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# CCDS MOBILIZER

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April 2006

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## Letter to Membership from the National Coordinating Committee

Dear CCDS Members and Friends:

This issue of the *Mobilizer* provides political context and pertinent information about the forthcoming CCDS Convention, July 21-23, and the CofC Education Fund symposium on July 20. The Convention Call (see below) forcefully articulates the urgency of this political moment and the need to extend every effort to defeat the Bush far right regime that appears increasingly hell-bent on leading the country and the world to escalating disasters.

The CCDS National Coordinating Committee would like to reinforce the Convention Call with a special appeal to you to attend the convention and participate fully in its deliberations and decision-making.

We are more persuaded than ever that CCDS has an important role to play in the essential task of building a progressive majority to bring an end to the Bush nightmare. We have made

the creation and consolidation of that majority our prime political objective. We are determined to rededicate our organization to its greatest strength as a consistent voice for working class interests, for the centrality of the battle against racism and for articulating the issues and interests embedded in the realities of class, race and gender.

We are committed through the symposium, entitled "Fighting Back, Moving Forward: Strategies for Building A Progressive Majority for the Coming Elections" (see Symposium Call below) and through the convention to concretize that effort and help gear our membership and our friends to work effectively in the coming crucial pre-election period to achieve that progressive majority.

CCDS now has an excellent website, and Portside continues to grow as an effective information source for

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## Call to the CCDS 5th National Convention July 21-23, 2006

**A**s the dangers and inequalities of rapacious capitalism are displayed in ever more bold relief than at any moment in history, the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism will convene its 5th national convention, July 21-23, 2006 in Chicago, IL.

The convention will discuss and debate the role of the left and CCDS in particular - what we need to do to grow and become more effective in helping to build a progressive majority in the country.

The challenge to the left and progressive movements today is formidable. Our country is currently in the midst of a political crisis brought on by an unjust, oil profit driven war,

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## Fighting Back, Moving Forward: Strategies for Building a Progressive Majority for the Coming Elections

**A Symposium of the Committees of Correspondence Education Fund**

**DePaul University in Chicago  
Thursday, July 20, 2006 9:00-5:00**

**W**ith the 2006 congressional election and the 2008 presidential election now in our sights, the need to build an effective progressive majority to wrest Congress and the Presidency from the far right is absolutely urgent.

The coming elections constitute the crucial moment to defeat those responsible for the inseparable outrages of Iraq and Katrina as well as a train of crimes, torture, corruption,

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## CCDS in the struggle for a Progressive Majority

*Following are remarks by CCDS National Co-Chair Charlene Mitchell at the April 1st meeting of the National Coordinating Committee in San Francisco.*

**B**uilding a progressive majority is an imperative for our country, and most importantly, it is possible to do. We are not dreaming. Some of the important lessons on how to build it were brought into focus at the Dec. 2005 Symposium on Building a Progressive Majority.

### Race, Class and Gender

First and foremost, it is necessary to see the centrality of melding together in all of our work, no matter what we do, a concept of class, race, and gender. Unless we can all think in this context we are not doing the best work we know how, and we are not adequately using tools to influence the main forces and the peoples' movements.

### Left Unity

The Symposium showed that it is possible to build unity, but unity doesn't have to mean bringing the organized Left into a single organization of the socialist left.

At every previous meeting of the National Coordinating Committee the question of left unity appears on the agenda. We hearken back to 1992, at the first conference of what was to become the Committees of

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**Convention and Symposium  
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CCDS Web Page - page 2**

## Letter to the Membership

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a widening left and progressive audience. We are happy with those accomplishments and with the quality of Dialogue and Initiative, our electronic Mobilizer and our recent pamphlets.

But there is nothing like direct face-to-face communication. That is the essence of democracy. The symposium and convention will offer an exceptional opportunity to reconnect with our membership, friends and with each other in one of the country's most stimulating cities with a rich history of progressive struggle.

