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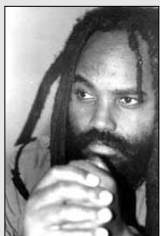
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# BUSH PROPOSES Social Security giveaway to Wall St.

By John Catalinotto

Everyone associates George W. Bush with the war on the Iraqi people. With his proposal for Social Security "reform," Bush is stepping up the war on working people at home.

Social Security is one of the most popular government programs. Since the improvements in benefits made in the 1960s, Social Security pensions have helped tens of millions of retired people to live in dignity.

People know Social Security provides a basic minimum retirement pension. In addition, it has helped people unable to work because of injuries or illness. It also helps 5 million children who are dependents of deceased workers and disabled children of retired workers.

It is run far more efficiently than any private insurance or investment program, with administrative charges at only 1 percent.

Two major organizations representing workers and retirees, the AFL-CIO and the American Association of Retired People (AARP), have written and spoken against Bush's attempts to dismantle Social Security. They have not yet proposed mass action.

Even many economists who are staunch defenders of the capitalist system see Social Security as providing a safety net that prevents a large section of the population from descending into abject poverty and creating an undesirable and possibly explosive situation.

### The gang that sold the Iraq war

It would seem that it would be impossible to sell proposals that could dismantle such an enormously popular program. But that would underestimate the ideological ruthlessness of the reactionaries in the Bush gang as well as the personal greed of them and their financier cronies.

This administration sold the Iraq war by mobilizing a whole campaign of Big Lies: the nonexistent "weapons of mass destruction"; Saddam Hussein's nonexistent role in 9/11; and that the U.S. is bringing "democracy" to Iraq by occupying it.

On Social Security, the Big Lie is that Social Security will collapse if it is not quickly "reformed" and privatized. In contrast, the rest of their budget, which has a vast deficit from the tax cuts to the rich and skyrocketing military costs, they claim has no problem.

The administration got its budget experts to make the harshest possible assumptions on Social Security to claim it is on the brink of collapse. Other more honest experts estimate it won't even run a deficit until at least 2042 or maybe 2052, and that these could be easily avoided. Of course all these estimates assume there won't be a general collapse in the capitalist economy.

On Jan. 18, the AFL-CIO, which represents 13 million active and millions more retired workers, stepped up its opposition to privatizing Social Security. The labor group accused the Securities Industry Association of campaigning in favor of policy changes that would put workers' retirement at risk, while billions of dollars in fees would go to SIA members.

The AARP, which represents both workers and other retired people, meanwhile has been taking out full-page ads objecting to the Bush proposals.

There is no guarantee, however, that if these groups limit their activities to lobbying and making statements, that they can defeat a no-holds-barred campaign by the Bush administration. That would require mass action and a mobilization of millions of working people to defend their hard-won benefits.

The goals are clear: defend Social Security and make sure that any funds needed to keep it going at least its present level of benefits comes from taxing the businesses and the rich. □



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At New York's City Hall, councilmembers, labor and community organizers on Jan. 15 announce actions to get 'U.S. Troops Out Now!'

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*This week ...*

# TIRED OF MEDIA LIES? Do something about it!

By Deirdre Griswold

Discussion about the distorted and biased view of world events that is peddled to this country by the corporate media is commonplace now. Polls have shown that most of the people in the U.S. still think Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and was connected to the 9/11 attacks. Since both views are totally false, how did that happen?

Columnists of the very newspapers that uncritically repeated Bush's lies and innuendoes now ask in anguished tones how the people could be so misinformed—although they tend to lay the heaviest blame on the broadcast media.

Television and radio don't have much to say about it. There's little looking backward on their news shows. They're too busy pumping out the latest falsehoods and rationalizations—all delivered with flashing, whirling graphics and thumping music meant to sear their images into your mind while numbing your ability to think about them.

We are constantly being told we have a free press. Yes, sometimes you can find the truth if you know where to look. There's no crude government censorship—except when it comes to crucial questions. Like barring television from showing the coffins arriving from Iraq. Or making sure only "embedded" reporters can go along to report a war—which has kept people here from knowing that the Pentagon used napalm in its recent bombing of Falluja.

But, most of the time, control over the media by monopoly finance capital makes it unnecessary to put a government bureaucrat with a "censored" stamp in every newspaper office and television station. Having bosses in the front office who are steeped in capitalist values is enough.

However, a failing war and a scary economy, plus a president hell-bent on breaking up Social Security while pumping hundreds of billions into new military projects, are putting strains on the capitalist media. And, just like the Vietnam War period, heads are starting to roll.

Not at the channels, like the various Fox stations, that did the most to lead the people into this war. They feel no need to apologize for their role in the administration's disinformation campaign.

But CBS just fired four of its news staff, including three top executives, and is shifting Dan Rather from anchoring the nightly news, because of the White House's fury over its reporting on Bush's National Guard record. At issue is a memo that CBS is charged with failing to authenticate. The officer who wrote it is long dead.

The impression given by all the fury is that Bush's sterling record is being sullied by the "liberal" media—when

in fact there's no question that this politically connected rich man's son got out of military service during the Vietnam War by signing up with the Air National Guard and then didn't even bother to show up for some of the training.

Knowledge is power and control of the media is just as important to the capitalist class as having SWAT teams to confront demonstrators and a huge military machine to protect its investments around the world.

Here let me switch hats from reporter to editor of this newspaper and talk to you about making a contribution to keep Workers World on the streets and on the Internet.

Obviously, WW can say what it believes about this vicious capitalist system. It doesn't have to fawn on authority or cultivate the good graces of the filthy rich. It doesn't have to pull punches when condemning racism or the oppression of lesbians, gays, bi and transgender people. It doesn't fear that some big backer will "pull the plug" if it calls for bringing the troops home or undemonizes the many struggling countries around the world that are on the Pentagon's hit list—or if it says that both the Democratic and Republican parties represent the interests of the big corporations.

Our little secret is that we work extra hard to keep this newspaper financially independent. For 46 years, our staff members have contributed their talents without pay. We rely on political activists to keep our readers informed about what important events are coming up. Our writers aren't high-paid graduates of Ivy League schools, they're workers who have dedicated their lives to the struggle for socialism. They've sharpened their tools of analysis by supplementing militant activism with a study of Marxism and the struggles of the past.

All this keeps the bills way down—but we still have to raise a lot of money to keep an office, publish a newspaper and get our views out on the web.

Who do we turn to? You, the readers, of course. Because we have no big backers—just a lot of little ones who have come to rely on us for news and a fightback attitude you won't find elsewhere. And you know we seldom ask for money—our single-copy and subscription rates are deliberately the lowest we can make them. We want this paper to reach those who need it the most, the working class—many of whom can't get any job, let alone one at a living wage.

So we're in the middle of our Fall/Winter Fund Drive and part-way to raising \$60,000. Can you help put us over the top?

Make a contribution by filling out this coupon today. And thank you for your kind support. □

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#### Fri., Jan. 28

Film showing: Chavez, Venezuela and the New Latin America. Film by Ocean Film and Aleida Guevara (Che's daughter). Sponsored by International Action Center, 5274 W Pico Blvd, #203. For info 323-936-7266.

#### Sat., Feb. 5

Forum: End War & Occupation in Iraq, Haiti & Palestine, featuring former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark and special guest Rep. Maxine Waters, leader of the struggle to save the King/Drew Medical Center. Sponsored by International Action Center. 4 p.m. At Southwestern University School

of Law, Bullocks Wilshire Bldg, 2nd floor. \$5/parking, \$10 donation at the door. Call for information and to make reservations (323) 936-7266.

### NEW YORK

#### Fri., Jan. 21

Workers World Party meeting: Representative of the Federation of Cuban Women, update on the Cuban 5 case, and assessment of counter-inaugural protests. 7 pm. (Dinner at 6:30) 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

#### Fri., Jan. 28

Workers World Party meeting: Larry Holmes, prominent leader in antiwar movement and WWP secretariat member, on current developments within the Bush administration, and Sharon Black, Baltimore-Washington regional coordinator for the Million Worker March, on lessons in the DC hotel workers' struggle. 7 pm. (Dinner at 6:30) 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

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# NYC groups announce March 19 'Out now!' protest

By LeiLani Dowell  
New York

On Jan. 15, the 76th anniversary of the late Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, a coalition of activists and representatives from dozens of community, labor, anti-war and international solidarity organizations joined veterans, clergy and military family members on the steps of City Hall for a press conference announcing their intention to march to Central Park on March 19 under the slogan, "Troops out now!"

Nearly 100 activists assembled outside despite the bitter cold, carrying placards with pictures of Dr. King and the words "Troops out now! March on Central Park, March 19!"

Speakers included New York City Councilmember Charles Barron; Brenda Stokely, president of AFSCME District Council 1707; Larry Holmes, co-director, International Action Center; Rev. Herbert Daughtry, national presiding minister of The House

of the Lord Churches; former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark; Chris Silvera, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 808 and president of the Teamsters National Black Caucus; Kim Rosario, mother of a soldier currently stationed in Iraq; Amos Hough of the New York City AIDS Housing Network; Nana Soul of Artists and Activists United for Peace; Mel Stevens of ACT UP/NY (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power); Nellie Bailey of the Harlem Tenants Council; and others.

Holmes said, "We have chosen the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. to make our announcement because, more than just to remember King, we want to emulate his fight against racism and the war on Vietnam. The best way to honor his memory is to continue the fight against war and racism. It is more important than ever."

The March 19 rally will be held on the second anniversary of the war in Iraq and will demand the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops.



From left, Nellie Bailey, Chris Silvera and Nana Soul up front at City Hall press conference.

WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL

The press conference stressed the importance of ending that war and the war against working and oppressed people here in the U.S. Bailey announced that an important feeder march will begin at Marcus Garvey Park in the African-American community of Harlem that will end up at Central Park for the major rally. She cited the high levels of unemployment among African Americans in New York and the cuts being made in social services.

The rally is being held in Central Park

to reclaim the right to protest there—a right denied during the Republican National Convention in 2004. Barron told the press, "Mayor [Michael] Bloomberg and President Bush barred us from holding a rally in Central Park during the Republican Convention. That was unnecessary, undemocratic, unconstitutional—and it's not going to happen this time."

For more information on the March 19 rally, please visit [www.troopsoutnow.org](http://www.troopsoutnow.org). □

## Bush inauguration

# Feds make DC poor pay for the festival

By Pam Parker  
Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C., residents need better schools, housing and health care. Instead, they're getting part of the bill for the lavish parties and accommodations making up the most expensive inaugural in U.S. history, all in the midst of an unjustified war in Iraq, and just a few weeks after the tragedy of the tsunami in Asia.

To accommodate George W. Bush's second inauguration, starting Jan. 16 the authorities will shut down or restrict traffic on more than 200 square blocks of D.C., removing street lights from their posts and welding shut manhole covers in large downtown areas.

Tom Ridge's Homeland Security Department lists balls, concerts, receptions, fireworks and rehearsals for the inauguration as the reason for these measures.

Federal, state and local police agencies will be out in force—including the Secret Service, 6,000 police, 7,000 U.S. troops armed with M-4 assault rifles. These police agencies have restricted access to the parade route for counter-inaugural protestors. They are imposing ridiculous restrictions on backpacks, food items, supports for signs and other items that would make an all-day protest in January more bearable.

To top it off, the federal government is

diverting \$11.9 million from D.C.'s Homeland Security budget to pay for Bush's inauguration security. D.C.'s mayor and City Council quickly pointed out that the federal government usually pays the expenses for these national events.

Every other U.S. president for the past 200 years has paid for his own inauguration through private donations.

D.C. residents—90 percent of whom voted against Bush—have suffered for decades under a colonial relationship with the U.S. government. Although D.C. has a larger population than Wyoming, what would be the first and only majority African American state has been consistently denied statehood.

Unlike most states, D.C. is not allowed to tax commuters, who take their often considerable income back to the nearby suburbs in Maryland and Virginia. This leaves basic city services without funds.

