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THE PRICE OF EMPIRE

Bush budget cuts everything but war

All out March 19 to demand 'Money for people's needs, not Pentagon'

By Leslie Feinberg

After all the triumphalism, all the grandiose boasts about U.S. finance capital bringing "democracy" to the world on the tips of bayonets, here comes the bill. And it's a whopper.

Bush's proposed \$2.57 trillion—yes, trillion—fiscal 2006 budget is no "guns and butter" financial plan, aimed at appeasing the home-front population while waging war for empire abroad. This even cuts out the bread.

"These budget cuts are a declaration of war on the cities of the U.S.—on the lives of working and oppressed peoples," Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center, stressed to Workers World newspaper. "And they underscore the importance of mobilizing for protests on March 19—the second anniversary of the Pentagon-led war against the Iraqi people."

More than 150 government programs are on the chopping block. Those who will suffer the greatest are not in the Bush administration's conservative political base, although some of them may feel it, too.

Medicaid would be significantly reduced, capping federal payments for many who need it most. That health safety net faces \$60 billion in cuts over the next decade. Other health coverage programs for the poor and disabled are in danger. And medical fees and a drug co-payment would be hiked for veterans.

Educational programs would lose \$528 million, leaving 48 educational programs high and dry—including a \$1.2-billion vocational-educational program. Aid that helps homeless children enroll in public school would be reduced.

The Environmental Protection Agency would take a \$326-million hit in its funding for clean air, clear water and Superfund clean-up programs.

If implemented, this fiscal axe would cut deeper into domestic spending on social services than any administration since Ronald Reagan's. And why? To wage war in the economic interests of corporate and banking profits.

Follow the money

The euphemistically named defense budget, on the other hand, would enjoy a lavish 5 percent increase, and "homeland security" another 3 percent.

This spending blueprint doesn't even include the blank check Republicans and Democrats on the Hill are expected to endorse for continuing war against Iraq and Afghanistan. The Bush administration is about to ask for at least \$80 billion more for that war chest—\$75 billion of it earmarked for the Pentagon—but that massive sum will be listed under "supplemental funding."

Yes, Bush talked about a \$55-billion reduction in planned Navy and Air Force spending. That would halt production of a submarine fleet and berth an aircraft carrier earlier than scheduled. And he did suggest shutting down production of the F/A-22 stealth fighter and the C-130J transport plane—a move certain to enrage Lockheed Martin Corp. and result in layoffs in Marietta, Ga.

But in reality, that's because the military machinery is getting an extreme makeover. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is ramming ahead like an Abrams tank with this costly overhaul.

"The \$419.3 billion defense budget announced yesterday," explained the Feb. 8 Wall Street Journal, "hews to Mr. Rumsfeld's vision of faster, more-flexible fighting forces and high-tech weaponry at the expense of traditional aircraft and ship programs that were designed to fight conventional military forces, not guerrillas." Military-industrial complex bigwigs like General

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Union, parents fight for school bus safety 6

In Boston, both drivers and parents want monitors on school buses, not GPS devices.

WW PHOTO: LIZA GREEN

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Ed Merrill Steelworker and Marxist educator



PHOTO:
MERRILL
FAMILY

By Leslie Feinberg
Buffalo, N.Y.

Workers World Party lost a wonderful comrade on Jan. 27. Ed Merrill, 80, died in a hospital here after a long battle with illness. He had been a founding member of the party, a National Committee member, and for many years an organizer and member of the Steering Committee of the Buffalo branch.

An outpouring of Buffalo comrades and friends, family, neighbors and hospital workers gathered on Jan. 29-31 at a local funeral home to honor Ed's life and to support Jeanette Merrill, his partner of 50 years, their daughter Mallory and grandson Tim.

It was a beautiful tribute to Ed. There was almost as much laughter from joyful memories as tears of loss. A spectrum of generations took part. Many young people visited all three days to talk about how much Ed meant in their lives.

When word had spread in the hospital of his death, his room began to fill with staff of all ages and nationalities. They came from other floors and departments; some came in early for their shifts or stayed later to pay their respects to this remarkable human being who had touched their lives. Ed had the courage, even from his hospital bed, to take on George Bush, the imperialist war and the occupation of Palestine.

Ed was born in 1924 in Old Town, Me. In his childhood, his family moved across the Penobscot River to Bradley, Me., an area so rural that, as he explained, "If you walked out our farmhouse door you'd have to walk two weeks before you'd come to a town." He recalled, "I was young when I first went into the woods. We were poor. We cut roads into the forest for the lumbermen. In the summer there was no air in the woods. Biting flies, mosquito stings. At night we slept on long boards with a little hay on them."

'Socialism sounds good!'

During World War II, Ed was stationed on a Navy minesweeper in the North Atlantic. After he came back from the war, Ed walked six miles every day to the University of Maine, getting a bachelor's degree in history and government with a minor in philosophy.

In 1951, he moved to Buffalo looking for work. He recalled, "I got a job making ice at the old Statler Hotel. I was complaining about the Korean War so loud that another worker asked me: 'What do you think about socialism?' I said: 'I like the idea.' She asked me if I'd like to meet a top socialist. That was Sam Marcy." Marcy later founded Workers World Party.

The first meeting Ed attended was invaded by some plainclothes cops. Someone took pictures of the audience, but a comrade quickly wrested the camera away. Since no one at the meeting was intimidated, the cops left. This was Eddie's introduction to the movement. That night and throughout his life, he met repression and intimidation with quiet strength and humor.

Ed worked outdoors on a track gang at Bethlehem Steel in Lackawanna and later at the Wickwire Division of Colorado Fuel & Iron in nearby Tonawanda—both industrial suburbs of Buffalo.

