

For a Democratic and Socialist Future



GOALS AND PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE FOR DE- MOCRACY AND SOCIALISM

Adopted July 2009
at the CCDS 6th National Convention

Prologue: Crisis & Opportunity

Interwoven Crises

We are in an historic moment of interwoven economic, social, environmental, and foreign policy crises. An economic crisis destroys millions of jobs and undermines the security of the working class. An environmental and climate catastrophe threatens our way of life. The cost of militarism undermines our national security.

Challenge of Building Unity

The convergence of these crises presents new challenges for a rising progressive majority. The various currents of progressivism must achieve new levels of mutual support. A higher level of political consciousness is needed to build coalitions capable of uniting to defeat the still dangerous right wing forces.

Realignment of Forces

The 2008 election was a blow against right-wing reaction that portends a left-center realignment of the nation's politics. It was the response of a rising progressive majority that matured during eight years of neoconservative policies that represented the most reactionary sectors of US capital. The election of Barack Obama to the presidency is an historic affirmation of centuries of struggle against oppression and racism - a struggle that continues with new inspiration.

Progressive Majority

The multiracial working class in alliance with trade unions, women, African Americans, Latinos and other people of color, youth, and progressive sectors of

business now form the promising components of the progressive majority. The profound challenge before the working class and its allies is to organize this majority into a coherent force capable of responding to the various issues it confronts.

Multiple and Inseparable Crises of Capitalism

Austerity for Workers

The gap between wealth and poverty is greater than ever. The U.S. production of goods and services has been declining steadily. The traditional pillar of national identity expressed in dreams of upward mobility is in tatters. Education, the lever of hope for a better life, is ridden by crisis with college costs beyond reach for most young people. Millions are ground down by gnawing insecurity. The bottom is falling out of people's lives as jobs are lost in the tens of thousands every month. Pensions are wiped out in stock market deflation, exposing retirees to frightening uncertainty.

The equity held by millions in home ownership is threatened by deflation exposing mortgagees and their families to foreclosures and being cast into the streets. Families struggle to make ends meet against the rising cost of food and energy. Illness exposes millions to bankruptcy, as the cost of health care in a profit-driven system rises inexorably. The prison and jail population, disproportionately youth of color, increased from 380,000 in 1975 to nearly 2.5 million today. Undocumented immigrants face round up, criminalization, jail, and deportation.

Discrimination

African Americans and other people of color face a dire situation. Centuries of racial and national oppression, the legacy of chattel slavery, have left a residue of disproportionate deprivation and suffering in today's economic crisis. The official jobless rate among African Americans is well over thirteen percent, with nearly sixteen percent for males. Joblessness among African American youth is devastating with many communities reporting more than fifty percent unemployed.

Latino workers' unemployment hovers close to twelve percent, up from seven percent in the previous year, while the rate among white jobless stands at close to eight percent.

The mortgage crisis has hit minority communities with particular force due to racial targeting by home mortgage and financial institutions. Housing foreclosures are destroying whole neighborhoods in cities like Detroit, Flint, and Cleveland along with the economic assets of those who have worked a lifetime to build a secure future.

Women suffer disproportionately from the economic crisis. Discrimination in earnings and hiring leave women more vulnerable to speed-up and layoffs. Many families are headed by single mothers now facing cuts in support by the social safety net.

Institutional racism is a central source of exploitation and division aimed at weakening the working class. The battle against white supremacy and sex discrimination are essential requirements for advancing the unity and interests of all working people.

Capitalism is exhausted. But it will not pass from the stage of history without a ceaseless struggle by the working class and its allies in a conscious battle against far right reaction, for concrete improvement in the lives of the vast majority, and ultimately for the democratic power to build a new society.



Crisis: The Cause is Capitalism

“Free Market” Collapse

The collapse of the financial sector and the bailouts of insolvent banks have provoked unprecedented public outrage. The transfer of trillions of taxpayer funds into the pockets of corrupt Wall Street speculators, while millions of working people face home foreclosure and loss of employment, has triggered demands for “bailouts of working people, not bailouts of banks.”

The Reagan, Clinton, and Bush administrations had systematically gutted the regulation of banking and investment practices. Regulations established to save capitalism from its own worst abuses were jettisoned in the name of the “free market.” The unprecedented power of finance capital, accumulated since the Reagan era, enabled the arrogance, greed, and criminal behavior on Wall Street, and in turn, its control of the political class and regulatory agencies.

The collapse of the financial sector has led to widespread questioning of capitalism, especially among young people who increasingly see the root cause of the economic crisis as the capitalist system itself.

Political Economy of Capitalism

Human labor creates the value from which profit is derived. Surplus value is the difference between the full value of labor reflected in commodity exchange, and the wages and benefits paid to workers by the capitalist. The capitalist appropriates that surplus value. The price of labor is determined by what is required for its survival and by its own struggles for a greater share of the value it creates. But capitalists, who own the means of production, seek to appropriate the maximum share of the surplus value and to minimize labor's share.

The economic crisis was precipitated by fraud in the credit sphere. But, economic instability had been building in the sphere of production in the real economy as capital appropriated an ever-greater share of surplus value from labor. Since the Reagan era, the living standards of the working class have suffered a relentless attack. That attack has been focused on undermining labor unions, shifting production to low wage "right to work" states, and destroying the social safety net. The increased exploitation of labor is manifested in longer hours, discrimination, temporary and part-time work, speedup, layoffs, and anti-union employer campaigns.

Crisis of Overproduction

Each capitalist strives to expand – to increase profit, to produce and sell more products. Driven by the pressures of competition, capitalists have no choice but to seek to increase profits by reducing the amount of labor that goes into the product.

The result is a crisis of overproduction at the same time that labor is increasingly saddled with debt. Overproduction brings about a decline in new production and workers are thrown out of work; joblessness means further decline in market demand; production is further slowed as businesses are forced into bankruptcy or simply closed. Surplus capital in the form of buildings and machinery is destroyed.



