

# **The Struggle for Social Justice**

**By Elbert “Big Man” Howard**

It can be said that the struggle for civil rights in America was the greatest social revolution in modern history. It was not only a Black struggle for equal rights for Black people.

At that same time, a struggle was also going on in Latino communities for equal pay, improved living conditions, and improved education for long-exploited migrant and farm workers.

In the Native American reservations and communities, the demand grew for improved education and job opportunities, as well as an end to poor health care and discrimination, in those areas, and in the area of police repression. The Native American community had, at that time, a general unemployment rate of about 80%. AIM, the American Indian Movement, was formed and became the voice of this social justice movement.

In universities and colleges across America, student organizations demanded social justice in the form of equal educational opportunities, free speech and an end to immoral, undeclared wars.

Women organized themselves and formed groups, known, in general, as The Women’s Liberation Movement. They demanded that they be paid the same as men (equal pay for equal work) and also an end to job discrimination and promotion discrimination. They demanded also that women be treated with respect in the workplace and an end to sexual harassment.

The outcry for social justice is ever-present in our local communities. The need for this is illustrated by the fact that people in Sonoma County are still being killed at the hands of law enforcement.

In 2007, at least two of these victims were mentally ill. One was a 16 year old child: Jeremiah Chass, shot several times, March 17, 2007.

Also killed were Haki Thurston, shot February 27<sup>th</sup>, Richard DeSantis, shot April 9<sup>th</sup>, Walter Heller, tasered, then died, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, and Luis Sanchez, shot , May 4<sup>th</sup>.

There were 5 people killed in 9 weeks at the hands of law enforcement in Sonoma County.

In addition, George Ryan, 22 years of age, died in a Sonoma County Jail cell July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007, following lack of correct medical treatment for Sickle Cell Disease. On June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2007, inmate Richard L Williamson was found dead in his jail cell. The cause of his death was never made public.

Social Justice cries out for this carnage to stop. The voting and tax-paying citizens of Sonoma County should and must take a stand against these human rights violations that continue to be committed by so-called law enforcement employees.

If people do not commit to change, more sooner than later, these numerous blood baths which Sonoma County residents equate only with Oakland, will be occurring on a daily basis here.

Extreme reactionaries are Americans in political circles who believe in Bureaucratic Capitalism. They are found in industry, commerce, education and culture, religion, science, and technology. As with all Republicans, they are extremely reactionary.

What is the upside of the American working class now being driven into poverty? It gives rise to the desire for change, the desire for action.

Attention American war-mongers! A history lesson: War is the highest form of struggle for resolving contradictions.

When politics develop to a stage where it cannot proceed, war breaks out. Therefore it can be said that politics is war *without* bloodshed and war is politics *with* bloodshed.

History shows that wars are divided into two types, just and unjust. Wars which create progress are just, but wars which impede progress are unjust.

Most countries struggling to develop for the benefit of their people want peace. The only ones which crave war and don't want peace are ones controlled by monopoly capitalist groups (like Bush and his cronies) in a handful of imperialist countries which depend on aggression for their profits. Are they not paper tigers?

Waiting and hoping “things get better” will not create the change necessary for our survival as human beings of conscience. The social justice movement dictates that we look to the civil rights era and remember what these groups fought for and that we unite and rise up against the very real injustices we face now. There is much work to do.