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# U.S.-backed referendum fails Venezuelan masses vote to advance revolution

By Vannia Lara

The president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, has won another battle against imperialism.

The Venezuelan people have once again defended their Bolivarian Revolution and their president, voting in the referendum in unprecedented numbers.

Elections in Latin America, and especially in Venezuela, have generally turned out a very low percentage of the voting-age population. The flow of people going to the polls this time, however, was double that of the year 2000. Out of 14,037,900 registered voters, nearly two-thirds participated in the referendum.

A decisive 4,917,279, or 57.9 percent of those voting, said "NO" to recalling Chávez. Despite a media almost totally in the hands of the opposition, only 42.2 percent voted "SI" to withdraw the leader

from office. The recall attempt failed.

Chávez characterized the vote as a victory for all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

At 3 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 15, people all over Venezuela had been awakened by revolutionary music summoning them to the polls.

Once there, they had a long wait. Incredibly long lines started forming at around 4 a.m. The average wait was seven hours, but a large number lined up for 12 hours. Nevertheless, both the opposition and the Bolivarians felt it important to be there—the opposition because this referendum meant they would either continue to lose their undeserved political, economic and social privileges or would regain them, and the Bolivarians because of something even more important and harder to achieve: a decision on whether they would continue to move forward in their struggle to be the possessors of their

country and their future.

The opposition to Chávez's government is led by members of the wealthiest class in Venezuela. It is understandable why they don't want Chávez to stay in office. Their power, wealth and influence are decreasing considerably. The recall referendum ended up confirming the Bolivarian Government and was a historic, extraordinary event for the whole world.

The two most important foreign observers of the referendum were the general secretary of the Organization of American States, Cesar Gaviria, and former U.S. president Jimmy Carter. They confirmed that the "quick counts" conducted by their organizations gave the same results as those made public by Venezuela's National Electoral Council.

Still, the opposition refuses to accept

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Anti-war activists confront George W. Bush at Santa Monica airport, Aug. 12.

WW PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA



# Murray Kaufmann

## He created a space for political discourse

By Deirdre Griswold  
New York

Murray Kaufmann's apartment was always a busy place. On a shady side street not far from Manhattan's Museum of Natural History, it was a popular gathering spot for a lot of people interested in discussing progressive political ideas and strategies for workers.

At a memorial dinner on Aug. 14, veterans of his coffee klatches praised Kaufmann, a retired teacher and union activist who died on July 28 at the age of 88. They cited his activism—he walked picket lines, passed out literature and attended meetings, even after health problems left him requiring assistance. And they lauded his generosity in providing a comfortable space for discussions, which often turned into serious but cordial debates reflective of differing political currents in the left movement.

Many of the old-timers present at the dinner could remember the days when such interchanges among leftists were next to impossible. Murray lived through those times with his optimism and ability to talk to everyone intact.

Murray used his apartment as a recruiting tool to win people to the struggle for socialism. Before he died, he had planned to put up 10 out-of-towners who were coming to New York for the protests at the Republican National Convention—four in beds and six on the floor. Along with their accommodations they could have expected plenty of discussion about what's wrong with the system and how we have to build a movement to end capitalism.

Murray was a man with a very sweet temperament who engaged everyone he came across. At a typical gathering at his apartment, there would be political activists, neighbors, a care-giver and people who had first met him when

they were hired to fix a door or deliver a package. It was during just such a gathering that he suddenly collapsed from a heart attack and died.

This writer spoke at one of Murray's gatherings a year ago, at his request, on the topic of why progressives should not surrender their independence by giving in to the "anybody but Bush" pressures. While a majority of those present agreed with this view, a lively but respectful pro-and-con discussion took place before the meeting shifted to the dining area and coffee and sandwiches provided by Murray.

Murray often provoked discussion with an impish directness that older people are more likely to get away with. He was particularly critical of conservative leaders in the Teachers' Union he belonged to.

The memorial dinner for Murray Kaufmann was organized almost single-handedly by his long-time friend Aaron Moss, 94, who himself has defeated the odds and continues his political activism into a ripe old age. Moss emceed the event, attended by 60 people at the Ukrainian Restaurant on Manhattan's Lower East Side—a location steeped in the traditions of left-wing immigrants from Eastern Europe who began pouring into the U.S. almost a century ago.

A member of the Workers World Supporter Program who frequently attended party meetings, Murray Kaufmann's broad smile and confidence in the outcome of today's epic struggles for a better world will be sorely missed. □



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#### NEW YORK

#### Fri., Aug. 20

Workers World Party meeting: Victory in Venezuela: Hear special guest speaker, Laila Tajeldene, from Venezuelan Mission to the UN. Program will also include updates on the week of resistance against the Republican Convention. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

#### Fri., Aug. 27

Workers World Party meeting: Panel of international guest speakers on building solidarity against imperialism. Program will also include regional

organizer for Oct. 17 Million Worker March. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

#### Mon., Aug. 30

Meet the Workers World Party candidates during RNC protests. Reception following Still We Rise march. 6:30-8 p.m. At 55 W. 17 St., 5th floor, Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

#### Sat., Sept. 18

Rally for socialist candidates John Parker, Teresa Gutierrez and Leilani Dowell. 2 p.m. at P.S. 41, 116 W. 11 St., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

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## As global economy shrinks

# Divisions deepen among imperialists

By Milt Neidenberg

As the U.S. economy chills, will the global markets catch a cold?

The sneezing has already begun. Even before the Federal Reserve Board raised the interest rate 25 points to 1.50 percent, factories worldwide cut output in June, raising doubts about the durability of the global economic recovery.

The U.S. economy shrunk .03 percent in June. In China, 12-month output growth slowed to 16 percent from 17 percent reported in May. For Japan, which depends on exports to those countries for economic growth, the drop from an annual rate of 6.6 percent to 1.7 percent for the second quarter shocked global investors, economists and policy makers.

The German economy, the largest in Europe, suffered a loss of 1.9 percent, while Britain dropped .03 percent and Italy .07 percent. Including the U.S. and Japan, these five countries account for nearly 60 percent of world economic output.

In Asia, industrial output fell by 3.4 percent in Singapore, 2 percent in South Korea and 2.5 percent in Taiwan. (Wall Street Journal, Aug. 10)

The downturn shows how inextricably capitalist economies are tied to each other in the global economy. It bares the false symmetry fabricated by the major capitalist powers that international rules and regulations—designed by the World Trade Organization—can maintain a stable and balanced state of economic trade and relationships.

According to the Aug. 14 New York Times: “The United States trade deficit ballooned in June to a record \$55.8 billion as imports of crude oil surged and slowing growth in Japan and Europe curbed export demand. ... U.S. exports had the biggest decline since September 2000, and ... rising energy prices led to the weakest pace of consumer spending since 2001, the Commerce Department reported.

“A senior economist at Lehman Brothers summed up the growing crisis, ‘The widening gap suggests that demand is being met from foreign rather than domestic production and employment.’”

As all this sinks in, stock markets worldwide have slumped. Some seasoned Wall Street analysts have warned that the bull market that began 19 months ago is in the process of topping out.

Recently, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a prestigious international think tank, has been signaling a slowdown in industrial-output growth since February. (Wall Street Journal, Aug. 10)

### Role of OECD

The OECD comprises 30 of the richest capitalist countries, all sharing a commitment to a capitalist market economy. It has relationships with some 70 other countries and non-governmental organizations, and unlike the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which dispense billions of dollars to prop up the imperialist markets, the OECD of necessity must be more objective than the governments it represents.

The OECD was formed in 1961, replacing an earlier formation named the Organization for European Economic Co-ordination that was instrumental in the reconstruction of Europe following World War II. It worked closely with the U.S., bankroller of the Marshall Plan to resuscitate capitalist Europe, when the U.S. was unquestionably the dominant global

power. Currently the U.S. provides 25 percent of its total budget.

The OECD produces internationally agreed-upon instruments, decisions and recommendations to promote rules in areas where multilateral agreements are necessary for individual countries to make progress in the global economy. Some of these agreements are binding on the parties.

The slowdown will make it more difficult for the OECD to coordinate these objectives. Each capitalist country will desperately seek to implement new rules and regulations to save itself from a growing global crisis. As the world economy shrinks, alliances and blocs will form to hold onto a share of the booty.

Bitter rivalries had already surfaced when U.S. imperialism, with the support of Britain, invaded Iraq in 2003. And opposition to the U.S. drive to seize the oil and dominate the Middle East grew, especially from the French and German imperialists.

In Europe, exports to countries outside the euro area account for 20 percent of the gross domestic product of the 12-nation euro zone. They will have to strengthen trade agreements among their members and build new ones to offset the shrinking U.S. economy. Japanese and East Asian trade agreements with China are growing. And Latin America, led by Brazil, is forming its own trading bloc. Africa is emerging as the key to the oil crisis.

In this unfavorable climate, global investors are indecisive. Overproduction has glutted world markets as production

of goods and services exceeds demand. Add soaring oil prices, rising interest rates and geopolitical instability due to the heroic resistance by the Iraqi people, and it's official: The global stock markets, barometer of future economic growth, are volatile and mired in uncertainty.

### Working-class strategy needed

How long will the U.S. superpower tolerate the growing unfavorable balance of trade, compounded by huge budget deficits, without retaliating against its imperialist partners? Is its power diminishing, pressured by contradictions?

Will cries of economic protectionism raise barriers to the imperialist “free trade” that has been a boon to U.S. global investors, bankers and Corporate America? If each capitalist country doesn't get its share of the world markets, will they seek relief in reactionary cries of “Buy American,” “Buy European Union” or “Buy Japanese”? Jingoist, nationalist and patriotic tendencies will grow if the global crisis continues unabated. This development will take time since the U.S. will do all in its power to hold onto its “free trade” booty through economic, political, and, if necessary, military intervention, no matter who wins the White House.

Layoffs, cutbacks in wages, benefits and social services, and increased productivity and speedups—that's the capitalist cure for the economic crisis.

The working class and the oppressed nationalities can't buy back the products they produce, and the scourge of inflation

aggravates their deteriorating conditions. It's called stagflation and it's a Federal Reserve Board nightmare.

Armies of unemployed are growing out of the global crisis. There's double-digit unemployment in the European Union—and 43 percent of the unemployed have been out of work for at least a year. In the U.S. the number of jobless, those looking for work, and those too discouraged to look exceed 11 million. Over 18 percent of teenagers, primarily youths of color, are unemployed.

Even if there is a short upward tick in the U.S. economy, it is expected that George W. Bush will be the first president since depression-era Herbert Hoover to end his term with a net job loss.

The dramatic restructuring that has taken place within the capitalist countries under the whip of the scientific-technological revolution and private ownership of the means of production has cost millions of jobs.

How will the workers and the oppressed nationalities respond? A first step in a working-class solution would be to get people back to work and guarantee an income to all who remain jobless.