In those days, before the high-tech revolutionizing of the means of production, Buffalo was a center of industry and transportation. Until the 1950s anti-communist witch hunt, the group with Marcy was deeply rooted in key industrial plants—Bethlehem Steel in Lackawanna,

Westinghouse in Cheektowaga, and Bell Aircraft in Tonawanda. But with the rise of McCarthyism, they were swept out of the factories, early victims of the Cold War. Their political struggles became defensive in character.

After the world war, U.S. imperialism had emerged as the Number One superpower and soon launched the Cold War against the Soviet Union and the socialist camp. It was hard to build and sustain a revolutionary tendency in that climate of political reaction. But the group in Buffalo held on to their revolutionary political world view, seeing their work as part of the global class struggle.

Ed held on to his job at Wickwire until the plant closed in 1964. The union there had remained strong during the anti-communist witch hunt of the 1950s, and he remained a shop steward and activist. He credited the militancy of the Black workers for the union's strength.

After Wickwire closed, Ed was hired and fired from a succession of four jobs in small non-union sweatshops. He had given Wickwire as a job reference. A letter from a bogus employer requesting a reference uncovered the reason for the firings. Wickwire wrote back: "Edward Merrill has a satisfactory work record. However, he was periodically checked by the FBI. We suggest you contact the local FBI office for further information." And as if that weren't enough, the FBI visited each shop to inquire about Ed.

In 1946, Ed had signed up with the Naval Reserve, thinking to pull in a little extra income—like so many in Iraq today. In 1952, he received a letter from the U.S. Commandant of the Third Naval District in New York City reminding him that he had not signed a loyalty oath.

In 1954 he received another letter outlining the terms he must meet to avoid a dishonorable discharge from the Naval Reserve. They referred to "alleged conduct, associations, casting doubt on your loyalty." There were 10 pages of questions: "List names and organizations associated with advocacy of revolution, and economic, social and political change ... classes attended, or led, names of instructors and attendees," and so on.

No more veterans' benefits for Ed, which at that time were more substantial than today.

Bringing Marxism to new generations

During the 1960s and 1970s factories were closing. Ed recalled, "The workers weren't moving but the students were." Ed and Jeanette organized meetings that inspired students on the restive campus of the University of Buffalo, injecting a class-conscious world view of the anti-war struggle. Together they helped kindle a chapter of the militant Youth Against War & Fascism. Many soon joined the Buffalo branch of Workers World Party.

Ed read the revolutionary classics of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky over and over, making these great ideas part of his nerve and fiber. He paid similar attention to the thinking of Sam Marcy. He swallowed up books on the labor movement, on Black, Latin@ and Native American history, on the communist movement, on world and U.S. history. He was an avid student of the Civil War.

In the house of Merrill, frugality went out the window when it came to books. He was always eager to listen and engage in discussions, from an elementary level to advanced political economy. Many benefitted from his

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WW CALENDAR

LOS ANGELES

Sat., Feb. 19

Martin Luther King/Malcolm X Anti-war Social Justice Conference and film showing: Chavez, Venezuela and the New Latin America. Speakers include: Clarence Thomas, Million Worker March; Pierre Lebossiere, Haiti Action Committee; Monica Moorehead, Millions for Mumia. Workshops and action plans. SEIU L660, 500 S Virgil Avenue. 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Sponsored by IAC-LA, MWM, SNAFU. For info (323) 936-7266.

NEW YORK

Sat., Feb. 12

Workers World Party Meeting. Report on World Social Forum:

155,000 progressive activists from 135 countries gathered the last week of January in Porto Alegre in opposition to the imperialist World Economic Forum. Hear analyses of the events by WWP participants Berta Joubert-Ceci and John Catalinotto. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

Fri., Feb. 18

Workers World Party Meeting. Analysis of the Bush budget and attacks on Social Security. 7 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m. At 55 W. 17 St., 5th fl., Manhattan. For info: (212) 627-2994.

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JOIN US. Workers World Party (WWP) fights on all issues that face the working class and oppressed peoples—Black and white, Latino, Asian, Arab and Native peoples, women and men, young and old, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, trans, disabled, working, unemployed and students.

If you would like to know more about WWP, or to join us in these struggles, contact the branch nearest you.

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Snared by 'stop loss' program

Reservist says, 'I won't fight for profit'

By Dustin Langley

Carl Webb is very clear about what he is doing: "I'm refusing to go to war because I do not believe the U.S. is on the right track. I think this war is not about liberating people, it's about oppressing them. It's a war that's being fought for profit."

Webb is a 38-year-old African American antiwar activist from Austin, Texas. He is also a fugitive with a federal warrant out for his arrest—for refusing to participate in the war against the people of Iraq.

Webb, who is active with Austin Against War, has been involved in many

anti-war and anti-racist activities over the past 10 years.

While it might seem unusual that someone with his activist background would end up in the military, Webb felt he had few other options. He said, "I didn't have a job, I was facing eviction from my home and I needed some extra cash. This was in August 2001 and I thought, 'We've invaded everyone we possibly can invade,' and it was relatively peaceful for the U.S."

His 3-year term of service was scheduled to end in August of 2004. Last July, he received a call from his sergeant. "She said she had bad news—I had been one of the soldiers selected to serve in Iraq. I was

stunned and shocked."

Webb was a victim of the stop-loss program. This program, which made its first appearance in the Gulf War of the early 1990s, keeps soldiers scheduled for deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan from leaving when their term of service ends.

"This policy is practically an unofficial draft," he said. "It is conscription against a person's will."

Webb said he initially considered three options: complying, fleeing the country or applying for a conscientious objector discharge.

He realized that he could not comply—he had been opposed to U.S. militarism for many years and could not be part of the war against the people of Iraq.

Exile wasn't really an option for him, either. "I'm not considering exile. I've traveled, I lived in Mexico for like five months and I like it, and I've traveled to Europe and Asia. But all my family and friends are in the States, and I like this country."

