republicans, another for Democrats. Is health care an individual responsibility or a shared responsibility? Do we think that health care decisions should be made by individuals – with or without their doctors – and through “market forces” which usually is a code phrase for private, for-profit insurance companies? Republicans who claim to believe in “individual responsibility” favor a complex program centered on health savings accounts coupled with high-deductible health insurance financed by patients out of pocket, and through tax credits. Democrats, who largely believe in shared responsibility, support some type of health insurance. Ah, but this is where it gets complicated.

In America, government has largely ceded responsibility for health care financing to private insurance companies except for niche markets that insurers deem unprofitable. There has been a public demand over our history for some type of protection for the elderly, poor, veterans, etc. The result, combined with the historical accident of employer-based coverage left over as an artifact of World War II price controls, is a totally incomprehensible, overpriced and inefficient hodgepodge health care system which leaves too many without coverage.

Given such strong evidence of a dysfunctional system, there may be agreement that the next president must do something. But since the tentacles of the insurers are deeply interwoven into the fabric of Capitol Hill, through their K Street lobby operations often financed with our premium money, standing down Big Insurance/Big Pharma is a heavy lift. Add to that a disengaged public and you have a recipe where the insurers and the pharmaceutical industry can literally write their own legislation. No finer example of this is the Medicare prescription drug bill (Part D) that prohibits the federal government from negotiating better drug prices with the pharmaceutical industry and gives between \$50 and 75 billion in enhanced payments to Medicare HMOs managed by private insurers. This legislative sewage outfall, injected into the Medicare system as part of the misnamed Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, was part and parcel of the Bush/Congressional GOP mission to privatize what's left of social insurance in the USA.

Progressives' best hope for fixing health care lies with the Democrats. And to the giddy glee of fellow health advocates, the very first Democratic presidential debate in March was on the single topic of health care reform. All of the candidates vowed to achieve universal health care, which, after a six year drought of inaction, felt like a spring rain. Unfortunately, all of the candidates, save Rep. Dennis Kucinich, incorporate private insurers as key players in their reform package, including the big three: Clinton, Obama and Edwards. Variations and nuanced differences center around how much insurers would be regulated or restricted under their respective plans.

Senator Clinton has estimated \$120 billion in savings from investments in prevention, chronic disease care, electronic medical records and insurance and pharmaceutical industry reforms. Senator Obama's plan also makes similar investments in disease management, information technology, and a new expansion of public programs to encourage others to buy private insurance. His plan, however, offers no mandate to purchase insurance as John Edwards's plan does, which is a major difference between the candidates. But make no mistake: All of these candidates state that they will carefully regulate the private insurance industry while offering them billions in new funds to expand coverage to Americans. And despite promises, none of these plans are 100 percent universal.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), largely discounted by the mainstream media as having "no chance," is a co-sponsor of HR 676, the U.S. National Health Insurance Act of 2007. Kucinich considers single-payer, national health insurance as the only way to achieve quality, affordable health care for all, not just some, Americans. HR 676 would cover all Americans with national health insurance (NHI) and forbid the sale of private insurance that duplicated the benefits offered by NHI. It currently has 70 cosponsors, the most of any comprehensive health care reform bill. Not surprisingly, the private insurers would be out of business as they are currently constituted, and they would spend any amount of money to defeat HR 676.

Rep. John Conyers (D-MI), the lead sponsor of this bill, stated at its first introduction in February 2003 that it was the second most-important piece of legislation that he has ever introduced in his distinguished political career. The most important legislation, according to Conyers, was the establishment of Martin Luther King's birthday as a national holiday. As he noted in 2003, "[I]t took me 15 years" and "a bitter struggle" in order to enshrine a national King Day of national remembrance and service. "I'm prepared to fight for another 15 years, if it takes that long, in order to get true universal health coverage for all Americans," he noted. For our millions of uninsured and underinsured, we can't wait that long.

The health care landscape is moving. Michael Moore's new movie, *Sicko*, ironically, is not about the 47 million uninsured. It is about the remaining 250 million who think they have insurance and just how limited our insurance system is. His movie should be required viewing for every American.

