

# Peter Camejo dies - an advocate for the poor and oppressed

Third-party political activist and former Fourth Internationalist

Sunday 14 September 2008, by [BROOKS Chris](#), [FERRISS Susan](#), [GORDON Rachel](#) (Date first published: 14 September 2008).

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Peter Miguel Camejo, a leading figure in the Green party and its vice-presidential candidate in 2004, died at home in California on September 13. He had been a leader of the Fourth International during the 1970s.

The 2004 Nader-Camejo campaign was covered repeatedly in International Viewpoint, and eventually won 460,000 votes.

Catherine Cartier shared the sad news with us. "It is with great sadness and regret that I have to inform you that Peter Camejo died this morning. Peter decided that he would be more comfortable at home, and the doctors agreed. Arrangements were made, and ultimately Peter returned home yesterday. Peter's health had declined rapidly over the last two days due to the aggressiveness of his cancer and the strength of the drugs used to combat his disease. His wife was at his side when he passed peacefully this morning.

Peter is survived by his wife Morella, his daughter Alexandra, his son Victor, three brothers Antonio, Daniel, and Danny, and three grandchildren Andrew, Daniel and Oliver.

Arrangements and memorial services will be announced at a later date. As a courtesy, the family requests that there be no calls at this time."

Numerous obituaries have been published, including by the The Sacramento Bee [see below], Louis Proyect [[1](#)], the San Francisco Chronicle [see below] and by Indymedia [[2](#)], which described him as "an advocate for the poor and oppressed".

## Chris Brooks

*\* Chris Brooks is part of the IV editorial team. He is a member of the British section of the Fourth International, the International Socialist Group, and serves on the 'Socialist Resistance' editorial board.*

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## **Obituary: Peter Camejo was state, national Green Party candidate**

**By Susan Ferriss**

Peter Miguel Camejo, a three-time Green Party candidate for governor and Ralph Nader's 2004 vice presidential running mate, died early Saturday at his home in Folsom, family associates said Saturday.

Camejo's wife, Morella, was with her husband when he died of lymphoma, just days after finishing an autobiography, consumer advocate Nader said in an written tribute.

Camejo, 68, was a longtime Folsom resident and a fierce advocate for third-party political activism, in California and nationally. He also was a pioneer in the movement to create investment funds stressing environmental conservation and fair treatment of workers and communities.

Last week he was treated at UC Davis Medical Center for the cancer, which had recurred, according to a statement by his family.

Camejo was born on Dec. 31, 1939, in Queens, N.Y. He was the son of an affluent Venezuelan couple, and he grew up in Caracas and New York City before settling with his mother on Long Island.

After earning a perfect score on the math section of the SAT college entrance exam, Camejo enrolled at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but dropped out to become a civil rights activist in the South.

He later returned to college at the University of California, Berkeley. He joined the anti-Vietnam War movement and was expelled for his role in campus protests.

In 1976, he embarked on the path that led to a reputation as a political maverick - a run for president, representing the Socialist Workers Party.

As the Green Party's candidate for governor of California in 2002, he garnered 5.3 percent of the vote, Nader said.

In the 2003 recall election of then-Gov. Gray Davis, Camejo debated Arnold Schwarzenegger and Davis and eventually won 3 percent of the vote. He ran again in 2006, but said it was his last campaign.

"Peter was a friend, colleague and politically courageous champion of the downtrodden and mistreated of the entire Western hemisphere," Nader said in his e-mail. "Everyone who met Peter, talked with Peter, worked with Peter, or argued with Peter will miss the passing of a great American."

Camejo also became an adviser to investment funds with a social and environmental bent.

Among his achievements was the creation of the Eco-Logical Trust for Merrill Lynch, the first fund of a major firm to hold investments to environmental standards.

His family has not yet made funeral arrangements.

*\* From The Sacramento Bee. Published 12:00 am PDT Sunday, September 14, 2008. Story appeared in MAIN NEWS section, Page A3.*

## **Peter Camejo dies - helped found Green Party**

**Rachel Gordon, Chronicle Staff Writer**

Sunday, September 14, 2008

***Third-party political activist Peter Camejo, a perennial candidate for state and national office who helped pioneer the financial market niche of socially responsible investments, died Saturday. He was 68.***

Mr. Camejo, who had been battling a recurrence of lymphoma, died at home in Folsom (Sacramento County).