Conscientious-objector status wasn't really an option either, Webb said, noting the Army's criteria that must be met—basically, opposition to all wars. "I'm not a pacifist. ... But I've always been politically opposed to U.S. militarism."

The only option left was for Webb to go AWOL, knowing that he would be facing possible jail time. "Prison is something that I never thought would be easy," Webb said, whose brother is in Angola prison in Louisiana for armed robbery. "It never sounded nice."

Still, he insisted that jail is "better than one and a half or two years in a combat zone and better than permanent exile."

Webb is now officially listed as a deserter. He said, "My case is different from some of the other soldiers who have



PHOTO: WWW.CARLWEBB.NET

Carl Webb went AWOL rather than fight for imperialism.

deserted, either because they just don't want to go, or because they think these 'stop-loss' orders are illegal. I tell people that even if there was no stop-loss policy, even if the government wasn't illegally using the reserves and National Guard and retirees as they are, I would still be opposed to this war. I don't think it matters what category of service you're in—whether you're in the reserves, National Guard or the regular army—I think all military personnel should oppose fighting in this war of imperialism."

For more information about Carl Webb, see www.carlwebb.net. □

Many struggles linked at L.A. forum

By Page Lee Getz and Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

The right of the people to determine their own destinies, from South Central L.A. to Iraq and Korea, was the common theme at an International Action Center forum held here on Feb. 5. Featured speaker Ramsey Clark, a former U.S. attorney general, was joined by solidarity activists representing struggles from around the world in a program that attracted about 250 people to Southwestern University School of Law. John Parker, West Coast Coordinator of the International Action Center, chaired the meeting.

The audience cheered for Palestine, Korea, Haiti, Iraq—and for Pedro Baez. Baez is a representative of the Committee to Save King/Drew Hospital. King/Drew, located in the African American community of Watts, is being eyed for closure, and a vigorous counter-struggle is being waged to save it.

Clark mentioned being part of a task force that went to Los Angeles in response to the 1965 Watts rebellion, charged with the responsibility of "making sure that South Central had a first-rate hospital. That the hospital would close is a powerful symbol of how this country is going in the wrong direction."

Clark said U.S. militarism by far exceeds that of any other country, and that "We don't just have to end the war in Iraq, but end U.S. wars altogether." On the U.S. role in Iraq, Clark said that in Falluja, the U.S. carried out the "21st-century version of Guernica, ... the pre-World War II symbol of superior military technology destroying a people village by village." He compared the recent Iraq election to elections forced on the progressive government of Angola in the 1970s, and the election the U.S. funded and organized to defeat the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Zahi Damuni, founder of Al-Awda,

Palestine Right to Return Coalition, received a standing ovation and chants of "Free, Free Palestine," after his talk. Of Palestine he said, "It is not enough to have an election. That's not democracy by any definition. Show me one country in the world that has borders it doesn't control, that has air space it doesn't control, that has water it doesn't control, or a banking system, telephone lines it doesn't control. Tell me one country in the world that you call sovereign that is like this." Damuni linked the struggle of the Palestinian people with the struggle of working and poor people in the U.S. "Imagine how many schools and hospitals could be built and staffed with the money that the U.S. sends to fund the Israeli war against Palestine." Damuni also announced the national Al-Awda conference to be held in Los Angeles on April 15-17, 2005.

Hyonchong Kim of One Korea L.A. Forum traced U.S. intervention in her country back to 1866, when the armed merchant ship General Sherman sailed up the Daedong River. The Bush administration and U.S. media, however, try to portray the North Korean leadership as a military aggressor, a human rights abuser, and a nuclear threat to the world.

Kim read a quote touching on the most important aspect of the United States' posture toward North Korea: "... imperialist countries have always used human rights as an issue to justify intervention of other countries and to take away the right to self-determination from its people. Human rights cannot be separated from the issue of independence and self-determination and the countries dominated by foreign powers cannot guarantee human rights." The quote was from North Korean President Kim Jong Il.

Noluthando Williams of the Coalition in Solidarity with Haiti explained how that country, once France's richest colony, was

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Ramsey Clark supports self-determination, from Watts to Iraq.

WW PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA

Bush budget

More Pentagon pork

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Dynamics Corp. stand to make out like bandits.

The Feb. 8 Financial Times added, "The White House is seeking more money for the elite special forces on which the U.S. has increasingly relied in the war on terrorism."

The White House also wants Congress to fork over another \$18 million total in 2006-07 to the Department of Energy to complete research on a new generation of "bunker-buster" weapons that may be nuclear as well.

And when it comes to international "aid," client states that the U.S. counts on to keep a bootheel on their populations and their regions are at the top of the list: Israel, Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Colombia.

All out on March 19!

Of course, when it comes to proposed presidential budgets, there's many a slip twixt the cup and the lip. For example, the proposed near doubling of security fees for airplane passengers to fund airport screening has the industry in a tailspin.

This budget is certain to alienate some of the Bush administration's political base. He wants to lower agricultural subsidies by \$5.7 billion over the next decade. This has already raised a hue and cry from Republican senators. Their political survival depends on delivering these financial supports.

While these subsidies have lined the already deep pockets of agribusiness, they've also helped the dwindling population of farmers in less populated states. These states get the same number of senators as those with large concentrations of workers, and have in recent decades helped skew U.S. politics to the right.

Most significantly, as the chant "Money for jobs, health care and social services, not war and occupation" rises in cities and towns, campuses and rural areas across the country, it has the potential to resonate for a larger segment of the population whose material reality is awakening them to the need for independent struggle.

After all, where does all this wealth that's being squandered on war and the pursuit of profits come from? The labor of workers and farmers, who have had no say—despite all the political trappings of capitalist democracy—over how their social surplus is spent. Their power can only be exercised through consciousness and organization—both of which have been at a low ebb.

That is what makes March 19 all the more important. More than 20 organizing centers, from the East Coast to the Midwest, are mobilizing to bring people to the protests—particularly the rally in Central Park in Manhattan. Car caravans and feeder marches are in the works. The list of endorsers is growing.