Unemployed workers in a food line

Cyclical Crises

Competition forces capitalists to modernize equipment to reduce costs of production to raise profits. With greater capital investment, machinery increasingly replaces human labor. The cyclical accumulation of capital in the form of factories and equipment to produce an abundance of goods eventually comes into conflict with the private accumulation of profit.

The disproportion between the expansion of capital and the resulting stagnation of workers' consumption of goods is the ultimate cause of crisis. At a certain point in the economic cycle the average rate of profit falls. The effect on working people is constant downward pressure on their ability to buy what they make.

Wealth and Misery

Capital becomes devalued if it is halted at any stage of its circulation, as unsold goods or idle money. The crisis lasts until overproduction is expended by the devaluation of productive capital and new productive needs emerge. This process was

described by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*: "...industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilization, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce.... The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them."

In *Capital*, Marx summed up the essence of capitalist relations: "The absolute general law of capitalist accumulation makes an accumulation of misery a necessary condition, corresponding to the accumulation of wealth. Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, the torment of labor, slavery, ignorance, brutalization, and moral degradation at the opposite pole, i.e. on the side of the class that produces its own product as capital."

Long Term Decline

This contradiction at the heart of capitalism is the source of past, present, and future cycles of boom and bust. With their unprecedented looting of trillions of dollars of the future earnings of the working class, it is likely that the financial sector will make a rapid recovery. But the destruction of productive capital will keep Main Street in a prolonged depression of joblessness and depressed property values.

Many claim that the collapse of the system was caused by bad choices and bad behavior, that it can be restored by re-regulation, banking reform and/or currency reform. But the system itself, not the abuses of it, ultimately generated this crisis. It is very likely that another deeper financial crisis will further cripple the economy before the end of the Obama administration unless the financial center banks are nationalized, the troops are brought home, and a tremendous campaign of infrastructure and green jobs capital investments is begun.

Crisis of Financialization

Managing Decline

The economic boom begun with World War II arms production has run its course. Over the past six decades, capitalism attempted to manage the falling rate of profit using government intervention. The neo-liberal policies of globalization, the attack on wages, and the technological revolution have failed to sustain profitability. Rising global competition, a work force squeezed by technological advances, and rising prices of core natural resources has further depressed the rate of profit.

Increasing Debt

With the weakening of the industrial infrastructure, financialization has become capitalism's cash cow. The after-tax rate of profit was increased by lower corporate taxes, financed by additional public debt. Investments were increasingly shifted from production of goods and services to shady financial instruments. Money was created solely from debt, with no new value created from real production. The surplus value appropriated by capital no longer found outlet in material production and spilled into financial schemes and speculative bubbles, spreading pain and upheaval throughout the global economic system.

Credit Bubble

Today, a "financial industry" has subjugated the real production of goods. Traditionally, credit functioned as an engine to sustain production and to compensate for the inability of labor to buy back all it creates.

The Federal Reserve's easy money policy led to an unsustainable inflation in the price of housing. The mortgage debt based on inflated home prices

was far greater than the growth of value from new production required to pay this debt. Riding a tide of “free market” deregulation, exchanges of speculative paper based on uncollectible mortgage debt have become the source of dizzying fortunes that created no new wealth. Ultimately the shrinking resources of the working class were transferred to the coffers of the Wall Street banks.

Capitalism has staved off crisis by lending out ever more of the profits, by confiscating workers’ savings in retirement and pension funds, and by monetizing the earnings of future generations of workers to stimulate consumption. When this credit expansion reached its inevitable limit, a financial panic ensued that triggered a spiraling collapse.

More of the Same

Faced with collapse of a financial system, the Bush administration and the 112th Congress made a critical choice. Rather than attempting to shore up the economy by creating jobs, the government committed trillions of dollars of future earnings of the working class to cover the speculative losses of favored banks.

The Obama administration and the 113th Congress are continuing on this path. This trend underscores the political and social bankruptcy of the financial oligarchy clinging to power. The growing impoverishment of millions of working people and local governments caught up in Wall Street’s speculative binge is deepening the present crisis.

The credit system again proved incapable of cushioning the fatal contradiction of capitalism: an exploited labor force without the resources to sustain the system. Given the huge increase in public debt to save the speculators, the next crisis will likely come sooner and result in more severe consequences.

Crisis of Capitalist Globalization

Capital Movement

Vast technological changes that facilitate rapid capital movement have advanced a newly integrated global capitalist system. The sharpening contradictions of capitalism over the last four decades have intensified the globalization of capital. A transnational capitalist class has emerged with globally interlinked ownership and distinct global interests.

Free trade agreements make it easier for capital to cross national borders. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank impose “structural adjustment programs” on poorer countries to privatize public wealth and enact neoliberal “free trade” policies. Global corporations press a “race to the bottom” in search of maximum profits, burdening much of the developing world with intractable debt. Wall Street bankers have spread toxic mortgages around the world, seriously undermining the global banking and credit system.

Assault on Workers

With transnational production and sale of goods and services, industry and government have assaulted unionization nation by nation. With a sharp decline in union protections and union growth, wages have stagnated. Labor has been pressed to greater productivity under the threat of removal of production to lower wage countries. Major sectors of US industry have been decimated as capitalist investment shifted production to countries with low wages, favorable tax policies, neglect of the environment, and hostility to labor unions.

Transnational capital has fostered a decline of schools, deteriorating cities, and serious neglect of our nation’s infrastructure by abandoning domestic



*Panel on building the progressive majority
at the CCDS 6th convention*

support for education, health care, and social services for working people. It has gutted welfare, marginalized and increased the poor and unemployed, and created a growing prison-industrial complex.

