

## TOWARDS THE CREATION OF A VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

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NAME: VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE (VSC)

### MISSION

We support those who struggle for self-determination and for the rights of women, workers, peasants, indigenous, African descendants, and all historically oppressed peoples in Venezuela. We oppose U.S. intervention in Venezuela.

### BACKGROUND

The struggles for social change in Venezuela found an unlikely outlet when a nationalist and bolivarian soldier, Hugo Chavez Frias was elected president of Venezuela, several years after an attempt at a progressive military coup de'etat had landed him in prison. The soldier turned politician was able, through his charismatic leadership, to galvanize diverse groups of working class, peasants, and radical organizations, behind an anti-corruption and anti-poverty program. He posed a class alternative to the political blocks that ruled Venezuela, COPEI (Comité de Política Electoral Independiente – independent political and electoral committee) and Democratic Action.

Chavez was elected president in 1999 and was sworn in, in his own words, over a “dying constitution.” A new constitution, in fact, was soon passed and according to this, a new election of all the new political offices, including the presidency, took place.

A series of popular reforms took place with the support of the majority of the poor and working class. Only three years after his election, in 2002, a military clique along with right wing politicians organized a coup d'état supported by the United States. Massive working class demonstrations that surrounded the presidential palace, and the actions of progressive military officers and troops, reversed the coup and returned President Chavez to power.

The Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela extended solidarity with other peoples struggles in Latin America and the world. Venezuela offered not only support in words, but also in deeds. Amazingly enough this people-to-people solidarity included providing subsidized heating oil to low-income households in the United States through their CITGO company. Hugo Chavez's concept of "21st century socialism" gained wide currency and was important in the revival of socialist thinking among young people in the US. President Chavez unfortunately died on March 2013, and was replaced by President Nicolas Maduro. However, the solidarity continues.

The gains of the Bolivarian Revolution in education, health care, employment, housing, and lowering poverty, have been overshadowed by the continuous propaganda campaign of right-wing capitalists in Venezuela and by the media outlets abroad. In the context of this continuous right-wing campaign, the crash in oil prices, and the extensive racketeering operations conducted by their Columbian paramilitary allies along the border, the right-wing opposition won a large majority in the recent National Assembly elections.

## THE NEED FOR SOLIDARITY

Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution is strong in Latin American countries but is not so evident here in the US, at least not in an organized way. We must recognize the important role in education carried out by the Bolivarian Circles in the United States, formed mostly by progressive Venezuelans and Latin Americans.

It is now necessary to organize the participation of larger sectors of folks who recognize the gains made in Venezuela and can be brought together in solidarity and in support of the revolution moving forward. The capitalists in Venezuela, their strong allies in the U.S., and wealthy sectors in Latin America are getting ready to reverse all the limited gains of the Bolivarian Revolution. Resistance in defense of the gains in Venezuela once the rightists reach power and control the state could be met with criminal repression as we have seen in many examples throughout Latin America, from Chile, Haiti, Guatemala, to Argentina, Colombia, Jamaica, Grenada, Dominican Republic, Panama, Brazil and more.

Our role here must be to denounce any involvement of the US government and state agencies in support of attacks against the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. At the same time, we support those who struggle in Venezuela for the rights and interests of workers and peasants.

We seek to create a resilient and strong organization. We should be instrumental in organizing "Sister City" relationships. Likewise, we can organize effective lobbying efforts in Congress and the Senate to oppose U.S. intervention. We declare ourselves an independent solidarity organization. We welcome participation of all who oppose U.S. intervention in Venezuela.

## WHAT CAN WE BE DOING

We understand that regardless of our desires, the activities of an organization of solidarity is somewhat limited. This should not be a deterrent to our organizing. We can contribute to develop these activities:

1. Systematic education about the political, social, and economic situation in Venezuela
2. Campaigning in support of the Citizens Energy Oil Heat Program and denouncing efforts in Venezuela to have it cut off.
3. Publicity and fundraising in support of grassroots initiatives in Venezuela that strengthen the power of working people and defend their interests.
4. Organizing opposition to and denouncing attacks against the revolutionary process in Venezuela arising from all branches of government in the U.S.
5. Exposing anti-revolutionary propaganda found in the commercial media
6. Promoting sisterhood between the peoples of the United States and Venezuela through joint social and cultural projects.
7. Being prepared to defend the human rights of revolutionary activists in case of attacks by right-wing forces.

We should aim to get organized locally, yet, we should aim to spread nationally, joining forces with other similar initiatives that can be taking place in the rest of the country.

## LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

**Membership** – Members agree with our mission, attend meetings, and carry out the work of the organization. Members sustain the organization financially according to their ability. Members Participate in the campaigns of the organization.

There is a separate document detailing the types of memberships and rights and responsibilities.

**Annual assembly** – Members can participate in the assembly and have the right to elect and be elected to the coordinating committee and other committees. This is the highest decision making body of the organization. A strategic plan for the year will emerge from the annual assembly.

**Coordinating committee** – Proposes a strategic plan to the annual assembly. Is responsible for ensuring that the agreements of annual assembly are carried out. Presents a report on activities to the annual assembly. Coordinates the work of sub-committees. Organizes and chairs General Meetings of Members.

**Education and Media committee** – Will plan and execute systematic education about the political, social, and economic situation in Venezuela. Will activate all possible social media including but not limited to having a web site, Facebook and Twitter accounts that are up to date and active at all times. Conduct media campaigns to denounce and refute anti-revolutionary propaganda found in the commercial media.

**Events and Membership Committe** – Will propose and organize campaigns and events that are of central importance to solidarity with Venezuela to be carried out. Will also do outreach to attract new members to work in the committee.

**Fundraising Committee** – Will work to collect contributions for the organization and carry out activities and campaigns to channel needed funds for the committee.

# THE VSC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

