

Atlanta may be muggy and hot in late June, but there were nevertheless some fresh winds of change in the air at the US Social Forum this summer. The Venezuela Solidarity Network hosted two workshops and participated on a panel on another all were well attended, VSN also circulated a number of flyers about upcoming VSN activities.

One of the best attended workshops about Venezuela was one that the VSN co-sponsored with Poder (a San Francisco based solidarity group). This workshop included a presentation from VSN staffer, Banbose Shango, with co-worker James Jordan emceeding the discussion period. Banbose spoke about the need for various organizations to work together to develop nationwide, locally based actions, and encouraged attendees to join the Emergency Response Network and to consider going on delegations to Venezuela. Many people did sign up. Following the presentations, during the call to the audience, people were clamoring for a chance to make comments and ask questions, showing that interest in this issue is high.

The VSN also hosted a workshop about so-called "Democracy Building" efforts undertaken by the US government. This was a very educational workshop, with presentations about the general structure of these projects, and more detailed discussion about attempts by the US to manipulate Venezuela's elections, and about the struggle within the US labor movement between collaborationists, supporting electoral interference, and internationalists, supporting workers solidarity against such interference. Every year the US government spends billions of dollars trying to influence the elections of other countries, including sometimes supporting outright overthrow attempts when other efforts fail.

A third workshop hosted by □National Network on Cuba□ about ALBA (The Bolivarian Alternative for Our Americas) was held on Friday. Banbose participated as a panel member on that workshop also. The ALBA workshop gave information on ALBA and it developing processes in Latin America.

All in all, by the end of the forum, consciousnesses had been raised, connections made, and a groundwork laid for us to move forward in building the VSN and the solidarity movement as a whole.

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