Transnational capital savages the poor in developing countries through demands for debt repayment at exorbitant interest and to cut government benefits. This enriches foreign investors in the wealthier countries. It also benefits the domestic elites who exploit their own national labor force. This has accelerated disease, hunger, and grinding poverty, widening the great disparity between rich and poor on a world scale.

Global Labor Pool

Capitalism from its very beginnings has created manageable pools of workers by a process of displacing people. Imperialism has used direct military intervention and proxy wars to make regions of the world safe for capital to exploit a global pool of cheap labor. This legacy of wars and exploitation has forced workers to migrate.

However, workers who follow the wealth that they created back into the imperialist states are subjected to xenophobia, racism, and repression. Denied full protection of their rights, migrant workers are forced by capital into substandard working

conditions, which lowers working conditions for all workers.

Those with economic and political power have exalted individual greed while preaching a doctrine of “personal responsibility” for the working class. While capitalism has transitioned to a supra-national globalized system of integration, it indoctrinates workers with appeals to patriotism and nationalism. Workers are urged to defend their respective nation states while capitalism rejects state intervention except where the state can facilitate its drive to exploit labor at home and abroad.

Global capital has sought to privatize social benefits and deny working people the entitlements won by decades of struggle. Today, more than ever “workers of the world unite” must be the operative principle to combat global capital.

Challenging Neo-liberalism

New social movements have arisen across the world to challenge global capital’s neoliberal “free market” domination of the developing regions. South America is now a primary area of struggle against the IMF and other agencies of capitalist globalization.

The anti-globalization movement in the imperial countries, the growing international solidarity movements, and the developing internationalism of the trade unions fighting the assault on living standards are creating a mass base to counter neo-liberal hegemony.

The growing progressive majority here and abroad must raise the demand for a new foreign economic policy based on international solidarity and the shared needs of workers. The United States must construct peaceful relations with the other nations of the world based upon fair bi-lateral trade agreements that protect labor, human rights, and the environment.



Crisis of the War Economy and the National Security State

Militarism

The United States emerged as a superpower after World War II with a vastly expanded industrial capacity untouched by wartime destruction. The Cold War buildup of conventional forces established a war economy and the largest military in history with a huge advantage in nuclear weapons. The emerging military-industrial complex became the global lever to challenge socialist and national liberation movements, and eliminate alternatives to capitalism.

US militarism has launched scores of large and small interventions over the past sixty years that have killed and maimed millions, bringing unimaginable suffering and tragedy to many parts of the world. The imperial wars in Iraq and Afghanistan underscore the senselessness of using military force to bring about “regime change.”

Economic Drain

Massive military spending overcame the effects of capitalism's postwar cyclical slowdown. But military spending in the trillions of dollars over the last quarter century has overwhelmed annual budgets. The war economy and related military adventurism are now bankrupting the country.

The production of increasingly expensive weapons systems ends in piles of lethal technology that fail to generate new value through follow-on economic activity. Such production drags down the civilian economy that increasingly needs new investment to sustain itself.

The economic consequence of the war economy has been a major drain on national wealth, and a crucial factor in undermining recovery from repeated cyclical crises. Funds expended on weapons systems undercut urgent domestic needs for education, health care, clean energy, and a modern infrastructure.

National Security State

With the dawn of the Cold War, the US government unveiled a policy to control and stifle dissent against the emerging military-industrial power. In the name of fighting communism, the far right subjected US citizens to job loss, jailing, and denial of the right to free association. Militarism served as a right wing alternative to social spending and infrastructure improvement. Trade unions, civil rights organizations, and peace organizations were prime targets of the national security state.

After the Cold War years of McCarthyism, the national security state as an essential aspect of political rule did not disappear. Government agents regularly infiltrated and spied on peace groups, phones were illegally tapped, and provocateurs disrupted demonstrations. The Cointelpro program

assassinated or jailed leaders of the Black Liberation and Native American movements.

After 9/11, the “war on terror” gave renewed life to the national security state through the repressive Patriot Act. Widespread illegal wiretapping of US citizens, relentless harassment and assault on immigrants, illegal kidnapping and rendition, mistreatment and torture, denial of habeas corpus to prisoners held without charge - have undermined the claims of US moral authority and earned worldwide disapproval.

Fundamental Challenge

The national security state, the source of systemic violations of constitutional rights, is inseparably tied to the war economy. To begin to restore full democracy, the national security and warfare state must be diminished and finally abolished. The neo-conservative policy of global empire that projects US military power to every corner of the world must be fundamentally uprooted.

The most transforming and basic challenge facing President Barack Obama and his administration – and a challenge to all who want a world of peace and justice is to shrink the military’s global footprint and end its interventionist policies.

Building the progressive majority, will create the environment that will empower President Obama to dismantle the national security state and end the violations of constitutional rights.

Crisis of Climate Change and Unsustainable Resources

Climate Crisis is Real

Two decades of study by international scientists has produced a stark consensus: the climate crisis is real, urgent, and threatens massive human misery and habitat destruction. Consump-

tion of fossil fuels, melting of the polar ice caps, increased frequency of devastating hurricanes, and wrenching changes in weather patterns – are inextricably linked. The current level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere already exceeds the safe upper limit according to many scientists and climate experts.

The depth of the climate crisis demands an end to the exceptional waste of natural and human resources under capitalism. The crisis demands that billions be invested and tens of thousands employed replacing carbon-based fuels with energy drawn from sun, wind, and geothermal sources. The country needs new energy grids, non-polluting mass transportation, and homes retrofitted to curb carbon emissions. New global agreements must end the emission of pollutants and greenhouse gases, reduce deforestation, and share the world's energy resources efficiently and equitably.

Solving the climate crisis also depends on opposing the neo-liberal agenda of globalization. The principles of the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change have been abandoned in favor of the financial markets that trade pollution rights as a commodity. The clean development mechanism designed to support sustainable development has been subverted with giant infrastructure projects that accelerate the privatization of natural resources at the expense of local communities.