### Crisis for schools and housing

The vast majority of D.C. parents either compete for the few spaces available in the very few good public schools left or are forced to leave their children in underfunded neighborhood schools. The federal government encourages charter schools, which siphon money and resources from public education but serve only a few. The wealthy send their children to private schools.

Residents in old D.C. apartment buildings often get government notices that their homes have code and safety violations, and they must correct them by a certain date. If they don't, their homes are barricaded and they are thrown out in the streets. With D.C. housing costs through the roof, renters fortunate enough to find affordable housing elsewhere in the city will likely confront similar code and safety violations.

D.C. homeowners are regularly assessed huge tax increases due to the rising values/costs. They are then subject to predatory lenders who often end up taking their homes when the borrowers can't pay back these high-interest loans. The average price of a new rental one-bedroom apartment in D.C. has gone from \$800 to \$1,500 in just a few years.

Residents understand that these are attempts to drive them out to make way for the expansion of the hot new neighborhoods and the many new high-salaried people in the area. Tax incentives have encouraged developers to buy up property and renovate it for a hefty profit. They are able to turn old rat infested warehouses into high-priced condominiums within a matter of months.

D.C. is full of upscale sandwich shops and coffee bars. It has an abundance of four-star restaurants and trendy clothing boutiques. It also has the highest percent-

age of advanced degrees per capita in the nation, but it's becoming more and more a city of haves and have-nots.

In the past, the very poor have turned to a shelter run by the Community for Creative Non-Violence. It has housed single men and women as well as families for decades. In the 1980s, CCNV's Mitch Snyder led fasts and protests that put the question of homelessness on the national agenda.

The city has now issued a directive that would force the shelter to discontinue accepting families, instead forcing them into apartments elsewhere in the city. This shelter also houses the D.C. Central Kitchen, Clean and Sober Streets and Unity Health Care, whose services these homeless families counted on.

Thousands of D.C. residents are without health care, which is especially difficult since the closing of D.C. General, the city's only public hospital. Many of those with health insurance are forced to enroll in high-deductible plans that set up tax-sheltered accounts in order to help pay for what's not covered. This can force people to reject needed medical care.

D.C. residents will join thousands from around the country to protest the inauguration, demanding affordable housing and health care for all, an end to gentrification and exploitation of D.C. residents, and for D.C. statehood now! □

# Anti-war marine killed in shootout with cops

By Adrian Garcia  
Los Angeles

When 19-year-old Chicano Andres Raya enlisted in the military in Spring 2003 and was sent to Iraq, he was hoping for a better future and some semblance of respect, even under a racist system that oppresses people of color and workers.

Unfortunately, Raya's experience revealed the awful truth: he was sent to oppress and kill innocent Iraqis at the behest of an imperialist vulture, the U.S.

Raya's disillusionment turned tragic after he returned home. On Jan. 9 he confronted police with an AK-47 assault wea-

pon. He killed one Ceres, Calif., police sergeant and critically wounded another. Then he was mortally wounded in a hail of police gunfire. (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 14)

Ceres is a poor industrial farming suburb of Modesto, Calif., consisting of decrepit housing and unlighted streets. Although Raya graduated from high school he saw few promising opportunities for his future, as do countless of young people of color. Raya believed that military service might offer him the opportunity he sought.

After serving a tour in Iraq, Raya returned to his hometown with an avidly

anti-war perspective. "The war changed him, there is no doubt about it," said Alex Raya, a cousin. Raya's family place the blame for their son's tragic death firmly on the war in Iraq. Some say his unwillingness to return to Iraq might have sparked the incident.

Last September, when Raya returned home after seven months in Iraq, he was very vocal about his anti-war stance. He urged everyone around him to see Michael Moore's anti-war film, "Fahrenheit 9/11." He said, "The war is no good." Modesto police confiscated a videotape on which Raya made negative comments against Bush.

Modesto authorities have classified this case as one of a gang member on a violent rampage. Police reacted by conducting a raid, along with agents of the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, of supposed gang territories. It's not their first overreaction. Back in September 2000 the Modesto Police Department SWAT team shot an 11-year-old boy to death during a raid.

Authorities are simply trying to mask the reality of life for a young oppressed Chicano who became yet another casualty of war when he was forced to face a system at home that only perpetuates the suffering of people of color and the working class. □

# Hotel workers' threat of strike at Inaugural wins settlement

By Sharon Black  
Washington, D.C.

A little after 6 p.m. on Jan. 14, hundreds of hotel workers from UNITE-HERE Local 25 jumped to their feet, embraced each other and declared victory following six hours of nail-biting negotiations at the Prince Hall Masonic Temple in Washington, D.C.

A sea of jubilant workers poured into the street to continue celebrations. Hotel management had agreed to drop their demand for a two-tiered health-care system for new employees and for increases in co-pays. They agreed to a 50-cent wage increase each year over a three-year contract. Management contributions to worker pensions will increase by approximately 20 percent over the contract period.

A series of changes in work rules will award many workers who had formerly been excluded with paid time off. Some rules, such as posting notices in workers' original languages, will protect them from abuses. Management also caved in on its earlier refusal to make the contract retroactive to September.

In September 2004, 94 percent of the 3,800 D.C. hotel workers had voted to strike over these issues, particularly the two-tier healthcare system and increases in co-pays. Negotiations had been stormy. The bosses had walked out of most sessions. Long periods went by when there were no talks.

The D.C. hotel workers' struggle was not isolated. It was part of a national fight that included hotel workers in San Francisco, who were both locked out and on strike over similar issues, and in Los Angeles, who have been and continue to be in a protracted battle for a union contract. UNITE-HERE has seen this as a critical battle and earlier sought to fight for coordinated two-year national contracts. Like the Food and Commercial Workers' grocery strike, the hotel workers' fight has become the focus for workers and the union movement nationally.

The workers will vote early this week. By all indications the settlement reached tonight will be approved and is considered a victory by the union members.

In the hours leading up to this settlement, the Prince Hall auditorium had become a stage for those workers—generally ignored and marginalized—who labor in the U.S. capital's luxury hotels.

The maids who pick up for the rich; the bellhops who carry the heavy luggage; the servers and food workers; the janitorial staff and desk receptionists, and all the others who actually keep the hotels running filled the hall, watching and listening to the contract negotiations taking place between union representatives and hotel bosses.

Those witnessing the Jan. 14 negotiations couldn't help but feel elated as the tables were turned, even if slightly, on the rich and powerful.

The hotel bosses and their representatives sat across from the union negotiating committee, led by John Boardman, secretary-treasurer of UNITE-HERE Local 25, and Peter Ward of New York City UNITE-HERE. They each presented proposals



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

and counter-proposals while the hotel workers looked on.

## Management feels workers' strength

When the hotel management left the hall to caucus, they had that uncomfortable squirming look, tightening their faces as if they were worried that they might be the target of justified anger. They felt the strength of the 600 workers who gathered to listen throughout the day. Workers were steadily coming in from picket lines that had been set up around the 14 impacted hotels. Other workers came by right after finishing their shifts.

Over the preceding days protests and picket lines had been conducted simultaneously at different hotels. Thousands of flyers had been distributed to the community. The union began a campaign to prepare for a strike on Jan. 15, linking it to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday and using the Jan. 20 Bush inauguration and the threat of strike as leverage.

Rev. Graylan Hagler, Local 25's new chaplain and a noted community and anti-war leader, helped to spearhead community support. At a picket line outside a downtown hotel while negotiations were continuing, he proclaimed to the workers, "The community supports you. Supporters from Washington and Baltimore are prepared to join you in taking over the hotels during the Bush inauguration on January 20."

Workers embrace and cheer Hagler wherever he speaks. They see him as a staunch and important ally.

Inside the hall those watching couldn't help notice the managers' tightened faces and stiff gait as they had to proceed through the room. Almost every one of the bosses was white and male, while the workers were overwhelmingly African American plus immigrants from the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, Africa and Asia. Half were women.

One of the workers expressed it best when he pointed out from the audience and exclaimed, "That's one of the meanest of them—they treat us like dirt." He was clearly elated that the tables seemed to have turned. It was like fingering a criminal, only this time it was the workers doing it.

A Washington Post article by Neil Irwin and Amy Joyce that appeared on Jan. 15 reports some of this, but also obscures the role of the workers and their struggle.

The Post article quotes Bruce

Raynor, general president of national UNITE-HERE, as saying, "The only thing I regret about this [settlement] is that we don't have the ability to embarrass this administration [referring to Bush's inauguration]. They deserve to be embarrassed by the workers. They are the most anti-worker administration in history."

Of course, there is no absolute guarantee that the Post quote is accurate. But every savvy trade unionist knows that the article is implying that Raynor was distant from these negotiations or without power, which is absurd.

Even more to the heart of the matter is how the Washington Post implies that the interests of the workers and the hotel bosses are the same, or at least not counter to each other. It paints the picture that the big worry on the workers' minds was the amount of overtime that would have been lost during the inaugural if a strike took place.

No worker would want to downplay the importance of overtime pay, especially for workers who have so very little. But what the Washington Post doesn't want to own up to is that the hotel workers were ready to fight and the capitalist class had to be deeply concerned that a strike during the inauguration could have damaged the Bush administration and his entire class.

This conflict could have opened up a wider and broader fight, and that frightened not just the hotel bosses—who need to make much of their revenue during this season—but the bankers and bosses as a whole. Such a struggle, led by the most oppressed, could have built unity in the labor movement. It might have provided the spark to take on the bigger attacks on the working class and the unions, especially during this period of imperialist war.

The hotel workers and their supporters were ready to fight. The potential of putting this on the doorstep of the White House can't be ignored. It was the wider conflict that the bosses most feared.

UNITE-HERE Local 25 leaders, organizers and staff, and especially the workers need to be saluted. They deserve this settlement and much more. Every progressive-minded worker will look hard at this fight and look forward to future battles. The hotel workers' struggle as well as the Million Worker March last fall give evidence of a growing militancy in a large sector of the working class. □

## ON THE PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

## Two organizing victories

On Jan. 10 workers in North Carolina celebrated a National Labor Relations Board ruling that Smithfield Packing Company suppressed their right to organize at its Tar Heel, N.C., plant. With 5,000 workers, this is one of the biggest meat-processing factories in the world. United Food and Commercial Workers sought the ruling, which cited widespread human and worker rights abuses. On Jan. 11 the NLRB supported a judge's ruling that a Toledo, Ohio, hospital had violated labor laws during a 2001 organizing drive by the United Auto Workers. Now the UAW has a green light to conduct a new election to represent nearly 3,300 nurses and other hospital staff.

## Youngstown paper strike gathers support

More than 170 newsroom, advertising and circulation workers in Newspaper Guild Local 34011 have been walking the picket line outside the Youngstown, Ohio, paper since Nov. 16. The paper's owner, Vindicator, Inc., is only offering a 1 percent increase after the workers have gone four years without a raise. Vindicator, which refuses to negotiate, also wants the workers to pay more for their health care coverage, which would completely wipe out the raise. Community support is growing for this Communication Workers local. Not only did the Youngstown City Council vote unanimously to support the strikers, but the union's boycott of the newspaper's circulation and advertising is going strong. The Teamsters who deliver the paper by truck are honoring the picket line, as are some paper carriers. The strike paper is so popular that all 51,000 weekly copies are quickly distributed. You can read it online at [www.valleyvoiceonline.com](http://www.valleyvoiceonline.com)

## Bus drivers on strike

Over 600 bus drivers and maintenance workers, who serve 70,000 riders in Queens and Brooklyn, went on strike on Jan. 10 when New York City's millionaire mayor, Michael Bloomberg, neglected to hold talks with workers about wages, health insurance and job security. Though a city spokesperson told the Jan. 7 New York Times that the drivers would be "fully protected" if the companies they work for are acquired by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Thomas DeMarinis, treasurer of Amalgamated Transit Local 1179, said the city hadn't bothered to discuss that with the workers. Members of locals 1179 and 1181 told the Jan. 11 Times that they were striking for more generous health care benefits, retroactive pay raises going back to 2002 when their last contract expired and an agreement that the workers would retain their seniority when they become part of the MTA.