This moment in time and the importance of a major presidential candidate to fight for single-payer, national health insurance comes once every presidential cycle. We are at that defining moment now, and our leading Democratic candidates' grudging acceptance of the private insurance model condemns us to another four to eight years of millions more who will be uninsured, billions more spent on an unfathomable bureaucracy, and trillions of dollars wasted on special interests. Americans have a choice, and our vote on the candidates will say much about how health care will look for the next decade. Now is the time to be vocal.

Walter Tsou is the former National President of Physicians for a National Health Program (www.pnhp.org). He is also former Philadelphia Health Commissioner and a DSA member.

Health care resources for DSA members:

www.uhcan.org: Universal Health Care Action Network

www.herndonalliance.org: a coalition of organizations trying to "Speak American" as they attempt to find solutions to the crises of coverage

Midwest Tour Highlights DSA/PRD Connection: Gracias Por Todo

By Stephan Peter



Saul Escobar Toledo

It was a lucky coincidence. May 1 saw rallies for immigrants' rights in major cities throughout the United States. And at precisely that moment, DSA launched a four-city, 11-day speaker tour with Saul Escobar Toledo, the International Secretary and a leader of the Mexican Partido de la Revolution Democratica (PRD). The DSA International Commission proposed the tour in response to a priority resolution from the 2005 DSA national convention urging dialogue between progressive elected officials and organizations in the United States and other countries, and a 2006 NPC statement on developing political events in Latin America which discussed policy alternatives to the "Washington consensus."

The tour was originally conceived as a brief upper Midwest and Manitoba gig involving the PRD, DSA, and Canadian NDP, all members of the Socialist International. While we did renew relations with key people in the Winnipeg NDP, the real possibility of elections in Canada at the time prevented this PRD-DSA-NDP collaboration from further development. With the support of Midwest DSA locals, Escobar Toledo's engagement then mushroomed into a much larger tour of Minneapolis/St. Paul, Detroit, Madison, and Chicago, with multiple venues and a whirlwind of activities. Given the structure of this trip, we decided early on to focus on the most pressing issue – migration – and tie in related topics such as trade, globalization, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), as well as border issues, the "fence," and the political situation in Mexico.

First stop, Minneapolis/St. Paul. Twin Cities DSA invited members and friends to an informal gathering with Escobar Toledo. The editor of *Workday Minnesota*, an AFL-CIO and University of Minnesota partnership, college professors and students, and the honorary Mexican consul of St. Paul were in attendance. Next, the DFL Education Foundation, the educational arm of Minnesota's Democrats, hosted Escobar Toledo in the downtown Minneapolis offices of the Robins, Kaplan law firm, where longtime former Congressman and Minneapolis mayor Don Fraser introduced me, and I in turn introduced Saul. In my introduction I pointed to an emerging collaboration between the DFL Foundation and DSA centered on a number of international dialogue projects over the past three years. The Minneapolis Resource Center of the Americas, an organization renowned for

its work on local human rights and globalization in the Americas, was Escobar Toledo's next host. He met with the dean of international studies and programming at St. Paul's Macalester College, known for its longstanding commitment to international issues. In terms of audience size, however, a local community college took top prize: 250 students and faculty members listened to Escobar Toledo's arguments and engaged him in a spirited debate.

Over the course of the five Twin Cities engagements, several key concerns and grievances regarding immigration became apparent. First, Mexican workers lack labor rights in the United States, given their low pay, long working hours, and poor working conditions. Second, Mexicans are informed by their own media on a daily basis about their countrymen dying while trying to cross the U.S.-Mexican border. Third, migration – the process of leaving one's home country, surviving in a foreign country, and the breaking up of one's family – is perceived as a growing problem. There is a lack of quality jobs in Mexico with pay sufficient to support families, and there is growing inequality in income and wealth, with 50 million Mexicans living in poverty and 20 million in extreme poverty. Migration is in part the result of failed policies enacted by Mexico's conservative elite and of disparate living standards between Mexico and the U.S. Both countries, Escobar Toledo concludes, ought to act in a neighborly manner and tackle these problems jointly. Ordinarily, if some neighbors have problems with each other, one of them may decide to move. In the case of Mexico and the United States, this is, of course, highly unlikely. Building a several-hundred-mile-long fence represents the failure of neighbors talking and listening to each other; it is the failure of the human spirit.