Capitalism Unsustainable

The inherently wasteful capitalist cycle of expansion and contraction is undermining the planet's ability to sustain human life. Billions of people are stripped of resources by global capitalism. A quarter of all deaths in the world are linked to environmental destruction, to the disruption of indigenous agriculture by global agribusiness, and

to political pressure upon developing countries to end subsidies to their own farmers. As energy resources shrink, food prices rise - causing widespread malnutrition and disease among three quarters of the world's rural poor.

Disruption of traditional agriculture by global agribusiness has brought huge migrations to cities around the world where displaced rural masses are forced to fight for survival. At the core of this upheaval is the persistent racism reflected in the indifference of political leaders, the silence of the media, and the relentless destructive activities of capital.

Climate Justice

The environmental justice movement has demonstrated that the effects of both climate change and pollution fall disproportionately on the communities of people of color, low income, and indigenous peoples. The wealthy countries, led by the United States have consumed the bulk of the world's resources. A just response to the climate crisis requires those most responsible to bear the proportionate cost of responding to the crisis.

The full environmental, health, social, and economic cost of energy use from extraction to disposal must be included in setting the fair allocation of costs. No group should have to shoulder alone the burdens caused by the transition from a fossil fuel based economy to a renewable energy based economy.

A just transition would create opportunities for displaced workers and communities to participate in the new economic order through compensation for job loss, loss of tax base, and other negative effects. Climate justice affirms the rights of unborn generations to natural resources, a stable climate, and a healthy planet.

The Progressive Majority: A Strategy for Change

Principal Strategy

Building and sustaining a progressive majority is the principal strategy to defeat reaction and place the country firmly on



Pennsylvania AFL-CIO members deliver petitions to Senator Specter in support of the Employee Free Choice Act.

the road to progress. Our nation's history and traditions of successful struggle for progress shows that the working class, allied with broader forces, is the agent of change. The building of a broad democratic alliance of forces on the basis of their programs and concrete activities will lead to deeper economic and social change.

The systemic basis of the interconnected crises of social life, the economy, climate, and empire makes the solution of any one crisis dependent upon progress in solving the others. The unity of the many currents of struggle around these issues into a conscious progressive majority is a prerequisite to attaining sufficient power to establish popular democratic control of our society. The political and social power of the progressive majority can achieve basic economic and social democratization that can lead to full democracy—the basis for building a socialist society.

Election of Obama

The contours of the progressive majority were strikingly manifested in the historic victory of Barack Obama, based on a coalition of new and traditional political forces. The election represented a new high tide for popular democracy in the United States. The growing anger and frustration of the American people suffering decades of declining living standards, imperial wars, racism, and erosion of democratic rights has turned into a mighty wave of organized voters.

The election underscored the inseparable connection of issues and constituencies in the progressive majority rooted in race, class, and gender. The backbone of that majority is the combined force of the working class, communities of color, women, and youth. Articulation of the needs and demands of those constituencies is essential to advancing and consolidating the progressive majority.

Labor

The labor movement had accumulated several election cycles of experience developing its electoral organization and the cadre necessary to fully wield its power. Though seriously weakened by the anti-union policies of recent neo-conservative administrations, it effectively led the fight against racism and reaction, especially in the older industrial states of the Midwest. The role of the unions in challenging white workers to vote their interests rather than their prejudices represented the finest traditions of the labor movement going back to the great industrial organizing drives of the 1930's that were largely built on interracial solidarity.

Labor's ability to assess and address the political tasks necessary to defeat reaction was exemplified by AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka's famous speech denouncing racism at the



Southern Regional Workshop at CCDS 6th Convention

July 2008 USW Convention: "...there's no evil that's inflicted more pain and more suffering than racism — and it's something we in the labor movement have a special responsibility to challenge. It's our special responsibility because we know, better than anyone else, how racism is used to divide working people." Polling data revealed that union households embraced progressive ideas with greater conviction and clarity than non-union households. Rebuilding and reenergizing a more democratic labor movement are fundamental strategic aspects of advancing the progressive majority.

African American Community

The election again confirmed that the African American community is in the forefront of progressive struggle and is a cornerstone of the progressive majority. The election of an African American president represented an affirmation of centuries of struggle for equality for millions of African Americans and many others.

But institutional racism is far from dead. The impact of the gathering depression falls heaviest on communities of color, which continue to face the highest home foreclosure rates, the highest joblessness, the poorest public education, the greatest lack of adequate health care, and the highest rates of incarceration, especially among youth. The struggle against racism in all its forms is essential to building and fortifying the progres-



*Angela Davis
addresses
the CCDS 6th
convention*

sive majority. The left, with its experience and outlook, is called upon to play a leading and vital role in eradicating every form of racism as essential to advancing the progressive majority.

Women

Women voted for progress in the greatest numbers. They are demanding effective action to curb the ravages of the gathering depression, especially in fighting for the interests of the majority of families with children caught in the mortgage crisis.

Three quarters of mothers who are in the labor force are struggling to cover the rising costs of childcare, healthcare, and food. The strengthening of the progressive majority requires resolute action by all sectors of the progressive community to finally eradicate the disparities between male and female in work opportunities, wages and promotion, health care, and education. A clear and persistent effort to eradicate sexism in all its forms is also mandatory to assuring the strength and solidarity of the progressive majority.

Latinos

Latinos, the most dynamically growing segment of the population, are a vital part of the progressive majority and were instrumental in moving western states into the progressive column. Motivated largely by battles to end discrimination, for fair and humane treatment of undocumented immigrants, for housing and healthcare, and for fair trade policies with Latin American countries, the growing presence of Latino communities in the progressive majority will become increasingly significant.