We cannot emphasize too strongly our desire to see you, exchange ideas and together construct a vibrant action plan. Over the past 14 years of our existence we have done many good things and have often contributed a politically mature and unifying voice to a number of struggles. But too often, the fine discussions at leadership levels have not impacted the membership and the thought and

### CCDS Remembers

We remember lifetime veterans in the struggle for world peace and justice. Members and friends mourn the loss of

Anne Braden

Mimi Shuldiner

*Presente!*

The *CCDS Mobilizer* is a publication of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism (CCDS). CCDS members are active in the struggles for peace, justice, democracy and equality with a vision of a socialist future.

Annual membership is \$31; \$41 for households; \$16 for low income. For info, write or call:

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Member contributions to this publication are welcomed. Pat Fry, Editor

experiences of the membership have not impacted the leadership. Now is the time to end this, to re-cement relationships and to move forward together.

The Chicago convention can well be the most significant gathering in our 14-year history. Most important, we can make it an occasion for rededication to our vision of building a democratic, participatory socialist organization that listens well, acts with principle and respects all viewpoints expressed by members and supporters.

With a great tide of struggle and change sweeping the country and the world, more than ever, we feel the need to reconnect with you, to see and hear you, and to join together with you in continuing and expanding battle for peace, equality and justice.

See you in Chicago!

### A Progressive Majority - What Is It and How to Build It

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political course.

A center-left coalition needs to formulate that broadly agreed upon common program that accommodates the holistic outlook of the left and the pragmatic outlook of the center. The three essential components of that program would most likely be a) a constructive global policy for peace and environmental survival; b) economic and social justice; c) defense of constitutional and human rights.

A common program does not imply unprincipled compromises that can only reduce the coalition to an ineffectual echo of the dominant political culture. Quite the contrary, a coalition of center and left has to grasp the interconnections between issues. It has to forge unbreakable connections among issues of class, racial and gender justice as well as peace and economic survival. Within the amalgam of left and center there must be a convergence of diverse social forces -- trade unionists, communities of color, white collar workers, immigrants, women and men, gays and straights, old and young

## Check Out the New CCDS Web Site

The all-new CCDS web page is up and running at: [www.cc-ds.org](http://www.cc-ds.org)

Over the last several months, a committee of members and friends have worked hard to renovate the CCDS web page. Special thanks go to webmaster Senora Amos, artist Rebecca Targ, and committee members Ted Pearson, Steve Willett, Carl Davidson, Anne Mitchell, Charlene Mitchell and Mildred Williamson.

To facilitate communication between members, there is now a membership discussion page on the web site. To sign up, click on:

#### CCDS Membership Discussion Member Only Area

The web site carries a number of features including the Portside article of the week, news of important mobilizing activities for peace and justice, a polling question of the week, and much more.

who recognize in the coalition's concerns a strong responsiveness to their needs. Thus, an organized progressive majority that stands with undocumented workers also demands a living wage, union rights and massive jobs programs for all -- undercutting corporate divide-and-conquer strategies seeking to pit oppressed nationalities against each other.

To suggest that such an interconnected basic program, linking for example the struggle against racism to economic justice and peace, would not enlist support of the center is defeatist and does not reflect the possibilities of this political moment. At the same time, a progressive majority is not, nor can it become, a vessel of ideological uniformity. An anti-imperialist outlook, for example, cannot be a compulsory condition imposed by left forces. For the anti-war component, in particular, a clear distinction has to be made between a broadly based peace movement and an anti-imperialist movement. Failure to make that distinction sows division and ironically undercuts the building of a majority capable of stopping

# Call to CCDS Convention

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and the wholesale corruption of the nation's political system.

The inequities of the system were demonstrated tragically by the scandalous response to the gulf coast hurricane at the hands of those sworn to "protect the general welfare."

As the year 2006 unfolds, we are witnessing the unmasking of a vast hydra-headed web of official corruption unprecedented in our history.

Meanwhile, the Bush Administration - with the cowardly connivance of too many of our elected representatives in Congress - has pushed through measures that reward those with wealth and power while drastically eviscerating government social welfare and educational programs that threaten the lives and well-being of millions of people.