He helped found the California Green Party in 1991 and ran three times for governor of California. He also ran as independent Ralph Nader's vice presidential running mate in the 2004 presidential election in which President Bush won a second term. In 1976 he ran for president as the Socialist Workers Party candidate.

Mr. Camejo described himself as a watermelon - red on the inside, green on the outside.

"Peter used his eloquence, sharp wit and barnstorming bravado to blaze a trail for 21<sup>st</sup> century third-party politics in the U.S.," Nader said in a prepared statement, which described Mr. Camejo as a "politically courageous champion of the downtrodden and mistreated of the entire Western Hemisphere."

Active in the Free Speech Movement and in protests against the Vietnam War as a student at UC Berkeley in the late 1960s, Mr. Camejo landed on then-Gov. Ronald Reagan's list of the 10 most dangerous people in California. School officials eventually expelled him, two quarters shy of a degree.

The spark of activism stayed with him as he became a leader in the movement to give voice to third-party candidates. He fought for universal health care, election reform, farmworker rights, living wage laws and against the death penalty and abortion restrictions.

His forum was often electoral politics, where he challenged Republicans and Democrats alike.

He ran for California governor in 2002, 2003 and 2006, only once breaking past the mark of 5 percent of the vote in grassroots campaigns in which he was vastly outspent by his Democratic and Republican rivals. He once told a reporter that he never expected to win, but wanted to help elevate the Greens to the mainstream political stage.

Mr. Camejo earned his living as a financier and helped start an investment firm, Progressive Management Asset Inc. in Oakland. Clients can arrange their portfolios so that their investments, for example, are not linked to animal testing, weapons or sweatshop labor.

He created the first environmentally screened fund - the Eco-Logical Trust - for a major Wall Street

firm, Merrill Lynch. He also founded the Council for Responsible Public Investments and wrote the book, "The SRI Advantage: Why Socially Responsible Investing Has Outperformed Financially."

Peter Miguel Camejo was born on New Year's Eve 1939 at a hospital in Queens, N.Y., where his mother had flown from Venezuela to use the American health care system and to give her son dual U.S.-Venezuelan citizenship. He spent the first part of his life in his parents' homeland. He moved to New York at age 7 with his mother when his parents divorced but spent summers in Latin America. He said the poverty he saw as a youth in Venezuela drove his passion for social and economic justice.

After graduating from high school with a perfect score on his math SAT, he studied mathematics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and later transferred to UC Berkeley. He never earned a degree.

Matt Gonzalez, a former San Francisco supervisor who is running for vice president with Nader as an independent, said that Mr. Camejo once told him that when he interviewed for his job at Merrill Lynch, "the only thing that was true on my resume was my name and phone number."

Gonzalez said Mr. Camejo was a success at Merrill Lynch, but was pushed out after the firm found out that one of its star employees had been arrested for protesting and had run for president as a socialist. Gonzalez said his friend continued to be a pioneer in the socially responsible investment movement and made a political mark, even though he did not win in any state or national election.

In the days leading to his death, Mr. Camejo completed his autobiography.

"We will all be able to get a vivid sense of the great measure of Peter Camejo as a sentinel force for civil rights and civil liberties, and expander of democracy. His lifework will inspire the political and economic future for a long time," Nader said.

He is survived by his wife, Morella Camejo; stepdaughter Alexandra Baquera of San Diego; stepson Victor Baquera of Folsom; brothers Antonio and Daniel Camejo and Danny Ratner.

Details for a memorial service will be announced.

E-mail Rachel Gordon at [rgordon@sfchronicle.com](mailto:rgordon@sfchronicle.com).

*\* This article appeared on page B - 1 of the San Francisco Chronicle*

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## Footnotes

[1] See: [Reflections on Peter Camejo \(1939-2008\)](#)

[2] See: [Peter Camejo, Candidate And Activist, Passes Away](#)