Escobar Toledo offered two points regarding how to begin to jointly move forward. NAFTA lacks a human dimension. It encourages money, goods, and company CEOs to cross borders; it discourages workers from doing the same. Furthermore, NAFTA lacks implementation of what is called the principle of compensatory funding. There should be compensation for the costs of the adjustments needed when the economies of countries with differing levels of development are integrated. The least-developed country and disadvantaged regions and sectors in the more developed countries should then invest in infrastructure and development projects to achieve a more balanced integration. Spain and Portugal serve as historical precedents. Within a generation, European Union funding helped transform their economies from Europe's "poor houses" to ones that see eye-to-

eye with other Western European economies. (Compensatory funding is not new; I was a direct beneficiary of it while growing up and working in the then-depressed French-German Southern Luxembourg border region.)

From the Twin Cities the tour moved to Detroit, where DSA had an evening reception for Escobar Toledo, invited him to visit Diego Rivera's murals at the Detroit Institute of Arts, and held a "Latin America and the Left" forum with him as the featured speaker. The tour then jumped to Madison. The Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies Center sponsored a brown-bag lunch meeting with Escobar Toledo, who then addressed the crowd at the Madison May Day rally. The next day, there was a one-hour, noon-time call-in radio show appearance on the local progressive radio station, and a Spanish-language taped interview that was scheduled to air a few days later over a Spanish-language broadcast network. Escobar Toledo was able to meet with local agencies involved with immigration and Latino issues. Lastly, he gave a lecture at an evening event jointly sponsored by Madison DSA and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Havens Center. The final stop was Chicago, where he met up with local, fellow PRD members and was the special guest and a speaker at the 49th annual Debs-Thomas-Harrington dinner. There was also

an opportunity to meet and talk politics with DSA National Director Frank Llewellyn.

The successful completion of the four-city tour showed the need for a new beginning. Populist isolationism, jingoism, and exclusionism have been growing in the United States: proponents of a "fence" see only a very limited role for Mexico in a future North America. Likewise, big business envisions the future around ever more "free" trade, NAFTA, and capitalist globalization. And the left? In the 1950s the European left built a common future around demands for full employment, strong independent labor unions, co-determination in companies, and a "Party of European Socialists" (PES). Our left needs to create suitable building blocks for its vision of a North American future. Upon returning to Mexico City, Escobar Toledo echoed this sentiment: "I think the tour was very useful. I hope it is the beginning of a new relationship between DSA and PRD and between DSA and the migration movement."

Stephan Peter, Twin Cities DSA, is a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany and co-chair of the DSA International Commission.

An Economic Prescription

By William (Bill) Lucy

The following is an excerpt from the Keynote Address of William (Bill) Lucy, president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), at the Coalition's 36th International Convention, which was held in Chicago on May 23-28, 2007. Founded in 1972, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists has over 50 chapters in the United States and one in Ontario, Canada, and has representatives from over 50 different national and international trade unions.

Today, I want to talk to you about the urgent need for a new economic prescription, one to cure the "working folks blues."



This prescription won't work for CEOs making twenty-five million dollars a year. It won't work for Wall Street fat cats who play with hedge funds. It won't make you feel better about

wearing jeans made in hidden sweatshops in China or Calcutta.

B.B. King can't play it.

Ko Ko Taylor can't sing it.

And Doctor Feelgood can not bring it to you in the midnight hour.

No, this economic mojo is the real deal. This economic prescription is for working folks tired of seeing the rich get richer.

Folks tired of living between hard times and bad times.

Folks scared that the next phone call from their job could bring them bad news about a pay cut, a layoff or a shutdown that could plunge them into the growing ranks of Desperate Americans.