For national information contact the Out Now Coalition at (212) 633-6646. □

War and deficits loom over G-7 meeting

By Milt Neidenberg

It could be likened to an annual meeting of the Cosa Nostra families. It's called the Group of Seven. Leaders of the seven richest capitalist countries in the world meet to exchange proposals for solving their global problems.

The meetings, which began in 1974, bring together the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Italy and Canada. Russia has also been in attendance since 1994, though not as a full member. In addition to gatherings of heads of state and top government officials, G-7 meetings of foreign ministers and ad hoc ministerial meetings are held during the year.

This year, at a meeting of G-7 finance ministers held in London early in February, China, India, South Africa and Brazil were invited to observe the main proceedings.

They got a firsthand look at the machinations of the imperialist thieves. For example, China is under tremendous pressure from the U.S. to reevaluate its currency so as to reduce its favorable trade balance. Lurking under the surface of the meeting was an atmosphere of tension and conflict among the imperialist families, due primarily to the U.S. policy of imperialist wars and intractable debt.

The agenda for the two-day meeting included trade deficits, the U.S. federal budget, the weakness of the dollar and China's linkage to the dollar. U.S. officials are very afraid that foreign central banks and private investors in Europe and Asia may decide to stop bankrolling the enormous U.S. debt.

The fear of a trade war was apparent. Alan Greenspan, chairperson of the Federal Reserve Board and President George W. Bush's monetary mouthpiece, opened up this critical issue. Speaking like a Mafia leader to the exclusive group of central bankers, he warned that the U.S. intended to reduce its current humongous account deficit by flooding their markets with cheap U.S. goods and services to reduce a \$60-billion trade imbalance. It was obvious to his counterparts that Greenspan was talking about a cheap dollar that bodes well for future U.S. exports. He indicated that the huge U.S. market for imports will be slowing down.

This is bad news for the G-7 family members and the 25-member European Union, the world's largest economy, whose members rely on enormous U.S. markets for their economic growth. Their economies have slowed precipitously to a less than 2-percent growth rate in 2004.

Mervyn King, governor of the Bank of England, warned the U.S. delegation about the feelings of the other G-7 members. "Reflecting the concerns of the global financial community," he said, "the international monetary system could be threatened by persistent deficits of the United States and the accumulation of vast dollar assets by Asian central banks." (New York Times, Feb. 5)

Imperialist thieves fall out

The G-7 meeting revealed differences between the Bush administration and Britain, its only imperialist ally at the London gathering. Washington is totally dependent on Britain in the Iraq war, which is deep in a quagmire. Ignoring the concerns of Prime Minister Tony Blair's government was only one of the issues that stirred up friction. The G-7 hoped they would find unity for a British/French proposal on financing relief for Africa and poorer countries elsewhere.

It didn't happen. The U.S. delegation rejected a proposal for a \$50-billion aid package to Africa, with the full knowledge that at least 2 million children there will die before the next ministerial meeting in July. This same administration, of course, had no problem asking Congress for \$80 billion, to add to the \$200 billion already allocated to finance the occupation of pillage and plunder in Iraq.

Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa who attended the G-7, was outraged by the U.S. position. He reflected the growing protests of the African masses when he denounced the G-7 for quibbling over the aid. Mandela "compared the fight against poverty to the battles against slavery and apartheid." (New York Times, Feb. 6)

The U.S. also has sharp differences with Britain and France over who will control the funding and finances of underdeveloped countries as they become involved in the international financial markets. They disagree on how to pursue a 100-percent write-off by 2009 of the \$70 billion owed to transnational capitalist investors and institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). They did find common ground on a demand that a debt write-off for each of the 37 poorest countries required approval, on a case-by-case basis, by the IMF and the World Bank—making it a certainty that these economies would be restructured to suit the G-7 imperialists.

The 100 percent write-off promises are a hoax, an exercise in imperialist deception, to create the image of compassion. Many of the poorest countries have already cancelled or defaulted on their debt. Demonstrations and protests of millions of oppressed workers plagued by hunger, poverty and disease have reached the ears of the imperialists. Land seizures are taking place in Africa and Latin America.

Bush's 'compassionate conservatism'

Greenspan assured the G-7 that the Bush administration would restrain domestic spending—except for military hardware and "homeland security"—to offset its \$400-billion budget deficit. The proposed cuts for the 2006 fiscal year will be borne by the workers, the oppressed and poor. From health care to food stamps, from Medicaid to child care, the Bush administration is slashing funds in every entitlement program. It will be a disaster for state and city funding throughout the country.

Washington is consolidating 18 community development programs into two, cuts that will impact on the poorest and most oppressed sector of the people, already plagued by double-digit unemployment. A record 1,625,208 families sought bankruptcy in 2003. That rose by 2.7 percent by midyear of 2004—a time of frenzied borrowing and 1-percent interest rates.

The Labor Department reported a measly new 146,000 jobs for January and revised downward the job total by 56,000 for November/December 2004. At least

200,000 jobs are necessary each month to absorb new job seekers—mainly youth of color—trying to find work. The long-time unemployed have dropped out of the statistics, rightfully discouraged by the lack of decent jobs. The total is in the millions. What's available are part-time and temporary work in the lower-paid service industries, for a non-union minimum wage.

Inflation has risen faster than wages for those fortunate to have jobs, and consumer spending, which makes up two-thirds of the Gross Domestic Product, is slowing down. Manufacturers shed jobs for the fourth month in a row and the average work week slipped to 33.7 hours a week. Idle plant capacity hovers around 25 percent.

In human terms, all these facts and figures spell disaster and tragedy for a growing unemployed army. Exploited as well is a low-paid, service-oriented workforce of mainly women and oppressed nationalities who are a pink slip away from unemployment.

