

## Bolivarian Circles – an autonomous movement

*“We defend the Circles’ horizontal structure and their autonomy. Because if the Circles became party political, the Circles would die. The Circles can have members who belong to parties – any party. But party business is discussed in the party. In the Circles we discuss community and social problems. The Circles are also an anti-globalisation and anti-neoliberal movement, a movement which must defend the right to environmental protection and food security, women’s rights, children’s rights . . .”*

Rodrigo Chaves, National Co-ordinator of the Bolivarian Circles, Paris, June 2003

## Some achievements of the revolution

The constitution gives land and housing to rural and homeless people, promotes co-operatives, prioritises water and food security, recognises Indigenous rights, promotes workers’ rights and employment equity between women and men, recognises housework as productive work, entitles housewives to health care and pensions, promotes unity among Third World peoples . . .

The constitution opposes the privatisation of oil, so the government can claim its stolen oil revenue to end poverty.

◆ Uniquely, the Chávez government has promoted a caring use of its military. Soldiers who defend the revolutionary process also work with and for the community: building homes, schools, providing healthcare . . .

◆ Since 1999, 3,000 Bolivarian schools have opened, in which one million children receive breakfast, lunch and an afternoon meal.

◆ 15 breast milk banks have been created as part of the programme to encourage breastfeeding and improve children’s health.

◆ The National Literacy Campaign was launched, with 100,000 volunteers.

◆ A million hectares of land have been distributed, and 2,000 tractors delivered.

◆ 5 million property titles are being given out, and 150,000 homes built.

◆ New aqueducts have brought clean drinking water to two million people for the first time. Drinking and waste water treatment plants are under construction throughout the country.

◆ The Women’s Development Bank has granted more than 40,000 micro-credit loans, the People’s Bank 30,000.

◆ 2,000 co-operatives have started up.

◆ 240 information centres have opened, so the population can use computers and the Internet for free.

◆ In 1999 the minimum wage was 75,000 bolívares a month, now it is 190,080; in spite of inflation it is the highest minimum wage in the region.

◆ Teachers’ and lecturers’ salaries have gone up.



President Chávez with Modaira Rubio, and Andaiye (Strike, Guyana), July 2002

## The world pains us as much as Venezuela

### Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela:

*I have attended many summits over the last four years, and I’m always left disappointed. I once told my fellow presidents: “We go from summit to summit, while our peoples go from abyss to abyss.”*

*The economy is very important, it’s necessary, but the economy can’t rule the world. The market cannot rule the world because it is the free market that threatens to end the world.*

*We need to bring back politics, political leadership.*

#### This revolution is peaceful and democratic, but it is armed

*We won’t put up with any interference with Venezuela’s sovereignty. We demand respect for the sovereignty of the peoples of the world. And above all for the sovereignty of our fellow peoples in the Third World, in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, who for centuries have been exploited,*

*colonised, recolonised, bombed, invaded and gunned down.*

*The world pains us as much as Venezuela does. And this must be a principle of our Bolivarian revolution, without which it wouldn’t be Bolivarian.*

#### We Indians are rising up and uniting

*This revolution is like the Chilean revolution of the 70s: peaceful and democratic. But unlike the Chilean revolution, it is armed, so it can defend its gains.*

*We Indians are rising up everywhere and uniting . . . planning the meeting of all rural people and all those who fight for the land on the American continent. We must win by the only path open to us, the path of revolution, which is the path of life.*

**International Solidarity Forum, 13 April 2003**

## Women’s autonomy

*By autonomy we mean not only women in relation to the parties and to men (although men are exploited, we do twice as much work as they do).*

*We mean also the autonomy of women of colour, who must ensure that women who are lighter of skin do not dominate the demands of the movement.*

*We mean the autonomy of lesbian women. Women who choose to live with other women have the right not to be discriminated against for it.*

*We mean the autonomy of prostitute women. We women have done everything to feed our children and we are not ashamed of one thing we have done.*

*We mean the autonomy of women with disabilities, many of us older women, who get even less pay and are even more mistreated.*

*We mean the autonomy of single mothers, who have no man to discipline us and so can come down from the hills and save the revolution.*

*All these autonomies strengthen, broaden, deepen and extend our movement.*

*In the revolution, there is room for everyone: working class, grassroots, middle class, even upper class. There is room for everyone, but the direction must come from the grassroots.*

*The middle class has many skills. They have two choices: either they try to dominate with those skills, or they teach us those skills so that we can move up together.*

**Selma James**, co-ordinator of the Global Women’s Strike, speaking at the INAMUJER Solidarity Conference, Caracas, April 2003

## Women in Africa and Venezuela: one struggle, one heart

Today, 31 July, is Pan-African Women’s Day. It is a good opportunity to speak out in solidarity with our African sisters for peace and social justice, and against poverty. And to express our deepest thanks for the beautiful gesture these women have made, celebrating their Pan-African Day with an act of solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution and its women . . .

Despite living in an oil-producing country, we too know poverty; 80% of our population lives in poverty . . .

Nor can we forget that most of the Venezuelan population and its president Hugo Chávez, who always repeats this with pride, are descendants not only of Europeans but of African women and men who were brought as slaves to this American continent, and of Indigenous people who fought back against European genocide and colonisation.

In these three years of Beautiful Revolution – the revolution with a woman’s face – we have been constantly under attack. We are attacked by those sectors which represent the interests of the old ruling classes and which want to stop our process and claw back the power to carry on plundering the wealth of our country . . .

We thank our African sisters for their solidarity, and say: your struggle is our struggle, your heart is our heart . . .

Message to the women of Cameroon and Uganda from Modaira Rubio, *Global Women’s Strike Venezuela*; Women’s Network of Vargas; Manuelita Saenz *Movement*; Union of Black Women; Bolivarian Women’s Force; 8 of March Movement; Natali Vasquez (*civil servant with the Ministry of Energy and Mines*); Isabel Dos Santos; and others

## Documentary

### Venezuela: a 21st century revolution

**April 2003. Venezuelans speak about how they are making their revolution. Interviews with the “Mano Amiga” cleaners co-operative, the workers of Anauco Hilton, Nora Castañeda, president of the Women’s Development Bank, Nelson Nuñez, president of the oil workers union, excerpts from a speech by President Chávez, and from Global Women’s Strike participants.**

**“I felt I was seeing an aspect of the process which even I was unaware of.”**  
**Modaira Rubio, Caracas**

**“Excellent documentary. Highlights the struggle of the women.”**  
**Cayapa Bolivarian Collective, Barcelona**

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