But before I share the prescription for this new economic medicine, let me speak on the current situation. *The central issue of our time is war and prosperity.*

Inequality Grows

As our government spends hundreds of billions of dollars on instruments of war, our nation and the world is less safe and less humane. As our \$13 trillion economy hums along and the stock market hits a new high every month, the gap between America's haves and have-nots grows wider and wider:

- One in eight Americans now lives in poverty.
- In the Chicago region, nearly 450,000 residents live in extreme poverty, meaning their annual income is less than *half* the poverty line.

But this surge in extreme poverty is not a “Chicago” crisis. Nor can it be labeled as just a “black” or “Latino” crisis. According to the national census, nearly 45% (or 16 million) of the nation’s 39 million poor people have been pushed into “deep or severe” poverty.

Meanwhile, the richest one percent of Americans now holds nearly 20% of the nation’s income – the largest share since 1929. In fact, *the average CEO earns more on the first day of the year than the average worker earns all year!*

There is something profoundly wrong about this lopsided prosperity in the Bush era. Rising and extreme inequality imposes heavy costs on society, especially in communities of color.

Prison Pipeline

Why should our children be the poorest group of citizens in the richest nation on earth? Why is the only guaranteed housing this society will provide poor children of color is a cell – in a detention center, or jail or prison? Why is our government willing to spend on average three times more per prisoner than it spends per student in public schools?

I am convinced that this cradle to prison pipeline that runs through our communities is no different than the oil pipeline that pumps profits into Exxon, Shell, Texaco and other petro giants.

It is often the most vulnerable victims of inequality – in jobs, in skills, in education, and health care – who fuel the prison industrial complex.

We know why people commit crimes and we know how to reduce them. For the hardcore career criminals, those who practice violence and mayhem as a way of life – jail *is* for them.

But let’s be clear: jail is *not* for those who are unprepared and underresourced to live a meaningful life in our society because the major institutions of our nation have either failed them or refused to address the conditions that poison their dreams....

Iraq War & Domestic Violence

I cannot talk about injustice or America’s youth without talking about the most insulated, incompetent Commander-in-Chief in American history. When you pair George W. Bush with Dead-eye Dick Cheney, the modern-day Machiavelli, you have the scariest White House duo since Nixon and Agnew. They have turned the Department of Defense into the Department of Evil.

Iraq has become the defining disaster of the Bush presidency. The sons and daughters of mostly poor and working class families

are bravely fighting and dying in Iraq not for democracy but for American oil kingpins, who have pocketed *\$440 billion* in profits over the past six years.

The Bush surge strategy is nothing more than the latest ass-covering ploy to buy time for a bogus mission, but at a terrible cost in lives, limbs and taxpayers’ money.

It’s time to bring our brave men and women back home – *now!*

It’s time to pull the plug on funding this immoral and unwinnable civil war.

It’s time – *Listen to me* – it’s time to seriously fight the violence and gun terrorism on *American soil* – from Compton to Chicago, from Harlem to Virginia Tech. It is a moral outrage that every day nearly eight American children and teens are killed by gun violence.

According to a report issued last month by the Children’s Defense Fund, in 2004 alone, the gun death toll for children and teens in the United States was 2,845 *more* than the total number of American service men and women who died in the first three years of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan – combined. Just think about that...

Sisters and brothers, it’s time to stop the violence against our children, our wives, our girlfriends, our neighborhoods. It’s time to stop the bleeding on our streets, in our homes, in our classrooms *and* in our foreign policy.

Bush vs. Clinton Years

Not too long ago – before blackberries, computers, cell phones and the Huxtables – the economic formula for America’s global dominance was shared prosperity. We had good jobs and made good products. Life was clear and simple.

We got an education and found a job at a local plant or hospital or post office.

We bought our first house and started our families.

This process repeated itself, generation after generation. Together, we the workers, the union and the employer, built the largest middle class and created the highest standard of living in the history of the world. We all prospered because we prospered together.

Then something happened...

Something changed in the Reagan era of “greed is good.” With the rise of corporate mergers, down-sizing, runaway plants and globalization, we have gone from voodoo economics to “yo-yo economics” – a *You’re On Your Own* economic philosophy that holds that the best thing government can do is make the rich even wealthier, while most Americans must rely solely on their own efforts to survive in this new cut-throat global economy.

