

Venezuela

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Hugo Chavez was elected in 1999 after a 20-year downturn in the Venezuelan economy, culminating in privatization measures, social cut-backs and increasing costs of public services.

The two political parties had previously signed an agreement of non competition, leaving their candidates the only options for the electorate.

To implement new programs in accordance with the Bolivian revolution, a new constitution was written by consensus throughout the country and voted in by referendum, disbanding political parties.

This new constitution, passed in December 1999, banned discrimination, guaranteed rights to and recognized the historic heritage of the indigenous population, created the government's obligation to make a quality education available to every citizen, improved the social security pension system for senior citizens and guaranteed everyone the right to housing and health care.

The constitution also guaranteed the direct political participation of citizens who had been left out of the process of choosing their leaders. It created the ultimate check-and-balance sys-

tem; the direct-recall referendum of all elected politicians. The constitution also protects the free speech rights of every citizen.

The constitution was passed by the overwhelming majority of Venezuela's population. The people of Venezuela made these choices as they are made in the U.S.; at the ballot box, in free and open elections. They chose free speech, democracy, the rule of law and an open market-based economy, developed in the context of social justice.

Chavez has revolutionized the Venezuelan economy by instituting major changes. As opposed to the system in the United States, which is organized at the top and dictates downward, the Venezuelan participatory democracy is organized from the bottom (the grass roots), up.

Community groups containing 600 families in urban areas and 200 families in rural areas meet and organize themselves, prioritize their needs, and with the help of the government, go about the business of improving their lives. Thus, the power of reform is in the hands of the people, coupled with the resources of the country.

Through these groups, a wide variety of social programs are implemented. The policies of the Bolivian project are anti neo-liberal. The revolution is opposed to the tenets of free trade, privati-

zation and deregulation, all of which tend to favor big business over the ordinary citizen. The Chavez government's economic policies emphasize "endogenous" development geared toward diversifying the national economy, especially by supporting small businesses and cooperatives.

As the economy of Venezuela began to boom and oil revenues increased, a new system of profit distribution was created. This was called the *mission system*. The missions are funded by the government and administered by committees within the framework of solidarity. Directly funded, in most cases, by the state-owned oil company PDVSA, the missions include, but are not limited to: Mission "Barrio Adentro" (Inside the Neighborhood), Community Health Care, Mission Miranda-Military Reservists, Mission Mercal-Food Distribution.

For more information and an accurate analysis on Venezuela go to:

www.venezuelanalysis.com, and read:

The Venezuelan Revolution 100 Questions-100 Answers by Chesa Boudin, Gabriel Gonzalaz and Wilmer Rumbos


**The Redding UU Fellowship
Peace and Justice Center**

On July 8, CRG and the Peace and Justice Center co-sponsored our first annual *Patriots for Peace Event* at the Buckeye Grange in Redding. It was well attended for a progressive get-together (80 or more people).

The members of the Peace and Justice Center wanted to express some fourth of July patriotic spirit by honoring disabled veterans. Contrary to conservative propaganda, liberals *do* care about the troops. We know they are not to blame for war, they are only pawns in the games politicians play. We also care about what happens to them when they are injured, come home and the government doesn't give them the care they need.

Dennis Kyne, a Gulf War Veteran and peace activist, was our guest speaker for this event. He talked about the problems veterans have when they return home.

On the lighter side, we had an hour of music, dance and comedy by local talent, including Nadia Hava-Robbins, Ellen Southard, Jenny and Ken Levens, Jim Dyar and friends. Hamburgers and hot dogs were served.



For the first time in my 54 years in Shasta County I'm not listed in the phone book.

My wife Betty is, however, both in the business section and with the listings for Marriage & Family Counselors, so our number can still be found.

Please help us let our mutual friends know that I'm alive and well... in spite of what you may surmise from the new phone book.

Fulton Doty 365-8068

The Peace and Justice Center raised \$220 (\$100 contributed by CRG), and mailed a check to the Disabled Veterans of America.

A couple of dates to remember are: the Peace & Justice Center meeting is held the first Friday of every month, at 5:30 pm, at 1611 Iris Avenue, Redding.

We call it our *Patriots for Peace Meeting*, and we discuss what we are currently working on, goals for the future, etc. We welcome anyone to come and give us input. Our main goal right now is to go into Shasta College and the high schools with information on alternatives to the military. Recruiters spend an enormous amount of time talking to these kids, and we think we should be able to talk to them and let them know about other options.

On the last Saturday of every month we meet at City Hall in Redding for a **peace vigil**.

We hold the vigil from 10 am to 11 am. It would be wonderful if more patriots for peace would show up. Not many people have been at-

tending.

Doug Milhous holds a Nonviolent Communication study group once a month. Call the Peace Center to find out the dates.

We welcome other groups to meet at our Center. At the Peace and Justice Center we also have information about other progressive groups. They include Concerned Citizens, Redding Friends, Women's Health Specialists, Marriage Equality, SCCAR, and others.

We are open from 1 pm to 5 pm, weekdays. Call (530) 221-7222

Peace, and keep on keeping on,

Chris Bradford, Director
Redding UU, Peace and Justice Center

The Redding Friends Meeting invites you to attend a presentation:
"Walk With Earth"

September 24th at 12:30 pm
First United Methodist Church Room 10 (corner of East and South). Rolene Walker from the **Walk With Earth** organization and a member of San Francisco Friends Meeting, will examine the spiritual dimensions of the environmental situation and explain plans for a **"Walk With Earth"** through the Latin American countries ending in Santiago, Chili.

Guests may come early and join the Quakers for worship at 10:30 am and/or lunch at 11:30 am.

Call 275-3513 for further information.

Thank you,
Doug Milhous
Redding Friends Meeting

Lisa Baechtle

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