And, like the callous response to the hurricane devastation, the racist character of this reactionary offensive has been laid bare for the world to see.

In our relations with other nations and peoples of the world we have been steered in a dangerous direction, abandoning long-held treaty obligations, engaging in ruthless military actions and threats, launching nuclear weapons in space, and rejecting calls for urgent planet-wide action to protect the biosphere. The Administration's policies are geared to thwart the goals and aspirations of peoples - particularly in the global "south" - to secure their independence and economic viability in the face of neo-liberal globalization.

It is clear now that while all this has unfolded, a plot has been underway to undermine the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights placing in jeopardy the civil liberties of our people.

We of the Committees of Correspondence are convinced that our country is in great danger. We hold that this reactionary political and extra-legal thrust can only be thwarted by sustained action of a broad popular coalition, united and determined

to move the country away from this perilous trajectory by changing the political alignment.

At our founding convention, we declared:

"Our members are activists in all the social movements of our country - of labor, civil rights, immigrant rights, women, peace, international solidarity, gay and lesbian rights, environment, youth and students, seniors,

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*We will survey the state of the organization and take a critical look at our past, and the requirements for the future.*

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and religion. We have come together to help shape a clear cut alternative to the destructive, mean-spirited corporate drive for profit above all else. We seek constructive solutions to the problems of poverty and unemployment, racism, sexism, health, education, and housing."

Those remain our goals, along with our vision and commitment to work for replacing the outdated and unresponsive "market economy" with a system more responsive to our country's pressing needs and the requirements of the future.

Throughout our history, the Committees of Correspondence has sought to be part of, and a constructive and contributing force in, building the widest possible unity of left and progressive movements and organizations dedicated to turning back the assault from the political right. We have and continue to support the coming together of all of those whose interests lie in upholding and strengthening peace, social justice, environmental responsibility and equality. And, we have worked toward that end while participating with others in the burgeoning and dynamic upsurge in social move-

ments for resistance and reform.

Last December, the Committees of Correspondence Education Fund brought together a wide variety of individuals from progressive movements, parties and organizations under the banner of "Building a Progressive Majority: The Next Steps." During the exchange, held in New York City, stress was placed on the imperative need for labor, anti-racist, peace, and socialist movements to come together to help build progressive unity based on an understanding of the connections between issues of class, race, and gender. There, over 100 participants from across the country discussed the urgent need for left dialogue and action in this period of economic and political crisis.

At our convention in July, we will be seeking ways to draw from our experience the lessons needed to build ours into a larger, stronger and more effective organization. We will survey the state of the organization and take a critical look at our past, and the requirements for the future. As with all of our previous similar gatherings, we invite and encourage the attendance and participation of those in the wider community who share the goals and objectives we have set out for the period ahead.

The CCDS 5th Convention will be held Friday, July 21 through Sunday, July 23. The day preceding the convention, Thursday, July 20th, the Committees of Correspondence Education Fund, Inc. will sponsor a second Symposium on "Building a Progressive Majority," bringing together a number of well-known representatives of varying political thought. In particular, there will be views presented on defeating the political right in the critical 2006 and 2008 elections. It will be open to the public with a modest registration fee. Convention attendees will be welcomed at the July 20th Symposium as part of the convention registration.

Join us in Chicago!

# Fighting Back, Moving Forward: Strategies for Building a Progressive Majority

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abuse of constitutional rights, assaults on the environment and economic and social policies that weigh heaviest on the working population and its most oppressed nationalities.

This symposium will address a series of vital issues related to the elections and to the movements that comprise a potential united progressive majority.

It will address issues regarding the working class and the organized labor movement.

The labor movement, despite its weakened condition, remains a cornerstone of the struggle for social and economic justice. Peace is now increasingly a part of labor's agenda. At its last convention, the AFL-CIO passed an historic resolution calling for a timely withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. That marked an important step toward building a powerful link between the peace movement and labor.

The symposium will urgently address the shocking crisis of massive joblessness and incarceration impacting the African American community, especially among Black males who face racist assaults that threaten their very survival.

