

Celebration of the Life of Jon Hillson

12:00 Noon Reception - 1:00 PM Program - Sunday, March 7

At the immigrant rights organization: CARECEN
2845 W. 7th St. – cross street Hoover, Los Angeles



Lisa Ahlberg

Jon Hillson, 54, a ramp worker at United Airlines, a trade union and political activist, and a leader of the Los Angeles Coalition in Solidarity with Cuba, died suddenly of a heart attack in Los Angeles on January 29, 2004.

A member of Local Lodge 1932 of the International Association of Machinists union, Hillson was active in organizing drives by food concession and baggage screeners at Los Angeles International Airport, and in efforts to extend solidarity to local striking grocery workers and longshoremens, as well as coal miners in Utah.

Hillson was born on September 16, 1949 in Malden, Massachusetts. He attended the University of Colorado at Boulder. There he was a leader in the movement against the Vietnam War and joined the Socialist Workers Party, to which he belonged for some 25 years. He was frequently a candidate for public office on the SWP ticket. He remained a staunch opponent of U.S. intervention throughout his life and actively opposed the recent U.S. war on Iraq.

In 1974, while living in Boston, he became immersed in the fight to desegregate the public schools and defend Black students from racist mob violence. Hillson subsequently authored *The Battle of Boston*, a seminal account of this struggle published by Pathfinder Press in 1977. He actively took part in the solidarity movement with the 1979 revolution in Nicaragua, traveling there often. He began to study Spanish in 1983 at a newly opened language school in Estelí, Nicaragua, where he met his wife, Beverly Treumann, the founder of the school.

Hillson wrote articles for and contributed to numerous publications about strikes and struggles for social justice in the U.S. and around the world, frequently writing about Cuba. He was also a published poet and recently read his poem “Lessons of Baghdad Rag” at City Lights Bookstore—home of the beat poets—in San Francisco.

For more than 30 years, Hillson was a steadfast opponent of the U.S. government embargo against Cuba. He supported the free exchange of ideas between those living in Cuba and those in the United States. He opposed U.S. government restrictions on travel to Cuba and organized several delegations of young people from the Los Angeles area to visit Cuba. He helped bring Cubans from the island to the Los Angeles area to speak about topics ranging from AIDS to the arts to the effects of U.S. policy on Cuba. He was a guest columnist for the on-line Cuban publication *La Jiribilla*, writing on political developments in the United States. His article “The Sexual Politics of Reinaldo Arenas,” discussing communism and homosexuality, was widely read in Cuba and the United States.

He is survived by his wife of 18 years, Beverly Treumann, his brother, Edward Hillson, of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, and a nephew and niece, Isaac and Alexanna Hillson. Those wishing to make a contribution in his memory may write tax-deductible checks made out to MADRE, c/o Beverly Treumann, 6709 La Tijera Blvd., #824, Los Angeles, CA 90045-2017. Beverly will direct the allocation of the fund to causes that Jon supported.

For further information, telephone Jennifer Caldwell at (323) 559-1959 or e-mail bevjonla@aol.com.