Youth

The young generation has emerged as a powerful force for progress and equality. Young people were the spark and early foundation for the vast new social movement that marched under the Obama banner and constitute a backbone for the future of the progressive majority.

LGBT Community

Gays and lesbians have been a leading force in the fight for equal rights and have brought to the progressive majority enormous energy and political clarity on the fundamental need to preserve and extend constitutional rights. Their presence in the progressive majority is a force for commitment to democratic principles and strategies based on defending and extending equality in all areas.

Social Movements

In addition to those crucial social forces based on class, race and gender – the progressive majority embraces mass social movements – peace and justice, seniors, environmental movements, immigrant rights, civil liberties, reproductive choice, public education, and sustainable agriculture. With those constituencies, a fundamental objective is to build a powerful fortification against right-wing resurgence. That unifying objective must necessarily embrace additional social forces: segments of all classes, including elements of the corporate and business sector that have rejected right wing policies as inimical to their own interests and aspirations.

Basis of Unity

A major strategic objective in advancing the progressive majority has to be the attainment of unity in struggle among labor, African Americans, Latinos, Asians and other communities of color,

youth, women, and the LGBT community. The strategy of building the progressive majority rests upon action to unite the left and center forces, and isolate and defeat the right.

Recognition of and support for the progressive majority is the basis of left unity. There is no basis for cooperation with those who attack mass movements and denigrate the progressive majority and its developing leadership.

With others on the left, CCDS seeks to help deepen our understanding of the nature of the present crisis and the dynamics of the social system that feed it. Majorities or pluralities exist in support of most progressive issues. With others on the left, we work to advance an understanding of the interconnectedness of those issues. We seek to develop a coherent and compelling insight into the working of the system that serves to strengthen unity within the progressive majority.

With others on the left, we reach out to those in the middle of the political spectrum to win their support for solidly progressive measures – single payer universal health care, strengthening public education, the right to organize unions, jobs with a “green” economy, a just immigration policy, and bringing the troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

What’s at Stake

The stakes in the fight for a survivable present and a secure future are enormous. A huge, wasteful military machine did not exist in the thirties. Then, unemployment exceeded 25%, but the industrial infrastructure had not been heavily dismantled as it is today. The food supply was not controlled by industry, and more families were able to feed themselves. Today the global capitalist system is tightly wired; a crisis quickly becomes a universal breakdown.

The strength of a united progressive community



International guests at the CCDS 6th convention representing left parties from Nicaragua, France, Venezuela, Germany and South Africa

is required to push back against the power of the financial sector, the military-industrial complex, and the pharmaceutical industry. Without counter pressure from the progressive majority, those regressive forces can be expected to prevail within the Obama administration. We will support progressive reforms by the Obama administration, including incremental reforms. Where the Obama administration continues past policies we will work with progressive forces to advocate a progressive agenda.

Extend Democracy

At this historic juncture, the fight to preserve and extend democracy is central to all demands. While the US government advocates free and fair elections around the world, they are under attack at home. Undemocratic districting, limits to ballot access, restrictions on registering voters, disfranchisement of current and former prisoners, corruption of the voting process, and stealing of votes constitute a crisis for US democracy.

The struggle for progress hinges on the ability of the progressive majority to both safeguard and advance democratic openings. The preservation and extension of democracy point to new directions in our nation's domestic and global policies:

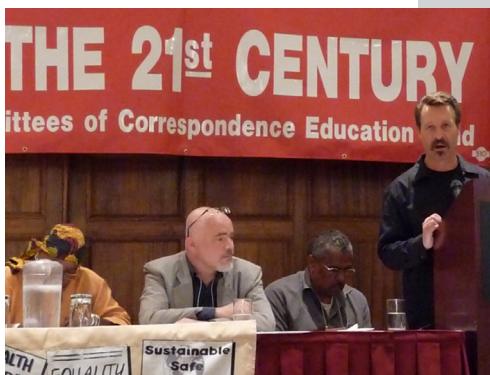
- Democratic control of the Federal Reserve, channeling stimulus funds to workers, not bankers;
- Public ownership of banking and financial institutions that would finally place the people's resources in their own hands;
- Nationalization of energy as the assured road to eliminating fossil fuels, and opening the door to clean energy;
- Devolution of power to the local level such as neighborhood councils, community development corporations, parents' school councils, workers' councils on the job sites.

Solidarity Economy

Throughout the world people subjected to the ravages of neoliberal globalization have turned to each other for survival in what is known as the "solidarity economy." Fighting for control of resources from the bottom up, the solidarity economy involves the creation of new wealth in a green way. Worker and community ownership and control are a component of its structures from the start. It takes the form of worker-owned firms, peasant cooperatives, community owned credit unions, local schools, and many other forms of mutual aid among the poor and unemployed.

The solidarity economy – along with public ownership of financial institutions, and workers' equity in industries – can help the most distressed among the progressive majority to secure economic and social stability in their communities. When combined with independent political action and

a platform of deep structural reforms that alter power relations, the solidarity economy can also point to wider economic democracy and the bridge to a socialist future.



Building the Core

Our core communities – workplace, labor organization, neighborhood, senior center, school, cultural group – should be arenas to reach out to those looking for progressive change. Many new activists who joined the Obama movement are seeking ways to remain connected to progressive politics. Trade union activists continue to work to realize their goals advanced during the election. The growing army of unemployed is a new, potent force for change.

The many issues arising from the crisis of daily living can be linked into a coherent progressive platform pursued through a variety of organized local activities including people's assemblies and other mass democratic forms. With an organized base, coalitions of organizations can be established around a common program. Within the progressive majority temporary alliances can form to support whatever group is in the forefront responding to a particular issue.

The strategy of building the progressive majority is based on the need to build the broadest unity to win concrete gains and to defeat the aggressive right wing. It is the basis for dialogue, joint action, and long-term cooperation between center and left. It is the way to defend and extend democracy into all political, economic, and social realms.