While divisions break out among the capitalist powers, the perspective for international working class solidarity will grow. The time is ripe for the kind of worldwide movement that brought hundreds of thousands of workers into the streets over a century ago to fight for the eight-hour day. □

## Long Island's unemployed want jobs, not war

By Heather Cottin  
Freeport, N.Y.

Long Island's unemployment rate is low compared to other states. But that's news to people trying to find work at the New York State Department of Labor unemployment office here.

Latisha, 28, lost an administrative assistant job two months ago and has found no other work since. “I know too many people who can't find work on Long Island,” she told Workers World. “People with experience. For minorities it is much more difficult, but everybody is affected now. I can only find part-time work. This system—it's not for everyone. They try to portray it as if it's for all people but that's just not the truth.”

Two workers stood talking outside the unemployment office. The men, who didn't want to be identified, spoke about non-union hospitals all over the island that are laying off workers. “They make people who stay work harder, longer hours,” said one. “Companies are really just benefiting themselves. They are cutting workers, cutting corners, making it hard for people to receive unemployment even if they are laid off.”

“Nurses are forced to work 12-hour shifts, seven days in a row,” said the other. “And there is a definite ‘Black line’ that prevents people of color from advancing. I trained this young white guy and then he became my supervisor.”

André is 21 years old. He was hoping for a job placement but left the Department of Labor office discouraged. “I got laid off

a few months ago,” André said. “It feels crazy, not working. I've been working since I was 14 years old.” He lost a job as a security guard making \$12 an hour with benefits. “They laid me off and put in two part-timers at \$7 an hour with no benefits,” he said, “and that is the story for everyone I know in Hempstead.” He shook his head as a woman with four young children walked into the unemployment office. “It's really hard if you have a family. The people I know are having a rough time finding work. The only jobs are at Wal-Mart, but that's minimum wage and no benefits.”

Racism plays a big part in the job search, he said, but companies on Long Island aren't hiring anyone full time.

Age is a problem, too. Carole, 57, from Lindenhurst is a computer specialist who was laid off to make way for a younger person willing to take lower pay. “I have been looking for five months. They see me and tell me the job is taken. After I applied to a company but was turned down, my son got the job. And I was the one who trained him for it! But these companies know young people move on, so they are willing to hire them and either wait for them to leave or lay them off—when they should be raising their salaries.”

Men and women, young and old, Black, Latino and white sat in rows at the unemployment office, waiting for some good news, hoping for a lead. Zita, a senior human resources administrator from Baldwin, took a pay cut in April and then was “downsized” in July. “A college degree is the same as a high school degree,” she said. “It doesn't help, because all the com-

panies are downsizing and outsourcing. All the jobs out there are for ‘temps.’ I have a home and kids in college. I will do anything, even take a pay cut, but there's no work out there.”

As a Department of Labor TV infomercial intoned, “Finding a job is a full-time job,” Wendell from Valley Stream stepped up to the window to ask about the possibility of getting retraining. He had an impressive résumé, a political science degree from City College, 20 years of experience working as a researcher for well-known law firms.

“No, we don't pay for retraining, we only give you six months of unemployment insurance,” the woman behind the counter said. “There's no money for extensions or education.”

Wendell walked away from the desk. “Maybe the money is in Iraq,” he wondered. “Maybe it is going to Halliburton. Maybe to military contractors. I have a degree in political science. I know what is going on.” He's worried about paying his mortgage, about getting another job, about his two children.

Carol C., an electrician with IBEW Local 25, has been doing odd jobs for her friends. “The past two summers there has been a lot of unemployment among the members of my union. Winters are usually slow, and summers you work. It's in the summers when schools and offices do their renovations. But now, there isn't any money for schools or county offices because it's all going to the war. I am unemployed, and with winter coming I am

*Continued on page 8*

## LOS ANGELES

# UNITE HERE takes on hotel bosses

By Sako Sefiani  
Los Angeles

On Aug. 13, an estimated 2,000 people staged a militant, spirited demonstration in downtown Los Angeles to demand better wages and benefits for cooks, housekeepers and other hotel workers.

During the protest, demonstrators blocked traffic in the middle of a busy intersection next to some of the most prestigious hotels. Union staffers rolled 20 beds into an intersection so a housekeeper could demonstrate the strain of her daily chores while a speaker described some of the tasks, totaling 100 per room.

Afterward, 45 people, including hotel workers, some in work uniform, along with clergy and other union supporters sat down in the center of the intersection.

Los Angeles Police Department cops, who had cordoned off several blocks, stood by in riot gear. Then a platoon moved in to separate the 45 people sitting in from their mostly Latina supporters who were chanting: "No justice, no peace," "Si, se puede" (Yes we can) and "El pueblo unido hamas sera vencido" (The people united will never be defeated).

The police handcuffed the sitters and put them into LAPD buses. They charged them with misdemeanors, and later released them the same day.

A contract between nine Los Angeles-area hotels and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees union, representing 4,000 employees, expired June 1. Talks on a new agreement stalled in July.

Among the issues in dispute are wages, benefits, pensions and the contract expi-

ration date.

The Hotel Employers Council, which represents the hotels, insists on a five-year agreement. The union has proposed a two-year deal to align the expiration date with that of agreements covering hotel employees in 10 major cities. This could bolster the union's bargaining power in future contract talks.

How do you negotiate with multinational corporations? "We have to unite with other workers in other cities," explains Maria Elena Durazo, Local 11 president in Los Angeles and vice-president of the national union.

In another bold move that will strengthen labor, the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees, with 260,000 members, and the Union of Needletrades Industrial and Textile Employees—UNITE—representing 180,000 workers, merged on July 8.

The new 440,000-member union is called UNITE HERE.

"Together we'll be better able to organize at a scale that hasn't been seen since the 1930s and better able to raise standards in our industries," declared a UNITE HERE statement.

In addition to the Aug. 13 protest, UNITE HERE had organized a strike earlier this month in San Diego. There was a noisy protest inside the Coronado, one of the city's premier beach resort hotels. Several people were arrested in that action.

Both UNITE and HERE have a history of activism.

UNITE was itself created in a merger—between the Amalgamated Clothing and



Some 2,000 protesters blocked traffic in Los Angeles Aug. 13.

Textile Workers Union and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Both unions had rich traditions of struggle, from organizing immigrant garment workers in the Northeast in the early 20th century to unionizing Southern workers, for example at J.P. Stevens, in the 1970s. The latter struggle was fictionalized in the Oscar-winning film "Norma Rae."

UNITE also created the "Behind the Label" campaign as part of its efforts in the global anti-sweatshop movement.

HERE has brought union rights to organized clerical, technical and maintenance workers at Yale University, restaurant workers in New York, and, in some of the most successful recent organizing, casino and resort workers in Las Vegas. In 2003 the union organized the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, a historic national event that mobilized tens of thou-

sands of immigrant workers and their allies to educate the U.S. population about immigrant workers' contributions and struggles in the United States.

In 2002, UNITE formed a partnership with the NAACP to bring the environmental and labor movements together.

During the past five years, UNITE and HERE have organized more than 100,000 new members. Leaders of UNITE HERE say more than half the new union's national budget will go toward organizing the unorganized.

In California, UNITE HERE has also been working together with SMART—Santa Monicans Allied for Responsible Tourism—to win a living wage ordinance in Santa Monica. Beth Leder-Pack, co-founder of SMART, was in attendance at the Aug. 13 demonstration in Los Angeles. □

## Mt. Clemens General Hospital

# Nurses strong on their picket line

By Lucy Seefried  
Detroit

It is Aug. 11, an overcast day two on strike as nurses, their families and friends picket outside the ever-growing metropolitan hospital of Detroit, Mount Clemens General.

Altogether the nurses of Mount Clemens General have been working without a contract for five months. Amidst the national crisis of nursing shortage, and the patient-nurse ratio rising all over, the nurses of MCGH went on strike the morning of Aug. 9. Patient care is their number-one concern.

Beginning in November 2003, claiming dire financial stress, the hospital began laying off employees and shutting down many of its community-service organizations that serviced low-income residents in the area. A hiring freeze was in effect for all of November and December that year, and the nursing staff was cut considerably. More than 100 employees were laid off. Many more resigned out of frustration.

As the number of MCGH employees began to dwindle, nurses' work load increased. They lost much assistance that was provided by nurses' aides and unit secretaries. Their patient load increased.

The patients' needs were not being met, which also put the nurses' professional licenses on the line. The nurses were left with no other option; they simply could not afford to work without adequate

staffing and an appropriate number of nurses to take care of patients. The nurses filed multiple grievances beginning in early January of this year. The nurses asked for a modest nurse-patient ratio and that the work load be contained. The response was "summary dismissal"—in other words, no action on the hospital's part.

Before the nurses took their battle to the picket lines, the hospital offered a poor contract option: further staff cuts, forcible cross training of the nursing staff to work on multiple units, a wage increase that nullified cost sharing, no increase in pension, and a take-back of 32 hours in sick and vacation time. Ninety-seven percent of the nurses voted down the proposed

contract. And in the end, 92 percent voted to strike.

While the hospital management justifies their position by pointing to a loss of \$30 million, they have continued building and expansion plans that to date have cost \$82 million. Within six years the hospital has built a brand new multi-million-dollar atrium, parking structure and emergency center. Construction has begun on a new surgical wing and a high-tech cancer center.

MCGH bosses refuse to discuss the matter. The nurses, says Sandra Sulflow, vice president of the MCGH RN Unit, RN Staff Council of Office and Professional Employees Local 40, feel "betrayed, aban-

doned, and disrespected."

Some of the nurses on the picket line are single mothers supporting their families. This is their only income.

And if the hospital bosses have their way, who else is going to suffer besides those who need the care the most?

*Seefried was laid off from MCGH during the program cuts in 2003.*

*Editor's note: On Aug. 15 the union leadership put management's latest offer to the members, recommending a "no" vote. Although the hospital threatened to hire permanent replacements after the strike began, the nurses still voted "no" by a three-to-one margin.*

## Coming to a 'Farmer Jack' store near you!

Farm workers on the picket line chanted, "Don't spend a nickel on a Mt. Olive pickle." Members of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee and their Auto Workers supporters told the store manager Detroit workers won't shop where anti-worker products are sold.

North Carolina farm workers who harvest the cucumbers for Mt. Olive Pickles are paid \$2.40 per hundred pounds while unionized workers in Michigan and Ohio earn \$6.10 per hundred pounds. Pesticides, housing, sanitation, child care and education are all critical issues for the Mt. Olive workers.



More information on the Mt. Olive boycott and how you can help is available at [www.floc.com](http://www.floc.com). In Michigan, join the rotating Friday noon-hour informational picket lines at Farmer Jack.

## Health insurance beef

Commuters on busy Gratiot Avenue and Vernor can't miss the striking Chicago Beef workers' picket line. Food and Commercial Workers Local 876 members walked off their jobs Aug. 3 over rising co-pays on their health insurance.

The Michigan Citizen reported that Rick Blocker, executive to the president of Local 876, said, "A lot of companies are giving raises which are then offset by the cost of health insurance so at the end of the contract you're actually losing money instead of gaining."