While the AFL-CIO leaders, representing over 13 million members, are mired in internal debates, there is a desperate need for unified action. On March 19, the second anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, marches and rallies around the country and abroad will take place. It will be a united response to the death and destruction visited on the Iraqi people—over 100,000 thousand dead and injured—and to the deaths of over 1,400 GIs and tens of thousands more maimed and injured.

And the U.S. prize of seizing Iraqi oil and resources is still out of reach.

No one can dispute that this war is draining money and resources that could go to desperately needed social services, to rebuilding the decaying infrastructure, and to providing jobs, health care, housing and education. All this has become all too obvious to those who labor and create the wealth of the monopoly capitalists.

It's time for the organized labor movement to call for an end to the endless occupation, and join the growing movement to bring the troops home now. The stage has been set for building a movement free of the constraints and conspiratorial machinations of Wall Street and the White House. It's time the AFL-CIO leaders put aside their debates over how to structure the labor movement and recognize that there are forces and leadership, particularly in the movement that represents people of color, that are organized and prepared to struggle. The Million Worker Movement is one example.

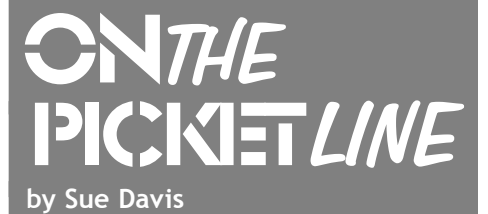
As the imperialist empire reveals its frailties and becomes more isolated, a bitter competition intensifies within its own class, globally and at home. The time is ripe for an independent classwide strike—one that would organize workers and oppressed to withhold their labor for a powerful march on Washington, organized in conjunction with like-minded organizations here and worldwide. As in all profound social change, the stirrings will begin from below. □

THE ROOTS OF LESBIAN & GAY OPPRESSION A Marxist View

By Bob McCubbin

This ground breaking pamphlet was originally published as the Gay Question in 1976, during the first flush of the modern lesbian and gay movement. Its unparalleled achievement was to offer a historical analysis of when, where, why and how lesbian and gay oppression developed.

WW PUBLISHERS Order from leftbooks.com \$6.99



by Sue Davis

Day care workers win contract

Finally, after an extended battle that included a three-day strike last June, some 7,000 day care workers in New York City won a contract on Jan. 25. They will receive an immediate 12-percent raise, with an additional 2 percent in April.

The workers, predominantly women of color who care for 34,000 children of low-income workers in 346 neighborhood centers, had gone without a raise since 2000 and a contract since 2001. A \$1,000 one-time payment in addition to the long-overdue raises was included in the three-year contract negotiated by District 1707 of the State, County and Municipal Employees. The contract will expire in 2006.

Unfortunately, the settlement also reportedly included givebacks—similar to those accepted last year by the union's District 37—of reduced wages, sick days and vacation for new workers' first two years.

Wal-Mart construction site picketed

Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 3 and Hod Carriers Local 166, along with other Alameda County Building Trades, began picketing the Wal-Mart construction site in Oakland, Calif., on Feb. 4.

The workers' beef: Contractor Frazier Masonry undercuts area wage and benefit standards and is employing out-of-state workers. The union vowed to continue the job actions until Frazier and Wal-Mart address those issues in a responsible manner. (www.labornet.org)

Schwab picketed over Social Security

Hundreds of workers rallied outside offices of Charles Schwab in Boston and San Francisco on Jan. 26 to demand the brokerage firm drop support of President Bush's Social Security privatization plan.

Carrying signs reading "Don't pick our pockets to line yours," the marchers passed out leaflets saying Schwab's involvement in the privatization campaign is a conflict of interest. Schwab, one of the world's largest brokers and managers of 401(k) retirement accounts, would grab millions in profits from new private accounts. (www.afl-cio.org)

Workers want unions

The recently released annual report of the National Labor Relations Board states that 42 million workers say they would vote for a union tomorrow if they had the chance. The report also exposed that 20,000 workers in the U.S. were fired or discriminated against in 2004 for union activities.

That doesn't count the 50,000 state government workers in Indiana and Missouri who just lost their collective bargaining rights when newly elected Republican governors in those states signed executive orders stripping workers of those rights. □

A FIST perspective

Youth have big stake in Social Security

By David Hoskins

The developing struggle over Social Security is as relevant to youth as to seniors.

Along with pension benefits to retirees, Social Security has provided income for the disabled and the children of deceased workers since 1935.

More than 3 million children are dependent upon SSI payments for their housing, food and clothing.

At least 5 million disabled persons depend on SSI funds.

And, of course, Social Security benefits provide the sole source of income for over one-third of all retirees.

The numbers are truly staggering, but the principle is not. Tens of millions of youths, the elderly and the disabled depend on Social Security as their only source of income. Losing benefits would push most of these individuals from relative to absolute poverty as they struggle to find sources of food and housing.

The Bush administration is asking them to risk it all in a privatization scheme that encourages young workers to invest in the same stock market that crashed in the 1930s, propelling the United States into the Great Depression.

Young workers targeted by Bush's plan

stand to lose as much as the current retirees, who could see their benefits slashed in order to contain costs during the transition from public to private accounts. According to an analysis by the Economic Policy Institute, a think tank close to the AFL-CIO, any attempt at privatization will result in "enormous across-the-board benefit cuts, whether or not a worker decides to open a private account."

This type of plan has very distinct and real implications for young workers. First, it is their parents and grandparents who will lose a significant portion of income from privatization. Young workers will be expected to pick up the shortfall in caring for elderly family members without a corresponding reduction in the Social Security portion of their payroll tax. This will mean longer working hours and increased stress as young people feel the burden of privatization in their own wallets.

The Bush administration is asking young workers to bear this burden in order to secure the program's solvency for their own retirement. But in fact they will have less to show for their private investment than retirees currently enjoy under the federal system.