A Vision of Socialism



History

Socialism is the extension and preservation of democracy in all realms of human activity, especially the economic arena. It is a political, social, economic, cultural, and ethical project: a struggle to transform power relations within a society dominated by a tiny minority to benefit the overwhelming majority of working people. Socialism liberates human energy to pursue its creative potential.

Socialism has honorable roots in the nation's history. Socialist aspirations and experiments predate the Civil War. Efforts were launched to form cooperative communities built on shared labor, shared production, and a shared commitment to the common good. Many streams fed socialism in the United States from utopianism to Marxism. Marxists were active in the struggle to overthrow slavery.

The populist movement that swept the Midwest and South in the late 19th century was not avowedly socialist. But it advocated public ownership of banks and railroads as means to relieve farmers and workers of the burden of economic crises.

The Socialist Party in the early twentieth century was a significant movement for public ownership of the means of production. In some states it gained widespread support and held many local public offices. In the Great Depression of the 1930s, large numbers looked to the Communist Party. It played a leading role in organizing the Unemployed Councils and the CIO. Other left organizations joined in the struggle against the ravages of the crisis and for a vision of a transformed society shorn of the inhumanity of capitalism.

Capitalism Today

Centuries ago, when the feudal mode of production could no longer accommodate the revolutionary productive forces of rising capitalism, a social and political conflict ensued. The rising class of capitalists, whose interests were tied to the new mode of production, engaged in a conscious struggle supported by the new working class to overthrow the old feudal social order and its political power.

Today, capitalism is a mature system that is unable to utilize the powerful creative forces it has developed to serve human progress. As technological developments increase the ability of the productive forces to meet all human needs, capitalism's implacable quest for ever higher profits renders it unable to place these productive forces at the service of society.

Fewer and fewer workers are needed to produce the necessities of life. This results in higher unemployment instead of fewer hours of work. Production is increasingly socialized while the wealth created by

that production is privatized into fewer hands. That is the core contradiction of a system whose relations of production can no longer accommodate advances in its productive forces without impoverishing working people in growing numbers.

Need for Socialism

In the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama was accused of wanting to “spread the wealth around” through moderate adjustments to restore some equity in tax policy. That hardly constitutes socialism. But it has aroused public interest and has widened the field for discussion of the concept.

For many, the notion of “spreading the wealth around” sounds good when the top one percent in the United States gained \$600 billion annually in income while the bottom eighty percent lost the same \$600 billion from 1979 to 2008. This translates into an average gain of \$500,000 for each person at the top and a loss of \$8,000 for each of those at the bottom.



Panel on left unity at CCDS 6th convention

Guiding Principles

Socialism can not emerge from sentiment, ideology, or wish fulfillment. Socialism emerges because the working class, as it struggles around the crisis of everyday living comes to recognize socialism as a necessity.

History and contemporary reality do not yield a schematic blueprint for socialism. An analysis of experiences in social struggle, combined with a critique of objective circumstances, suggest some possible guiding principles for the transition to a socialist democracy.

Socialism's fundamental building blocks are already present in US society. The means of production are fully developed and stagnating under the political domination of finance capital. The US labor force, for the most part, is highly skilled at all levels of production, management, marketing, and finance. There is a broadly enfranchised electorate, as well as kernels of socialist organization scattered across the landscape in cooperatives, socially organized human services, and centralized and widespread mass means of communication and supply/demand data management. Many earlier attempts at socialism lacked these advantages.

Socialism is a democratic political system wherein the interests and organizations of the working class and its allies have attained and hold the preponderance of political power and play the leading role in society. It is still a class society, but in a protracted transition to a future classless society as exploiting class privileges are gradually abolished, and class distinctions generally decline. Because it will be a mixed economy, with both public and private ownership, socialism will have classes, including some capitalists, for some time. There will still be a need for entrepreneurial

startups, both as worker cooperatives and as private firms serving the common good.

Socialism at the base is a transitional economic system anchored in the mode of production brought into being by capitalist development over several centuries. While it will vary according to prevailing conditions at the time of transition, its economic system is necessarily mixed. It also makes use of markets, especially in goods and services, which are regulated more rationally and consistently, especially regarding the environment. But capital markets and wage-labor markets can be sharply restricted and even abolished in due time. Markets are a function of scarcity, and all economies of any scale in a time of scarcity have them. If needed, a stock market can still exist for remaining publicly traded firms and investments abroad, but will be strictly controlled. A stock transfer tax will be implemented. Gambling in derivatives will be outlawed. Fair trade agreements with other countries will be on a bilateral basis for mutual benefit. In addition to regulated markets, socialism will also feature planning, especially where markets have failed. Planning will especially be required to face the challenges of uneven development and harsh inequalities, as well as the challenge of moving to an energy system based on renewable green energy sources.

Socialism will be organized in public and worker ownership of the main productive forces and natural resources. This can be achieved by various means: a) buying out major failing corporations at steep discount, then leasing them back to the unions and having the workers run them; b) workers directly taking ownership and control over failed and abandoned factories; c) eminent domain seizures of resources and factories, with compensation; d) public fund-

ing for startups of worker-owned cooperative businesses. Socialism will also require public ownership of finance capital. Lease payments from publicly owned firms could go into a public investment fund, which would in turn lend money to community and worker owned banks and credit unions.

Socialism will require democracy in the workplace of public firms and encourage it in all places of work. Workers have the right to independent unions to protect their social and daily interests, in addition to their rights as worker-owners in the governance of their firms.

Socialism will largely be gained by the class-conscious working class and its allies winning the battle for democracy in society at large, especially taking down the structures and backward laws of class, gender, and racial privilege. An important first step is campaign finance reform to curb the influence of wealth in our electoral system. It will need a true multiparty system, with fusion voting, proportional representation, and instant runoff. All trends are guaranteed the right to speak, organize, petition, and stand for election. These are the structural measures that can allow the majority of the people, especially the working class and its allies, to secure the political leadership of government and instruments of the state by democratic means, barring sabotage by reactionary forces.