—Stories and photo by Cheryl LaBash



## LOS ANGELES

# ILWU leader builds support for Million Worker March

By John Parker  
Los Angeles

On Aug. 13, the International Action Center held a Los Angeles forum on the Million Worker March. The gathering featured honored guest Clarence Thomas, International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 executive board member and former secretary-treasurer, and Alameda County Central Labor Council member.

Members of several unions, including the United Teachers of Los Angeles, Communication Workers and Service Employees, attended the meeting. Representatives also came from community organizations including Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates, Minjok/Tongshin.com (news resource and activist organization of the Korean community), Global Women's Strike and Veterans for Peace.

Magda Madrigal of the IAC, who chaired the meeting, is playing a leading role in organizing for Oct. 15-16 immigrant-rights marches in Los Angeles. She explained the Million Worker March's importance for the progressive movement. And she congratulated Thomas for leading the effort.

Thomas framed the MWM's intentions within the historic tradition of Harry

Bridges, founder of the ILWU. It was Bridges who said in the 1930s, during the tumultuous struggles for basic union rights, that "the main issue is the right of labor to organize."

Thomas is leading a battle for the right of labor to organize politically and independent of the two ruling-class parties. The MWM exposes that there is indeed a ruling-class war against workers. Thomas is bringing these class antagonisms to light by pushing demands that the candidates of the two parties of capital—John Kerry and George W. Bush—refuse to address.

Thomas mentioned a few of these demands feared by the ruling class. He called for national health care, a living wage, guaranteed pensions, cancellation of all corporate "free trade" agreements like NAFTA, amnesty for all undocumented workers—and slashing the military budget and ending the U.S. war and occupation of Iraq now.

Thomas spoke of his recent trip to Iraq. He witnessed the devastation to civilians, hospitals and the labor movement there. Saying the war in Iraq must be opposed, he asked, "How could I return to Iraq and talk to the people there if I supported continuing the war?"

He said workers and progressives here must stand in solidarity with workers

everywhere.

Johnnie Stevens, from the International Action Center national office in New York and People's Video Network, spoke about the connections between the MWM and the struggle against U.S. terror and occupation in Haiti.

Juan Jose Gutierrez of Latino Movement USA addressed the most recent attacks on immigrant workers and how the MWM's demands coincide with the struggle of the undocumented. He is one of those building for the Oct. 15-16 demonstrations, calling for justice for immigrants and an end to terrorist Immigration and Naturalization Service raids.

Gutierrez endorsed the MWM. After he spoke, many in the audience enthusiastically suggested ways to build for the Oct. 15-17 events simultaneously, to increase participation in both demonstrations and strengthen solidarity in Los Angeles.

Maggie Vascassenno of the IAC addressed the current intensifying U.S. threats against the people of Iraq. She went over the atrocities occurring in Najaf and Kut. She urged everyone to attend the Aug. 26 Iraq War Crimes Tribunal in New York before the Republican National Convention to put the Bush administration and accomplices on trial for war crimes.

## Million Worker March and Haiti

The MWM demands that Clarence Thomas referred to are resonating loudly amongst workers and community activists alike. He attended an Aug. 14 afternoon planning session at the IAC office, along with representatives of the Peace and Freedom Party in Southern California, United Teachers of Los Angeles, Communication Workers, National Lawyers Guild, Latino Movement USA, Veterans for Peace and ANSWER Los Angeles.

That evening, the theme of solidarity for the MWM extended to a forum on Haiti in

South Central Los Angeles. This forum was hosted by Black organizations including the Haiti Solidarity Coalition.

Johnnie Stevens spoke about the parallels between U.S. imperialism's attack on Africa and Central and Latin America, and their connections to the Haitian people's struggle for self-determination. He said that all these developments affect working and poor people here, and helped motivate people to answer the call for a Million Worker March.

Clarence Thomas commented on the need for people to become organizers and participants in the MWM to help build awareness and fight back on issues like U.S. crimes against Haiti.

On Aug. 15, Thomas held meetings with South Central church leaders including the Rev. Andrew-Gaither of Faith United Methodist Church and the Rev. Richard Byrd of KRST Unity Center for African Spirituality. At KRST Unity, Thomas addressed the packed church from the pulpit about the MWM. Church members enthusiastically endorsed his effort with applause and Byrd incorporated Thomas' message into his sermon. About one-third of those present signed up to become MWM organizers.

By 1936 the guiding slogan of the Longshore Workers was: "An injury to one is an injury to all." This principle of solidarity led the West Coast maritime unions' campaign to spread unionization to all workers. This legacy is also loud and clear as a theme for the Million Worker March.

Thus, like Harry Bridges, Clarence Thomas is building the type of unity and leadership in the labor movement that will be a precursor to historic revolutionary change in this country and around the world.

*John Parker helped to organize the Aug. 13-15 meetings on the MWM and Haiti.* □

## Conference exposes crimes of prison system

By Lou Paulsen  
Chicago

Activists, including former prisoners, gathered in Chicago on Aug. 13-15 to expose the crimes of the U.S. prison-industrial complex. The third national Prison Abolition Conference, organized by Chicago Anarchist Black Cross, featured a demonstration at Cook County Jail, workshops, and an impressive lineup of speakers.

Aaron Patterson, an African-American activist and exonerated death row inmate, was scheduled to be a featured speaker—but was being held in solitary confinement in a federal lockup. Patterson was arrested on Aug. 5 on drug and gun charges.

Supporters say that his arrest is a racist frame-up intended to derail his damage lawsuit against the Chicago police for torturing him and framing him for the murders of an elderly couple in 1986.

Despite testimony from ministers and community activists that Patterson has been an "asset to the community" since Gov. George Ryan pardoned him in January 2003, Judge Morton Denlow, relying entirely on the government's assertions, has ordered him held without bail.

Pam Africa and Ramona Africa, of the MOVE organization and the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, called on participants to work to free Patterson and all the victims of Chicago Police Lt. Jon Burge. Burge has sent as many as 100 African-American men to prison by torturing false confessions out of them.

"When Aaron got out, he didn't just say, 'I'm out, that's cool,'" said Pam Africa. "He understood that the DA and the cops must



Aaron Patterson

be exposed. We must have massive demonstrations at the prison and the homes of the judge and the DA, in the neighborhoods where they're seen as acceptable."

She also called for unity in demanding Mumia Abu-Jamal's freedom from Pennsylvania's death row. And Africa encouraged people to organize for the Million Worker March on Washington, set for Oct. 17.

Kathy Kelly of Voices in the Wilderness spoke movingly of the women prisoners she had met while serving a three-month federal sentence in Pekin, Ill., for participating in an anti-war demonstration. The median sentence at this minimum-security women's prison is over eight years, mostly for first-time non-violent offenses.

"Why are these women kept there, away from their children?" she asked. "They aren't dangerous; the only fence there is around the visitors' area."

The women are used as a labor force for the adjoining male high-security prison, where the median sentence is 27 years and the prisoners are locked up almost continuously. Products of the prison industries include parts for military personnel carriers and cages used for deporting immigrants.

Robert "King" Wilkerson of the Angola Three described how he joined the Black Panther Party in the Louisiana prisons in 1971, was framed for murder and held for 29 years in solitary confinement. Wilkerson was exonerated in 2001, but Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace are still in the Angola, La., penitentiary, after being convicted in the killing of a guard. □

## Maryland AFSCME workers endorse

# MWM gathers steam

By Steven Ceci  
Baltimore

Maryland State AFSCME Council 92 has endorsed the Million Worker March, set for Oct. 17 in Washington, D.C.

The council represents close to 30,000 state workers. The resolution was reportedly passed overwhelmingly. It had been prompted by a similar resolution passed by AFSCME Area 2, which represents Baltimore metropolitan workers and four other Maryland counties, and AFSCME Local 1072.

Andre Powell, a Local 112 Executive Board member who is helping to organize a subcommittee to plan for buses and mobilize workers, said: "The workers we represent are underpaid and have been battling privatization, budget cuts and harassment on the job. Some state workers are paid so little that they actually qualify for food stamps. The community too has had to suffer from cutbacks in services."

Powell continued: "The Million Worker March is long overdue. As workers we need to speak in our own name whether we are organized, unorganized, employed or unemployed. We see this march as the

beginning of a movement."

Locals, districts and councils of AFSCME—the State, County and Municipal Employees—are becoming an important part of the Oct. 17 Million Worker March. AFSCME District Council 1707 President Brenda Stokely in New York City was one of the first and earliest voices to support and organize for the march. She has energized and helped win the support of AFSCME locals around the country.

Pam Parker, outreach coordinator for the Baltimore and Washington, D.C., MWM region, reports: "We have been fielding calls from the Washington, D.C., community. Last night, we spoke with a union member of AFGE-AFSCME who had been disabled on the job. She called us because she represents a group of disabled workers from the District of Columbia who are fighting for compensation for their injuries, wanting to know how she could support the effort."

Parker adds, "Washington, D.C., trade unionists, community and anti-war activists will not only be welcoming marchers, we plan to make the Washington, D.C., community a very important part of this mobilization." □

**Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row**

## Voting for empire

For millions of people, there exists in their minds, in their hearts a hunger for change.

That hunger is becoming a driving force in the upcoming elections, and is being expressed in a way that can best be summed up: "Anybody But Bush."

President Bush's cowboy-style diplomacy, and the slick way he promised to govern one way only to actually govern another, has grated on people, until many just want to see him quietly pass into retirement. Moreover, the nature of the U.S. economy, with its growing outsourcing and capital flight abroad, also plays into this growing trend.

I find it utterly understandable, and even quite a good thing, but it has its problems.

What that means in Summer 2004 is an embrace of Massachusetts Sen. John F. Kerry, the Democratic nominee for U.S. president.

But Kerry, no matter his positive features or his faults, isn't the real reason why Democrats gathered in rapture in Boston recently. They applauded him because they hunger for the political demise of George W. Bush.

One of Kerry's selling points is his plan to appeal to Europe to give a hand to the American colonial project in Iraq, instead of the cold shoulder which the Bush regime has received since the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

But plans are one thing; obstacles, another. Nations don't deal with other nations because they like or dislike a nation's leader. They deal with others based on the guiding light of self-interest. As the British Viscount Palmerston (H.J. Temple, 1784-1865) intoned in the British House of Commons in 1848: "We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and these interests, it is our duty to follow."

When, or if, a President Kerry speaks softly and perhaps in French, to Europeans, seeking an infusion of European troops into the rolling ruins of a burning Iraq, he will hear a polite yet firm response: "Pardon! Monsieur Kerry—mais non!" ("Sorry, Mr. Kerry—but no!")

That's because few European leaders can withstand the floods of popular discontent that will accompany the use of their nation's troops in America's imperial exercise in Iraq.

They see it as America's problem—not theirs—and they will be hard-pressed to make it theirs.

Ultimately, what does it matter if Americans change the face of international policies, when it's the same basic policy?