Bush insists that a crisis in Social Security is imminent. He should know.

The Bush administration purposefully engineered the program's deficit by raiding the \$1.8-trillion Social Security surplus in order to provide tax breaks for the wealthy and finance the occupation of Iraq.

Despite his attempt to bankrupt the system, full payments are still projected until the year 2042, when a quarter reduction in benefits could be necessary to keep the fund solvent.

A simple repeal of the Bush tax cuts for those in the upper percentiles could easily cover the projected \$3.7-trillion Social Security shortage.

What is the solution to the problems inherent in the system? The ruling class evidently feels bold enough to attack popular domestic programs in the midst of ongoing resistance to a foreign war. This is certainly a historical deviation from the experience during the Vietnam War, when Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon attempted to use programs such as the Great Society in order to divide the working class and smash domestic dissent.

The ruling class is placing a bet that young people and the working class are not currently capable of resisting an assault on Social Security.

It is going to require a militant struggle,

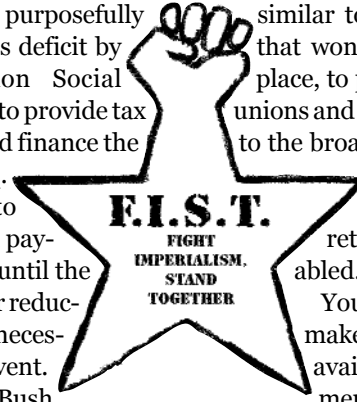
similar to the one during the 1930s that won Social Security in the first place, to push back this attack. Trade unions and leftist parties must reach out to the broader people's movement and wage a sincere battle to protect Social Security for retirees, children and the disabled.

Young workers who want to make sure that full benefits are available to them upon retirement and that their elderly family members are cared for have a key role to play in this struggle.

Revolutionary youth organizations such as Fight Imperialism—Stand Together (FIST) are struggling to end the occupation of Iraq and ensure that money is available for jobs, education, and social security—not for war.

The March 19th demonstration in New York City's Central Park and elsewhere on the second anniversary of the war can help reach out to youths, the working class and the oppressed communities and demonstrate how the war abroad is directly tied to the war back here at home.

By linking these struggles together, the people can beat back the Bush administration's attacks on Social Security and other progressive programs. □



Boss said five years, but

Workers fix subway in 11 days

By G. Dunkel
New York

A fire on the A and C subway lines in Manhattan Jan. 23 destroyed a signal relay room close to the Chambers Street station. Afterward, the 600,000 people who use those lines daily suffered major inconvenience. Some spent five extra hours a day commuting to and from work.

Within hours, authorities and local media tried to pin the blame on an unidentified homeless person. They claimed the homeless person had started a fire underground to keep warm and that it had spread to the signal room. However, after an investigation, the Fire Department announced Jan. 31 that it could not determine the real cause of the blaze. (Newsday, Feb. 1)

New York City Transit Authority (NYCTA) President Lawrence Reuter at first predicted that it would be three to five years before full service was restored to the

A and C lines. The public response was withering. Three years is longer than it took to build the Empire State Building.

The next day, Reuter changed his prediction—to six to nine months for the A line, and indefinitely for the C line. Calls went up for Reuter and the whole NYCTA administration—which recently raised subway and bus fares yet again—to be fired. And promptly.

A similar fire occurred in Brooklyn six years ago. Consultants told the Transit Authority then what should be done to prevent similar problems: install fire alarms and video cameras, put in fire-retardant systems, and allow fire personnel to shut off power to the room from the outside.

The NYCTA received \$591 million in Homeland Security funds, but still hasn't secured 42 of the 200 signal relay rooms.

Perhaps the bosses felt their program to prevent tourists from taking pictures on the subway, or their ad campaign instruct-

ing people to tell a cop if they see an unclaimed shopping bag, were suitable substitutes for making minimal improvements to the 70-year-old signal relay rooms.

The NYCTA's plan for relay room upgrades is scheduled to last until 2021.

The only reason the signal relay room at Chambers Street wasn't completely destroyed was that a train operator noticed the fire and called it in.

After the fire, very limited service was provided using a manual procedure. Signal maintainers got to work cleaning up the relay room.

These workers came up with a plan: to use signals that were replaced on the D train line a while ago, molded to new specifications at a machine shop in Queens. They took some circuits from a control tower that were not essential and wouldn't jeopardize safety.

All service was shut down on the A and

C lines beginning Jan. 28. Then 12 to 15 signal maintainers worked 12-hour shifts for the next 53 hours to build a new signal system. When they finished, off-peak service on both lines was running at 100 percent, and rush hour service was at 80 percent.

The workers restored service in 11 days using their ingenuity and deep knowledge of the signals.

Even Reuter had to acknowledge that the signal maintainers had designed a safe signal system on the fly. (Newsday, Feb. 2)

In most media accounts, the contributions of the workers to restoring service was minimized or ignored, along with the complete failure of the bosses to plan a safe, reliable and secure system.

The workers make the system run every day, and they could also manage it much better than the suits who run around making wild statements and ignoring the real needs of the people. □

'Get involved and fight back'

By Cheryl LaBash
Detroit

Once known as Motown or Motor City, Detroit lost its auto factories to restructuring 20 years ago. Today working and unemployed women and men are looking for answers as local and national budget cuts in the midst of a war are bringing devastation. Life grows more difficult every day.

"Let your voice be heard. Get involved. Fight back," said the call for a Million Worker March speak-out forum held here Feb. 5. Inspired by the Million Worker March in Washington, D.C., last Oct. 17,

the gathering united organizers fighting water service shutoffs with the fight for immigrant rights and the common interests of working people across international borders.

Although only 14 percent of workers in the U.S. are union members, said Maureen Taylor, state chair of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, the other 86 percent are potential members of her organization—and together they will be strong.

