

PEOPLE'S WORLD

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December 20, 2014

The limits of charity

By Rev. Jim Conn

With the expensive mid-term elections followed by Thanksgiving and Black Friday, followed by Cyber Monday, you'd think that people wouldn't have much money left over for Giving Tuesday. But if current trends continue, charitable contributions this year may actually match pre-Great Recession levels. We won't know about 2014 for a while, but the results are in for last year: Americans gave \$335 billion in non-profit, tax-deductible gifts in 2013.

The vast majority of that money did not come from rich people. Yes, occasionally a Mark Zuckerberg will give away a billion or so, which certainly ups the total. But on the whole, those in the top 20 percent give away about 1.3 percent of their income while those in the bottom fifth donate about 3.2 percent of their incomes. That's unfortunate because America's "ultra-rich" population grew by about six percent last year. Meanwhile, corporations, which seem to be on a roll this year in profits and stock prices, actually decreased their giving last year. Among the top 100 companies headquartered in Los Angeles, only five involve themselves in "formal philanthropy," according to the Los Angeles Business Journal.

And what did all these donors give most of their money to support? Charity, not change. Only 41



percent of charitable giving went to fulfill the obligation to create a just society. The rest went to put Band-Aids on serious matters far beyond the capacity of charity to remedy.

Charity cannot solve the problems of clean water, health care, education or safer living conditions. Peter Buffett, son of the famous Oracle of Omaha, wrote as much in a New York Times piece. As a scion of formalized philanthropy, he argued that it just "kicks the can down the road." He

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might have added hunger or homelessness or mental illness. Only government has the resources to address problems of this magnitude. Only government has the power to regulate against these threats to our common life. Charity only applies bandages to prop up the system that causes these

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problems, it doesn't fix them.

Charity also keeps people dependent. The standard sociological solution to repair a poor neighborhood is to get a grant. I've done that. I have started nonprofits as a boon to neighborhoods short on social and financial capital investment, and doing it takes money. But I never believed it was a substitute for change. An effective remedy for poor communities would shift the causes of poverty itself toward a livable income for working families; universal health care; empowering low-income neighbors to develop a voice for their communities. Those are the ways, as Buffett puts it, to stop "the perpetual poverty machine."

Charity simply cannot come close to solving the problems facing Americans, much less the world. Furthermore, major gifts by the rich tend to support the interests of the rich. Zuckerberg's donation will support educational and environmental projects in the Silicon Valley, one of the richest regions in the country. The rich especially like to give money to education - often at the institutions

that educate their own children.

Moreover, the rich who contribute to their favored projects receive a higher rate of income tax deduction than do lower-income families. A family reporting an income of \$450,000 gets back 40 percent of its donations from the tax man, while a middle-class family earning \$70,000 receives only 15 percent. Families reporting incomes less than \$50,000 contribute about 19 percent of total charitable dollars, but receive only five percent of the tax write-offs. Giving, in other words, receives unequal treatment that is skewed to the rich.

I believe in charity, but it is no substitute for government resources and policies. That's why I urge people to support change agents rather than "jingle the red kettle" of established charities. Supporting change makes a difference.



Rev. Conn is a minister of Ocean Park Church.

The life of jazz great Will Connell to be celebrated in New York City

Special to Peoplesworld.org

He is the son of a violin prodigy deprived of the profession by racist politics.

A favorite elder statesman and unsung hero of Free Jazz, who served as a powerful conduit between the Black Arts Movement and the Downtown avant-garde, passed away suddenly on November 19, just days shy of his 76th birthday. Will Connell had been planning a weeklong residency over the Christmas season at the Stone in New York City, intended as a retrospective into his 50-plus years in the music as well as a showcase for his current projects.

Highly beloved by all who knew him, his upcoming residency will proceed with him in spirit. The musicians involved in this very important series of concerts have vowed to keep his vision alive. John Zorn, owner of the Stone, is in full agreement. The four-day program is now called the "Will Connell Memorial Week: Celebrating the Life and Music of the Heart and Soul of Downtown." Proceeds will serve as a fundraiser for his family.

His life and music were threaded through the

quest for social change. As a saxophonist/bass clarinetist/composer, he came of age in the 60s as an invaluable part of Horace Tapscott's organization, L.A.'s Black Arts Movement and stood as an underground giant of NY's Free Jazz and New Music circle since 1975.

The son of a violin prodigy deprived of the profession by racist politics, he became aware of both music and the struggle for justice as a child in the 40s. Jazz served as a source of art and great pride for the African American community.

In 1956, he joined the U.S. Air Force, serving nine years. In between tours, he purchased an alto saxophone but didn't dedicate to the music until surviving a chemical blast that blinded him for several days. Lying in an Air Force hospital in darkness, Connell vowed that if he regained his eyesight, he'd formally study this art that had driven him so deeply. This and the gnawing outrage about the military's treatment of Black servicemen led to his decision to rejoin civilian life.

What's outrageous? Poverty wages!

By Rossana Cambron



Fast food strikers and supporters danced in front of a Downtown Los Angeles McDonald's on December 2, chanting, "If we don't get it, shut it down!" and "What's outrageous? Poverty wages!"

Martha Arevalo, executive director of Carecen, a community-based organization that provides direct human services to low and moderate income Latinos, has been involved in the fight for \$15 an hour since the beginning. "We fight for social justice," she said, "because it is not right that people have to work three jobs to provide basic needs for their families." Edgar Gonzales works at McDonald's and shared a rap song that he wrote about the fight for 15.