While both France and Germany will no doubt lust for entree into the Iraqi oil fields, they cannot ignore the lessons of Spain and Britain.

Tony Blair's Labor Party is riding low these days, and Brits are not keen to continue sending their fathers and sons to Iraq. It's clear that Blair can't buy a new term.

Kerry's promise to "stay the course" in Iraq, one drawn for him by neocons from the oil-funded think tanks in Washington, does not endear him to many Democrats, who want to see Iraq off their front pages.

While Kerry's "stay the course" is an attempt to attract a thin slice of undecided, independent voters to his card, he also runs the risk of alienating a growing anti-war segment that may choose to sit out the election, feeling it really makes no difference.

What the nation needs is not a new face, but a new policy—an anti-imperialist policy.

It does not have that option before it in either of the two corporate parties.

If that deep, unsatisfied yearning continues to grow, it can only feed even more alienation from the established political system, and perhaps from the voting process itself.

Or else Kerry will be but another politician, promising peace, yet delivering the horrors and loss of war. □



# War Crimes Tribunal comes at crucial time

By Peter Gilbert  
New York

On Aug. 26, leaders of the global anti-war movement, expert witnesses, GI resisters and activists will gather in New York to consider overwhelming evidence of the criminal atrocities committed by the Bush administration against Iraq and the people of the world.

The Iraq War Crimes Tribunal, inspired by the World Tribunal on Iraq that has held sessions in many countries, comes at the beginning of a week of demonstrations against the Republican National Convention. They send a message to the resistance here and across the globe that it is the obligation of people here in the U.S. to end this nightmare. Tribunal testimony will identify that only the resistance in Iraq, coupled with mass actions directed against governments that support the occupation, offers any real possibility for stopping it.

The tribunal takes place as the resistance in Iraq is reaching new levels. U.S. troops have failed to pacify any part of the country. The resistance has managed to shell even the U.S. command center in Baghdad's fortified "green zone."

On Aug. 16, a National Conference in Baghdad, the latest attempt of the U.S. and its puppet government led by Iyad Allawi to achieve legitimacy, broke down. In a surprise to the U.S., many of the conference's hand-picked representatives declared support for the resistance and called for an end to the assaults on the people of Najaf. A combination of the heroism of Moqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi army and the overwhelming disaffection of all Iraqis with the occupation has so far prevented U.S. forces from using their weapons of mass destruction to destroy the city and conquer it.

"The tribunal offers an opportunity to explain to the world why the Iraqi people have the right to resist and people here should stand in solidarity with them," says International Action Center co-director Sara Flounders, an organizer of this tribunal. "Both ruling-class parties—Republicans and Democrats—conspire to repress anti-war dissent. The tribunal offers a unique opportunity to show the anti-war movement and the population in general that the war and occupation are criminal and that the Iraqis' right of resistance deserves international mass support."

A series of hearings in the afternoon will show that the Bush administration and all who support them are criminals. Testimony from former UN official Denis Halliday will show how the U.S. planned and prepared over a decade for this crime against peace, as will Hana al Bayaty, an organizer from the BRussels Tribunal that focused on how the U.S. planned the war over many years. The complicity of the Democratic Party and the UN with the Bush administration in these atrocities makes them both co-conspirators in the aggression.

### Eyewitness Baghdad, Falluja

Eyewitnesses will give firsthand accounts of how the Pentagon has targeted Iraqi civilians. Jo Wilding, a British woman, was fired upon while driving an ambulance during the siege of Falluja. Maria Rosa Peñarroya Miranda and Javier Barandiaran gathered interviews with wounded Iraqis during the worst of the missile attacks in Baghdad

in March and April of last year.

International reports about Africa, East Asia and Latin America will show that this aggression follows a pattern of U.S. behavior. Iraq is no exception. John Parker visited Sudan after the Pentagon destroyed a medicine factory with missiles in August 1998. Ben Dupuy will speak for the Haitian movement PPN. Teresa Gutierrez covers Latin American struggles for the International Action Center. Others will speak on Palestine and Iraq.

Global leaders in the anti-imperialist movement will share experiences combating their own countries' participation in the "Coalition of the Willing." These include Manik Mukherjee from the All-India Anti-Imperialist Front, Yong Mi Yang from South Korea, Dennis Brutus of the anti-apartheid movement and others. AFSCME District Council 1707 President Brenda Stokely, ANSWER steering committee member Larry Holmes and others will address resistance here at home, including demands to restore funding for social programs instead of diverting money for racist war and occupation, and the preparation of the Million Worker March in October.

Other hearings will air testimony from previous tribunals around the world. Reporters include: Filipino activist Romeo Capulong, who is an expert on international law and was chief prosecutor at the World Tribunal on Iraq held in Kyoto; Joachim Guillard, a leading analyst and opponent of sanctions and organizer of the German tribunal; and Professor Akira Maeda and others who organized the Japanese tribunal.

There will be hearings focused on the use of

illegal weapons, the sanctions and other crimes against civilians and culture.

GI resisters in contact with the group SNAFU will be speaking, along with families of GIs and representatives from the newly formed Iraq Veterans Against the War. They are expected to urge the anti-war movement to support GIs who refuse illegal orders. Fernando Suarez, whose son Jesus Suarez was one of the first U.S. troops to die in Iraq, will be part of this hearing.

The tribunal will conclude with an evening plenary session where hundreds of participants will hear former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, as chief prosecutor, charge Bush et al. Witnesses will present a concise version of the testimony collected during the hearings and previous tribunals. A more complete list of speakers and panelists can be found on the website [www.PeopleJudgeBush.org](http://www.PeopleJudgeBush.org).

Following the tribunal, participants will execute the verdict by joining the week of resistance to the RNC in the streets of New York. Hundreds of thousands are expected to demonstrate in solidarity with the people of Iraq and the world, saying no to racist war and demanding to bring the troops home now. □



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

## NEW YORK CITY

# Protests gear up

By John Catalinotto  
New York

The Republicans' choice of New York City as their National Convention site is starting to look like a big mistake. The idea that President George W. Bush could be nominated to run for a second four-year term is attracting possibly hundreds of thousands of people who want to put an end to his time in office.

Opponents of the war and of the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Anti-racists. Unionists tired of shrinking wages, persistent unemployment and cuts in social services. AIDS activists demanding better health care. Youth demanding more funds for education. Civil libertarians defending constitutional rights. Environmentalists protesting Bush's compliance with corporate polluters. Lesbian, gay, bi and trans people wanting the right to same-sex marriage. Immigrants

wanting asylum and the right to a union. They'll all be here to confront Bush.

They will do it with mass protest marches, rallies, poetry readings and musical evenings, bike rides, bell ringings and satirical farce.

On Aug. 26, to begin the week of resistance, a war-crimes tribunal organized by the International Action Center will be held from 3-9 p.m. at Martin Luther King Auditorium, 65th Street and Amsterdam Avenue.

Most of the news coverage of the protests has been about the struggle to rally in Central Park, especially after the mass march planned for Aug. 29 passes Madison Square Garden, where the Republican National Convention is set to begin the next day. City authorities have refused to give the organizers of that march, United for Peace and Justice, a permit for the park, and instead want them to lead the marchers

## WWP candidates: Indict Bush for war crimes

# Support Iraqi resistance against U.S. assault on Najaf

The Workers World Party election campaign and our candidates, John Parker for president, Teresa Gutierrez for vice president, and LeiLani Dowell for Congress, condemn the monstrous U.S. assault on the Iraqi city of Najaf and demand an immediate end to the siege that began Aug. 5.

We demand an end to the U.S. offensive and the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all U.S., British and other occupation troops from Iraq. And we join the Iraqi people in demanding the resignation of the puppet regime headed by Interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

U.S. forces are besieging Najaf in an attempt to crush the wing of the Iraqi resistance headed by Moqtada al-Sadr. Shiite Muslims and all Iraqis are justly outraged at the siege of the historic Imam Ali Mosque where Sadr has taken refuge.

The offensive, which has already resulted in many civilian casualties, displays the same ruthless character as the siege of Falluja earlier this year. Many see it as a punishment of Sadr's forces for refusing to support the conference called by the Allawi regime to select an interim national assembly.

On Aug. 15, John F. Burns of the New York Times, reporting from the Baghdad conference, admitted that "the rebel attacks ... have spread to virtually every Sunni and Shiite town." The meeting itself, held under "siege-like conditions" in the U.S.-controlled Green Zone, was "thrown into disorder by delegates staging angry protests against the American-led military operation in the Shiite holy city of Najaf." Knight Ridder reported that 100 delegates walked out in protest.

Allawi's government, handpicked by Washington, has no legitimacy with the Iraqi people. Instead, the population is responding to the U.S. offensive with acts of solidarity for the besieged residents of Najaf and the resistance fighters. This sentiment cuts across all layers of the population, including all religious and secular groups, which are united in opposing the colonial occupation of their country.

Mass protests were held in five cities Aug. 13. This included Falluja, the major-



WW PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA

**ANSWER** protest against George W. Bush, who appeared at a fundraiser held at the Santa Monica airport on Aug. 12.

ity-Sunni city that Reuters calls "a hotbed of resistance." There, crowds chanted, "Long live Sadr, Falluja stands by Najaf against America."

Tens of thousands poured into Najaf during a brief cease-fire to hold a mass demonstration. Thousands more have gone to form a defense shield around the Imam Ali Mosque.

"We are a group of 500 women, many of whom are young students, and we plan to go tonight to Najaf to be part of a large human chain that we will form surrounding the shrine and also Sadr," said Rajaa Khayum of Baghdad. (AFP, Aug. 13)

Al Jazeera reported that 16 of Najaf's 30-member provincial council and a deputy governor resigned in protest over the U.S. attack.

After the U.S. offensive resumed Aug. 15, Iraqi defense ministry officials told Knight Ridder that an entire battalion of Iraqi soldiers and over 100 national guards had thrown down their rifles and quit, refusing to attack fellow Iraqis.

Armed resistance is growing through-

out the country. In the second week of August, clashes were reported in Sadr City, Baghdad, Balad Ruz, Diwaniya, Hillah, Samarra and Amarah, to name a few.

What all of this amounts to is a genuine people's war for the liberation of Iraq from those who would conquer, occupy and rob the country of its resources for profit.

Although the resistance does not yet show the same kind of unified national leadership as the Vietnamese National Liberation Front, it is nonetheless a genuine liberation movement and deserves the support of all anti-war forces, workers and progressive people in the United States.

We declare our unconditional support for the Iraqi people's right to resist the murderous U.S. occupation by any means necessary.

### Indict war criminal Bush

The brutal assault on Najaf is but the latest atrocity committed by the Bush administration, in collaboration with Republican and Democratic party leaders, on behalf of Wall Street, Big Oil and other

sectors of the capitalist ruling class.

We urge the Iraq War Crimes Tribunal, convening in New York City Aug. 26, to hand down a strong indictment of Bush and his collaborators for war crimes—including crimes against peace, targeting civilians, destroying a sovereign regime, sending U.S. soldiers into battle under false pretenses, torturing prisoners, robbing U.S. workers to pay war profiteers, and much more.