## Immigrant workers win \$164,000 settlement

Two pricey New York City restaurants agreed on Jan. 11 to pay \$164,000 in back wages to 23 Mexican workers. The immigrants had worked 50 to 55 hours a week but were only paid for 35 or 40 hours. And they were routinely bullied and subjected to racist abuse by the bosses. In the settlement the restaurants agreed to give the workers time and a half for all hours worked over 40 each week, as well as a half hour lunch break, as required by state law. The workers, who cannot be fired for a year after the agreement, also won three paid sick days and a week's vacation each year. The settlement, as reported in the New York Times, said that the agreement "shall not be construed as an admission of wrongdoing." But if managers at those restaurants were tried by a people's court, they would be found guilty of theft and racist discrimination. Fortunately, the workers knew their rights, fought back and won. □

## Detroit budget crisis

# Feed the cities, not the Pentagon

Special to Workers World  
Detroit

Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick launched a major attack on the people of Detroit in his State of the City address on Jan. 12.

Citing a looming budget deficit estimated at \$214 to \$400 million, Kilpatrick announced the layoff of 686 city workers effective March 1. He also ordered a 10-percent pay cut for all non-union city workers, along with the elimination of 24-hour bus service and 237 unfilled city positions.

Detroit City Council fiscal analyst Irvin Corley Jr. forecast further layoffs of up to 2,300 city workers.

The city also plans an attempt to force union workers to accept a 10-percent pay cut and greater co-payments for medical coverage.

The effects on the city would be devastating. Earlier budget crises have already resulted in cuts in services. In summer 2004 the School Board laid off over 2,000 employees. Now, another 2,000 school employees may be cut, along with the closing of up to 40 schools.

City Council member Joanne Watson denounced the plans to curtail bus service.



“One third of the workers in this city take the bus to work,” she said. “Cutting 24-hour service will only cause people to lose their jobs or move out of the city.”

The Detroit Million Worker March Committee issued a petition to the mayor and City Council to keep 24-hour bus service. The demand ends: “Don’t put the budget crisis on the backs of those who can least afford it.”

### Big business blames workers

For months the mayor and big business have tried to make these cutbacks seem inevitable. At a special symposium at Wayne State University on Jan. 4-5, corporate and banking consultants, along with the mayor and other city officials, blamed the fiscal crisis on the loss of population. Detroit went from a high of over 1.5 million people in 1951 to 900,000 today, with a corresponding 12-percent drop in property tax revenue.

Their consensus? Mass layoffs of city workers and cutbacks in services, as well as privatization of some departments.

What these spokespeople for big business failed to point out is that their policies accelerated Detroit’s population decline. Massive job losses came from outsourcing to non-union areas and other countries, followed by plant closings in Detroit. Large corporations received huge tax abatements from the city over the years. Banks were guilty of red-lining—refusing to give loans to many African Americans seeking to buy homes—while racist whites fled the city. Giant malls opening in the suburbs led to loss of inner city commercial businesses.

Detroit City Council members have demanded the mayor discuss ideas for

budget reduction for the past three years with no response. Detroit City Council President Maryann Mahaffey sought information from the Council’s analyst about eliminating high-level management and supervisory positions, rather than laying off those who really do the work. Council member Sharon McPhail publicly asked why the mayor had appointed a deputy mayor at \$140,000 a year when the city is in such bad financial shape.

At a news conference the day after the State of the City address, reporters who tried to question the mayor about excess spending were dragged out of the room by the mayor’s security team.

### Workers protest cuts

Less than 24 hours after the mayor announced the cuts, several dozen unionized city workers picketed City Hall. The protest, called by Federal, State, County and Municipal Employees Local 207, got wide media coverage as workers chanted, “Stop the layoffs, stop the cutbacks” and “Lay off the mayor!”

Speaking to the demonstrators, Auto Workers Local 2334 President David Sole pointed out that there was money to eliminate the deficit and even expand city services. Sole noted that Detroit has accumulated billions in debt to corporate banks.

“In Iraq, Indonesia, Latin America and Russia, when these countries couldn’t repay their debts, the banks negotiated to forgive a portion of that debt. Why can’t they do that for Detroit and other cities?” Sole asked. He said in the 1930s Detroit’s



WW PHOTOS: CHERYL LABASH

mayor called for a moratorium on payment of interest on the debt.

The cost of the Iraq war and the overall Pentagon budget has been heavy on Michigan, and on Detroit in particular. The city paid \$1.18 billion in 2004 toward the massive Pentagon \$550 billion war machine. According to Employment Research Associates, a worker-oriented think tank, in 2004 Detroit sent \$429 million to Washington, its share of the Iraq war’s \$200 billion appropriation. This is twice as much as the city’s projected budget deficit.

Cities and states around the U.S. are facing similar budget crises. Service cuts and mass layoffs threaten the livelihood and well-being of tens of million of workers and unemployed. This opens up the possibility that people will confront the fact that only a struggle against the war can solve the crisis.

Union and community activists in Detroit are currently discussing a proposal for a national conference of the cities to fight the Bush budget that “feeds the Pentagon and starves the cities.” □

## Unions resist control board’s attacks

By Bryan G. Pfeifer  
Springfield, Mass.

Members of Springfield’s Finance Control Board, under the guise of achieving fiscal solvency, are stepping up their attacks on workers and their communities. Special targets are vital city services and public-sector union workers like the teachers who are entering their fourth year of a wage freeze.

On Dec. 21 Philip Puccia, the Control Board’s executive director, sent a letter to the Springfield Education Association informing the 2,500 teachers and 3,000 retirees in the teacher’s union that the board was going to vote at its next meeting to increase deductibles and co-payments for all medical services except office visits and prescription drugs, effective April 1. If implemented, the maximum out-of-pocket increases would be \$1,000 per person, or \$2,000 per family for in-network medical care annually.

After the board voted in the changes, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, on behalf of the SEA, filed a complaint Dec. 29 with the Massachusetts Labor Relations Commission. The MTA asserted the board violated collective bargaining by unilaterally imposing the fee hikes without negotiating them with the union. Traditionally the union negotiated with the City Council’s School Committee. The union maintains this bargaining responsibility now goes to the board, based on the legislation that created the board.

SEA president Tim Collins says of the

Finance Control Board: “They are absolutely violating the law. By trying to wring more money out of employees, the Board is going to drive more good teachers out of the system and hurt the quality of education in our schools—and they know it.”

Many union members in Springfield, a significant number of whom are African American, Latin@ and women, charge that privatization and de-regulation are the board members’ real goals.

Besides attempting to set a precedent for violating collective bargaining rights, the Control Board has contracted with various consulting firms to “analyze” many unionized public sector workforces in the city. The consultants are being instructed to recommend whether various departments or services should be retained, put out for “competitive” bidding, outsourced, leased or sold.

The board has targeted almost all aspects of public work, including the fire department, the payroll system, on-street parking enforcement and many other city departments. The largest is the Department of Public Works, which does solid waste disposal, street repair, plowing and numerous other jobs. The board is also “investigating” food service, information technology, bus service and office supply services in the school department.

Control Board Executive Director Philip Puccia said on Jan. 3: “We expect the return will more than outweigh any cost that may be incurred. Much of what the control board is doing is trying to analyze the operations of all city departments to

compare them to industry-best practices and see if and where there may be efficiencies to be gained.” (www.masslive.com)

### Big Business Takes Over

The mission of the five-member Control Board is to make Springfield “solvent.” The board has full control of the municipal budget and spending, and its decision-making powers supersede the Mayor and the City Council, thereby legally side-stepping elected city officials. But the board members’ salaries, as well as those of an executive and assistant director, are paid by the city.

The Massachusetts legislature created the board in early July 2004 through a bill signed by Republican Governor Mitt Romney. The justification was Springfield’s deficit of \$23 million in its 2004 annual budget of \$442.3 million. (www.mass.gov)

The composition of the board shows the determination of powerful financial and political interests to protect their investments in the city.

Members include current state Revenue Commissioner Alan LeBovidge, who is a former Vice Chairman of PricewaterhouseCoopers, which provides “industry-focused assurance tax services,” as well as Tom Trimarco, former chair of the state’s retirement fund and a former advisor at the U.S. Department of Transportation.

A third member is Jake Jacobson, a Harvard and MIT graduate billed as a “turn around specialist” by Romney for his experience in management consulting for corporations like Vetco Gray, a \$500 mil-

lion oil services firm. The mayor of Springfield, Charles Ryan and City Council President Timothy J. Rooke, by virtue of their offices, are automatically on the board.

The executive director, Puccia, with an annual salary of \$130,000, most recently ran the Washington, D.C.-based Adelphi Capital, a consulting business on transportation technology. Puccia is the former head of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority where, in 1997, a chief administrator, Roberta Edwards, an African-American woman, sued him for sexual and racist harassment after being fired. Although a judge initially dismissed the claims against Puccia, a jury in June 2001 awarded Edwards damages.

During her suit, Edwards called Puccia “a racist, a harasser, and a ‘pit bull.’” That his behavior represented system-wide discrimination shows up in a report from the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. The commission documents that during Puccia’s tenure, the MBTA was rife with sexual and racist harassment in the workplace, in its hiring practices and worker grievances. In 1997 the Federal Transit Administration exposed the concentration of female and workers of color in low-level classifications at the MBTA.

The disenfranchisement of workers, women and people of color continues in the makeup of the Springfield Finance Control Board. Despite the city’s demographics, which are 53 percent women and almost 50 percent people of color, there

Continued on page 9

## Honoring the memory of Dr. King

# Marches oppose war, racism & cutbacks

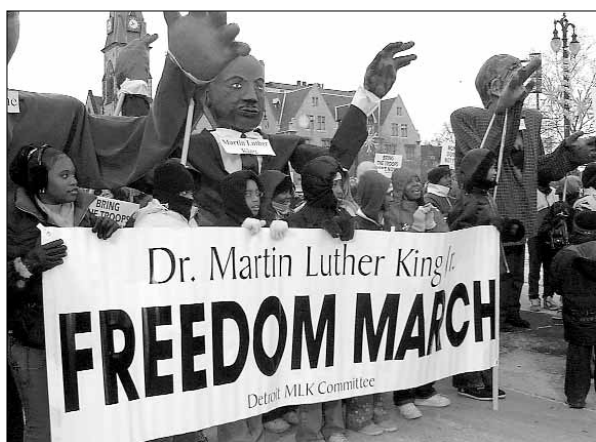
You would never know, based on the mediocre coverage in the U.S. capitalist press, that hundreds of events, large and small, took place all over the U.S. to pay homage to the legacy of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King on his birthday, which is commemorated as a federal holiday on the third Monday of January. This is not just a time to reflect on King's contributions to the struggle against racist segregation but is also an opportunity to project an anti-war and anti-cutback fighting perspective that King was developing before his assassination in 1968. This brief MLK roundup reflects political issues raised in some of the King events.

### ATLANTA

The pulsing sound of drums marked the participation of an anti-war "Drums for Peace" contingent in the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day march Jan. 17 in Atlanta, the birthplace of the slain human rights leader. Organized by the International Action Center, Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition and Women's Action for New Directions, the contingent included high school activists, families with children and immigrants from Ethiopia and Senegal. Hundreds of deep blue signs saying "Stop the war now" were distributed throughout the entire parade. The banners in the contingent had slogans such as "Money for jobs and human needs, not war" and "Bring the troops home now." Thousands of flyers advertising the Atlanta counter-inaugural "Bush has no mandate" march and rally on Jan. 20 were distributed. Those lining the streets applauded and chanted along with the contingent.

### DETROIT

The second annual Martin Luther King Freedom March brought 1,000 people into the streets and the halls of historic Central Methodist Church Jan. 17. With



Detroit

WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

wide support and participation from all ages, nationalities and families, the event was initiated by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice and the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights. The demonstrators called for U.S. troops out of Iraq as they marched through downtown Detroit, past the International Auto Show, to the Labor Arch and Underground Railroad monuments and the Coleman A. Young Municipal Building. There they demanded no layoffs, no pay cuts, no service cuts. The march was led by youth who also read their essays prepared for the Freedom March contest. The Detroit Million Worker March Committee petitioned to save 24-hour bus service and leafleted for a Fightback Forum at UAW Local 22 on Feb. 5.