“Make it on your own” means:

Roll back Medicare...

Privatize Social Security...
Cut back employer-paid benefits...
Gut affirmative action programs...
Strip agencies that enforce civil rights and worker rights...
Demonize unions and ignore labor laws...

Today, we are preparing as a movement to expose and counter this prescription for inequality and instability. But first, let us remember a few short years ago. For eight years, prior to the year 2000, our nation and the world looked very different:

- Family income was up.
- Net spendable income was up.
- Home ownership was at an all-time high.
- Twenty-two million new jobs were created.
- Unemployment was 3.7% – the lowest in fifty years.
- Crime had declined for five consecutive years.
- Business and personal bankruptcies were steadily declining.
- Poverty was decreasing and people could see some light at the end of their own economic tunnel.
- The national budget was balanced for the first time in decades.
- We had a two hundred thirty-six billion dollar surplus, and we were paying down the national debt.
- We used our economic, diplomatic and military power responsibly around the world, taking the moral high ground on issues like human rights, civil rights and economic justice.

But today, our nation and the world are in a much different place: More divided and less secure; more fatigued and less optimistic; more isolated and less respected around the world.

We used to be the world's greatest creditor, seller and lender. Today, borrow and pray that our checks won't bounce. Moreover, we face an economic environment characterized by:

- Stagnant or declining incomes, with wages (in actual dollars) twelve percent behind what they were in 2000;
- Unemployment for people of color nearly double the official unemployment rate of 4.7%;
- Predatory lending practices in the sub-prime market causing skyrocketing rates of home losses and foreclosures;
- Record levels of personal and small business bankruptcies;
- Increased crime rates;
- Increased levels of poverty with an additional five million more individuals in poverty in the last six years, many from the middle class.
- Escalating college tuition levels effectively pushing higher education beyond the reach of many families; and
- Massive downsizing and privatization of thousands of government jobs.

China & Job Loss

The loss of manufacturing jobs has gotten far worse, especially since China entered the World Trade Organization and dramatically tilted the global economy toward the East.

According to a recent report by the progressive Economic Policy Institute (EPI), American job losses have increased to an average of four hundred forty thousand (440,000) per year since China entered the WTO in 2001. Every state and the District of Columbia lost tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs, including:

- Illinois lost 80,000 jobs;
- New York lost 105,000 jobs;
- Ohio lost 66,000 jobs;
- California lost 270,000 jobs;
- Pennsylvania lost 70,000 jobs.

We should not get mad at Chinese workers. Our sisters and brothers there are the victims of ruthless wage exploitation and shocking rates of workplace injuries and death. In 2002, workplace accidents reportedly caused one hundred forty thousand (140,000) deaths in China, and a quarter of a million (250,000) workers lost body parts – *in one year alone!*

Every day, “free trade” agreements without labor standards, without prohibitions on child labor, and without environmental protections cost our economy hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs. American workers should not have to compete against other exploited workers around the world in a race to the bottom.

Economic Doctrine of the NeoCons

Yes, brothers and sisters, something has gone terribly wrong in this wireless, borderless global economy. From retail, textiles and telecommunications to auto, rubber, steel and many other industries, this economic policy of “you’re-on-your-own” has backfired badly.

The decline in jobs and the living standards of American families is not some kind of freak economic accident.

It is the inevitable outcome of a philosophy based on a monopoly of wealth and power, an ideology that protects the rich at the expense of all others in our society.

If you doubt this claim, just consider that the Bush tax cuts to households with incomes above two hundred thousand (\$200,000) a year is projected to be one hundred billion dollars (\$100 billion) in 2008 alone!

Meanwhile, the federal minimum wage of five dollars fifteen cents (\$5.15) is at its lowest level in real terms in 50 years.

Not since the heyday of the Robber Barons has our national government used its power so brazenly *against* average Americans on behalf of the rich and the politically connected. It

shows up in legislation that a neo-conservative public policy officials advocate, the policies the Bush administration implements, and the legal decisions handed down by the judicial system.