Dave Sole, president of UAW Local 2334, spoke representing the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice. Sole worked at the Fisher Body Fleetwood auto plant for 17 years until it

School Board worker Otis Mathis in floor discussion.

WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

was closed down.

Facing restructuring again today as a City of Detroit worker, Sole said, "Detroit isn't poor. It pays \$300 million in interest on bonds. According to Employment Research Associates, Detroit's share of the Iraq war budget last year was \$429 million. Police brutality lawsuits pay out more per capita than Los Angeles."



Charles Brown saw the victories of working people in the state of Michigan—from the sitdown strikes that organized the auto industry during the 1930s, to the reclaiming of Detroit's right to elect its School Board in the last election—as preparation for new struggles ahead. □

Boston School Safety Summit

Parents, union describe horrors of budget cuts

By Stephanie Nichols and Frank Neisser

An overflow, standing-room-only crowd met at the historic Freedom House in Boston on Feb. 3 over issues of school bus safety. They put the School Department and First Student Inc., the privately owned school bus company, on the hot seat. The largely African-American outpouring of over 150 parents, students, teachers, bus drivers and community activists had responded to a call for a School Bus Safety Summit put out by African American and Latino city councilors Chuck Turner, Charles Yancey and Felix Arroyo, as well as African-American State Senator Dianne Wilkerson and State Representative Gloria Fox.

The communities of color in Boston have been struggling for decades for equal, quality education and desegregation. Over the last year, they have successfully pushed back an attempt by the mayor, the racist majority on the City Council and the Boston business community to turn back the clock and return to racist, segregated, unequal "neighborhood schools."

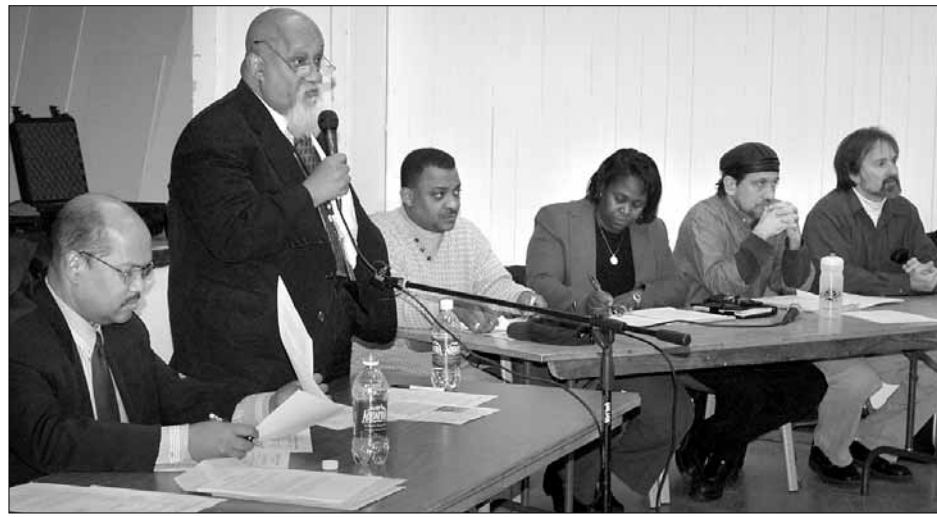
But for desegregation to be successful, the ride to and from school must be safe. The call for a School Bus Safety Summit came in response to an all-out attack on Boston School Bus Union USWA Local

8751 by the Boston City Council, which blamed drivers for safety problems and called for installation of Homeland Security-style "Global Positioning System" (GPS) devices on the school buses, rather than deal with the real safety issues.

These are: lack of monitors on the buses, not enough drivers or personnel devoted to safety, a bus fleet in ill repair and inadequately maintained, lack of rosters and necessary safety information, and poorly maintained and defective radios on the buses. The GPS would be a violation of the union's contract. The Greater Boston Labor Council has passed a resolution against it.

The campaign, which was taken up by many organizations and community groups, including the International Action Center and the Women's Fightback Network, also demanded that Chuck Turner be restored to his seat as chair of the City Council's Education Committee. Even though 85 percent of the students in Boston schools are from communities of color, the president of the City Council replaced Turner last year with a white racist chair and vice chair of the committee. They have pursued an agenda of returning to separate, unequal "neighborhood schools."

At the Freedom House meeting, Turner announced that as a result of the cam-



Elected officials and unionists at Safety Summit.

WW PHOTO: LIZA GREEN

campaign, City Council President Michael Flaherty had agreed to appoint him as vice-chair and to appoint councilors Yancey and Arroyo to the committee.

Grim stories of budget cuts

The summit opened with statements by Turner, Yancey and Gloria Fox welcoming representatives of the school bus drivers' union, community, and parents to "voice for themselves what actions need to be taken," and citing the City Council's failure year after year to pass Yancey's legislation for monitors on all the buses.

Steve Gillis, president of Local 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers, described system-wide problems with lateness and safety caused by the School Department's budget cuts. He also stated that while driv-

ers are all showing up on time for work, cuts to the maintenance budget mean not enough buses are mechanically fit to go on the road. Preventive maintenance is not done on the buses.

He described how a wheelchair bus had caught on fire last year because of a missing piece. Because a monitor was on board, it was able to be evacuated. "Clicked" routes require buses to deliver to as many as four different schools within a short window of time, causing them to arrive late at some schools. He explained that, "The School Department spent just over \$2 million for bus monitor safety this year, out of a more than \$700-million budget. It is a small price to pay for 40,000 children who rely on school buses in order to get their family's right to choose where to go to school."

Oslyn Brumant, a steward and representative of the union's safety committee, explained that for everyone's safety the drivers shouldn't have to take their eyes off the road, and that the human contact of a monitor is necessary to ensure children's safety on every bus, especially during a medical emergency. She also cited broken radios, the lack of personnel on the other end of the radio to respond in case of emergency, and the lack of safety supervisors. There are only four safety supervisors for over 700 buses and four bus yards. She described an incident in which it took over half an hour to get assistance for a driver who had been beaten up.