### OAKLAND, CALIF.

Concerned students, parents, teachers and community supporters attended the Martin Luther King Day March Jan. 17 to demand "End the takeover and closure of our schools" and "Defend public education."

The Oakland public school system is on the brink of being sold to the highest bidder and privatized due to the consequences of President George W. Bush's "No child left behind" scam. Gov. Arnold Schwarzen-

egger's recently unveiled budget promises to deepen the attack on students, teachers and school districts statewide. More than 10 Oakland schools are scheduled to be closed at the end of this year.

Student activists from several high schools urged the crowd to get involved. One young man said, "No one ever got anything accomplished by sitting around. It's time to fight."

Trent Willis, the newly elected president of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 and co-chair of the Million Worker March Movement, expressed strong support for this movement. Willis stated, "We demand an end to the dismantling of public schools immediately."

Sponsored by the Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration & Immigrant Rights and Fight for Equality by Any Means Necessary, the rally ended with a short march through downtown Oakland.

### SAN DIEGO

Marchers at the front of the San Diego International Action Center contingent in the Jan. 15 Martin Luther King Jr. Parade carried an 8-by-4-foot oil portrait of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the work of San Diego muralist and activist Mario Torero. Many onlookers applauded and yelled "Free Mumia!" Other signs in the contingent that followed called for freedom for this heroic political

prisoner and for the U.S. to get out of Iraq. Also prominent was a large Palestinian flag. IAC leader Carl Muhammad led chants and gave a heavy rap on the misuse of human resources for war. Bringing up the rear was a flatbed truck, its sides adorned with identical banners carrying Dr. King's condemnation of U.S. militarism: "... the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today [is] my own government."

### SAN FRANCISCO

Families including children, along with labor and anti-war groups, were among thousands of people who participated in the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Freedom March in San Francisco Jan. 17. A freedom train brought people from San Jose and other cities in the South Bay and ferries carried others across the San Francisco Bay to the starting point of the march at Fourth & Townsend streets. In this 19th annual event, people marched to the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, where an indoor rally was held in King's honor. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union drill team was one of the most dynamic groups in the march. Many youth were present, including a Sacramento high school marching band. There were many "Free Mumia" and "U.S. out of Iraq" signs in the march as well as a contingent calling for the end of Israeli occupation of Palestine.

*Dianne Mathiowetz, Cheryl LaBash, David Sole, Judy Greenspan, Bob McCubbin and Brenda Sandburg contributed to this roundup.*

## MLK rally denounces racial profiling

By Stephanie Nichols  
Boston

On Jan. 15, in celebration of Martin Luther King's 76th birthday, the International Action Center held an anti-war, anti-racist speak-out in downtown Boston.

Before the speak-out began, several speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr. himself were played over the sound system.

Speakers included: musician David Ebony Allen Barkley, a member of The Alliance of Black Union Workers; Jorge Marin, Martin Luther King Bolivarian Circle of Boston; Maureen Skehan, Women's Fightback Network of Boston; Stephanie Nichols from Fight Imperialism-Stand Together (FIST) youth and student group; and representatives from a community anti-war group that holds Saturday demonstrations at the site, among others.

Several young students from Chelsea helped lead chants including: "Who's gonna stop the war? We're gonna stop the war!" "FBI, INS, Hands off immigrants!" "Hey Hey, Ho Ho, this racist war has got to go!"

A young Muslim student, Suhair Masood, spoke about the case of a Syrian man, Nabil Al-Murvah, who was racially profiled over three years ago.

Al-Murvah was continuously harassed by the FBI and almost fled to Canada. He

was incarcerated for being a suspected "terrorist" based on the repressive Patriot Act. He was tortured and put into a private cell. After he finally won the case, the Immigration Service "discovered" papers that they claim he falsified in order to become a U.S. citizen. He was a legal citizen at that point and had lived here for 16 years. But the INS put him in jail anyway.

Six months is the maximum time that anyone can be held in jail without a hearing. Every time Al-Murvah's six months have been up, he has been moved to another jail in another city where he has to start the process over again. He has presently been in jail for three years.

His family and friends, including his North American wife of seven years, have not heard from him in over a year. They suspect that he has been deported.

Connecting racial profiling in the United States, cutbacks, the prison industrial complex and the cost of war in Iraq, this speak-out, full of solidarity and political consciousness, strengthened the dream for a better world at home and abroad. The struggle will help to make that dream, for which Dr. King gave his life, a reality.

Contact FIST at FIST@workers.org. □



CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY

PHOTO: MARCUS GHO

## FIST confronts racism and militarism

By Evan Sarmiento and Sarah Glod  
Pittsburgh

On Jan. 17, Pittsburgh FIST (Fight Imperialism-Stand Together), along with the Duncan Porter House of Hospitality and Resistance and the Thomas Merton Center, demonstrated in front of Warner Hall at Carnegie Mellon University to demand an end to the school's military contracting and to all forms of occupation, from Haiti to Iraq.

Carnegie Mellon has a long history of supporting militarism and advocating racism. CMU's National Robotics Engineering Consortium (NREC) was awarded a multi-million-dollar contract to develop a "Tactical Unmanned Ground Vehicle," which is essentially a seek-and-destroy robot. Named "Gladiator," it has direct-fire capabilities. This concept was demonstrated at the Marines' Camp Smith in

Hawaii. It is equipped with an M240G medium machine gun and can launch dozens of smoke rounds down-range.

Carnegie Mellon also harbors racism. A computer science professor at CMU, David Touretzky, is very vocal about his racist sentiments. He claims that "The Black underclass is a very, very sick culture... AA [affirmative action] programs can't help the Black underclass, because those people are so [expletive] they're virtually unemployable." (PRNewswire)

Since the 1980s, the diversity of students at CMU has gone down. Students are now combed from elite prep schools. The Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) has become one of the largest institutions at CMU and CMU's right-wing agenda is visible everywhere.

On the national holiday for Dr. Martin Luther King, Pittsburgh FIST demonstrated in the spirit of solidarity with the civil rights leader, who came out against the Vietnam War, against all forms of military contracting and racism. □



# 10,000 protest police killing of Kenneth Walker

By Dianne Mathiowetz  
Columbus, Ga.

In a historic march for the African American community of Columbus, Ga., thousands of people streamed into the streets on Jan. 15, demanding justice for Kenneth Walker, a 39-year-old insurance agent who was killed by a Muscogee County sheriff's deputy on Dec. 10, 2003.

After a year marked by delaying tactics and failure to release information about the investigation, on Nov. 23, 2004, a grand jury refused to indict David Glisson, the former deputy who shot Walker twice in the head. Authorities fired Glisson about two months after Walker's death for "not following proper police procedures."

After the verdict, civil-rights organizations in Columbus, with the support of nationally-known leaders such as Jesse Jackson and Joseph Lowrey, immediately called for a national march. Set for Jan. 15, the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the march denounced the failure

of the judicial system to protect the rights of Black people.

Organizers from Atlanta came in buses and car caravans. People traveled from other parts of the state as well as from Alabama and South Carolina.

But the vast majority of the 10,000 protesters were from Columbus. Young and old, women, men and children, they marched to the local Government Center, chanting, "No justice, no peace," and calling out Kenneth Walker's name.

Many had seen the police videotape of the shooting, finally released to the public on Dec. 1, 2004. This footage had verified to them that once again the police had murdered a Black man.

Walker and three of his friends were heading for a local restaurant on the night of Dec. 10, 2003, when sheriff's deputies pulled them over on busy Interstate 185. Police said they were acting on a tip that heavily-armed Miami drug dealers were making a delivery in Columbus that night and were driving an SUV.

The three surviving men say they were physically pulled out of their Yukon, thrown on the ground with

guns pointed at their heads and not allowed to ask any questions. The videotape shows all four men prone on the ground, with no sign of resistance. Suddenly two shots ring out. Officers then mill around Walker and leave him unattended for two minutes before anyone attempts first aid.

There were no weapons or drugs found in the car or on Walker or his friends. Glisson first claimed that he tripped as he put his knee in Walker's back and the barrel of his semi-automatic machine gun to the back of his head. Later he said that he fired "instinctively" when he thought Walker's hand moved toward his pocket.

On Jan. 15, protesters jammed the Government Center plaza and spilled



across the street to listen as speakers put into words the pain, anger, frustration and grief they felt at the death of another Black man at the hands of police. On the side of the multi-storied building was a banner with Walker's face and the words "Break the chains of injustice."

Since Walker's death, his mother and wife have continued to demand justice. Standing with her young daughter on stage with civil-rights activists, Cheryl Walker, his widow, thanked the crowd for their support and shared some of her memories of Kenneth.

In addition to pursuing civil lawsuits, the family and friends of Walker are demanding a second grand jury be convened to show that the taking of a Black man's life has consequences. □

## Police brutality covered up

# 'Non-lethal' TASERs still kill

By Imani Henry

Last Oct. 20, cops at an elementary school used a stun gun to subdue a six-year-old boy who was using a shard of glass to cut himself and hold a security officer at bay.

A month later they used TASERs to shock a first-year high-schooler. On Nov. 20, police in Lincoln Park, Mich., TASERed a 14-year-old boy who wouldn't stop playing his Nintendo Game Boy during class.

On Dec. 29, 2004, Christopher Hernandez, 19, was killed after being TASERed and doused with a substance similar to pepper spray by the Collier County, Fla., sheriff's deputies. According to the Associated Press, Hernandez was the third person to die in Florida that month after being zapped with a TASER gun.

The national press virtually ignored these cases of police brutality and the outrage of the communities victimized. Since

Sept. 11, 2001, the Bush administration's propaganda has whipped up not only a phony patriotism but a hero worship of law enforcement.

Along with the media whiteout on police brutality cases, the post 9/11 political climate has also served to desensitize the general public to the rampant police brutality and racial profiling of communities of color. In the name of national security, the war against the people of Iraq has been used to justify racial profiling of Arab, Muslim and South Asian communities in the U.S.

In the late 1990s, when national movements against police brutality were more visible, terms like "racial profiling" and "police brutality" were part of mass consciousness. In this current period of war and political repression, it is more hotly debated what constitutes actual brutality at hands of the cops.

For decades, stun guns and TASERs have been marketed to police departments

across the country as "nonlethal weapons." TASERs and stun guns are both electro-shock weapons, but stun guns are not as powerful as TASERs and only deliver a shock when directly applied to a person. Police prefer TASERs, which are shaped like handguns and can administer a 50,000-volt shock. The cop can either shoot a person from a distance of up to 21 feet with metal darts or apply the gun directly to the victim's skin.

TASER International, based in Scottsdale, Ariz., is a multimillion-dollar company that provides TASERs to 6,000 agencies of law enforcement across the country and to military units around the world.

### Used against schoolchildren

Last Nov. 30, Amnesty International reported that the use of TASERs by U.S. law enforcement agencies should be seen as widespread human rights abuse. The report concludes that, "Far from being used to avoid lethal force, many U.S. police

agencies are deploying TASERs as a routine force option to subdue non-compliant or disturbed individuals who do not pose a serious danger to themselves or others.

"In some departments, TASERs have become the most prevalent force tool. They have been used against unruly schoolchildren; mentally disturbed or intoxicated individuals; unarmed suspects fleeing minor crime scenes and people who fail to comply immediately with a command."

In October 2002 in Miramar, Fla., Chiquita Hammonds, a 15-year-old Black youth, was taken off her school bus by cops after she was mistakenly pointed out as being involved in a paper-throwing incident. Surrounded by three cops, she insisted that she wanted to walk home. For refusing to obey a cop's demand to stay, she was attacked with pepper-spray and TASERed by the police.

