

## Statement for May Day from Latin American Solidarity Network

Rivers of spilt blood and too many tears frame the recent history of Latin America. The 1970s were framed by dictatorship and state terror, the 1980s by bloody US interventions in Central America and the 1990s by the implementation of a cruel neo-liberalism in accordance with the Washington consensus. But in this first decade of the twenty-first century the tide is definitively turning in Latin America as workers and peasants begin to find new and creative ways to exercise their power.

From the streets of the New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, across the Rio Grande and down on through to Tierra del Fuego, Latin Americans in all their diversity are showing the world not only that another world is possible, but how to live it now. Across Latin America there is the feeling that things are changing, where and how no-one really knows, but masses of people are on the move lessons we would do well to take heed of.

Of course one of the most inspiring examples of social inclusivity emanates from Venezuela under its popularly elected leader, Hugo Chavez. At a myriad of levels Chavez is heading a system of social reform not attempted in Latin America since Allende's Chile in the early 1970s. Coupled with this is the recent election of Evo Morales, a cocalero, who was elected President of Bolivia, which was part of the unfolding expression of the popular resistance to the privatisation of both water and hydrocarbons in this nation, and only this week the Bolivian government declare that these resources return to the people's hands.

But these examples are also expressed in smaller ways across Latin America:

In Argentina with the on-going experiments in worker's owned factories and the mass-movement of the unemployed; Chile where the Mapuche continue to resist the theft of their land by transnational corporations; Brazil where the landless workers movement continues to occupy millions of hectares of land and distribute unused land to the landless and in Colombia where trade unionists still make a stand despite the murder of thousands of unionists in the last decade.

The people resist and at the same time they propose alternatives with their actions, new and autonomous ways of struggling and organising the grass roots. The struggles across Latin America are growing and we believe that they have a lot to contribute to the global movement against social exclusion, labour law Reform injustices perpetrated on indigenous people and repression through the so-called anti-terror laws. Latin America has experienced in the past and is experiencing in the present these injustices and it is now time to share these experiences and struggle and resist together.

We, for many years through various organisations and today through the Latin American Solidarity Network (LASNET) have worked to support the struggles of the Latin American people. Today we continue to seek ways to widen this work and to increase its public dissemination and that is why we have decided to hold the second Solidarity Gathering with Latin America and the Asia-Pacific in this country.

This project seeks to give voice to social and political activists from Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region. It seeks to help rebuild a broad solidarity movement with the peoples of the Americas and help create real links between our struggles and hopes. This is why "for the right to organise globally" is one of the principles of the Solidarity Gathering which will be held on October 21-22 this year at Melbourne Trades Hall.

This May Day we should celebrate the courage and vision being shown on this vast and beautiful continent and chant together! El Pueblo unido jamas sera vencido!

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