Teresa King, long-term care worker and member of SEIU-ULTCW (United Long Term Care Workers), stated that the average worker is 27 years old and is supporting a family. She asks, is it fair that the family members who own Walmart have more money than they can spend? In 2013, the Walton family's net worth was \$144.7 billion.

Roger Hernandez, chair of the California Assembly Labor and Employment Committee, told the crowd of about 1000 people, "We won't stop and we can't stop, because too many of us go home to fami-

lies that depend on us. We need you to mobilize to show that the average worker is supporting a family so that those in Sacramento can clearly see that it's not kids that work at these business but that 75 percent of workers are supporting a family."

Los Angeles Councilmember Paul Koretz, who was born and raised in L.A., stated, "We are on the cusp of being able to end poverty in Los Angeles. \$9 an hour is not going to cut it. With the mayor's proposal we are going to get there. We are also going to put a stop to other low wage workers such as janitors who don't even make the minimum wage and whose employers steal their wages with threats."

Jose Huizar, another councilmember, started by saying, "The time is now!... I voted to raise the hotel workers to \$15, we did it for them, we can do it for fast food workers. When we raise the salary for some workers we raise it for all workers," he continued.

Carwash worker Fausto Hernandez said he worked for seven years in the car wash industry. "I worked 10 hours and I would get paid for 3, so what we want is \$15 an hour and stop the wage theft."

LAX worker Tim Maddox, a member of SEIU, said, "We join with this struggle. we are proud to be here. When we fight we win."

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Por Edwin Díaz Muzaly

Stop the repression of the opposition in Sudan!

International Dept. CPUSA

Faced with economic collapse, mass protests and uprisings against his despotic regime, Sudanese Dictator Omar Hassan Al-Bashir is hitting back with a new wave of repression.

Last month several leading members of the Sudanese Communist Party in Blue Nile Province, including Party Political Secretary Ali Suliman, were arrested and charged with serious crimes; their only offense was to call for Al Bashir's removal from power and a return to democracy.

"The authorities arrested Mr. Farouk Abu Issa, the Speaker of the National Consensus Forces, and Mr. Amin Mekki Medany, the Chairperson of the Sudanese Civil Society Organizations, on 6th December 2014.

These detentions constitute a very dangerous step. Mr. Issa is in his early eighties, and Mr. Medany is in his mid seventies. Both suffer from several illnesses, including high blood pressure and a heart condition. They need permanent medical attention, which is denied by authorities.

The signing of the "Sudan Appeal" is a very important step towards the unity of the different opposing forces. The regime is resorting to oppressive measures in a desperate attempt to stop the historical march of our people towards victory.

The Communist Party USA calls upon its members and friends to respond to this urgent solidarity request from our Sudanese comrades by contacting the Sudanese Embassy in Washington DC and our elected officials.

The message is to free them immediately, along with other political prisoners, drop all charges, as well as ending these repressive acts.

Ese fue el llamado hecho por Hugo Chávez al pueblo venezolano el 25 de noviembre de 1999, al presentar el proyecto de Constitución nacido del intenso debate desarrollado en el seno de la Asamblea Nacional Constituyente.

Veinte días después, el 15 de diciembre de ese mismo año, el 71,78% de los electores y las electoras aprobó en referendo el texto constitucional más avanzado del mundo. Al mismo, fueron incorporados novedosos elementos en los órdenes político, económico y, fundamentalmente, social; a partir de los cuales poder conducir al país por la senda de la paz y la verdadera democracia.

La soberanía pasó a residir realmente en el pueblo, quien a partir de ese momento pasó a ejercerla directamente. Los Órganos del nuevo Estado emanan de la soberanía popular y se someten a ella.

Al aprobarla, durante la que Chávez definió como la más grande batalla de finales del siglo pasado, por su importancia, significado e impacto en los años por venir; finalizó una era nefasta para Venezuela y, al mismo tiempo, germinó la nueva República. También, se instauraba una revolucionaria doctrina constitucional, asumida por otros gobiernos del Continente como único camino pacífico para salir del desastre heredado.

La V República nació aquel día rescatando a Bolívar como signo nacional, como principal referente del proyecto de regeneración de la Patria que se hizo gobierno unos meses antes, en febrero de 1999.

Quiénes antes lucharon en contra de la aprobación de la nueva Carta Magna, apelando al engaño y la desinformación, vieron cambiar el mapa político a partir de su aprobación, por lo que optaron por insurgir permanentemente contra ella.

Aún cuando ahora dicen defenderla, lo que buscan en realidad es dar al traste con el proyecto de amplias transformaciones que tiene lugar en el país desde hace ya quince años, soportado en la Constitución Bolivariana como su principal carta de navegación.

Hoy, pese al largo camino que aún falta por recorrer y las renovadas amenazas que enfrenta, el Gobierno Bolivariano encabezado por el presidente Nicolás Maduro, inspirado en el legado eterno del Comandante Chávez, sigue combatiendo por hacer irreversible la Revolución.

El reto es tremendamente duro, pero el contar con un pueblo como el venezolano, decidido a superar la mentira y el engaño de los enemigos de la Patria, sigue siendo la garantía de que el bien continúe imponiéndose al mal, a la maldad, a la mentira, a todo aquello que significó para el país la vieja praxis política.