Since Jan. 7, police who patrol middle and high schools in Jacksonville, Fla.,

*Continued on page 8*

## MLK march aims to save hospital

By John Parker  
Los Angeles

The annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration along MLK Jr. Blvd Jan. 17 had a unique twist. Along with the military and police presence and the usual array of politicians, a march float was present with a progressive political message. These kinds of messages aren't usually allowed by the march organizers who are not connected to the community of South Los Angeles.

The message of fight back resonated with the community's demand to not allow the closing of a hospital that serves over 1 million people and is the primary health care facility in the Black and Latino communities of South Los Angeles.

The trauma center at Martin Luther King/Drew Medical Center has already temporarily been closed down. The community is demanding that the facility be left as a comprehensive health care and training center with the trauma unit fully operational.

Before the march began Congresswoman Maxine Waters requested that the International Action Center's "Save King/Drew Money for health care not war" banner be placed on the King/Drew float. Waters holds weekly meetings in the Black community building a fight back strategy to save King/Drew.

An official parade organizer told the contingent that the banner had to come down since it talked about war. Waters responded to this request with "Don't touch anything, if they want to restrict our First Amendment rights we'll sue them." The banner stayed up, along with complimentary placards. The contingent was left alone for the remainder of the parade.

King/Drew hospital and Waters have been under attack for many months with a vicious media campaign launched by the Los Angeles Times urging its closure. Although the hospital was lauded by a major national newspaper last year, some elected officials and the LA Times seem desperate to close it, jeopardizing count-

less lives.

While a panel of nurses and activists organized by the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) discussed why the hospital is vital to the needs of the people it serves at a Jan. 15

community strategy meeting, a LA Times reporter rudely began interviewing members of the panel. When the moderator, an elderly Black man, asked the white reporter to stop the interviews, the reporter ignored him and continued with the interviews. When the moderator approached the reporter again, the reporter violently pushed him out of his way.

Members of the outraged community then surrounded the reporter telling him that he was no longer welcome at the meeting. He was escorted out promptly.

At one of the meetings a person respon-



WW PHOTO: ANA DUARTE

Los Angeles

sible for writing the first mission statement of the hospital noted that South Los Angeles has the highest percentage of homicides, yet they want to close the emergency facility at King/Drew. Some called that genocide against the Black and Latino communities.

The IAC will be at the Jan. 29 Watts Community Labor Action Center meeting at 9 a.m. to continue this most important fight back for healthcare and against racism. □

## Demonstration for Mumia Abu-Jamal Feb. 11

# 'Let the evidence be heard'



By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

Demanding that the truth be heard in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, supporters will go ahead with a planned demonstration Feb. 11 in Philadelphia despite the cancellation of a hearing on his case scheduled for that day in front of Pennsylvania State Court Judge Pamela Dembe.

That hearing was to present two key facts proving that the prosecution falsified evidence in order to convict Abu-Jamal. The reason given for the cancellation was that the "Johnson Ruling issued Dec. 20, 2004, may prohibit Dembe from ruling on the evidence."

According to Abu-Jamal's attorney Robert R. Bryan, however, the Johnson Ruling has nothing to do with the evidence being presented. Dembe's latest ruling is clearly just one more in a long history of blatant denials of justice in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Pam Africa, coordinator of the International Concerned Family and Friends of

Mumia Abu-Jamal, told Workers World, "Despite Judge Dembe's absurd cancellation of Mumia's hearing, the February 11 demonstration will go on as earlier planned. Dembe's action is consistent with all the fraud, lies, deceit and irregularities marring Mumia's case. The courts have attempted to stunt the people's power on behalf of Mumia by canceling at the eleventh hour to stop our momentum. However, protesting now is relevant and urgent. We need to be present, visible and vocal in our demands that Mumia's hearing be reinstated, with him present, to let the evidence be heard, and ultimately to release Mumia."

Demonstrators will gather at 10 a.m. at 15th and Cherry Streets, then march to the Criminal Justice Building at 13th and Filbert for a rally and press conference. Supporters will hold a symposium from 1:30 to 5 p.m. at 1501 Cherry on Mumia's role in the struggle, the status of his legal case and building the international support movement. An evening cultural event/fundraiser from 7 to 10 p.m. will

follow.

Mumia's supporters are asking people to call Judge Dembe to demand that Mumia's hearing be reinstated with him present. Dembe's phone number is 215-683-7148; her fax number is 215-683-7150.

Africa pointed out that "Dembe is currently feeling the collective heat of her colleagues in the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), the District Attorney's office, governor's mansion and on up to the top. To see Mumia walk out free from SCI-Greene we need to make our people's pressure greater than what Dembe is experiencing from the other side. There is only one way to do that — join together!"

### Support gaining momentum

The call for justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal has been gaining new momentum as the San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a resolution Jan. 11 by a nine-to-two vote calling for justice and a new trial for Abu-Jamal. They will send the resolution to Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell.

In November 2004 a resolution by the

National Caucus of Black State Legislators demanded that the courts consider the evidence of innocence of Mumia Abu-Jamal and that he be released from prison. The resolution commits the NCBSL to work with Abu-Jamal's legal defense team to petition the courts to file any necessary friend of the court brief on behalf of Abu-Jamal in order to vacate his conviction. The resolution describes Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial in Philadelphia (for the murder of Philadelphia policeman Daniel Faulkner) as "characterized by illegal suppression of evidence, police coercion, illegal exclusion of Black jurors and grotesquely unfair and unconstitutional rulings by the judge."

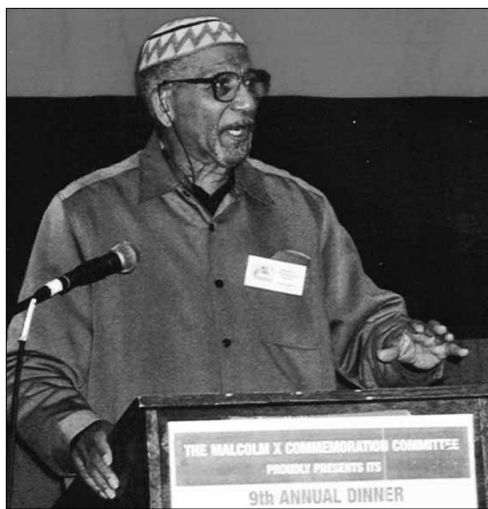
The NAACP also passed a similar resolution at their national convention in Philadelphia last summer.

For transportation from New York City for the Feb. 11 protest in Philadelphia call the International Action Center at 212-633-6646. For general information on the Feb. 11 protest call 215-476-8812 or visit the ICFFMAJ web site at [www.mumia.org](http://www.mumia.org). □



WW PHOTOS: ANNE PRUDEN

Co-chairs of the Malcolm X Commemoration, Iyaluua Ferguson and Herman Ferguson



## Malcolm X dinner honors political prisoners

The Malcolm X Commemoration Committee held its ninth annual dinner on Jan. 16, the eve of Dr. Martin Luther King's holiday. Herman Ferguson—a former political prisoner who is beloved by all who ever heard of and/or met him—welcomed and inspired a large gathering at Brooklyn's Restoration Plaza. The dinner honored the families, including children and grandchildren, of political prisoners and prisoners of war. Ferguson, who chaired the committee, was a revolutionary activist in the 1960s. He was in exile in Guyana for 19 years and, upon his

return, spent six years incarcerated in various New York facilities.

With Zayid Muhammad as Master of Ceremonies, speakers and entertainers included Sister D.K. Dyson, editor of The Nation newspaper, and Kamel Bell, son of Black Panther Party prisoner Herman Bell. Supporters were painfully moved by every person who contributed to the evening via song or spoken words. Most of them related to revolutionary struggle and solidarity with the old and still important slogan: "Tear Down the Walls!"

—Workers World New York bureau

## Ohio youth rally for marriage equality

By Martha Grevatt  
Columbus, Ohio

More than 100 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youths and allies rallied outside the Ohio State House on Jan. 15, braving the cold to protest "Issue One." As an amendment to the Ohio state constitution, Issue One not only blocks same-sex marriage but also prohibits civil unions. Passed on Nov. 3, 2004, the amendment threatens domestic partner benefits for LGBT people and unmarried heterosexuals. Under its restrictions, victims of domestic violence are already losing protection from abusive live-in partners.

The rally, called by Spectrum, a group of LGBT students and supporters at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, attracted students from Ohio State, Kent State and other campuses. Speakers called President Bush and his right-wing cohorts "terrorists to love" for their attacks on the right to marry, and blasted the "moral values" of a president who murders Iraqi civilians and, as governor of Texas, executed 151 individuals. In a fitting tribute to Jan. 15, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, speakers also stressed the need to unite in struggle, including the fight against racism. □

## 'Non-lethal' TASERs ?

Continued from page 7

have been armed with TASERs in addition to their regular guns, batons and pepper spray. According to the Jacksonville Times-Union, the Duval County sheriff's resource officer will be authorized to shock anyone, including students, if they resist arrest or demonstrate a threat.

The reality is that TASERs are deadly weapons. The AI report detailed 74 TASER-related deaths in the United States and Canada; 60 percent occurred between November 2003 and November 2004. In many of those deaths, the individual was not only shocked multiple times but also subjected to pepper spray, beatings with batons and/or hogtying.

### Most victims unarmed

Some 80 percent of the people TASERed to death were unarmed and 36 percent were killed for verbal noncompliance. Of course, this report is only the tip of the unreported cases of people TASERed.

The AI report also cites the use of TASERs against prisoners of war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sparked by international outrage, the Pentagon was forced to acknowledge the routine torture reports of abuse at U.S. detention centers in Iraq and Afghanistan and at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Fingered as the "ring leader," Charles A. Graner Jr. was sentenced to 10 years on Jan. 15 for his role in the sexual, physical and psychological torture of Iraqis incarcerated at the Abu Ghraib prison.

Graner is a former U.S. prison guard, It has been a long-time practice to torture and TASER prisoners here.

At his court-martial, Spec. Graner testified that when he complained to a superior, "His advice to me was that if M.I. is asking you to do this, it needs to be done. They're in charge, follow their orders."

Again, neither the top military brass nor Bush is facing charges. Yet they gave the orders to soldiers to torture prisoners, to destroy cities like Falluja and to occupy the sovereign nation of Iraq.

Cases of both police and military torture have been covered up. When public outrage forced some action, the media covered up the chain of command and focused instead on "rogue" individuals who perpetrated the crime. All attention is deflected from the top and from the capitalist sys-

tem, the root cause of the brutality.

Over the past weeks, TASER International's stocks have been on a rollercoaster ride because of a report about heart attacks induced by TASERs. A media frenzy ensued, with charges of cheating stockholders and a possible investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

On Jan. 11 TASER International issued an open letter to its stockholders, who range from Wall Street investment banks to cops, defending its \$105.8 million in stock sales last year. By Jan. 14, the company released a "newly published" report stating that "the gun's electric shocks do not cause cardiac arrest" and "may be safely applied multiple times if needed."

After this, TASER International stock rose more than 22 percent. Back in December 2004, TASER International was also in the news when one of its board members, former NYPD police commissioner Bernard Kerik, was up for appointment as director of the Department of Homeland Security.

Kerik had served under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani during his second term of office, beginning in 2000. During his term as New York's top cop, Kerik refused to discipline the four officers who shot and killed West African immigrant Amadou Diallo. As a reward for leading the racial profiling and detentions against the Arab and South Asian communities of New York after Sept. 11, Kerik was sent by Bush to Iraq in the summer of 2003 to train the Iraqi police.

Kerik's nomination came under fire for a host of reasons, including corruption while he was on the Commission of NYC Corrections. He was forced to withdraw his name after a week.

According to his biography on the Wikipedia site, Bernard Kerik's relationship with TASER since 2002 has earned him more than \$6.2 million in pre-tax profits through stock options he was granted and then sold, mostly in November 2004.