These neo-conservatives, or NeoCons as they are commonly called, flourish in right-wing think tanks, dominate radio talk shows, and float between Fortune 500 jobs and government appointments. They literally shape the language and messages used to justify their radically conservative agenda.

Let me lay out the core principles of the NeoCon economic doctrine:

1. **Corporate-controlled globalization** – with “free trade” and unrestricted capital flows (as its core element).
2. **Smaller government** – which really means protecting corporate subsidies while eliminating safety net programs.
3. **Economic stability** – means manipulating unemployment to keep labor costs down.
4. **Labor Market Flexibility** – a code word for union-busting, low wages, weak or non-enforced worker rights, giving up gains of the past concerning wages, benefits, working conditions, health insurance and retiree pension plans.

Sisters and brothers, this is the lethal economic medicine peddled by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to retirees and working families.

This is the agenda of the National Association of Manufacturers.

This is the agenda of the rich and well-connected.

It is not a surprise that the NeoCon economic policy will not fix the chronic problems that plague our nation and our own neighborhoods – problems like healthcare, education, crime, housing, lack of youth opportunities, and race and gender inequality.

We can not solve these problems within the NeoCon policy framework, because the concept of unequal distribution of resources and life opportunities is at the core of this worldview.

Let me go further to say that we have crossed a dangerous threshold. The rich and powerful have apparently concluded that millions of people in this country and millions more around the world are *permanently expendable*.

In their view, people with little or no income security contribute little or nothing to the global market. Furthermore, the jobless or un(der)employed contribute little or nothing to capitalist production.

In the end, war, famine, disease, incarceration, and random violence have now become the *real* weapons of mass destruction, eliminating those who can no longer be absorbed into the economic system and exploited by its corporate masters.

The New Economic Medicine

This stark but real scenario makes our work this week and beyond that much more urgent, much more necessary.

If we continue to play by the rules set by those who intend to marginalize our families, our communities and our movement, then we cannot complain about the inevitable outcome:

More hard times.

More racism, sexism and union-busting.

More poverty and urban neglect.

More lies, alibis and incompetent leadership.

We must break free from an economic philosophy that can justify fifty percent of American working families living paycheck to paycheck, even those in the one hundred thousand dollar (\$100,000) income bracket.

We must face the real problem straight up. That problem is a set of economic policies that will not allow us to *ever* rise above a certain standard of living.:

- Economic policies that eat up three-percent pay raises, or overtime pay, or money earned from a second job.
- Policies that take a toll on mental health as well as family and community life.
- Policies that sap our capacity to believe that a better world, a different world is even possible.

But rising public anger over economic stagnation and the bloodshed in Iraq tell me that America just might be ready for some real change.

And CBTU, along with our labor allies and other allies in the social justice movement, is leading the way in creating a new framework for progressive economic policies.

Brothers and sisters, our system is not short on things that need to be done or on people to do them.

We have developed an economic agenda that reflects working family values:

1. Anyone who wants to work should have a job.
2. Anyone who does work should be able to live in dignity with adequate healthcare and retirement security for their family.
3. Every worker should have the opportunity to form a union and bargain collectively without harassment.
4. All workers should share equitably in the prosperity of a strong American economy.

This is the best economic prescription to reduce inequality and to build a stronger, more just society. The first steps toward

changing the economic playing field have already been taken. CBTU strongly endorses the Employee Free Choice Act.

This legislation would require employers to recognize a union after a majority of workers sign cards authorizing union representation. It would also establish stronger penalties for violating workers rights.

The Employee Free Choice Act is perhaps the most significant piece of labor legislation in fifty years.

This legislation will absolutely provide a system for leveling the playing field between the rich and the powerful and everyday working Americans.

It will begin to level the economic playing field for workers across the spectrum by allowing them a fair opportunity to form unions, *where they choose*, and to have a contract bringing Democracy to their workplace.

History has shown that when workers can exercise their rights to form unions and participate in the collective bargaining process, not only do organized workers benefit, but workers in unorganized sectors benefit as well, giving more American workers a share of the fruits of our economy.