The Iraq War Crimes Tribunal kicks off a week of resistance against the Republican National Convention. Tens of thousands of protesters from across the United States will join New Yorkers to protest this celebration of racist war-

mongers. Bush and his backers must have their feet put to the fire for all their crimes against poor and working people at home and abroad, and especially for the criminal war and occupation of Iraq.

We caution those burning with righteous anger against Bush not to fall into the trap of supporting the "lesser evil" presidential candidate, Democratic Sen. John Kerry. He recently declared that he too would have gone to war against Iraq, even though the fraud of "weapons of mass destruction" has been long exposed.

Kerry has vowed to continue the occupation. Like Richard Nixon before him, Kerry's claim to legitimacy with the ruling class is that he could do a better job of conducting their criminal war than the current president.

The Iraqi people are waging an independent mass struggle to drive out the occupation forces. We must follow their example by building the anti-war movement, reaching out to the working class and oppressed people who are increasingly turning against the war, organizing among disaffected military personnel, and building an independent, anti-imperialist struggle to challenge whoever next occupies the White House. □

# to confront Republican Convention

to the West Side Highway, all the way over by the Hudson River.

UFPJ spokespeople on Aug. 10 reopened their demands for rally sites in Central Park. The city refused immediately and, as of Aug. 17, has refused to reconsider.

In a related struggle, the national office of the anti-war ANSWER Coalition and the National Council of Arab Americans filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Manhattan saying that they were unfairly denied a permit for an Aug. 28 rally on Central Park's Great Lawn by the city Department of Parks and Recreation.

On the afternoon of Aug. 14, a group organized by the International Action Center picketed for an hour outside Madison Square Garden, demanding the city allow the rallies to take place in Central Park.

### IAC's 'center of resistance'

From that protest, IAC co-director Sara

Flounders told Workers World that her group would turn its office in Manhattan at 39 West 14th Street, Room 206, into a "center of resistance for the week."

"Thousands are coming to struggle now. We are going to do everything to make it as simple as possible for people to get out to the streets and stay in the streets to take part in all the dozens of protests during the Aug. 26-Sept. 2 days of resistance. In our office we'll have a list of all activities, how to get there, where to eat cheaply, even where to find public rest rooms in midtown. We'll have a list of available housing and will accept offers of housing.

"All this," said Flounders, "will be published as a sort of 'Field Guide' as part of a journal on the Iraq War Crimes Tribunal.

"Most important, we want to make sure that the struggle continues after this week. Our special effort will be to promote the organizing of the Million Worker March

set for Oct. 17 in Washington. We invite everyone to come by the office to get material about this effort, a struggle that can prevent everyone from being sucked into the dead-end of electoral politics," Flounders added.

"On Aug. 29 the gathering site for the mass march is only one block from our office. Thousands of people will pass right by, and we hope many come in to get banners, posters, placards, leaflets and all sorts of material to reach out with a clear position to end the occupation of Iraq and struggle for the working class here at home."

A few of the many activities listed in the "Field Guide" are an Aug. 27 Immigrant Workers Day of Action 4-10 p.m. at St. Mark's Church at 131 E. 10th St.; an Aug. 28 Planned Parenthood March for Women's Lives 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. across the Brooklyn Bridge, assembling at Cadman Plaza in Brooklyn; Still

We Rise march to Madison Square Garden on Aug. 30 at 12 noon, assembling at Union Square; a Sept. 1 Central Labor Council March to Stop Bush at 4 p.m. at 8th Avenue and 30th Street in Manhattan; an Artists & Activists United for Peace March and Rally at 2 p.m. on Sept. 2 at the Harlem State Office Building at 163 W. 125th St. & Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Blvd.; and, on the same day, a Demonstration in Solidarity with the People of Palestine, the Haitian People, and Others Resisting U.S. Occupation, meeting at 5 p.m. at the Israeli Mission to the UN at 43rd Street and 2nd Avenue, organized by national ANSWER.

*Editor's note:* United for Peace and Justice filed a lawsuit in State Supreme Court in Manhattan Aug. 18 seeking an order that would stop the city from refusing the use of Central Park for its rally Aug. 29.



## 1930s USSR:

# Survival with setbacks

By Leslie Feinberg

Male same-sex love was re-criminalized in the Soviet Union in 1933. In 1936, measures were introduced banning abortion and making divorce more difficult to obtain. (Abortion for medical reasons was restored in 1955, and free abortion on demand was re-legalized in 1968.)

Upon seizing state power in October 1917, the Bolsheviks had struck down the tsarist laws against homosexuality and abortion and eased restrictions on divorce. Why, then, this political reversal after more than a decade and a half?

For diehard anti-communists, no explanation of why setbacks occurred in the Soviet Union will convince them that in its more than seven decades of development there was still much worth defending from the point of view of the working class.

But for those who study past revolutions in order to strengthen the modern movement to achieve socialism—a system that will flourish in a planned world economy—a much more thorough examination of this period is essential, and no glib answers should be accepted as good coin.

The seizure of state power by the numerically small Russian working class, allied with the vast peasantry, did not establish socialism. A revolution is not a single act. It is a process.

The state based on this workers' revolution liberated turf on which to build a planned economy which, to be socialist, had to build the economic base of the impoverished, war-torn country, in order to breathe life into the demands of the revolution: peace, bread and land.

Russia was still semi-feudal and semi-colonial—the weakest link in the capitalist chain. Technologically under-developed.

This was the material reality.

People “make their own history,” Karl Marx wrote, “but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.” (“The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte”)

### Cleaning the Augean stable

If all the Bolsheviks had to do was get rid of the dominant ideas of the old exploiting class, ideas which had permeated the population of laborers in the fields and the factories—national chauvinism, anti-Semitism, misogyny, anti-gay and anti-trans attitudes, superstition—the task of cleaning this Augean stable would have been formidable.

But in order to change social ideas, it was necessary to change the material conditions—to raise the productive level in the workers' state. And world imperialism, howling like ravenous wolves at its borders, did everything possible to hamper that historic effort.

Lenin wrote concretely about this in 1919 in relation to women's liberation. “Not a single democratic party in the world, not even the most advanced bourgeois republic, had done in decades so much as a hundredth part of what we did in our very first year in power. We actually razed to the ground the infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality, restricting divorce and surrounding it with disgusting formalities, denying recognition to children born out of wedlock, enforcing a search for their fathers, etc., laws numerous survivals of which, to the shame of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism, are to be found in all civilized countries.”

However, he concluded, “Notwithstanding all the liberating laws that have been passed, woman continues to be a domestic slave, because petty housework crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and to the nursery, and wastes her labor on barbarously unproductive, petty, nerve-wracking, stultifying and crushing drudgery. The real emancipation of women ... will begin only when a mass struggle is started against this petty domestic economy, or rather when it is transformed on a mass scale into large-scale socialist economy.” (“A Great Beginning,” Collected Works, vol. 29, pp. 408-34)

### Herculean tasks

The “dead hand of the past” handed the Russian Revolution three enormous responsibilities. “The new, infant workers' state, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,” wrote Workers World Party founder Sam Marcy, “had thrust upon it three Herculean tasks utterly unprecedented in the entire history of the class struggle.

“It had the duty and obligation to reorganize on a revolutionary basis the left wing of the social democratic movement, put it on a communist basis, and lay the foundation for a new and revolutionary international. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were thus obligated from the start not only to give revolutionary leadership at home but, in a way, to become the general staff of the world revolution which seemed visible on the horizon, especially in Western Europe and later in the East, in China.

“Its second task, no less urgent and intimately connected with it, was for the new workers' state to defend itself against the most barbaric assaults by the united front of the imperialists, from Vladivostok to Murmansk.

“And thirdly, it had to begin to lay socialist economic foundations and raise the living standards of the workers and peasants who had passed through a most horrible period of destruction, civil war

and famine.”

(“The Significance of Euro-communism,” WW, July 11, 1977)

Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik seizure of power, was no utopian. He had no illusions that the capitalist class in Russia, or the enraged imperialists who surrounded the young workers' state, would be won over by “moral suasion” to stop attacking the revolution. In fact, he and other revolutionary leaders did not think the workers' state could survive long without the support of workers and oppressed peoples' around the world rising up in a groundswell of revolution in order to provide material support—globalizing socialism.

In Lenin's report to the Eighth Congress of the Bolshevik Party on March 18, 1919, on behalf of the Central Committee, he said that “it is inconceivable for the Soviet Republic to exist alongside of the imperialist states for any length of time. One or the other must triumph in the end.” (Collected Works, vol. 29, p. 153)

A year earlier, on April 23, 1918, Lenin had explained to the Moscow Soviet, “We are a revolutionary working-class contingent that has advanced to the forefront, not because we are better than other workers, not because the Russian proletariat is superior to the working class of other countries, but solely because we were one of the most backward countries in the world. We shall achieve final victory only when we succeed at last in conclusively smashing international imperialism, which relies on the tremendous strength of its equipment and discipline.

“But we shall achieve victory only together with all the workers of other countries of the whole world. ... Our backwardness has put us in the forefront, and we shall perish unless we are capable of holding out until we receive powerful support from workers who have risen in revolt in other countries.” (Ibid, vol. 27, p. 233)

Something had to give, Marcy stressed. While the result was not the dismantling of the workers' state and its economy, as the imperialists had hoped, some of the

social gains of the early revolution were set back. The most left-wing militants in the Bolshevik Party, if they had not died on the front lines defending the revolution, were being pushed back in an internal struggle. And the population was exhausted by imperialist war and intervention, famine and want.

### Revolution bent, but did not break

Any study of how and why important political rights that had been won for same-sex love and women were reversed in the Soviet Union in the 1930s has to take into consideration the effects that encirclement, economic embargo and isolation, sabotage, civil war and other weapons of unrelenting attack by world capitalism had on this vast but economically underdeveloped country.

Stripping historical reality from these steps backward does historic injustice to the tens of millions of workers and peasants of many nationalities, sexes, genders and sexualities who built the revolution with their sweat and defended it against the onslaught of world imperialism with their blood.

And it merely fans the flames of anti-communism, serving to derail the forward motion of the planet's working class and oppressed peoples towards genuine liberation.

An honest look at the measures taken against male homosexuality and abortion in the 1930s Soviet Union must ask: What effect did the low level of the productive apparatus and the high level of scarcity and deprivation have on the political goals of the Bolshevik Party? How did this frustrate the early goals of achieving the liberation of women and greater freedom of sexuality from state regulation?

With the danger of a new and even more destructive imperialist war gathering like a storm against the workers' state, creating an imperative need to quickly build a military force capable of defending the Soviet population, how did the industrialization and rapid collectivization of the peasantry in the 1930s produce a sea change in the spheres of women's societal role, and official attitudes towards gender expression and sexuality?

And perhaps most importantly, did these political reversals mean, as some said, that the Soviet Union ceased to be a workers' state that deserved the support of laboring and oppressed peoples around the world as it fought for its very life against world imperialism?