From the profits of TASER International to the over \$152 billion spent so far on the war, it isn't hard to see who the real criminals in society are. What is truly outrageous is how capitalism allows a few to gather great wealth through the sale of a tool of murderous terror against poor and working people. □



## Walkouts protest exploitation

# Chinese law helps workers organize union at Wal-Mart

By Deirdre Griswold

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions announced in November that Wal-Mart, which employs 20,000 workers at its stores in China, has agreed to allow a union to represent them if its “associates”—its euphemism for employees—show that they want one.

This chain of mega-stores has tried to close the door to unionization anywhere in the world it operates. Given Wal-Mart’s deserved reputation for ruthless exploitation and preventing its workers from organizing, this development could have tremendous repercussions for low-wage retail workers everywhere.

Chinese law requires that all companies, whether private or state-owned, allow the establishment of unions. But the law has not been vigorously enforced in foreign-owned companies until recently. Now the ACFTU says it will concentrate on organizing large corporations like Wal-Mart, Kodak and Samsung.

### Economic growth and class struggle

China has been undergoing a rapid expansion of its manufacturing base—the largest such growth in the world. While the state still employs the most industrial workers, investment by overseas capital has been extensive and many millions now work in foreign-owned firms, where conditions are much worse than in the mostly unionized state enterprises.

In recent years, protests by workers over low wages, long hours and working conditions in these factories have become tumultuous. Walkouts, work stoppages and even strikes have broken out in many of China’s industrial cities.

In December, the New York Times ran a series of articles about China that focused on its rapid industrial growth and the

growing confidence of workers to raise demands. One article, about a walkout by mostly women workers at a Uniden plant making wireless phones for Wal-Mart, told how they had met secretly to draw up a list of demands and then walked off the job.

“Analysts of China’s labor scene say strikes like this are becoming far more common as younger migrant workers exposed to the wealth of China’s relatively rich eastern cities grow increasingly angry over what many see as their exploitation. ... All the women interviewed seemed determined to press their demands, the most important of which, they said, were shorter work hours and enforcement of minimum-wage laws. Asked if they were afraid of losing their jobs, they scoffed at the idea, saying workers were in short supply in Shenzhen’s vast manufacturing zone.” (New York Times, Dec. 17, 2004)

This fall, the Washington Post reported that an “unprecedented series of walkouts” had shaken Chinese factories. (Nov. 27) This grassroots militancy has both stimulated the official trade union movement to act and been encouraged by developments in China’s political leadership.

Last August, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress launched a nationwide inspection of the implementation of the Trade Union Law, according to Beijing Review. “Results indicated that less than 10 percent of the 500,000 foreign-funded enterprises registered in China have established trade union organizations.”

Under Chinese law, “no organization or individual has the right to obstruct and prohibit the establishment of trade unions. ... China’s Trade Union Law stipulates two ways for the establishment of trade unions: One is a request from employees on a voluntary basis, and the other is a suggestion from the trade unions at a higher level. Trade unions in the upper

level of the national union hierarchy are authorized to send union officials to enterprises and help them establish trade unions. Enterprises have no right to interfere in the process,” says the Chinese daily.

The attention now being paid to union organizing in the Chinese press indicates that this development has the support of the Communist Party at the highest levels. It comes at a time when not only has the robust and growing working class been militant in pressing its demands, but economic development has created greater demand for skilled labor.

The ACFTU has also begun organizing community-based trade unions for migrant workers, who often are scattered in small worksites, as well as the unemployed. Last October, the union federation set up a hotline and by the end of December had received 60,000 complaints from workers nationwide. (Xinhuanet, Jan. 6) It then established 1,763 aid centers “to offer needy workers job opportunities, legal services and policy consultations,” Dong Li, director of the union’s Financial Auditing Committee, told a press conference in Beijing.

### ‘Independent’ trade unions?

Critics of China in the imperialist countries, many of them adherents of social democracy, have been demanding that Chinese workers have the right to establish unions independent of the ACFTU, claiming it is too close to the government and local authorities. The president of the ACFTU, Wei Jianxing, rejected this position in August 2002, saying the union “must resolutely uphold the unity of the working people and trade union organizations, and guard against the plot of hostile forces at home and abroad to ‘westernize’ and ‘split up’ the working people and trade union organizations.” Wei is also a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. (Quoted in China Labor Bulletin, based in Hong Kong.)

These critics almost unanimously view China as a capitalist country because of its introduction of market reforms after the death of Mao Zedong. And there certainly is a capitalist class in China today, just as there is class struggle. The growth of private ownership along with the phasing out of many social guarantees for workers and farmers has created a growing income gap in a country once noted for its relative social equality.

However, it would be wrong to write off the state structures erected by the Chinese Revolution, which was an earth-shaking development of world historic significance. There has been no counter-revolutionary breakup of the Chinese state, and while the party has made tremendous concessions to foreign and domestic capitalism in order to get technology and capital for development, and has been severely altered in the process, it has neither been broken up or destroyed.

China, with its tremendous development of recent decades, stands in great contrast to the lands of the former Soviet Union, where capitalist reaction and imperialist penetration have brought economic chaos and terrible hardships for the masses of people. Wages and living standards in China are rising—workers in China now earn three times what Indian workers do—and infant mortality in Beijing is now 4.6 per thousand live births (compared to 6.5 in New York City!). In the former Soviet countries, all the health

Grassroots militancy has stimulated the official trade union movement to act and been encouraged by developments in China’s political leadership.

and social welfare indices have moved in the opposite direction since the breakup of the USSR.

### Lessons of Poland

Wei Jianxing may very well also have been thinking of Poland when he cautioned against any “westernization” of China’s unions. Some of the very same political forces that today are pushing for “independent” unions in China wholeheartedly embraced “Solidarity” in Poland, the organization that mobilized for the restoration of capitalism there. Far from being a true expression of the workers—although it certainly became an outlet for their frustrations and grievances—Solidarity had a petty-bourgeois leadership that was advised and supported by the CIA, the Pope and, unfortunately, the AFL-CIO leadership as well.

In the first year after Poland’s weak socialist government fell, the economy imploded. Living standards took a nose-dive. Even today, 15 years later, unemployment in Poland is 18 percent and the shipyards where Solidarity first appeared have been either closed down or sold to Western corporations.

The ACFTU has taken on a huge task in trying to organize Wal-Mart, as U.S. unions have already found out. It takes genuine international solidarity among the workers of many countries to force these transnational corporations to sign a union contract. That should be at the top of the agenda of unions in the U.S.—not a campaign to defame China’s national union organization.

What do the bosses and executives of these corporations think about China’s “official” union movement? On the one hand, they want workers everywhere to take a cynical attitude toward the ACFTU, and spread the word that it is little more than a company union. But they’re not acting like it is.

“Multinationals resist introduction of Chinese unions,” was the headline of an article from Shanghai that appeared in the Financial Times of London on Jan. 5.

“Large multinational investors in China are resisting aggressive attempts to establish trade unions in their workplaces,” said the article. “U.S. business associations have held seminars in Shanghai and Beijing in recent weeks to advise their members how to respond to the unions’ campaign.”

The article quotes an anonymous U.S. executive who cares sooooo much about the workers. “This is about money and getting party cells into private enterprise,” he says. “If they are so concerned about workers, why aren’t they recruiting members in places like coal mines?”

And if this business executive is so concerned about workers, why is he resisting unions?

“Some executives worry that, as China’s economy becomes increasingly attuned to market forces, a more strident union movement could emerge from the docile federation’s framework,” the business paper concludes.

Yes, that’s what it’s all about. The pressure of tens of millions of new workers has raised the specter that China may be moving leftward once again. □

## Unions resist control board’s attacks

Continued from page 5

are no representatives from these populations on the board or any labor or community representatives. Instead, all members are white and male.

### The war and the economic crisis

The Pioneer Valley Labor Council, a federation of more than 50 labor unions in the greater Springfield area, has organized to oppose the board’s high-handed anti-worker activities. Beside the recent actions of the Control Board, over the past two years the city has laid off more than 300 workers and frozen wages amid other measures that the unions are fighting with grievances and arbitration proceedings.

On Oct. 15, 2004, the Labor Council sponsored a rally attended by about 4,000 rank-and-file union and community members from Western Massachusetts and throughout the state.

Union members and allies at the rally emphasized that the city’s situation is a crisis manufactured at the state level because the city historically has received less state funding than more affluent and majority-white cities, and thus is at a con-

stant disadvantage in meeting its budget needs.

And because of the U.S. war on Iraq, the increasing Pentagon budget and drastic cuts in social programs, the city has suffered as federal block grants are increasingly pared down or cut outright.

At the rally the workers demanded a moratorium on cuts in wages and benefits for Springfield’s workers and demanded that the city receive an adequate share of state money to achieve solvency.

“I’ve come here today to say to Gov. Romney that we are not going to stand idly by while we let you bust unions and take away wages that have been negotiated and rightfully earned,” said Henry E. Twiggs, African American chair of Springfield’s Democratic City Committee.

This militant spirit-and the increasing unity and solidarity between the independent anti-war and labor movements best represented by the Million Worker March-promise to forge a serious fight-back in Springfield and other cities across the United States where the current capitalist economic crisis has just begun to take hold. □



## OUT NOW!

In the days leading up to George Bush's coronation, the Los Angeles Times reported that support for the war on Iraq has declined significantly. Those "who believed the situation in Iraq was 'worth going to war over' had sunk to a new low of 39 percent." The protesters in the streets of Washington Jan. 20 made sure this message was heard.

The anti-war movement is emerging again, some say it will be stronger now than before, with the growing anti-war sentiment among GIs and their families. The March 19 rally in New York's Central Park is shaping up to be a landmark anti-war gathering.

The question now before the anti-war movement is the continued occupation of Iraq. The staged-managed elections scheduled for the end of the month are a tortured attempt by the Bush administration to give some legitimacy to the brutal occupation.

The ballots—both those that will be used inside Iraq and those that the U.S. government is collecting from dozens of locations outside of Iraq—do not list the candidates. Instead each paper ballot has a number, party name, logo and the first candidate of each of the 70 "parties" that paid the 7.5 million dinars required to be listed. Voters can select only one party, regardless of the number of candidates it is putting up, and no voter can know the names of the candidates. (From "Facts about Iraq's January elections" by the French News Agency, Dec. 10.)

There is no reason to give these elections or the occupation any legitimacy.

There is only one solution that can bring an end to the war on Iraq. That is, for the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The war on Iraq must be understood for what it is: a class war. The war serves only the interests of the U.S. capitalist class.

This was a war initiated, promoted and led by the U.S. capitalist class. That is why it must be called a class war. It is a war against the oppressed Iraqi people who suffered years and years of colonization by Britain first and later the U.S., whose borders were drawn and redrawn to suit the imperialist powers, whose oil wealth is being stolen to fatten the biggest of the imperialist hogs.

It is the undivided support of the U.S. capitalist class for this war that has kept it going. The big business interests that control the Republican and Democratic parties made sure that the Democrats put up a weak, pro-war candidate in the November elections against Bush.

We should not repeat the mistakes made by some in the movement against the Vietnam War. There can be no justification for the continued occupation of Iraq for any reason. The principal issue is not Saddam Hussein or the Baath party or forces that identify with Islam. The peoples of Iraq—more concretely, the working class, farmers and progressive intelligentsia—must be left free to decide their own fate without any outside intervention. Our support must be for the oppressed Iraqi peoples in a united front against imperialism, the main enemy. That means: U.S. troops out of Iraq now! □

### Greetings to the National Meeting of WWP of the U.S.

In your National Plenum meeting receive the solidarity of the Cuban Communist Party and the Cuban people.

This meeting takes place on the eve of the inauguration of the second term of George W. Bush, that points to four more years of aggressive invasive policies in the foreign arena, directed towards the strengthening of the hegemonic plans in the world of the Republican far right-wing.

We are sure that the progressive forces in the U.S. are part of the 55 million citizens that, according to official reports, voted against the re-election of G.W., at the same time that they confront the restrictions of civil rights at home; and will continue expressing your rejection to the repressive, war-mongering politics of the current administration.

In this new period, we are aware that the hostility of the U.S. government will continue against our homeland.