It will examine the attack on immigrants and the exploding resistance of immigrant communities to proposed severe restraints on those communities and those who assist them.

The symposium will consider strategies to fight back against the Bush-led right wing assault on the economic, social, environmental and constitutional rights of the vast majority.

The CoC Ed Fund invites you to participate in this vital symposium.

## **Symposium Panels**

### **Where the Jobs Have Gone and How to Win Them Back**

How can the labor movement - and all working people - meet the challenge of corporate globalization, "outsourcing" of jobs, and corporate-engineered global job competition? How can the labor and progressive movements defend the needs and interests of the growing number of casual, part-time and immigrant workers? How can those movements advance global labor cooperation and solidarity? How can progressives make jobs and economic survival, especially among besieged communities of color, a vital election issue?

### **"Connecting the Dots" to Create a Unified Program for a Progressive Majority**

What is needed to create a dynamic minimum progressive program that reflects the urgent interests of major segments of society? How can we advance the growing linkage between justice for Katrina victims and ending the devastating Iraq war? That latter outrage has now cost over \$251 billion

with the House of Representatives recently voting to expend another \$72 billion to prolong and escalate the killing and destruction. At the same time, only \$19 billion, too little and too late, has been allocated to assist the victims of Katrina. How can progressives effectively challenge the shocking contrasts between lavish funding for Iraq and festering neglect for Katrina victims? How can an effective program be forged that links the fight for peace, economic and social justice, and constitutional and human rights? How to advance such a program to impact the coming elections?

### **Strategies for Winning at the Polls in 2006 & 2008**

What strategies are needed to forge a progressive majority to defeat the right in 2006 and 2008 elections? What is meant by a coalition of "center and left?" How is it to be achieved? What would be the most effective relationship between progressive activists, independent politics and the Republican, Democratic and Green parties?

### **Summing Up - A Roundtable**

Discussion on the next steps needed to advance a progressive majority for peace, justice and democracy.

The Roundtable will be an informal discussion among a diverse group of activists as well as between the panel and the audience.

## **A Progressive Majority - What It Is and How to Build It**

*The following is an excerpt from an article by Mark Solomon, national CCDS co-chair, posted on Portside April 15. For the full article see the CCDS web site or call the national office.*

A progressive majority is more than numbers. It is an organized, unified, coherent force able to impact the political process and ultimately overcome the dominant corporate politics -- connecting constructively with the rest of the world and promoting a domestic culture of democracy and justice.

A progressive majority must be a coalition of center and left. The center generally has no systemic political philosophy save pragmatism whereby it tends to shift around issue-by-issue, at times pressured from the left or right. It is moderately liberal, does not see U.S. global policy as necessarily imperialist, but often opposes the negative consequences of US foreign adventures. Domestically it favors government intervention to curb the worst corporate abuses and social ills while not seeing government as a

sure vessel of big business and military power.

The left, clearly smaller, embraces many currents but generally shares a systemic critique of the dominant system and a consistently critical estimate of U.S. foreign policy. Under present circumstances where the bankruptcy of the right is exposed and where it is beset by mounting difficulties and growing resistance, the left can influence the center to join with it to forge a common minimum program to alter the country's

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# CCDS in the struggle for a Progressive Majority

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Correspondence, where we discussed the importance of the left trying to draw together not as a single organization but rather bringing together an organization that would be open to working with all on the left.

Programmatic unity has to some extent worked in different local areas. In some areas where we have been working together with people from other left organizations we have come together on various projects and campaigns. "Organic unity" has never been the form and where people have joined CCDS from other organizations, they've always retained their membership and commitment to their original organization. For example, people who joined from Solidarity, remained members of Solidarity. People who came in as members of DSA maintained membership in both organizations. Some people who were in the Communist Party maintained their memberships in both organizations as did members of Freedom Road.

Many felt it necessary to continue to make their original organization the main focus of their attention. This dichotomy did not develop all of a sudden and will not change any more suddenly. But in many ways we are able to work together on any number of issues with any number of organizations and coalitions.