*Next: Political setbacks for gays and women, and the 'seismic gender shift'*

Lesbian ♦ gay ♦ bi  
and trans  
PRIDE  
SERIES  
PART  
13

## Unemployed want jobs, not war

Continued from page 3

really worried.

“This summer we have 300 electricians unemployed. We never had that before. People who have jobs are working overtime, because the contractors are using the least number of people. They're working people to death. People think they better grab the money and run, because they don't know when they will work again. You need 1,000 hours a year to get your pension credit and your hospital insurance, and people are afraid they aren't going to make it.”

For Long Island's day workers who wait at legal or illegal “shapeup sites,” the situation is grim. “The number of contractors coming to the Freeport shapeup site

has declined by 15 percent since last year,” says Carlos Canales of the Workplace Project in Hempstead. “The contractors aren't hiring. People aren't having their lawns done. And this is the same all across the U.S. Day workers do the lowest-paying jobs, and they are decreasing. The restaurants, the landscapers, the small-time contractors aren't hiring on Long Island.”

The military-industrial complex sucked Long Island dry. Companies like Grumman, Republic and Fairchild once made big profits here. As recently as 1986, 26,000 worked at the Grumman plant in Bethpage. Now it's like a ghost town.

Long Island is beginning to look like much of this country's industrial heart-

land. Expensive homes and exclusive villages still exist, but for much of Nassau and Suffolk counties, unemployment and housing costs are twin terrors.

Many Long Islanders now live in their parents' basements, cheap motels and even campgrounds. Newsday reported last Nov. 23, “For a family to afford a mid-priced home, it should have a gross income of \$164,000 in Nassau and \$130,000 in Suffolk.” Yet in four years, home prices have “skyrocketed 81 percent while household incomes have risen only 14 percent.”

Neither Democrats or Republicans have a solution. Military recruiters target unemployed youth but, as André said, “Nobody I know wants to go to the Army. We just need jobs here.” □

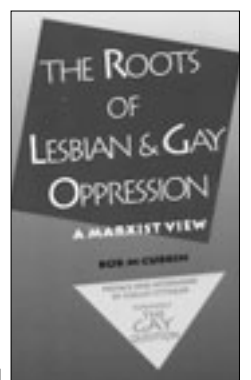
## The Roots of Lesbian & Gay Oppression: A MARXIST VIEW

By Bob McCubbin

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## Outraged by State Supreme Court ruling

# San Francisco protest demands same-sex marriage rights

By LeiLani Dowell  
San Francisco

On Aug. 12, couples, activists and supporters rallied in 25 cities across the state to decry the California Supreme Court's ruling invalidating the 3,955 same-sex marriages performed in San Francisco between Feb. 12 and March 11.

A defiant rally of more than 500 people marched from San Francisco's Castro District downtown to City Hall. There protesters said they are determined to make same-sex marriage a legal reality.

In ruling the same-sex marriages of February and March "null and void," the court focused almost exclusively on San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom's actions in approving marriage licenses for same-sex couples. The judges decided unanimously that Newsom had overstepped his authority. They ruled five to two that the same-sex marriages performed therefore did not have any legal status.

Rather than address the inherent discrimination in laws barring marriage for

same-sex couples, Chief Justice Ronald George argued that allowing local officials to refuse to enforce a law before the court invalidated it would lead to the disappearance of "any semblance of a uniform rule of law."

The constitutionality of California's law banning same-sex marriage is currently being challenged with two lawsuits, consolidated into one, in the San Francisco Superior Court. Many believe that this is the more pressing legal struggle in California for same-sex marriage, rather than the Aug. 12 verdict. Legal observers expect this issue to end up in the high court after the appeals process in one to two years.

However, for those couples who were married during the spring of this year, this latest ruling was a disappointing if not surprising setback.

Meanwhile, earlier this summer, the U.S. Senate soundly defeated the election-year move to write a ban on same-sex marriage into the U.S. Constitution. In a 48-50 vote, right wingers were not even able

to get a majority on the procedural move to bring the proposal to a vote. House Republican leaders say they will bring the amendment up again the week of Sept. 20.

As for the Democrats, candidates John Kerry and John Edwards oppose same-sex marriage just as President George W. Bush does. So does Sen. Barbara Boxer of California.

As the Aug. 13 San Francisco Chronicle noted, "The court's rebuff of Newsom won't undo all the effects of his action." Since Newsom moved to allow same-sex marriage licenses six months ago, local officials throughout the country have gone against their state's laws and approved marriage licenses. And judges in Massachusetts, Oregon and Washington have declared their states' anti-same-sex-mar-

riage laws unconstitutional.

Yet it is really the continuing actions of lesbian, gay, bi and trans activists and allies—who have fought for the basic civil right of marriage for over a decade in the streets as well as in the courtroom—that will not be undone. The issue of same-sex marriage, in addition to the "LGBT issues" of war, poverty and racism, was raised by protesters at the Democratic National Convention in July, and will no doubt be raised by activists protesting the Republican National Convention at the end of this month.

LeiLani Dowell, a Workers World Party member, is the Peace & Freedom Party candidate for Eighth Congressional District, San Francisco. Visit: [www.dowell4congress.org](http://www.dowell4congress.org).

## WWP candidates' views on Philippines

Special to Workers World

On July 28 the Network in Solidarity with the People of the Philippines released a survey asking 10 U.S. presidential candidates to answer four questions about current U.S. relations with Philippines.

The United States invaded and colonized this important Asian country, along with Cuba and Puerto Rico, in 1898 following the Spanish-American war. Today the Philippine economy is dominated by U.S. big business and imperialist banks, resulting in abject poverty for the majority of the Filipino people.

John Parker, Workers World Party's 2004 presidential candidate, was asked to participate in the NISPOP survey. Monica Moorehead, a co-campaign manager, stated on behalf of the campaign: "If John Parker and Teresa Gutierrez were elected president and vice president of the U.S. respectively, they would unconditionally withdraw all U.S. troops from the Philippines," and "unconditionally withdraw all U.S. troops from Iraq," and "repeal every word of the repressive USA Patriot Act" And, she said, they would "immediately

remove Professor Jose Maria Sison, the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army from the U.S. State Department's list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations and from the U.S. Treasury Department's list of Specially Designated Nationals."

The WWP candidates would also have the United States "pay reparations to the Filipino people for the many decades of super-exploitation and neocolonial oppression suffered under U.S. imperialist domination."

Other candidates asked to respond to the survey were John Kerry, George W. Bush, the Green Party's David Cobb, the Reform Party's Ralph Nader, the Libertarian Party's Michael Badnarik, the Constitution Party's Michael Peroutka, the Socialist Workers Party's Róger Calero, the Socialist Party's Walter F. Brown and the Socialist Equality Party's, Bill Van Auken.

For more information on this survey, contact: Network in Solidarity with the People of the Philippines, 122 West 27th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10001; (212) 561-1567; [nispop@nispop.org](mailto:nispop@nispop.org); [www.nispop.org](http://www.nispop.org). □

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## Carter in Venezuela

What's an old imperialist like Jimmy Carter doing validating the results of the referendum in Venezuela—results that show the large majority of the Venezuelan people support President Hugo Chávez and his Bolivarian Revolution, which seeks to free Latin Americans from the domination of U.S. imperialism and is raising the living standards of the masses?

It is being reported that Carter “stunned” the elites in the Venezuelan opposition by disputing their charges of voting fraud and telling them in a face-to-face meeting to accept the results of the referendum.

The former U.S. president and his Carter Center have a history of paving the way for elections that have produced quite the opposite result. Carter went to Nicaragua in 1990, supposedly to observe the election. But on the eve of the voting, he bolstered the opposition candidate, Violeta Chamorro, by allowing a photo to be run on the front page of the daily newspaper she owned that showed the two of them with hands clasped and raised in a victory gesture. Carter then convinced Daniel Ortega, leader of the Sandinistas, to accept his party's election defeat. Of course, behind the outcome of this “democratic process” was the terrible U.S.-sponsored war that threatened to become even worse if the Sandinistas held on to power.

The Sandinistas had overthrown the hated Somoza dictatorship in a heroic guerrilla struggle, but they then faced a bloody counter-revolution—organized, armed and financed by the U.S.—that kept them from realizing their promises to the people. Hunger and violence wore them down. The cynical imperialists were very happy that they could overthrow the Nicaraguan Revolution and make it look like an exercise in democracy.

This time the results of an election monitored by Carter are very different. Venezuela has been able to use its significant oil income to improve the lives of the people, and that has brought many who had nearly lost hope into political activism in a big way. They turned out in huge numbers for the referendum.

But is Carter any different? What does he represent?

Throughout his political career Carter has been consistent in this respect: He always seems to know which way the wind is blowing.

When he began his political career in Georgia, open racism dominated Southern politics. In his 1970 bid for governor, Carter chastised his opponent “for failing, during his governorship, to invite Alabama's outspoken segregationist governor, George C. Wallace, to address the Georgia General Assembly.” (The New Georgia Encyclopedia) On taking office, however, Carter softened his attitude toward the growing civil rights movement. But he hedged his bets by naming arch-segregationist Lester Maddox as lieutenant governor.

Carter moved onto the national stage in 1976, when he captured the Democratic nomination for president after having been endorsed by Time, Newsweek and the major newspapers of the imperialist political establishment. By then he had been schooled in foreign policy by the Trilateral Commission, a Rockefeller-sponsored think tank that has groomed presidents, secretaries of state and other political heavies from both the Republican and Democratic parties.

As president from 1977 to 1981, he did what he was supposed to do for U.S. global imperialist interests. His national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who had been appointed the first director of the Trilateral Commission by David Rockefeller, presided over the covert campaign to overthrow the secular democratic government in Afghanistan, directing the CIA to set up a guerrilla army of right-wing fundamentalists there. That secret U.S. intervention eventually led the Afghan government to call on the Soviet Union for support, and a terrible war followed. Brzezinski later boasted that he had drawn the USSR into a quagmire.

Since 9/11, has one major newspaper or television channel asked Carter about how his multi-billion-dollar CIA operation may have set the stage for the rise of al-Qaeda? Maybe Carter himself is reflecting on that, but not publicly, of course.

Carter's role in the Venezuelan referendum undoubtedly helps those Democrats who want the world to believe that a Kerry administration will not resort to the blatant imperialist tactics of Bush. And this is what a growing section of the billionaire class in the U.S. wants right now. They see how hated the U.S. has become in the world. No matter how the Pentagon, the CIA and other instruments of repression try to stamp out wildfires with their hobnail boots, new ones flare up immediately.

Latin America has become a cauldron. All over the continent broad struggles of the people are changing the political climate. The knee-jerk reaction of some of the ultras in the Bush administration was undoubtedly to support the opposition's fraudulent charges of election fraud in Venezuela—in the same way that they called the 2002 military coup against Chávez a triumph for democracy, until the intervention of the people made it fail. But Carter and the more wily imperialists know that wouldn't do them a bit of good now. It would only further enrage the people and make it impossible for the U.S. to talk to any Latin American leaders.