This is shown in the new measures taken to strengthen the blockade and suffocate economically the Cuban Revolution; we see it also in the provocative attitude of the chief of the U.S. Interest Section office in Havana, to name just two examples.

We cannot rule out the use of military force to destroy our Revolution, taking into consideration the failure of the multiple attempts tried over 45 years that have increased since mid-2004.

As an example of what the aggressor would face in case they launch a military attack against our country, in December we conducted a strategic exercise "Bastión 2004," with the participation of our Armed Forces together with millions of Cubans, during which we evaluated the missions within the framework of our military doctrine of "Peoples War."

In this New Year, the battle for the liberation of our Five Heroes imprisoned in the Empire will continue, a battle that is receiving increasing support of progressive parties and forces of the U.S. and the world. The truth about the injustice committed against these five Cubans, Heroes of the Cuban Republic, is being revealed, and the day will come when they will return to their homeland to receive the homage of their people.

Difficult days are ahead for humanity but, sooner or later, reason will prevail over brute force.

We wish you success in your debates during this important event.

**Department of International Relations  
Central Committee, Cuban Communist Party**  
Jan. 7, 2005

## Open letter to World Social Forum on Occupation of Iraq

We appeal to the participants in the World Social Forum to endorse worldwide actions on March 19-20 to immediately end the criminal occupation of Iraq, to express solidarity with the courageous Iraqi resistance that has derailed the U.S. Empire, and to join in spirit and in deed to create a forum at the WSF for those in solidarity with the resistance.

**Action:** Should the WSF remain limited to talk of how to make "another world" possible? This undervalues the WSF's potential. The Social Forums have already inspired action. The high point: the call out of Florence in November 2002 and its endorsement in January 2003 at the WSF in Porto Alegre. These led to millions taking the streets in January, February and March 2003. These actions built real solidarity between the workers and progressive people of the imperialist "North" and the billions of people of the global South in ways that mere words can never do.

**March 19-20:** The next weekend of worldwide protests will be on the second anniversary of the illegal U.S. invasion. We invite participants of the WSF to endorse and carry out these actions to make this a truly worldwide weekend of struggle. In each country the organizations will choose their slogans. But we assert that: (1) the occupation is illegal and illegitimate, (2) the Iraqis have the right to resist occupation by whatever means necessary and (3) the world is indebted to the Iraqi resistance for derailing the U.S. war machine.

**Solidarity:** Remember May 1, 2003, when George W. Bush declared "mission accomplished" on the deck of the USS Lincoln? The Pentagon's tanks were aimed at Iran, Syria, North Korea (DPRK), and the borders of China. Cuba, Venezuela and Colombia were in their sights. Solidarity against intervention and subversion is needed still in all these places. But the Pentagon now has to think long and hard before committing its ground troops. Why? The Iraqi resistance has tied down the U.S. military. U.S. youth avoid the Armed Forces. Sergeants no longer re-enlist. There is a near-rebellion in the ranks. More aggressions could deepen their crisis.

**Self-Determination:** There are different forces in the Iraqi resistance. They have different ideologies and goals, but they all want the U.S. and all other foreign occupation troops out of Iraq. Solidarity with the resistance means simply solidarity with its struggle to drive out the occupation forces. Neither Washington nor Brussels should decide Iraq's future, nor even the anti-war movement or the WSF. The Iraqis will decide. That is self-determination.

**Hear the resistance:** Representatives of some Iraqi resistance forces will be at the WSF. One has signed a call asking for a big plenary session in support of the Iraqi resistance in the light of the March 19 demonstrations. We endorse this proposal. It can counter the falsehoods about the Iraq war, from the lies about 9/11 and the "weapons of mass destruction" to the crimes at Abu Ghraib and the assault on Falluja, to the goals of the resistance itself.

**International Action Center (USA – founded by Ramsey Clark)**

The Out Now Coalition has called a demonstration for March 19 in New York, the very city where the attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, was seized on by the Bush administration to justify endless preemptive wars. The demands are: Bring the troops home now! End the occupation of Iraq! Money for jobs, healthcare, schools & housing - not war! Hands off Social Security! The protest aims to retake Central Park, banned during last summer's Republican National Convention. The call has received strong support from trade unions and from the African American and Latino communities in the city. Other major actions that day focus on a military base near Fayetteville, North Carolina, and in California.

**IAC – 39 W. 14 Street, New York, NY 10011 USA**  
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# U.S. steps up intervention in Venezuela, Colombia

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Washington is rapidly and dangerously stepping up its hostile acts against Hugo Chávez's Bolivarian government in Venezuela. A Jan. 14 article in the right-wing Washington Times newspaper quoted a Bush senior official as saying, "The administration will begin a broad campaign in Latin America soon, urging friendly countries to reassess their relations with Mr. Chávez and to speak up against his authoritarian and anti-democratic rule."

"We'll be communicating our conclusions to his neighbors and raise the alarm about what is happening in that important country."

One of these neighbors is Colombia. Although Colombian-Venezuelan relations have been tense for years due to conflicts on their common border, Chávez has increased trade and economic cooperation with Colombia. This is part of Chávez's proposal for Latin American integration called the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas or ALBA. This program aims at opposing and replacing Washington's Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA, or ALCA using the Spanish initials).

Recent bilateral accords included an important project: the construction of a trans-Caribbean gas pipeline that will run from Venezuela through Colombia. This project would greatly help the economies of both countries.

Dubbed the "Israel of Latin America," Colombia is the closest and most loyal ally of Washington in the area. Its president is Álvaro Uribe Vélez, a pro-fascist U.S. client. Uribe is diligently setting in place the essential directives needed to suppress any opposition to his and Washington's agenda of privatization and the stealing of natural resources by transnational, mostly U.S.-based, finance capital.

The role assigned to Colombia is twofold: exterminate the insurgency there and threaten its neighbor, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Faithful Uribe has increasingly been doing just that.

## Granda kidnapped in Caracas

On Dec. 13, after the closing of the Second Bolivarian Congress of the Peoples held in Caracas, Rodrigo Granda, a representative of the international commission of the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army) who had attended the congress, was kidnapped in Caracas. It was in the middle of the day right in front of a restaurant where he was being interviewed by Omar Rodríguez, Le Monde Diplomatique's editor in Colombia.

Granda's account and a later investigation by the Venezuelan authorities showed that Colombian police and rogue officers from the Venezuelan National Guard and

police were involved in the kidnapping. Granda was forced into the trunk of a vehicle and driven to the Colombian border. Once in Colombia, he was handed over to that country's police in the city of Cúcuta.

Right away the Colombian government announced the capture, stating that it was done in Colombia and denying reports that Granda was seized in Venezuela.

On Jan. 13, a month after the incident, Venezuelan officers detained for their role in the kidnapping stated they were paid \$1.5 million by Colombian police for their participation. Colombian Minister of Defense Jorge Uribe, his position compromised by this admission, publicly admitted that the Colombian government had indeed paid that amount for the capture of Rodrigo Granda. He did not admit, however, that Granda was captured in Venezuela, but claimed it was in Cúcuta, Colombia.

In a statement to radio RCN, Colombian Vice President Francisco Santos justified the bribe, saying, "This is a legitimate method, it is used here, in the United States, in England and other places."

In Colombia, where more than 60 percent are poor and the process of privatization is leaving millions without adequate health care and other essential social services, one wonders where this "hefty reward money" is coming from. Possibly from Washington's Plan Colombia.

The Venezuelan government has reacted by withdrawing its ambassador from Bogotá and suspending the new bilateral projects and trade accords, accusing the Colombian government of an assault on its sovereignty. Chávez said that he has taken this action until Uribe apologizes for sending police to Venezuela and bribing local Venezuelan authorities to help kidnap Rodrigo Granda.

Venezuelan Vice President José Vicente Rangel said, "I think that the Colombian authorities are committing a serious mistake. Plan Colombia is being carried out all over the Andean region." He also compared the kidnapping of Granda to the anticommunist extermination plan "Cóndor" for which former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet was recently being tried.

The situation between the two countries is escalating daily and the U.S. government has publicly taken sides. A Jan. 16 AP article quotes U.S. Ambassador William Wood as saying, "We support 100 percent the declarations from [Uribe's] presidential palace."

In what was clearly an attempt to divide and conquer, Wood even agreed with a statement that the FARC-EP had released after the kidnapping. Wood said: "For the first and probably last time we are in agreement with the FARC, which in its

Dec. 30 communique asks the Venezuelan government to define its position."

Only U.S. imperialism, which has been trying to destabilize Venezuela since Hugo Chávez took office, can benefit from this latest attack. Recent developments in the Bolivarian Revolution, like enforcing laws on land reform and the media, are truly a terrible nightmare for the U.S. ruling class. Venezuela has also gained in international prestige and trade relations.

Washington has intervened both from within, by funding Chávez's opposition through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and other organizations and employing CIA agents, and from without, particularly through Colombia. There have been many "mini interventions" from Colombia against Venezuela through its common border. Last year, 100 Colombian paramilitaries were caught in Caracas, training to kill Chávez.

The U.S. campaign to destabilize Venezuela is continuous, with the CIA playing a very active role in the support and training of disaffected elements hostile to the revolution.

## U.S. media mobilizes against Chávez

A Jan. 14 Washington Post editorial was meant to warn the U.S. ruling class: "Last Sunday hundreds of heavily armed Venezuelan troops invaded one of the country's largest and most productive cattle ranches, launching what President Hugo Chavez describes as his 'war against the estates.'"

"The next day Mr. Chavez signed a decree under which authorities are expected to seize scores of other farms in the coming weeks. This assault on private

property is merely the latest step in what has been a rapidly escalating 'revolution' by Venezuela's president that is undermining the foundations of democracy and free enterprise in that oil-producing country. The response of Venezuela's democratic neighbors, and the United States, ranges from passivity to tacit encouragement."

The editorial then reminds the ruling class here of Venezuela's relationship with Cuba and its trade agreements with China, Libya, Iran and Russia. In the article in the Washington Times referred to earlier, the quoted U.S. government official says, "An interagency policy review under way is focusing on political and diplomatic measures, rather than economic sanctions that might hurt the U.S. economy." This refers to the flow of oil that makes Venezuela the fourth-largest oil supplier to the U.S.

With the kidnapping of Rodrigo Granda, the Bush administration aimed to not only deal a blow to the Bolivarian Revolution and its improving relations with Colombia, but also against the Colombian insurgency.

Every revolutionary should oppose this imperialist act against Venezuela and against the armed insurgency in Colombia. The FARC-EP deserves the solidarity of the people around the world who demand peace with justice. Revolutionaries who, like the FARC and the ELN, are waging a battle against imperialism and for national liberation, should be able to address international forums without threats and fear of prosecution or assassination. They should not be pariahs just because the terrorist government of the United States places them on its "most wanted" list. □

## MUNDO OBRERO

# Cuba a la cabeza en el manejo de desastres

*continúa de página 12*

durante el tsunami ocurrió en Banda Aceh en el norte de Sumatra, más cercana al lugar del terremoto submarino que desató las olas. Las redes de televisión capitalista han mostrado recientemente pirotecnia de videos hechos por aficionados que muestran el tsunami golpeando Banda Aceh. Pero primero se ve gente limpiando lenta y metódicamente por 25 minutos después del terremoto, totalmente ignorante de lo que iba a seguir — a pesar de las indicaciones precisas de peligro, como el retroceso del mar.

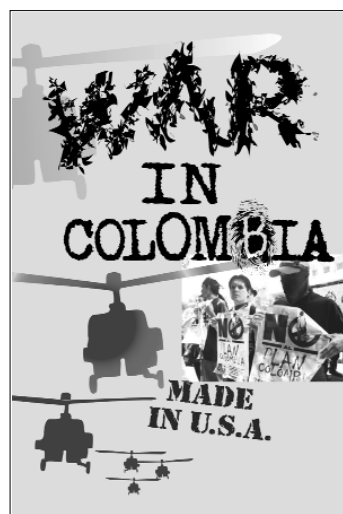
Una población organizada, educada, preparada y completamente respaldada por el gobierno hubiera podido evacuar a miles de personas, aún en la zona más cercana al epicentro del tsunami. La evacuación a zonas de seguridad en la mayoría de los lugares equivalía moverse a sólo una corta distancia de la costa. Esto es cierto aún más en las regiones de gran número de víctimas más alejados del terremoto, como Tailandia, Sri Lanka, India y, por supuesto, África de Occidental.

