

MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS FOR 2002

By Frank Valdez

"To sin by silence when we should protest makes cowards out of men"

Ella Wheeler Wilcox,
popular 19th century poet

When my wife Sheila asked me what my New Year's resolutions were, I responded that I had none. However, upon further pondering and having viewed the movie, Ali, I decided this question would be a good topic to write about.

According to sources on the Internet, New Year's Resolutions go as far back as 153 B.C. in ancient Rome. The mythical god Janus was placed as the first month, hence the month of January. This god with two faces could look back on past events and forward to the future. Janus became the ancient symbol for resolutions and many Romans looked for forgiveness from their enemies and exchanged gifts before the beginning of each year. Today "experts" on the subject of New Year's resolutions say that this practice indicates that we are in control of our lives and NOT reliant on the stars, luck or perhaps even the will of God? These same experts also say that we make New Years Resolutions because we wish to be better people, with more meaningful lives. This philosophy is based on the old European custom of "What one does today, one will do for the rest of the year."

With all this in mind I have chosen the following resolutions for 2002:

- 1) I will strive to be a better man for my spouse, our daughters and our sons. Change begins with self and within one's home.
- 2) I further resolve to continue to be active in the struggle for social justice.

In this time of complacency and going along to get along, those of us in the movement must recommit ourselves and continue the fight. Choosing to be neutral, or silent may be the way of neo liberals, but it does NOT result in JUSTICE! When one sees how Muhammed Ali stood up and refused to fight in Vietnam, one cannot help but respect him. His world championship was taken from him, he almost went broke and he endured an enormous amount of personal hardship. We should be so lucky to have such a high profile person opposing the aggression against Afghanistan today.

- 3) My final resolution is to change careers this year.

Having worked as a social worker for the past 10 years, I have come to the conclusion that pushing papers, following meaningless policies and procedures and working for agencies that put the almighty dollar before the needs and interests of the people is NO longer something I can do. I would love to get a job in the movement or writing

articles, but I'm old and wise enough to accept the realities of life.

These resolutions are all linked one to another. They are linked because of love for my family, self and community. The late Che Guevara once stated, "at the risk of sounding ridiculous the motivation for the revolutionary vanguard had to be love, love for the people." Love, solidarity, militancy and commitment for social change are all values that the oppressors cannot understand because they know NO love other than the love of money. They fail to understand solidarity, because REAL solidarity is based on feeling for people who are in similar economic, political and ideological circumstances.

While the oppressors often show some semblance of solidarity, it quickly ends once their goal is accomplished. (e.g.) the U.S. and Saddam Hussein, the U.S. and Manuel Noriega, etc. These relationships are more often temporary because the imperialist's and their puppet's sole linkage are an insatiable addiction to power and money.

The oppressors understand militancy on a limited basis. However, they have confused true militancy with irresponsible violent behavior. In reality, true militancy has little to do with being violent. (The ruling class almost always initiates violence.) Militancy has everything to do with being committed to a cause. (Even the far right has been known to be militant in their extremist views.) As to commitment to social change, the oppressor's only interest in social change is to have more power, more control and to take away the rights of the people. For this reason I have chosen as one of my resolutions to step up my efforts in the struggle for social justice.

In San Antonio we have our work cut out for us; struggling for livable wages, affordable housing, accessible healthcare, opposing police brutality, fighting against racism and homophobia, fighting for our environment against further military and industrial pollution and the struggle against further deterioration of our civil liberties by the ultra right Bush administration.

In closing I wish all readers of La Voz and supporters of the Esperanza a Happy and prosperous New Year!



Frank Valdez is a veteran labor, peace and civil rights activist who has been a prominent figure at the Esperanza since its inception fifteen years ago and a frequent contributor to La Voz. We wish him and his family well in the coming year.