After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the new Kennedy administration launched the Alliance for Progress, offering Latin America billions for development so more countries would not go the way of Cuba. But in the end, according to former CIA officer Philip Agee in his book “Inside the Company,” U.S. corporations were taking out even bigger profits from the area while U.S. agents worked with the generals to strengthen their hold, ushering in a period of military coups throughout the region.

Kennedy, Carter, Kerry—the same old imperialism, but with a smile. □



## Unnatural disaster:

# Hurricane Capitalism

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Hurricane Charley screamed out of the Caribbean on August 13, touched Jamaica, and left a band of destruction across Cuba, before heading across the Gulf of Mexico to a devastating landfall on communities about 90 miles south of Tampa, Fla., on Aug. 14.

When the storm hit Florida, winds had reached 145 mph, and flooding from a 13-foot storm surge was extensive. Six hospitals were damaged or destroyed, and perhaps as many as 375,000 buildings. Close to a million people were left without electricity.

Nineteen people died in Florida, with some there still reported missing in the twisted wreckage of trailer parks.

These were the homes of retired and lower-income people in the communities of Punta Gorda and Port Charlotte in Charlotte County—the area hardest hit by the storm. There were 31 mobile home parks in Punta Gorda.

The county has the highest percentage of people 65 and older in the U.S.—almost 35 percent. Most of these older residents are on fixed incomes and in poor health. (New York Times, Aug. 16)

Many braved the storm in their mobile homes, which are vulnerable to hurricanes and tornadoes, but affordable to them at prices from \$10,000-\$20,000.

Steve Williams, a nurse with a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) team providing care to storm victims, said that of the 120 patients his team treated in three days, about half were 65 or older. Many had serious health problems like lung and kidney disease, requiring dialysis or oxygen unavailable in the aftermath of the storm. (New York Times, Aug. 16)

### Property vs. people

Authorities estimate damages may exceed \$20 billion. They emphasize that this makes Charley the worst and most expensive hurricane to hit the U.S. since Hurricane Andrew lambasted South Florida in 1992.

However, this figure is only for damage to property—and does not take account of the brutal economic toll of this catastrophe on people's lives.

More than 1,400 complaints of price gouging by store owners have already been filed with the state by storm victims, including a couple who were charged \$11,000 for removal of one tree that had fallen on their house.

Insurance companies, hit by record payouts after Hurricane Andrew, have worked to limit coverage, cut losses and defend their profits by subsequently refusing to cover hurricane damage along the Florida coast. In other areas, they increased premiums more than 100 percent and imposed high deductibles. Homeowners had to accept high losses, if they were able to afford insurance at all. (New York Times, Aug. 15)

What kind of help can Hurricane Charley's victims expect? Some five years after Hurricane Andrew, Homestead, the city that it devastated, had been rebuilt—but over 300 low-income residents were still living in storm-damaged houses and remained on a waiting list for repairs or rebuilding.

Dr. David Neal, director of the emergency administration and planning program for the University of North Texas, said this neglect was the result of “institutionalized racism” in the recovery process, when white business owners concentrated on rebuilding structures related to the tourist economy, like hotels and restaurants.

Neal notes that people who worked in these businesses, mostly Latin@s and African Americans, lost their jobs in the disaster and had to leave the area to find work. (UNT News Service)

Many migrant farm workers lost their homes from Hurricane Charley's impact, and will lose their jobs as well. Florida's commission of agriculture estimates that the state's main agricultural businesses—citrus-growing and plant nurseries—will suffer billion-dollar losses that exceed Hurricane Andrew's because the current damage ranges over a larger growing area. (New York Times, Aug. 17)

The impact of capitalist exploitation in the wake of this kind of “natural disaster” is anything but natural. Poor and working people are left with the biggest losses of all.

### A socialist response to disaster

In dramatic contrast to the U.S., recovery from Hurricane Charley in Cuba will not mean higher insurance rates or scams, a soaring increase in the price of housing, or price gouging by local businesses.

To prepare for the impact of Hurricane Charley, Cuban National Civil Defense workers evacuated more than 215,000 people and 158,680 animals out of the path of the storm. According to the Aug. 15 Granma International, “only 35,749 [people] were housed in shelters, given that the rest went to the houses of relatives, neighbors and friends, showing once again the spirit of solidarity of the Cuban people in times of catastrophe.”

Four people were killed. Each of them was respectfully listed by name and town, and with the circumstances of their death, in Granma, the main newspaper of the country.

There was serious damage to the national power grid, houses, health center facilities and schools. Sixty technical brigades were sent immediately to the hardest-hit areas to help restore power. Communist Party leaders and local government committees have rushed to these areas to arrange material support for storm victims.

In Cuba's planned economy, the entire government and the entire populace can mobilize to overcome the disaster, placing the emphasis on people's needs and not on profit. □

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WW PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA

# Venezuelan masses vote to advance revolution

Continued from page 1

the will of the majority of Venezuelans. Immediately after the vote they claimed victory and are now saying that he perpetrated a fraud. They base this on alleged surveys of voters at the polls that they themselves had conducted. During an interview with the U.S. media, Carter described these surveys as "quite unreliable" and urged the opposition to accept the results.

This recall referendum is the product of the new participatory democracy guaranteed in the Bolivarian Constitution, which gives the voters the right to choose whether or not to remove elected officials once at least 20 percent of the voters sign a petition calling for a referendum.

After organizing a coup d'état against Chávez in 2002 in a desperate attempt to oust him—an attempt that failed despite the direct support of the U.S.—and after having rejected the new Bolivarian Constitution, the opposition took advantage of the rights that this constitution gives Venezuelan citizens for the first time and called for a recall referendum. The opposition was able to activate the referendum through a very questionable process.

Why was it so important that Venezuelans vote "NO" on the recall of Chávez?

Chávez represents the largest and most oppressed groups in Latin America—the Indigenous and Black population of the continent. He represents the certainty that Latin Americans' rights will be met, that they are people of thought, and that they have recovered their conscience. His leading role as president of Venezuela shows that the struggle has not been in vain. That even after more than 500 years

of colonial super-exploitation—or globalization without computers, as Chávez calls it—a genocidal colonization that took the lives of millions and millions of Indigenous people, wiping out entire civilizations, today the people are saying, with more fervor than ever, NO! Along with Chávez, they say NO!

With Chávez the people of Latin America have a voice of their own. Chávez speaks for the people, saying what they always wanted to say but couldn't because they were silenced, first by the European yoke and then by the iron fist of the U.S. In the tradition of Simón Bolívar, the Great Liberator of Latin America, he talks openly against imperialism, attacks savage capitalism and globalization. Chávez has given back to the underprivileged their memory and their conscience.

Venezuelans are confident that Chávez is a true man of the people committed to the social, political and economic transformation of Venezuela.

Chávez has promoted an autonomous and legitimate revolution.

This is not only a Venezuelan revolution; this is a Latin American revolution. This is the Bolivarian Revolution. It belongs not only to Venezuela but also to South America, Central America and the Caribbean nations.

He has revived Bolívar's legacy—of anti-imperialist thought, of waking the people, waking the nations in order to win.

What is taking place in Venezuela is a revolution that is not imported but is based on the struggle of its own colonized peoples.

By casting their votes, Venezuelans defended the Bolivarian Constitution. One of the strongest weapons of the revo-

lution is the new constitution of 1999, offspring of the Fifth Republic. This is not merely a representative constitution but a participative one, created with the participation and approval of 80 percent of the Venezuelan people.

There are very few constitutions in the world like it. It guarantees human rights for Indigenous and Black peoples. Under the Bolivarian government, the Indigenous population now has direct participation in the government and in the nation's course.

Furthermore, the new constitution recognizes a fundamental, however marginalized, task—housework—because it produces social well-being. This work, mainly done by women, now generates social security. In the same fashion, gender equality is decreed and many social, economic and political privileges are eliminated. With the creation of the Law of Local Councils for Public Planning, the people have the power to ensure that the Bolivarian Constitution is implemented—a truly democratic move.

President Chávez and his government have been under continuous media attack. The privately owned media of Venezuela has directed a dirty and slanderous campaign. Nevertheless, the president's response has been not to ban this manipulative, racist, fascist, bourgeois and pro-coup media, but to give the people their own voice by making adjustments to the broadcasting law. This has allowed communities throughout Venezuela to create innumerable local radio stations, websites and over 500 community newspapers.

The Bolivarian government defends the interests of the majority and not those of the small elite. The unemployment rate

has decreased by 12 percent. In addition, Venezuela has an economic growth of 12 percent, the highest in Latin America. The government gives more priority to cooperatives than to corporations, thus helping communities to organize together in order to achieve economic independence.

Chávez seeks the economic liberation of Latin America and the Caribbean.

His proposed Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) is an answer to the U.S.-dominated Free Trade Area of the Americas (ALCA), which has caused the misery of the peasantry and children's empty stomachs. The ALBA rejects sweatshop industries—maquiladoras—which have been so devastating for Latino people, especially women.

When the Bolivarian government brought medical care to the poor through the program called "Barrio Adentro," it made Venezuela a healthier country. Infant mortality decreased by 30 percent, giving Venezuelan children the opportunity of a healthier life.

Venezuelans have voted to continue educating themselves. Under the government's Mission Robinson, 1.23 million people have learned to read and write, virtually eliminating illiteracy. Teachers have gone to the poorest barrios of Caracas, to remote places in the Amazon region, in the plains and in the mountains, as well as to Venezuela's prisons. Now the deprived people are already writing their own history.

This ongoing revolution, with Hugo Chávez in command, promises Latin American people liberation, the recovery of their resources and their own identity, so they can cease to be slaves to imperialism. □

## On 100th anniversary of massacre

# Herero people demand reparations from Germany

By Monica Moorehead

It is a well-established fact that Africa is considered the most economically underdeveloped continent. How is it that Africa is so abundant in natural resources, including oil, diamonds, magnesium, uranium, etc., and yet is the continent most indebted to the imperialist banks?

The answer lies in the horrendous period of colonialism that intensified during the late 19th century.

Colonialism, or the enslavement of African peoples within the borders of their homeland, was an outgrowth of the slave trade. The African continent was virtually sliced up like a pie as European capitalist countries such as France, England, Spain, Portugal, Germany and the Netherlands built their capitalist economies by stealing the lands and resources of the African masses.

The African people heroically tried to beat back the onslaught of invasions by the racist colonialists. But their weapons were no match for technologically advanced European weaponry like machine guns.

Just as tens of millions of African people were kidnapped and sold into slavery—that is, if they survived the horrific Middle Passage to the "New World"—millions more died attempting to defend their homelands from European colonialism.

One of the most bloody, genocidal chapters during the depths of the colonial period occurred almost a century ago in the country then called "South-West Africa," today known as Namibia. Namibia, which borders South Africa, Angola and Botswana, was and still is considered to be one of the most mineral-rich countries in Africa.