Los tsunamis no son nada desconocido en la región del Océano Índico. Sólo en Indonesia han ocurrido tres en los últimos 12 años.

Un gobierno socialista como el que existe en Cuba hubiera estado alerta a

todos los avisos transmitidos por la comunidad científica sobre la vulnerabilidad de la región en cuanto a los tsunamis. Y, por supuesto, la población hubiera estado completamente entrenada y organizada para bregar con tifones y otros desastres naturales, y hubiera tenido todo lo necesario dispuesto para bregar con el tsunami.

Cuba, tan pobre como es, ha hecho milagros en la seguridad pública a pesar de todos los obstáculos puestos en su camino por el bloqueo y la hostilidad inexorable de las administraciones estadounidenses por más de cuatro décadas. Su lucha por vencer los efectos de huracanes y desastres naturales integrando su trabajo de mitigación de desastres dentro del marco general de planificación y organización socialista, a pesar de los límites económicos extremos, demuestra que en el mundo natural la humanidad puede tomar el control sobre su destino. Pero Cuba estableció la base al expulsar primeramente el imperialismo, derrocando al capitalismo y asumiendo el control de los medios de producción y los recursos de la sociedad para poder organizarlos para cubrir las necesidades del pueblo, y no para conseguir ganancias — es decir, llevando a cabo la revolución socialista. □



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## Demostración de la Planificación Socialista

# Cuba a la cabeza en el manejo de desastres

Por Fred Goldstein

La tremenda falla de los gobiernos capitalistas del mundo de no avisar a los pueblos del Océano Índico sobre el desastre y de mitigar el caos que reinó tanto durante como después de la devastación, trae a la superficie los logros monumentales de Cuba socialista en la esfera del manejo de desastres.

La propaganda capitalista se ha enfocado en el sufrimiento de las víctimas del desastre abriendo un falso debate sobre si el tsunami fue un acto de dios o de la naturaleza. El mensaje es que, de cualquier manera, era el destino y nada podía haberse hecho para cambiar las cosas. Lo que no se encuentra en los debates es la crucial pregunta de cómo los efectos catastróficos de este desastre pudieron haberse evitado.

El récord del gobierno cubano en la preparación de su población contra los huracanes y otros desastres naturales para limitar la pérdida de vidas humanas ilustra la falsedad del misticismo religioso y el pensamiento fatalista.

Cuba ha sido señalada por la Organización de las Naciones Unidas, la Federación Internacional de la Cruz Roja, la Sociedad de la Medialuna Roja y otras agencias y autoridades que bregan con los efectos de desastres naturales, como el modelo mundial en el manejo de desastres, no sólo para los países subdesarrollados sino para todos los países. Evacuaciones masivas y humanitarias de cientos de miles de personas se han llevado a cabo en cuestión de horas durante el azote de huracanes que alcanzaron altos niveles.

En el año 2001, cuando el Huracán Michelle, una tormenta de cuarto nivel, traía vientos de 125 millas por hora y grandes inundaciones, más de 700.000 personas fueron evacuadas. Sólo cinco cubanos perdieron la vida por la tormenta, la cual mató a 20 personas en América Central.

### Más muertos en California que en Cuba

Vale la pena mencionar que las prolongadas lluvias en California ya han matado en un período de dos semanas, casi el doble de las 16 personas que perecieron durante los seis grandes huracanes que azotaron a Cuba entre los años 1996 y 2002. El método cubano de educación, preparación, aviso e intervención organizada de las masas durante desastres naturales se necesita ahora grandemente en California.

En California, muchas personas perdieron la vida en un derrumbe de lodo en el pueblo de La Conchita después de dos semanas de lluvia. Éste mismo sector sufrió derrumbes similares hace diez años. Si el método cubano hubiese sido aplicado en California, no hubiera habido ninguna pérdida de vida.

Un análisis del método cubano por Oxfam, una organización humanitaria británica burguesa de gran prestigio que trabaja en varias áreas, llevó a la publicación de un estudio de 68 páginas en el

2004 titulado, "Soportando la Tormenta: Lecciones de Reducción de Riesgos desde Cuba." (oxfamamerica.org)

El estudio alabó la efectividad del sistema cubano centralizado y concebido basado en la participación de las masas que ha salvado muchas vidas durante los desastres naturales.

"Cuba es diferente por la combinación de su desarrollo socio económico con sus políticas de respuesta para reducir substancialmente la vulnerabilidad de la población contra estos peligros. En los 40 años el gobierno socialista de Cuba ha enfocado el desarrollo social y económico, dando prioridad a la distribución equitativa de los recursos, acceso universal a los servicios sociales y la disminución de la diferencia en el desarrollo urbano y rural," dice el reporte.

"L@s cuban@s son personas altamente educad@s, con un fuerte sentido de solidaridad y cohesión social, con gran experiencia en movilizaciones y altamente organizad@s a través de organizaciones de masa, grupos profesionales y estructuras políticas."

Cuba tiene un sistema Nacional de Defensa Civil dice el reporte, que "es tanto un concepto de organización como un sistema de medidas y procedimientos." Su labor esta basada en el plan nacional, formulado tanto de arriba como a nivel popular, el cual cuenta con organizaciones de masa tales como los Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (CDR), la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, grupos estudiantiles, sindicatos y la Asociación de Pequeños Productores.

"Además de los puntos específicos para los trabajos sobre los desastres," continúa el reporte, "existe también un compromiso político a todos los niveles del gobierno para colocar todo recurso disponible para la preservación de vidas durante las emergencias. Esto permite que los cubanos utilicen cuanto recurso hay, como el uso de las escuelas para refugios de evacuación, asegurando lanchas y autobuses para propósitos de evacuación, o utilizando las asociaciones locales de radioaficionados como una red de comunicación." Todos los otros aspectos de preparación son "secundarios al compromiso básico de salvar vidas."

### Detallada planificación en todos los niveles

El plan nacional de preparativos para desastres es refinado y reajustado todos los años, desde los niveles más altos del gobierno hasta los vecindarios y asociaciones de bloques. El reporte presentó los resultados de numerosas entrevistas que revelaron los frutos de la planificación detallada, la organización y la educación.

"Irrespectivamente de su responsabilidad, todo el mundo estaba muy consciente de qué medidas y qué procedimientos tenían que seguir si acaso se produjera un huracán. Sabían las etapas de advertencias, dónde conseguir la información necesaria, como proteger su casa, y dónde podrían acudir para albergarse si fuera

necesario la evacuación. Prevalcía la creencia entre la gente de que el gobierno iba a priorizar la seguridad del pueblo. La población cubana, claramente ha desarrollado una 'cultura de seguridad'".

José Castro, el secretario de la Comisión de Evacuación y Estudiantes de la Defensa Civil de Cienfuegos, dijo a Oxfam que "Cualquier joven estudiante en la escuela puede darle una explicación: cómo se prepara, qué hacer. Los estudiantes saben qué hacer... cómo recoger las cosas en la casa y ponerlas en su lugar... cerrar la fuente de agua y luz. Todos los estudiantes, trabajadores, campesinos, reciben este entrenamiento".

Lo que se considera básico para la preparación es lo que se llama "señalando los riesgos en la comunidad". De hecho, según Oxfam, "es ésta señalación metódica y constante de los riesgos al nivel comunitario por miembros de la comunidad que funciona como el cemento en la muralla de reducción de riesgo en Cuba".

Una discusión con una representante de la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas en el distrito de la Habana ilustró este punto: "Yo soy responsable de esta parte del vecindario. ... Si ocurre un huracán, yo sé que dentro de una unidad multi-familiar hay una señora anciana en silla de ruedas, que va a necesitar ayuda para salir. Tengo 11 madres solteras en el segundo y el tercer piso de edificios de apartamentos con hijos menos de dos años de edad que van a necesitar ayuda especial."

Cada año el plan se actualiza para incluir nuevas informaciones y evaluaciones de experiencias pasadas. "Comenzando a nivel de los CDR", dijo José Castro, "las autoridades actualizan el plan en el vecindario. L@s miembr@s del CDR apuntan en su censo las viviendas que están más vulnerables, incluyendo el nombre de la familia y el número de niños. Anotan quién va adónde en caso de una evacuación, quién necesitaría ayuda extra, etc." El plan del vecindario entonces sube al nivel municipal, al nivel provincial y finalmente al nivel nacional para ser integrado en el plan nacional.

### Todos los oficiales públicos responsables por seguridad

Diferente de los EEUU, todos los oficiales públicos tienen la responsabilidad de bregar con urgencias. "Por ley", dice el reporte, "todos los jefes de gobiernos provinciales y municipales son los directores de la Defensa Civil provincial y municipal encargados de organizar, coordinar y reconstruir en su área. ... Esto crea un proceso centralizado de manejo, lo cual es crucial en situaciones de urgencia, a la vez que hay un proceso de implementación descentralizado, proveyendo agilidad y adaptación igualmente necesarias para la preparación y respuesta efectiva durante emergencias.

"En la práctica, el encargado de la Defensa Civil en cualquier provincia o municipalidad dada es alguien familiar con el funcionamiento del gobierno de tal

provincia. También significa que los grupos locales están siguiendo las órdenes de una persona conocida, no de una persona desconocida que llega nada más por la duración de la crisis. En caso de emergencia, todos los responsables en los lugares de trabajo, hospitales, escuelas o negocios asumen sus responsabilidades dirigiendo su personal para llevar a cabo las medidas de la Defensa Civil".

Todas las estructuras organizativas están movilizadas para alertar a la población cuando se acerca un huracán. Se convocan reuniones, se revisan los planes y se organizan centros de comando. "A nivel comunal, los Comités de Defensa de la Revolución, organizaciones de masas, doctores familiares, directores de escuelas, y jefes de instituciones" revisan los planes de emergencia y chequean los procedimientos de evacuación, las destinaciones y las provisiones.

En la fase de evacuación: "si la casa de una persona tiene techo de teja, de fibrocemento o de paja, los residentes de tal casa deben mudarse a una casa de concreto. Si esas opciones ya han sido asignadas en el barrio, la familia es asignada a un refugio de grupos y se les provee transporte. Todo transporte desde carros a camionetas a carretas con caballos es movilizado por los líderes de la Defensa Civil. Para evacuar a la gente en las zonas de mayor riesgo, todos los medios de transporte necesarios, como helicópteros y botes, se ponen al servicio de las fuerzas de rescate de la Defensa Civil para este propósito.

"En Cuba," sigue el informe, "las estructuras que corren la vida cotidiana son las estructuras usadas también para implementar las medidas de la Defensa Civil."

En otras palabras, la organización revolucionaria de las masas de trabajadores y campesinos en una sociedad socialista pone los intereses del pueblo primero en todas las esferas de la vida; naturalmente esto forma el marco general dentro del cual es posible prepararse efectivamente para desastres naturales y disminuir las pérdidas de vida.

### Todo eso a pesar del bloqueo estadounidense

Cuba, en términos relativos, es un país pobre, subdesarrollado por siglos de colonialismo español, de 60 años de control imperialista por los Estados Unidos, y por décadas de un perverso bloqueo económico. Sin embargo ha superado al país más rico y desarrollado del mundo en la esfera del manejo de desastres naturales.

Si la India, Indonesia, Tailandia, Sri Lanka y otros países del Océano Índico hubieran tenido regímenes socialistas que ponen los intereses del pueblo en primer plano todos los días, como Cuba socialista, hubieran conseguido la tecnología científica para detectar tsunamis la cual ya está desplegada en el Océano Pacífico, o la hubieran colectivamente comprado o desarrollado ellos mismos.

La pérdida más tremenda de vidas