



Boston
Democratic
Socialists of
America

Socialism and Human Rights

In the past decade or so, friends of political freedom can point to some historic victories. Democratic insurgencies have toppled tyrannical dictatorships from Eastern Europe to South Africa, from Haiti to South Korea, and come close elsewhere. Principles of democracy and human rights are accorded much deference and respect in high places, some of it even sincere.

Democratic Socialists of America welcomes these developments. As consistent democrats we support the right of all people to free association and free elections, including independent political parties, social movements and trade unions with the right to strike. Democratic socialists are also among the strongest supporters of racial equality and women's rights, and longstanding foes of all forms of colonial and imperial domination.

But there is another kind of change afoot: the restructuring of an increasingly integrated world economy based on profits for the few at the expense of the many. In the U.S. real wages have fallen since the 1970s, unions grow weaker, industries collapse, farms foreclose, cities decay, crime and racism grow. The current economic boom has momentarily arrested some of this downward spiral, but almost 40% of the employed workforce are now “temporaries” or “consultants,” with no pensions or health benefits. Although our standard of living is still far higher than most, the corporate sponsors of the NAFTA, MAI, and now FTAA “free trade” treaties hope to fix that problem through a leveling down process. Internationally there is growing economic polarization both within and among nations, as millions are forced from their homelands to become involuntary immigrants on the world labor market.

Most mainstream pundits and political leaders accept this, to one degree or another, as the perhaps unpleasant but inevitable price we must all pay for “free-market principles.” And they link it with the global struggle for democracy.

We in DSA disagree. We believe the free market itself could use more democracy — a lot more. Critical investment decisions that affect everyone are too important to be left only to corporate executives obsessed with profit maximization. And democracy and human rights will find their best allies in an international movement for social and economic justice, freedom and solidarity — for democratic socialism.