## **Pseudo Coalitions**

There are, of course, organizations that form pseudo coalitions - not to work with others - but to undermine the work of legitimate coalitions of peace and justice organizations, solidarity campaigns, the labor movement and other people's movements.

A major case in point is the repeated role of ANSWER within the peace movement. Historically, whenever a broad array of forces have been able to form a coalition, ANSWER manages to tie up the proceedings by insisting that the coalition accept the maximum demands at the inevitable risk that many will walk away from the coalition altogether. Such tactics

usually either result in ANSWER achieving their programmatic position within the broader coalition or calling for a separate action.

UFPJ, plagued with the disruptive sectarian antics of ANSWER has taken a firmer position to proceed with commonly agreed upon actions despite the negative division sought by ANSWER. In my opinion UFPJ has defined and clarified its role as a coalition against the war in Iraq that brings together the broadest array of movements and organizations, including the anti-imperialist movements, to realize the agreed upon goal. In other words, on program, we must find ways to move together toward a common goal.

## **Role of CCDS**

The role of CCDS as a socialist organization is not simply to network with others on the left, but to help build a movement. Cooperation will be melded together to the extent that we are able to influence those who influence movements and people. Organic unity of left sectarian organizations is not a realistic or desirable vehicle to forge a center left majority. The energy should be geared to working with movements, organizations, and individuals whose program and tactics help to influence broader constituents in the struggle. It is this approach that will help to raise the level of consciousness without destroying the base.

This means that we have to find ways to move and influence masses of people in this country into an organized left, but also to move people away from the right. In that sense, there are some things that we need to think through as we grapple with how best CCDS can do that and what our specific role is in moving masses of people in struggle more and more to the left.

One of those ways, of course, is connecting the dots. The issues that oppress the majority of people in our country must become our issues. Clearly we are not suggesting that every member or chapter of CCDS

will or should have the same interests in every issue.

Let me give three examples. The question of national healthcare is a major movement that has advanced from where it was just a year ago, certainly more than where it was two years ago. The question of healthcare involves the labor movement and problems of the class as a whole.

Second, the prison industrial complex in most urban areas has become a major business. In one way or another it is an issue that affects growing numbers of families with sons and daughters in some form of imprisonment or control by the criminal justice system. The business of prisons has become a major issue, and some CCDS members devote most of their "free time" to dealing with prisoners and prisons. The victims are mainly people of color, working class and jobless youth. Is this an issue, then, in which everybody in the local area CCDS has to be involved? No, but isn't it an issue that touches whatever else we do, and isn't there a way we could all be more familiar with and show the relationship between issues with those that are more immediately active in the work? We are with people who are working in those organizations and making the interconnection could help to influence that movement in a way that takes it further in the direction of being an organized part of the forces that connects the movement as a whole.

Third, there are members of CCDS who are very active in their respective unions and other labor related institutions. There are people who spend literally 75 percent of their time working at their union responsibilities. Some of them devote every spare moment to the organizational and educational work of CCDS and the problems that confront the class as a whole, and they also spend a great amount of time dealing with questions of the labor movement. We need to find the form in which this energy can be spent more collectively.

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# CCDS in the struggle for a Progressive Majority

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## **The Struggle for Peace - the Overriding Issue**

Unlike issue-oriented organizations, the struggle for peace should be the issue that brings together the coalition of all forces interested in the struggle for peace and justice. Finding the way to show the interrelationship between peace and justice is a key task of the socialist left within each part of the whole.

For example, there is an area here in San Francisco called Bay View-Hunter's Point. It is my understanding that this is a multi racial, multi-cultural community now being gentrified. Before gentrification there were whites, Latinos, African Americans, Asians and Pacific Islanders. While mainly working class, there were middle class and professionals and growing number of seniors. These residents are now fighting to preserve their community. They are being attacked by city hall and developers. There is an important housing movement in San Francisco and many members of CCDS are part of it.