During the 1880s, Namibia was brutally ruled by Germany. White farmers systematically took over the most arable lands from the indigenous Herero and Nama peoples. A similar process took place in Zimbabwe, formerly Rhodesia, during the same period, with England being the colonizer there.

The Hereros organized a heroic guerrilla struggle against the invading German troops led by the fascist General von Trotha.

On Oct. 2, 1904, von Trotha issued a proclamation ordering that the Herero people were to be exterminated either by machine gun or by poisoning their drinking water if they refused to leave their lands.

An estimated 65,000 out of 80,000 Hereros, including children, were massacred in Okakarara, along with 10,000 Namas. Hereros who were captured were either hung in massive numbers or driven into the desert to die.



Namibia's Hereros at most recent commemoration of genocide of ancestors in Okakarara.

Apartheid South Africa succeeded Germany as the colonizer of Namibia in 1918. Namibia won its formal independence in 1990 under the leadership of an armed guerrilla movement, the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO).

On Aug. 12, a ceremony was held at Okakarara to mark the anniversary of this crime against humanity. The current German development minister, Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul, attended. While Zeul acknowledged that what happened to the Herero and Nama peoples was geno-

cide, she refused to make a formal apology.

To add insult to injury, Zeul stated that the German government would not pay \$4 billion in reparations that are being demanded by the surviving Herero people for past colonial crimes. Zeul stated that because the "killings" happened so long ago, the reparations claim would not hold up in court.

Herero chief Kuaima Riruako countered: "We still have the right to take the German government to court." (BBC News, Aug. 14) □



# El pueblo venezolano se moviliza para defender su revolución

## Latinoamerican@s resisten intervención estadounidense

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Cuando el pueblo de Venezuela vote el 15 de agosto en un referendo presidencial, no irá solo. Miles de partidari@s de la Revolución Bolivariana en todo el mundo y en particular en los países del Caribe y de Centro y Sur América, están planeando múltiples eventos en lo que promete ser la más grande vigilia electoral en la historia.

Bajo el lema, “Si fuera venezolan@, votaría por Chávez,” esta campaña que se opone a la destitución del Presidente Hugo Chávez, está planeando eventos durante la semana anterior a la elección al igual que masivos mítines solidarios el día de la elección. La mayoría de las acciones se darán frente a los consulados y embajadas de Venezuela donde residentes venezolan@s darán sus votos.

Se espera que miles de venezolan@s emigrantes en todo el mundo aprovechen la oportunidad de votar fuera de su patria, un derecho garantizado por la constitución bolivariana de 1999. Una de las comunidades venezolanas más grandes en el exterior está en Miami, Florida. L@s organizador@s de los eventos quieren asegurarse que cuando aquell@s venezolan@s que se oponen al Presidente Hugo Chávez, esperando sacarlo de su puesto, puedan ver que existe un gran apoyo internacional para Chávez.

Otros objetivos serán las embajadas y consulados estadounidenses, para exponer la complicidad de Washington con la oposición y su papel como la fuerza tras el intento de golpe del año 2002 en Venezuela y el posterior intento de sabotaje de la compañía petrolera PDVSA.

El referendo es un derecho constitucional ausente en muchas de las constituciones de otros países. Este derecho se puede ejercer cuando l@s ciudadan@s estimen que un/a oficial electad@ no está cumpliendo con el papel para el cual fue elegido@. Aquell@s que se oponen a tal oficial tienen que recoger firmas de un 20% del electorado registrado para poder demandar un referendo.

Como a pesar de muchos intentos, incluyendo un golpe militar, la oligarquía de Venezuela no ha podido sacar a Chávez y echar atrás los logros del proceso revolucionario, por eso esta vez optó por un referéndum.

El petróleo es la industria más importante de Venezuela, el cual es el quinto país exportador de petróleo en el mundo. Aunque la compañía petrolera ha estado nacionalizada por años, los capitalistas y terratenientes por medio del control de los partidos políticos y el estado robaban una parte de la riqueza del país, y muy particularmente del petróleo. Gobernaban para el beneficio de las cuentas bancarias suyas y la de sus socios, en su mayoría corporaciones transnacionales con base en los Estados Unidos, vendiéndoles petróleo a precios muy bajos. Estados Unidos importa el 10% de su petróleo de Venezuela.

El pueblo nunca se beneficiaba de los ingresos del petróleo. El hambre, el desempleo, la analfabetización y la falta de cuidados de la salud mantenían a la mayoría del pueblo en absoluta miseria.

Después que Chávez ganó las elecciones de 1998, la Revolución Bolivariana que inició comenzó a cambiar esa fórmula. Las ganancias de PDVSA ahora se revertían al pueblo en servicios y programas para mejorar su calidad de vida. Con estos programas—o “misiones,” como se les conoce en Venezuela—para proveer al pueblo de viviendas, servicios de salud, educación y empleos, la revolución se ha ganado el apoyo de una leal y combativa mayoría. Ahora mismo hay una campaña de alfabetización y educación masiva para los millones de pobres que no podían leer o escribir.

Miles de personas que anteriormente fueron excluidas de la sociedad, como las naciones indígenas, ahora forman parte activa no solo de la sociedad, sino del liderazgo del país. Noelí Pocatertera líder de la nación Wayúu en su puesto como segunda vicepresidenta de la Asamblea Nacional en el 2002 y 2003 rubrica este cambio.

Los opositores de Chávez por muchos años usaron las dificultades en la economía como un garrote contra su gobierno, mientras saboteaban cuanto más podían industrias y empresas. Ahora la economía está mostrando una recuperación.

En un reporte reciente, el Banco Central de Venezuela anunció que la actividad económica había subido en un 29,8% este año y que las ventas de automóviles incrementaron en un 93%. El desempleo bajó a un 12%, de una elevación del 18% el año pasado. La economía de Venezuela creció un 12%, el incremento más alto en América Latina.

Estos irrefutables éxitos en la economía han logrado que sectores de la clase media que antes se oponían a Chávez, ahora se adhieran a la revolución

### Chávez moviliza sentimiento antiimperialista

El papel de Venezuela en la comunidad internacional ha cambiado dramáticamente, desafiando directamente a las fuerzas neoliberales. Con frecuencia Chávez caracteriza la revolución como antiimperialista. En cumbres económicas y políticas y en conferencias internacionales, Chávez ha alentado abiertamente a otras naciones y pueblos oprimidos a también desafiar los mandos de dominio de los Estados Unidos.

Repetidamente, Chávez ha llamado a la unidad de los países de Latinoamérica y el Caribe a que combinen sus recursos naturales, intelectuales y materiales para conformar un bloque poderoso que pueda desafiar el control de Washington y Wall Street en la región.

Algunos acontecimientos recientes en esta área destacan las posibilidades. Por ejemplo, Venezuela acaba de ser admitida al bloque económico MERCOSUR. Anteriormente estaba compuesto solamente de países del Cono Sur—Argentina, Brasil, Paraguay y Uruguay. Venezuela queda en la costa norte del hemisferio.

El gobierno de Venezuela también ha trabajado duramente para fortalecer a los países de la Comunidad Andina. Hay una gran actividad económica, con pactos y acuerdos entre Venezuela y otros gobier-



Caracas, ocho días antes del referendo. El pueblo dice 'NO'.

nos vecinos involucrando la producción de gas natural y petróleo, particularmente con Brasil, Argentina y Colombia. Otros acuerdos están en proceso con países africanos.

Esto pone doblemente ansioso al gobierno de los Estados Unidos y sus grandes corporaciones. Por un lado, siente amenazada su hegemonía económica. Por otro lado, el apoyo y la admiración a la Revolución Bolivariana por parte de los pueblos de Latinoamérica y el Caribe amenazan su dominación de la región. La ola de activismo militante que está recorriendo al continente atemoriza al Pentágono y a las corporaciones transnacionales de los EE.UU.

### Agencias de los EE.UU. ayudan a la oligarquía venezolana

Por medio de la Dotación Nacional para la Democracia (National Endowment for Democracy) y otras organizaciones, unas conocidas y otras encubiertas, el gobierno estadounidense está canalizando millones de dólares para apoyar a la oligarquía venezolana. Un recipiente de dinero de los EE.UU. en Venezuela es la organización Súmate, un actor clave en el intento de derrocar a Chávez, bajo el pretexto de promover la “democracia”.

La oposición venezolana incluye a la federación empresarial FEDECAMARAS, la federación sindical-patronal CTV, la antigua burocracia de PDVSA, y los medios de comunicación antichavistas privados los cuales controlan 400 radioemisoras, 20 canales de televisión y 100 periódicos. Estos han intentado por todas formas de sabotear la revolución.

Pero la intervención del pueblo por millones resultó en el fracaso del golpe de estado de 2002. Un cierre patronal de parte de los burócratas de PDVSA con la intención de sabotear la producción petrolera de Venezuela también fracasó cuando los trabajadores tomaron el lado del gobierno. Entonces la oposición recurrió a las guarimbas (tranques violentos de tráfico) y otros actos de terrorismo. Cuando eso no funcionó, recurrieron al

referendo para forzar el retiro de Chávez. Desde su inicio este estuvo lleno de fraude. Presentaron peticiones recogidas fuera del período estipulado por ley, utilizaron firmas no válidas, y violaron otras reglas.

Agencias del gobierno de los EE.UU. han participado en la campaña de la oposición a cada paso. Roger Noriega, el Asistente del Secretario de Estado para Asuntos del Hemisferio Oeste de los EE.UU. declaró recientemente: “Nosotros hemos invertido mucho dinero en este proceso porque tenemos confianza en la sociedad civil que es el pilar de la democracia. Hemos donado dinero por medio de ONGs y otros grupos similares en Venezuela”.

Aunque la mayoría de las encuestas muestran que los resultados del referendo favorecerán a Chávez, el pueblo y Chávez mismo no están celebrando con anticipación, cautelosos de que el fraude o la violencia podrían abrir una vez más el intento de nulificar los resultados verdaderos. Los ataques violentos de la oposición han sido esporádicos hasta ahora. Es revelador, sin embargo, un artículo publicado el 10 de mayo en el periódico El Nacional en Miami, que implicó una amenaza peor. Citó al ex presidente de Venezuela, Carlos Andrés Pérez, actualmente ocultándose en Miami de la justicia venezolana. “Nosotros los venezolanos tenemos que acabar con Chávez por medios violentos, no queda otra opción”, dijo.

Pero el pueblo bolivariano de Venezuela está listo para el desafío. Han estado organizando cuadra por cuadra, barrio por barrio, asegurándose que todo el mundo capaz de votar esté registrad@ y conoce los procedimientos. También han forjando organizaciones de autodefensas de las masas para suplir a las Fuerzas Armadas.

L@s bolivarian@s votarán “NO” al revocatorio. Como dice uno de los anuncios de la campaña: “NO a la injusticia, NO al engaño, NO al pasado, NO a la violencia, NO volverán, NO pasarán, Venezuela el 15 de agosto ganará. Victoriosa será. La respuesta es NO”. □