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by Virginia Garza, East Los Angeles branch

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At the Socialist Workers Party 1976 convention, one of the workshops conducted was on the defense of Latin American political prisoners. The United States Committee for Justice to Latin American Political Prisoners (USLA), which had been formed in 1966 to defend the political prisoners in Latin America, discussed the future campaigns for 1976 and 1977.

Since 1966, through the different campaigns and tours, USLA has become widely known and respected as a serious committee which will work with groups of different political persuasion and with civil libertarians that are willing to come to the defense of the Latin American political prisoner.

It is my opinion that USLA can carry out their projected campaigns on Argentina, Brazil, Panama, etc., anywhere in the country and in every YSA local and SWP branch.

With the division of further branches in Los Angeles, it is very important all the branches as well as the YSA locals view the coming USLA campaigns and activities as something they should work on -- not leaving this important work aside for other branches to do. In recent months, the USLA activity has been carried out by one branch and has been left aside by the others.

Here in Los Angeles we have had a unique experience in doing USLA work. We have been able to develop a good working relationship with the Los Angeles Group for Latin American Solidarity (LAGLAS) which is headed by Tim Harding, a Latin American history professor at Cal State Los Angeles. We have also developed relationships with the Latin American Studies at Cal State and have continued to work with each other on different projects. It has been a fruitful association and we wish to develop other such working relationships on more campuses.

Due to these associations and to some individuals USLA has had some success in getting the campaigns initiated known here in Los Angeles.

In the past years USLA has initiated several pickets in defense of Argentine, Chilean and Spanish political prisoners. There were public meetings for Maria Isabel Barreno from Portugal and for Juan Carlos Coral. USLA participated at Cal State Fullerton this past

April in their Latin American Women's week, where the situation of the women political prisoners was discussed and where USLA was able to explain about the different campaigns.

USLA held a large fund-raiser last fall, where 200 people attended, and the Olga Talamante committee spoke in her defense. USLA has been able to be part of the consistent work in the defense of the Chilean political prisoners. We have helped organize some of the protest concerts that have taken place in the last two years, where several thousand people attended and were able to see the USLA Reporter and campaign materials on hand.

This year USLA led a campaign protesting the visa denial of Hugo Blanco, and further campaigned against his recent imprisonment in Peru. We were able to get some newspaper coverage, an article and his picture appeared in the Los Angeles Express. This campaign broadened USLA's contacts even more, since all kinds of groups and people were contacted to send telegrams in his defense.

Now with the future campaigns on Argentina that must be mounted, the defense of Latin American political prisoners must be viewed by all the branches in Los Angeles as something to get involved with, and not see it as the work of one or two branches only. The work of six branches will increase our contacts and influence immeasurably.

The Latin American population with the Chicanos existing all over Los Angeles can become a base of potential supporters for USLA defense work. Branches can also look at women's groups to approach on the defense of Latin American women political prisoners. The campuses especially where there is a YSA functioning can probe the different studies departments that will do USIA support work.

USLA activities can produce all kinds of contacts and periphery for all the branches. One or two small branches doing USLA work alone will just limit our functioning. Each branch should begin to look at who can best do USLA activity, view it as important as PRDF and CODEL work. Start investigating different organizations to approach with petitions and to suggest teach-ins and sell the USLA Reporter.

Already experience has shown that we have gained valuable contacts, that we have a periphery around USLA and that we can recruit some of them and bring them closer to our ideas.

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