Socialism will be a democratic political order with a representative government and state power. The government and state components of the current order connected to the old ruling class will have to be broken up and replaced with new ones that are transparent and serve the majority of the people. The US Constitution and Bill of Rights can remain the initial basic organizing principle for a socialist

government and state. The democratic rights it has gained over the years will be protected and enhanced. The legal fiction that corporations are people will be eliminated. Government will also be needed to organize and finance social development and environmental protection. Forces that try to overturn and reverse the new socialist government illegally will be broken up and brought to justice. Our society will need a state power for some time to come, even as its form changes. Still, government power has limits; the powers of any government necessarily will be restricted and subordinate to the universal and natural rights of all humankind. Attempts to ignore or reject these principles have severely harmed socialist governments and movements in the past.

Socialism will be a society in harmony with the natural environment. The nature of global climate change necessitates a high level of planning. We need to redesign communities, introduce healthier foods, and rebuild sustainable agriculture—all on a global scale with high design, but on a human scale with mass participation of communities in diverse localities. We need intelligent growth in quality and wider knowledge with a lighter environmental footprint. A socialism that simply reproduces the wasteful expansion of an earlier capitalism creates more problems than it solves.

Under socialism the government will serve as the employer-of-last-resort. Minimum living-wage jobs will be provided for all who want to work and adequate security for those who cannot work. Socialism is committed to genuine full employment. Every citizen will have a right to work. Under socialism the government would serve as the employer of last resort.

Socialism values equality, and will be a society of far greater equality of opportunity, and far less economic inequality. All citizens and residents will have equitable access to a “universal toolbox” of paid-up free public education for all who want to learn, for as far as they want and are able to go; universal public pre-school care; a minimum income for all who create value, whether in a work-

place or social environment. Universal single-payer health care with retirement benefits at the level of a living wage is critical to start. Socialism would create the basis for positive and respectful relationships amongst diverse ethnic and racial groups. No nation can be free as long as it oppresses another.

Socialism is a society where religion can be freely practiced, or not, and no religion is given any special advantages over any other. As important theologists have long pointed out, a Marxist critique of capitalism with its vision of a classless society is compatible with both belief and non-belief in God.

The role of armed forces under socialism will be transformed. Their mission will be to defend the people, secure their interests, and help in times of natural disasters. It will not be their task to expand markets abroad and defend the property abroad of the exploiting classes. Armed forces also include



*Retiring National Co-chair
Jim Campbell presents award to
Committees of Correspondence for
Democracy and Socialism leader
Charlene Mitchell*

local police, under community control, as well as a greatly reduced prison system, based on the principle of restorative justice. Non-violent conflict resolution and community-based rehabilitation will be encouraged.

Socialism is internationalism. It extends a hand of co-operation to the rest of the world. It does not seek dominance over other nations. It seeks fair trade with others. It seeks to improve the conditions of working people the world over. It seeks to learn from the experiments in social justice and socialism proliferating around the world. At the same time, US socialism should have no dogmatic attachment to other models, but respects and expresses solidarity with all who are trying to build just, humane, and secure societies.

A Renewed Vision

The world has moved beyond the 20th century experiments in socialism. Those efforts went through uncharted territory under severe coercion from outside capitalist powers. In that context, the democratic soul of socialism was seriously undermined; the essential need for popular participation in building the system was largely unrealized, and economic advances were distorted by dogma.

We learn from those failures as we probe deeply into our own national history and traditions to create a vibrant and successful socialist vision. Most of all, socialism is the solution to the intractable problems of an exhausted capitalism devoid of hope and increasingly unable to advance human development.

CCDS considers educating and organizing to build the path to socialism to be the primary purpose of our organization and all who wish to bring the human epoch into existence.

CCDS: Its Outlook and Role



Legacy

The Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism is a national organization, united by a common commitment to struggle for democracy and socialism. CCDS embodies the legacy of the great social movements for peace, freedom, and democracy led by the working class, and racially and nationally oppressed people. CCDS carries forward the courageous traditions of the democratic socialist and left leaders and activists of the USA.

CCDS is a pluralist organization within the framework of working class partisanship embodied in Marxism. Our pluralism reflects a political culture in which people are joined in a common, profoundly humanistic project. This encompasses the creation of an atmosphere that elicits different views in substantive as well as supportive exchanges to advance our collective strength.

Principles

We are governed by principles that empower our members to determine the policies, activities, and leadership of our organization. We strive for an



*CCDS National Co-chair
Carl Bloice*

organization that is multiracial, of all generations, and gender balanced, both in membership and in elected bodies. Every member of CCDS is entitled to full participation in every aspect of the organization.

CCDS adheres to the principles of democracy and transparency, including full disclosure of all aspects

of our organization and the decisions that we make. We welcome constructive criticism offered in the spirit of mutual respect. CCDS endeavors to cultivate a deep commitment among its members to work collectively on common projects.

CCDS views the concrete struggles against the depredations of capital as the basis for the development of class and socialist consciousness. The theoretical framework of dialectical and historical materialism that constitutes Marxism provides CCDS the scientific and philosophical basis for collective conscious development.

We draw upon Marxism, not as “revealed truth” but as a guide to understanding the dynamics of historical development and change. It is a scientific tool to discover the essential societal relations and social forces that advance the struggle for democracy and socialism.

CCDS has no theoretical test for membership—only a willingness to study, debate, act upon, and develop the principles of human liberation exemplified by the theory and practical works of Marxists.

Science of Marxism

Our study embraces the many currents that have nourished Marxist thought over nearly two

centuries from Europe, to Asia, to Africa, and the Americas. It explores the meaning of Marx's view of class struggle at the core of all history and the role of the working class as the essential agent of social transformation. It seeks to develop the struggle for equality drawing from the rich Marxist theory and practice developed in the movements for national liberation.