Is there any reason why there should not be a collective approach to dealing with some of these particular issues and how the issues of war and peace affect what's going on there? How are the issues of race and gender affecting what's going on? Fundamentally, what does it mean in terms of what we do about the ability of working class people to remain in urban populations? Is this something that we can all find a way to relate to in all of our other work?

This example brings together some other questions. In Hunter's Point there are people who can't afford healthcare and who have capitalist-rooted health problems, including many union workers. Because of the nature of that area and its history of involvement in political campaigns, there are a number of organized senior citizens. It's an example of how you could take a problem and make it a collective position, a collective duty of the whole Bay Area, East Bay and

San Francisco area. It seems to me that it might be something that would bring people together and would force us into working with people in a new way, in a different way.

## **The Assault on Organized Labor and the Need for Marxist Theory**

Once we start talking about Hunters Point, we are reminded of what is going on in the Midwest, a region that is fast becoming a Rust Belt. This is the plight not only for Detroit, Chicago, Gary, St. Louis, etc., but the whole region including the farm area of Nebraska and Iowa.

What do plant closings that result in the loss of tens of thousands of jobs mean for the quality and conditions of life? How do we raise the level of the real meaning of global capitalism and the disaster it creates in its wake?

This link is brought home when we look analytically at the meaning of the new intensive assault on organized labor and consequently the entire working class, including: 1) the ability of the bosses to divide older and newer workers with two and three-tier wages systems in negotiated contracts, 2) cuts to health benefits and pension benefits by negotiating contracts that place the burden of paying rising costs on workers, and 3) contracts that increase the work day with no increase in pay.

Big business, encouraged by many in Congress, continues to use the immigration issue to divide workers between citizens and immigrants without documents. They include proposals for guest worker programs to "do the work that U.S. citizens won't do."

Most of the issues I raise have to do with problems created by capitalism and its inability to solve these problems. What does that mean?

These are questions that deal with our weakness in tackling theoretical and analytical problems. Connecting the dots is not just a slogan. It is a political concept that makes it possible to bring together problems that confront our class and our whole people. It calls for the theoretical under-

standing of the inseparable connection between class, race and gender.

Concretely, we are saying that we want to help build a movement of a progressive majority that is clear about the relationship between the struggle against racism, the struggle for peace, the struggle for economic justice, human rights, and saving democracy.

Unfortunately we have not given sufficient attention to the important combination of theory and practice, resulting too often in the neglect of the fundamental class aspects of global capitalism.

We have a meaningful asset in the Socialist Education Project, but we have not yet used it to further our collective tackling of the problems of capitalism, socialism and democracy. The use of Marxist methodology would help a great deal to focus on the importance of building a movement to achieve a progressive majority in our country that is able to challenge for power.

## **2006 and 2008 Elections**

It is in this regard that we see the months between now and the 2008 elections and beyond as crucial. A coalition of center and left forces is the only way to garner the numbers and energy to defeat the right-wing thrust from maintaining power and increasing the danger to our country and the world.

As we approach our national Convention to be held in Chicago July 21-23, 2006 our thoughts and activity should include working to build the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism. We can be proud as well as critical of the work that we have done. We have and can continue to make contributions in the movements in which we are active. Working collectively, we can do much more.

**All members of CCDS are encouraged to attend the national convention and symposium, July 20-23, 2006 in Chicago - see page 7**

## Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism 2006 Convention Registration

Date of Registration: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Apt/Floor: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Best Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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### Registration

Registration is \$50 for all four days: July 20 - 23, 2006 which includes the July 20th "Building a Progressive Majority" Symposium sponsored by the CoC Education Fund. The daily fee is \$20. For low income, and youth, and students: \$5 per day.

