

## D.C. rallies led by Bevel have powerful impact

by Patricia Salisbury

An unprecedented coalition of civil rights activists and other political forces held rallies in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 7, signaling that a movement potentially larger and more powerful than the 1960s civil rights movement is being built in the United States. The actions—which brought together fabled leaders of the civil rights era such as the Rev. James Bevel, Amelia Boynton Robinson, and Hosea Williams, with spokesmen from the Nation of Islam, former Washington mayor Marion Barry, and presidential campaign organizers for Lyndon LaRouche—began at the U.S. Supreme Court building.

The court was scheduled to hear the case of Leonel Herrera, in which the court will decide whether it violates the constitutional prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment and guarantees of due process to execute a person, such as Herrera, who has been convicted of a murder but may be innocent.

Demonstrators numbering around 150 rallied to demand that the death penalty be abolished in the United States. Speakers joined in denouncing the death penalty from a variety of perspectives. James Bevel, the running mate of jailed presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche and former direct action coordinator for Martin Luther King, stated that “life is an inalienable right, not a privilege.” He told the crowd that judicial murder to establish the principle of revenge makes society barbaric and encourages violent crime. Michael X, speaking for the Nation of Islam-Howard University branch, warned white Americans that the death penalty is a hypocritical cover for killing young African-Americans and challenged citizens favoring the death penalty on religious grounds to realize that one who believes that God favors the death penalty had better consider whom a just God would wreak vengeance upon: surely not the victims of an unjust society but rather the organizers of the crimes of that society, “Dope, Inc.” and its associated banks and political figures.

Former Mayor Barry vowed to build a coalition to defeat the referendum reestablishing the death penalty in the District of Columbia which Congress has decreed be put on the Nov. 3 ballot. Juanita Kennedy Morgan, who chairs the National Black Women’s Political Leadership Caucus, criticized Sen. Richard Shelby (D-Ala.) for initiating the death penalty referendum only after his white aide was murdered despite the high number of blacks murdered in the district. She pointed to the disproportionate statistics of young African-American men on death row. Other speakers included: civil rights activ-

ist Lawrence Guyot, who worked with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee Mississippi Voters Project; Jerry Brentar, an activist from Ohio who is demanding justice for Cleveland auto worker John Demjanjuk (who faces hanging in Israel for alleged Nazi war crimes after a Soviet-rigged frameup); and a member of the Peace and Justice Committee of the Catholic Church.

Speakers addressed the throngs of tourists and federal employees near the Supreme Court building. Around 150 people, some of whom had traveled from Alabama, Tennessee, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, marched in a picket line, challenging the court, “If you’re going to kill people, put on your hood and robe”—a reference to the fact that the court is meting out “justice” no different from the terrorist Ku Klux Klan, who hide under white sheets and hoods. During the rally, nine figures dressed in hoods and robes and representing the nine Supreme Court justices strode through the crowd. Civil rights leader Hosea Williams told the rally that the current court behaves no differently than the Klan in Georgia and throughout the South.

### Pike statue must come down!

Later that day most of the demonstrators and many of the speakers assembled for a second rally at the site of a statue of Albert Pike, a Confederate general who became a KKK founder and chief organizer of Klan terrorism against blacks in the late 1800s. The demonstrators demanded that this obscene 50-foot-high, bronze cast monument to brutality and injustice, which is designated a national monument by the U.S. Congress, be torn down immediately. They explained to astonished onlookers that the statue is maintained at taxpayer expense by the Department of Labor in the middle of the District, which has a predominantly black population.

Erected (and still protected) by the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, which helped Pike in founding the Klan, the statue remains despite demands to the relevant government agencies and challenges to both the Bush and Clinton campaigns to demolish it. How long it will stand remains to be seen. While the demonstrators renewed chants of “put on your hood and robe” and “Albert Pike take a hike,” two of them used mountain climbing gear to scale the statue and garb its obese figure in a full-scale hood and robe. When D.C. police moved against the two, the crowd closed ranks and they were lost from sight. These events were videotaped by camera crews for the LaRouche-Bevel presidential campaign, which has announced plans to air the footage—and LaRouche’s demand that the statue come down—on a half-hour television broadcast in October. The Oct. 26 issue of *The Final Call*, the Nation of Islam newspaper, quotes Bevel’s demand that the statue come down by Oct. 23, the anniversary of its erection.

The issue has become so hot that the rally at the statue was covered in much of the major Washington media, including the *Washington Times*, *Washington Post*, the local ABC television affiliate, and CNN.