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Bill Camp ¡Presente!

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Bill Camp

Bill Camp, a leader in the union movement who fought tirelessly for workers' rights, died Sept. 23. Camp was known not just as a labor union leader but equally for his years of work in solidarity with the workers of Cuba to end the damage inflicted on the people of Cuba by the U.S. government blockade of that country.

Lianys Torres Rivera, the head of the Cuban Mission in the United States, posted on X: "Deepest condolences to Bill Camp's family, whom the Cuban people will never

forget for his unconditional solidarity and ongoing struggle for justice, peace and better relations between our country and the U.S. RIP Dear friend.”

When Bill Camp received a diagnosis of brain cancer last summer, he never paused in his organizing work, determined to get Cuba off the list of “countries who support terrorism,” a fallacious narrative started by Trump and continued by Biden, to tighten the deadly strictures of the blockade on Cuba.

A long life lived well with many accomplishments

Bill Camp was born in 1944 in the cotton mill town of Anderson, South Carolina. While at College in Jackson, Mississippi, during the 1960s, he joined in actions supporting integration. The Mississippi White Citizens Council targeted Camp with a KKK-type death squad. He managed to escape across the border before sundown.

In 1968, while enrolled in a Ph.D. program at Duke University, he played a lead role in organizing student support for a strike by the Black workers on Duke’s maintenance staff who were receiving less than minimum wage. The strike was successful, and Camp was expelled from Duke.

In Redding, California, Bill Camp’s efforts helped to create the national model for parent participation in the early childhood education program, Head Start.

From there he and his spouse, Catherine Camp, moved to Sacramento, where he worked for the California Agricultural Labor Relations Board. This state agency guaranteed the organizing rights of farm workers. He ran elections to recognize the bargaining rights of farm workers, investigated illegal actions by growers, and played a key role in helping to win the first collective bargaining contracts for lettuce workers in the Imperial Valley.

California Gov. Deukmejian eliminated his job after Camp reported on illegal appointments to run the Prosecutorial Division of that State agency.

He joined the Sacramento Central Labor Council (SCLC), and during the 15 years he served on the Labor Council, it became a significant voice for the working class in the area. He remained on the Board of the SCLC and the SCLC newspaper even after he retired in 2014.

In 2015, [Bill received a union flag](#) signed by UFW President Arturo Rodriguez and Cesar Chavez Foundation President Paul Chavez, recognizing his decades of selfless service to farm workers.

His son Bayliss Camp noted that “my father may have been living with this cancer for perhaps two years before it was diagnosed. ... During those two years, he organized trips to Cuba.”

Bill Camp was instrumental in organizing a group of union members, their union officers, and supporters, mainly from the U.S. West Coast, in the aptly named [Building Relations with Cuban Labor](#) (BRCL). That included leading a group of labor leaders and members to celebrate Cuba’s May Day 2024 in Havana. The visit was planned to support Cuban workers and see the many accomplishments of the Cuban workers.

