

Rudy Pisani - A life well lived

written by Struggle-La Lucha Los Angeles bureau
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Rudy Pisani, April 6, 1930 - Oct. 15, 2024.

Friends and comrades came together at the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice in Los Angeles on Dec. 15 to celebrate the phenomenon that was Rudy Pisani. Rudy Pisani was a much-beloved activist in the anti-imperialist, workers, and socialist movements.

Throughout his life, Rudy stood shoulder to shoulder with the oppressed of our working class. A dedicated communist, Rudy was entirely committed to international solidarity and building a workers' movement here in the belly of the beast. The program opened with videos of Rudy singing the famous communist anthem, The International, in French and Italian. Activists and leaders in the international and local movements spoke warmly about Rudy.

His life partner and wife, Rosa Pisani, spoke. John Parker, the West Coast coordinator of Struggle-La Lucha and the HTC coordinator, opened. Eric Mann, the founder of the Bus Riders Union, spoke of Rudy's iron-clad commitment to workers. The Union of Progressive Iranians leader, Mo Mansuri, spoke. Fernando Ledezma, a member of the United Teachers of Los Angeles, talked about how indefatigable Rudy was at protests. Sekou Parker spoke of the warmth and vigor of Rudy, who he'd known for nearly all his 26 years. Parker said that Rudy always greeted him with two truths: Down with U.S. imperialism and F*ck the Police. Sekou said his friends would be a little taken aback by Rudy's enthusiasm, and Sekou would tell them, "Well, he's not wrong."

The day's remembrances and salutes to Rudy by comrades and friends came to a close with a rousing rendition of The International.

Cliff Olin, Rudy's long-time friend and comrade, shared some of Rudy's life story, which is excerpted here:

Rudy Pisani was born in Morocco and grew up in Casablanca, Algeria, which was then a French colony. His father spoke Italian, and his mother spoke French. As a

young man, he learned Spanish.

In 1951, at his mom's insistence, he moved to Ohio to live with his sister and brother-in-law to avoid being forced to serve in Vietnam with the French Foreign Legion. Ironically, after living in Ohio for a few months and knowing very little English, he was drafted by the U.S. Army to serve in Korea. He was forever a stalwart defender of workers in South Korea and the revolutionary Democratic People's Republic of Korea. One of his mantras was, "Long live Kim il Sung!"

By the early 1970s, he had become more and more disenchanted by the double standard inherent in U.S. foreign policy. He found work as an organizer for the Culinary Workers Union while also working for years in a meat packing plant in Vernon.

He joined the Communist Party and worked as an organizer to elect Angela Davis as vice president in the 1980 and 1984 campaigns. He later joined his comrades at the Harriet Tubman Center and the Bus Riders Union. His fluency in Spanish and sympathy for immigrants led him to dedicate untold hours to struggles for immigrant rights, and solidarity with political refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala, as well as with L.A.-based Sandinista activists. In the early 1980s, he met and married Rosa, the love of his life.

Though a vigorous and outspoken critic of U.S. military intervention, he kept his veterans' ID in his wallet and regularly showed it to police or guards when threatened with arrest at countless marches and protests. "I'm a veteran." He would go to Veteran's Day lunches and talk to vets about how the "system is rotten to the core, not the American people, the system."

His powerful voice boomed over a crowd, so he was easy to find at protests for immigrant rights and against U.S. imperialism, and he appeared in interviews on TV news reports in Spanish and English because he was a dramatic and articulate

speaker.

He had a gentle, persuasive voice when speaking to young people about social injustices. They knew he spoke from the heart and responded well to him even when he was in his late eighties or early nineties.

He had a great love of jazz music and often went to jazz clubs. He had a mellow side and was intensely loyal to friends. He is dearly remembered by the progressive community.

Hasta la Victoria, Siempre, Compañero.