Please check below the days you are registering:

Thurs, July 20 \_\_\_\_ Fri, July 21 \_\_\_\_ Sat, July 22 \_\_\_\_ Sun, July 23 \_\_\_\_ Fee: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Housing

Housing at the University Center Conference Chicago has been reserved. The per person/per night rate is \$61.74 (includes taxes and breakfast) for a suite with two single beds per room with bath. Please indicate the name of a roommate, unless you wish to be assigned. If you wish a room without a roommate, the rate is \$123.48 per night. Indicate below the days you wish housing at the University Center:

Thurs, July 20 \_\_\_\_ Fri, July 21 \_\_\_\_ Sat, July 22 \_\_\_\_ Sun, July 23 \_\_\_\_

Name of roommate, if you do not wish an assignment: \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish a roommate assignment, indicate your gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of nights: \_\_\_\_\_ Total housing fee: \_\_\_\_\_

*Check-in time is 3:00 PM. Check-out time is no later than 10:00 AM. The University Center includes linen service, sheets, towels, internet access, alarm clock and access to recreation center, fitness center, outdoor terrace and laundry facilities.*

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TOTAL: Housing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Registration \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ = Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please clip this registration form and send with a check or money order, payable to CCDS, to:

CCDS  
545 Eighth Ave, 14th Floor NE  
New York, NY 10018  
Ph (212) 868-3733 Fx (212) 868-3334  
Email: national@cc-ds.org Web: www.cc-ds.org

## DAY OF ACTION FOR THE RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS IN CHARLESTON, S.C.

By Jim Campbell

In Charleston, S.C., the turnout of support on April 10th for workers' rights, now in the form of defending immigrant rights, was impressive. Organized labor, the NAACP, a large segment of the faith community, CAFE, S.C. Progressive Network, the peace and social justice movement and CCDS were among many other organizations who joined in support for the majority Latino, but also Caribbean, Haitian, Panamanian and other workers from the Americas. The rally was held in support of legalization, citizenship, reuniting of families, basic civil rights and protection for the vulnerable undocumented worker status.

Historic Marion Square in the middle of downtown Charleston was the setting for this gathering of 3,000. The Square is surrounded by powerful symbols of the city's early, seminal history. On the north edge of Marion Square, backdrop for the rally's speakers' stage, stands the original Citadel building erected in 1822 as a military garrison in response to an attempt by a group of enslaved African workers in Charleston to repossess their lives, their labor and their families. That attempt was led by Denmark Vesey and Gullah Jack in company with many other enslaved African work-

ers. Their attempt was unsuccessful and they were subsequently hung. Along the south side of the Square, is a stature of John C. Calhoun, one of the chief theoreticians and defenders of the enslavement of African labor as a state's right. At the southeast corner of Marion Square is a more recent addition, the Jewish Holocaust Memorial. It was placed there so that we "Never Forget" the calculated horrors of the German State under fascism.

The People United For A Better America! Hispanic Community of Charleston organized this broad coalition of support for the legalization of undocumented immigrants. The prevailing mood and message in the gathering was that immigration is the Civil Rights issue of our time, that a realistic immigration policy must be a two-way street between America and other nations and that workers must not be criminalized.

Speakers spoke of the reasons for some of the forces driving immigration during the last ten years. In the post NAFTA era, it was pointed out, the Mexican government was forced to end subsidies on the growing of corn and beans. The farmers could not afford to grow basic foods and the workers could not afford to buy. Thus, the exodus from Mexico. Further

aggravating conditions in Mexico was the fact that in a period of eighteen months Mexico lost more than five hundred fifty factories as corporations moved plants to China exploiting workers where wages are sixty cents an hour as compared to two dollars an hour in Mexico.

Corporations are free to exploit workers and their labor around the world and, in so doing, use the workers' condition of underdevelopment to pit one poor work force against another on a global scale. Meanwhile, the wealthy class increases their wealth. Speakers included Dot Scott, President, Charleston Branch, NAACP; Reps. David Mack, III and Seth Whipper of the SC House of Reps; Rev. Joe Darby, Senior Pastor of Morris Brown AME Church and Second Vice President, SC Conference of NAACP Branches; Thomasina Green and Yadaira Omar, both of CAFE; Diana Salazar of People United For A Better America and this author who spoke as the National Co-Chair of CCDS. Charleston City Councilman, Wendell Gailliard was in attendance.

The planning committee, a diverse coalition that included leaders of the AFL-CIO ILA Local 1422, is now planning for national days of action on May 1st.

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