In 2005, the economy had thirteen trillion dollars in economic activity, but none of that growth was shared with workers. All of it went to the top ten percent income bracket.

History has also shown that when workers exercise their political rights, in solidarity with other brothers and sisters, through their union, greater progress is made on programs and policies that effect the broad mass of Americans.

The National Chamber of Commerce will never voluntarily give us a better pension plan or absolute protection for the ones we have left.

The National Association of Manufacturers will never voluntarily offer workers and their families universal health coverage.

The rich and powerful will never unite workers to sit down and develop a process for sharing the benefits of our economic system.

The Employee Free Choice Act will give workers, through their free expression of choice, the opportunity to form a union, if they so choose.

They will have, through the collective bargaining process, an opportunity to gain for themselves and other workers a fairer share of America's economic pie.

The growing political power of union families and working families will be enhanced by growing and building new unions and increasing union density.

The rich and powerful know this.

The National Chamber of Commerce knows this.

The National Association of Manufacturers knows it, too.

But it will not happen if we sit on the sidelines. So here is what CBTU will do to support the Employee Free Choice Act:

1. Hold community forums regarding the act.
2. Advise our members to contact their representatives in Congress.
3. Communicate with religious allies and supply them with materials, encouraging them to contact their Senators.
4. Provide information on your website regarding the Employee Free Choice Act.
5. Coalesce with community-based organizations.

The House of Representatives has passed the free choice act, and the Senate will take it up soon. It has also won the endorsement of the *New York Times*, and drawn the support of a prominent policy group.

In its recent critically praised report, *From Poverty to Prosperity*, the Center for American Progress said that poverty could be cut *in half* in the next ten years by taking 12 key steps, including increased union representation made possible by the Employee Free Choice Act.

CBTU is calling for a full-court press to win senate approval of this bill, which is the centerpiece of the AFL-CIO's legislative agenda. Contact your senators and tell them to get on board – *now*.

Closing: Be Inspired Messengers

Since we are privileged to participate in this special gathering in the city where CBTU drew its first breath, let us remember that such privilege carries responsibility.

When we leave this convention, we must return home ...go back as *inspired messengers* with a strong, positive message to spread:

- The have-nots are fighting back.
- The labor movement is fighting back and winning.
- And the American people are ready for real change.

We have a duty to be worthy of that glorious pantheon of CBTU pioneers who invested their heart and soul in this organization....

In their name, we form a bond and a promise to those fighting poverty, injustice and oppression.

We will *never* forget the victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

We will *never* abandon the heroic trade unionists in Zimbabwe.

And we will never, *ever*, stop fighting for the dignity of our retirees and for the future of our youth.



From the Clown to the Crown: 2007 McDonald's Truth Tour

By David Duhalde

The celebratory gathering in Chicago April 13-14th that culminated the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' (CIW) "2007 McDonald's Truth Tour" demonstrated the moving solidarity that a social justice movement can achieve. The CIW, which represents the interests of primarily migrant tomato pickers in Florida, reached an agreement with McDonald's for a wage increase of one cent per pound of tomato for its workers (this should raise farm workers pay by more than ten dollars per day). As the National Labor Relations Act still does not cover farm workers, their ability to gain collective bargaining rights in most states is severely limited. Thus, the CIW had to achieve this victory by organizing and building a national coalition of community, religious, and union activists that threatened McDonald's with a national boycott if the corporation did not treat their tomato pickers with justice.

The gathering in Chicago reflected the diversity of American social justice movements. The crowd of nearly one thousand included African American human rights workers from Mississippi, Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) activists from Detroit, Presbyterian church activists from Louisville, trade unionists from the AFL-CIO and Change to Win unions, and scores of Latino activists representing various organizations. The ability of Floridian migrant workers to work with such diverse allies and achieve their demands provides a striking example for today's labor movement of the power of community-based coalition organizing.