It seeks to understand Marx's work in relation to the vast changes in science, technology, and the whole of human productive forces since his time. It explores the contradictions between modern advances in science and the fetters placed upon those advances by contemporary capitalism. It examines the dialectical relationship between nature and society; how external circumstances impact consciousness and how consciousness, in turn, acts upon nature.

CCDS seeks to promote a dialogue, a correspondence, between generations. Marxism is not static; it is always evolving with changing times. It is understood and acted upon by different generations in different ways. The dialogue between generations is aimed at a productive synthesis between past and present. It aims to merge the experience of older generations with the fresh outlook of the young, forging a deeper understanding by all of how past history informs the present and provides a vision of a socialist future.

CCDS seeks to understand and convey the history of all oppressed people as central to the struggle for the liberation of all. From that standpoint we stress the inseparable relationship be-



*CCDS National Co-chair
Renee Carter*

tween the struggles of all nationally oppressed people and the struggles of the working class for a new society. We have an unambiguous commitment to the leadership of people of color and of women, acknowledging both the essential historic and current contributions of these groups to all major progressive achievements.

Education

CCDS stresses the dialectical relationship between theory and practice in the spirit of Marx's critique of preceding philosophers: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it."

In that spirit, CCDS advances an interconnected program of socialist education and democratic action. As a socialist organization, we seek to engage in advanced theoretical and educational work to explore the road to socialism; we conduct research and policy development aimed at charting and amplifying public and workers' ownership. We study varying roads to socialism through discussion and organized travel to countries charting their particular paths to transformation. We seek to better understand and popularize socialism through study groups, forums, and media.

At an historic moment filled with portents of change, our socialist education is an essential element of our program. Our Socialist Education Project is charged with developing web-based course outlines for study groups on a wide range of subjects relating to capitalism and socialism, to organize public forums, to participate in academic and movement conferences, to organize a speakers' bureau, to develop popular programs through film and other media. In these endeavors we urge and welcome the full participation of our members.

Action

In the realm of democratic action, we engage in mass campaigns for peace, justice, and economic security. We work to promote the leadership of the working class in all struggles. At the core is our determination to build and unite the progressive majority. We seek to build mutual respect and cooperation among all progressive forces through mature, honest, open relations, and through primary commitment to the interests of the mass movements.

In political struggle, CCDS works in both electoral and non-electoral arenas, recognizing the dialectical connection between these spheres of activity. Thus, in advancing democratic action, CCDS favors a full range of tactics: electoral activity, lobbying, mass action, civil disobedience, picket lines, and strikes without mechanically favoring any particular tactic, while always acting based on a scientific analysis of concrete conditions.

We advocate a realignment of the nation's politics, recognizing that the parties of the capitalist class cannot be agents of qualitative change. Such realignment can only be achieved through mass movements and mass struggles. Socialists and progressives must participate fully in those currents—consulting, influencing, organizing, working to change the electoral system to accommodate new parties, and forging relationships inside and outside the current two-party system.



*CCDS National Co-chair
Carl Davidson*



*CCDS National Co-chair
Pat Fry*

Political Independence

We uphold the vision of a progressive political party independent of capital. Our present efforts in concrete struggles to build the progressive majority will inform and develop the path to the eventual form of that political independence. The successful establishment of such a party will be furthered by the experience of independent political formations as well as by joint actions with progressives in all areas of politics. In a historic realignment of the nation's politics that will reflect the ascendance of the progressive majority, unity and cooperation of the broadest constellation of progressive forces is essential.

Dialogue

CCDS seeks to build cooperative relationships with other socialists and progressives, organized and unorganized. We seek our proper space on the political landscape by commitment to study, learning, and contributing to struggle based on developing socialist consciousness and Marxist theory. We strive to contribute a mature, principled, respectful voice to dialogue on the left. We seek to play an active role in effective movements to liberate the working class and its allies and to build a socialist future. We anticipate that future with confidence.

JOIN OUR FORUM ONLINE!

CCDS maintains an online forum for free and open discussion of political ideas. Debates over the features of 21st Century socialism, trade union strategy, electoral issues and the fight for universal public health care are among the featured topics. If you have a paper or position of your own to discuss, you can submit it. Open to nonmembers as well as members. Anyone can read the discussion, but to comment, you simply register online. Go to <http://ccds-discussion.org/forum>

A special invitation...

to join the **Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism** and help to build a progressive majority to defend and extend our democracy.

The CCDS is working with many others to end the war in Iraq, and advocate for a new global policy based on peaceful relations and mutual respect toward nations, nuclear disarmament, and a safe environment.

You can make a difference!

Join the CCDS and lend a hand with many others to fight for a progressive agenda in the streets, in union halls, neighborhoods and barrios, churches, synagogues and mosques, schools and workplaces.

Working together, we can halt the ruthless, racist, anti-immigrant, anti-union corporate assault that has put profits and militarism above the needs of the majority of the people of our country and the world.

We call upon Congress to stop the war on Iraq, bring the troops home now, and transfer military spending to meet the pressing needs of people for affordable housing, quality public education, and a government-sponsored health care program for all.

Fill out and mail with your membership today.*

☐ Yes, I'd like to join the CCDS.

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.

☐ I'd like a subscription to **Dialogue & Initiative**.

Enclosed is my check for \$10 (\$5 for CCDS members).

☐ I know good causes need money.

Here is my contribution of \$ _____.

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Make check payable to Committees of Correspondence, and mail to:

Committees of Correspondence, PO Box 437, New York, NY 10018-0008.

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* Annual membership, including a subscription to the CCDS Mobilizer newsletter, is \$36 (\$18 for unemployed, seniors, youth, and others with low income; \$42 for households).



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