

**In the Upcoming Edition of
The Bottom Will Rise and Create a New World
from the International School for Bottom-up Organizing**

The Bottom Will Rise and Create a New World is a work in progress. We have already begun to revise the current book based on our organizing practice and on the feedback we are getting from the first edition.

What Is This Thing about Hue and Class?

It has become clear to us that our readers do not understand how we make the leap from noticing that the bottom throughout the world is dark-skinned to saying that it is that sector that should lead our movement. We are working on how to do that. Here's a start:

When Marx and Engels wrote *The Communist Manifesto*, which focused exclusively on Europe, they predicted that the proletariat would rise up, overthrow capitalism, and create an egalitarian future for humanity (socialism and communism). The proletariat they wrote about was their "bottom:" its children were swept into factory work by the age of six or seven; they worked from sunup to sundown, earned only enough to stay alive until the next day, lived in squalor and disease, and usually died before reaching the age of thirty. When the communist anthem, the *Internationale*, said, "the international working class shall free the human race," it was saying, "the bottom will rise and create a new world!"

The problem is, that vision excluded most of humanity. Marx and Engels were products of their times, and saw the world with racial blinders on. *Because of this, they were able to see the bottom within their limited context, and were able to propose that the bottom would be the salvation of humanity.* Their racial blinders excluded dark-skinned people from their line of vision because, to them, slaves and colonial people were a different and lower category of humanity. Our vision today drops the racial blinders. We must look squarely at the truth – that all of humanity is one, *and that bottom is dark.* Everywhere in the world, those at the bottom have darker skin than those at the top, and the lower you go, the darker they get. *The biggest problem our movement faces today is internalized racism – and it affects all of us, whatever our hue. Once we can see that the European proletariat is not the bottom, our internalized racism prevents us from imagining that the bottom has the capacity to "free the human race."*

This is the phenomenon we are trying to understand in our attempts to analyze the unity of hue and class. We invite your thoughts and experience as part of this process.

We see what ISBO is saying: What is ISBO doing?

Venezuela

ISBO's first session was held in Caracas in October of 2008. The New Orleans Survivor Council (NOSC) had a relationship with people in Venezuela dating from when the government promised money to the people of New Orleans in the wake of Katrina. An NOSC organizer lived in Caracas for six months prior to the first session of the school to continue to deepen relationships with Communal Council members. This relationship was consistently undermined by efforts of the US government, culminating in derailing support for NOSC by replacing it with a collaboration around

a completely different effort (which is represented by several panels here at the Left Forum). However, ISBO continues to train young organizers in Venezuela working with Communal Councils.

Colombia

ISBO organizers are working in three areas. One is a mountain campesino community, where they are building a local community organization, establishing a cultural and educational center for organizers, running organizing retreats, and doing radical cultural work with young people. They are experimenting with collective methods of food production and distribution. In an Afro-Colombian town, ISBO organizers are working with a deeply rooted community group fighting for its survival against racist opposition, in an area where slavery persisted until the 1920s. They work especially with young people in the hip-hop community. A collective of women in an Afro-Colombian city neighborhood are the third set of ISBO organizers.

Jamaica

ISBO organizers are working in two neighboring communities in rural Jamaica. They have established a community group consciously based on bottom-up principles, intentionally separate from government and electoral politics. They are building two community centers and dealing with local issues like water and postal service, as well as running an organizing class that has already produced new leaders. Our School operates out of Jamaica, which will also host the next session.

England

Organizers in England supported NOSC work and have had a relationship with the organizers in Colombia from the beginning. They are creating a support network for ISBO's "front line" organizers, including cultural events, fundraising, communications, artwork and printing.

United States

ISBO was born out of the demise of the organizing in New Orleans after Katrina. Our estimate is that, after leaving the bottom to die, the government organized to prevent rebellion by sending its agents within every organization that was part of the rebuilding effort. These groups then united to reject and repudiate the only group organizing along egalitarian principles of leadership from the bottom, the NOSC (organized by People's Organizing Committee). Some of these agents have become public; most have not. It was this estimate that New Orleans and the US had become thoroughly contaminated by a combination of sellouts and outright agents that led ISBO's initial organizers to base themselves outside the US. However, a support network similar to the one developing in England is also developing in the US. We expect that it will eventually give birth to new organizing projects within the US, as honest, on-the-ground organizers come to grips with the infiltration, at leadership levels, of virtually all existing movement organizations by government agents.

Watch for the next edition of *The Bottom Will Rise and Create a New World* for detailed reports on these efforts and on newly developing projects in Bolivia and Mexico.