Even as neo-liberal economics still remains the consensus in Washington, these workers were able to win economic gains despite their being denied the legal right to form a union and bargain collectively. Many of the tomato pickers are also undocumented workers who risk the retribution of deportation if they stand up for their rights. But by building a powerful coalition both within and without the labor movement, the CIW workers gained an impressive victory while also protecting themselves from corporate retaliation.

Democratic socialists understand that only by building a broad coalition that goes beyond organized labor's own ranks can pro-union forces defeat a virulently anti-union corporate America. By engaging in union support work with a broad range of community supporters, YDS can educate the broader public as to the central role trade unions have played around the world in limiting the injustices of corporate power. Through the solidarity and social diversity of coalitions similar to the CIW, progressive activists can demonstrate that democratic collective action can bring the most powerful of corporations to the bargaining table.

The battle for justice for the Immokalee workers is far from over. Lucas Benitez of the CIW urged rally participants to re-energize ourselves for further struggle on behalf of these embattled tomato pickers. As the CIW turns its focus from McDonald's to Burger King, Benitez reminded us that this is a long-term struggle. It took four years for CIW to win the Taco Bell campaign. A swifter victory came against McDonald's, and the coalition remains confident that Burger King can be brought to justice. But there are many more fast-food chains that continue to demand that their suppliers follow unfair labor practices. Members of the Democratic Socialists of America and Young Democratic Socialists remain ready to meet this challenge.

In addition to the YDS members who traveled to the Chicago rally from across the country, several prominent DSA members spoke from the podium. On Friday, DSA Honorary Chair Delores Huerta addressed the rally about the need to build unity and stop the deportations that mercilessly divide immigrant families. At the House of Blues party on Saturday, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney made a surprise appearance, followed by SEIU Executive Vice-President and DSA Honorary Chair Eliseo Medina. They spoke of the pride we should take in our victory and what we can learn from the work of the Immokalee tomato pickers.

Eliseo Medina reflected on DSA's long-term commitment to the struggle for farm worker rights in his keynote address to the 2001 DSA National convention. He reminded convention delegates that "it was the DSA chapter that adopted me in Chicago, that got us food, found me a place to live....



DSA: the next generation. Nelson Mosley, the youngest YDS member.

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Debs Foundation

The Debs Foundation preserves the Debs home and operates it as a museum open to the public. It also funds and administers an awards program that annually honors a person whose work contributes to the advancement of industrial unionism, social justice, or world peace, in the spirit of Eugene V. Debs.

We encourage *Democratic Left* readers to join; please fill out the form below and mail it to:

The Debs Foundation, P.O. Box 843, Terre Haute, IN 47808 or visit <http://eugenevdebs.com>

Name: _____
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Please select your level of support:

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Outside the U.S. and Canada, please add \$5. Make checks payable to the **Debs Foundation**. *Dues are tax deductible.*

McDonald's Truth Tour
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And so I want to thank you, 35 years later, for what you did for me and for what you did for farm workers, because, I think, thanks to that help, we were successful, and we did stop the sale of grapes, and we did build a farm workers union." Decades later, a revived YDS continues this socialist tradition with our National Immigrant Rights Project and our mobilization for events such as the "CIW 2007 Truth Tour." *¡Si se puede!*

David Duhalde is the Organizer for the Young Democratic Socialists.

Carl Marx Shier
 September 26, 1917- May 26, 2007

Carl Shier, one of our important founders, died suddenly last month. He was an important figure in Chicago's labor movement, mentoring hundreds of trade unionists and more than the occasional young radical. His many contributions to the socialist movement will never be forgotten. An appropriate reflection on his life will appear in the Labor Day issue of *Democratic Left*.

Change the USA! Join the DSA!

Yes, I want to join the Democratic Socialists of America. Enclosed are my dues (includes a subscription to *Democratic Left*) of

\$50 Sustainer \$35 Introductory \$15 Low-Income/Student

Yes, I want to renew my membership in dsa. Enclosed are my renewal dues of:

\$60 Sustainer \$45 Regular \$20 Low-income/Student

Enclosed is an extra contribution of : \$50 \$100 \$25 to help DSA in its work.

Please send me more information about DSA and democratic socialism.

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