

The USSF : a important step toward the resistance against the crisis

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The second US Social Forum started today in the city of Detroit, Michigan. For the american social movements, this gathering holds a special importance as it is the first large scale meeting of the progressive social movements in the country since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2008. As such the forum picks up the flags of the World Social Forum and even takes them one step further. Thus, not only "Another world is possible" but furthermore "Another America is necessary". This slogan is the tacit recognition of the key role of the social struggles in the US for the rest of the social movements around the globe. Given the central role of the US in the international system it is clear that a stronger resistance in the country against the current offensive of capital can have significant repercussions abroad.

To highlight the importance of the social struggle against unfettered capitalism, the organizers have chosen a city that through the last 2 decades has suffered the effects of neoliberalism: Detroit. Home of the big three american car companies (Chrysler, GM and Ford), the city has been closely intertwined with the fortunes of the automobile industry. As the companies started to outsource their production overseas in the late eighties, unemployment started to rise and eventually led to a massive emigration from the city. Today, Detroit holds half of the population it bolstered 20 years ago, 40% of the houses remain empty and due to the collapse of the american auto industry, the open unemployment rate hovers above 30%.

Against this dismal context, peculiar social movements have developed. The focus of the social struggles in Detroit is concerned on the one hand with the workers of the auto industry and on the other with the civil rights movement.

This set of specific characteristics was clearly present at the demonstration which kick started the US Social Forum. With more than 5000 participants, the rally was a colorful representation of the variety of struggles in the US and in Detroit. The overarching demands of the demonstrators were related to unemployment, healthcare, social rights, Native Americans, global climate change, anti-discrimination and dismissal of the US involvement in the wars of Iraq, Afghanistan and its support to the Israeli government. There was also a widespread rejection of the economic policies implemented by the Obama administration and specifically it's handling of the economic crisis and the bailouts given to the financial sector. The workers participating in the demonstration made it clear that they wont pay for the crisis.

After the demonstration, all of the participants gathered at the COBO convention center in downtown Detroit. According to the organizers more than 12000 people have registered to participate in the week long activities of the US Social Forum. The air was filled with expectation and excitement about the possibilities that this gathering has for strengthening of the social movement in the US and the World. The CADTM team participating in this Forum will make its best to help to strengthen the movement.

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