But the most chilling and gripping testimony came from the parents. One parent told how his autistic child was missing for 1.5 hours. He couldn't get anyone from the school department to answer and treat him with respect, and there was no monitor on that bus.

A bus driver and parent described the condition of a student with a metal plate in her head who was scratching at and hitting it, with no monitor on the bus.

A mother of three children, including a 13-year-old special needs student, cited how her daughter had missed 38 days of school so far this school year because no bus came, although the child was certified as requiring door-to-door special needs service. She described buses over-full, with three kids to a seat, and fights breaking out with no monitors. Kids jump over the seats, throw backpacks, and are getting hurt.

In answering them, School Department Transportation Chief Richard Jacobs implied the parents weren't telling the truth. And despite the pleas all night long, he said he didn't believe it was necessary to put a monitor on every bus.

Council members Turner and Yancey and State Representative Fox promised that this campaign would continue until the voices and concerns of the community were met. □

Detroit city workers resist layoffs

By Cheryl LaBash
Detroit

Bus drivers in uniform and workers from Water and other city departments picketed the Coleman A. Young Municipal Building after work on Feb. 2. Stretching along Woodward Avenue, the demonstration drew supportive horn honks from rush-hour drivers. Upstairs in the City Council chambers, a 4-4 tie stalled approval of a plan to authorize \$1.2 billion in bonds to fully fund Detroit's two pension systems.

A written statement issued by four Council members explained their "no" vote. "A more rigorous analysis of our budget situation can yield alternative solutions to preserve jobs that do not depend upon this deficit financing tool. At a time when we face an uncertain future because of a volatile stock market, a federal deficit estimated in the trillions of dollars, and a protracted costly, disastrous war, we should not gamble on a 15-year financing plan that is predicated upon promises of a stable stock market."

However, under the threat of 2,000 immediate layoffs in addition to 686 layoffs already announced, the four relented. Two days after the protest, a unanimous City Council approval was traded for a "no additional layoffs" pledge from the mayor for this fiscal year. The agreement reportedly also includes freezing the city's purchase of real estate and nonessential items. The layoffs already announced were not rolled back.

Council may have agreed to the pension bonds, but this is only one part of the squeeze on Detroit city workers and resi-



One week of the war budget would more than fix Detroit's budget crisis.

WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

dents. Calling for "equality of sacrifice," Mayor Kwame M. Kilpatrick announced an across-the-board 10-percent pay cut or an equivalent amount of time off without pay—called DO-WOP days. The union contracts expire on June 30. Pay cuts, layoffs, health benefit and pension changes will undoubtedly be put on the table by the city during the union contract negotiations.

A City Council public hearing on the effects of service cuts is scheduled for Feb. 14. City workers will picket the mayor's Community Budget meetings on Feb. 8 and 10.

Clearly, a 10-percent cut in the six-figure salaries of the top city administrators does not represent a sacrifice equivalent to 10 percent of a typist's \$20,000. But the big bonanza was left out of the plan altogether.

What about a 10-percent cut in the city's interest payments to the banks? The largest seven capitalist countries have recommended outright canceling the debt of the 17 poorest countries, which is unrecoverable anyway. Certainly the debt of the poorest countries should be cancelled, but what about Detroit? Can't the banks contribute even 10 percent?

To fight the cuts, working and unemployed people in this city must consider what is not being mentioned. For example, the military budget will reportedly increase by 5 percent. Eliminate just one week of the cost of the military occupation of Iraq and Detroit could blossom. Two Detroit Council women members have called for a preliminary meeting later this month to start that very discussion: How can we stop starving the cities to feed the Pentagon? □

SAN DIEGO

FIST fights campus racism

By Ruth Vela
San Diego, Calif.

The San Diego chapter of Fight Imperialism-Stand Together (FIST) was created and operates out of Southwestern College, the southernmost school in California. A majority of its students are of Mexican descent. Some live in Tijuana, Mexico, and must commute into the United States to attend school every day.

Many students are not "legal" U.S. citizens. As such, they often pay higher fees, do not qualify for financial aid and cannot apply for scholarships. On top of homework and tests, they have to worry about incarceration and deportation.

Recently the Southwestern College school newspaper, *The Sun*, ran an editorial by one of its staff writers entitled, "Illegal Immigrants Are Taxing on American Citizens." The piece was a blatant attack on immigrants. It stated, "It is time to burn the leeches off of our society and crack down on the people who flagrantly take advantage of America's wealth and prosperity."

Some students believe the article also included fictitious quotes, like this one from Marjorie De La Cruz: "The government needs to tighten if not close its southern borders to protect its citizens and legal immigrants from the inevitable poverty and diseases these people bring."

In response to this racist attack, members of FIST, MEChA and other campus organizations have formed the ERACISM coalition. The coalition launched a campaign that has collected over 700 signatures from students who feel attacked, harassed and let down by Southwestern College, *The Sun* newspaper and the school administration.

The administration has responded by sending campus police to harass students in an effort to prevent the distribution of flyers and collection of signatures. It has been trying to sweep the movement under the rug.

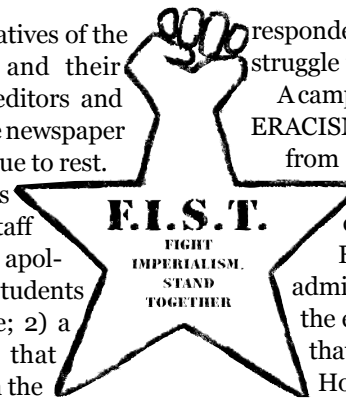
Emails mentioning FIST members by name and referring to the group as "just one or two upset students" have circulated among administrators who seem to value their positions more than their students.

On Jan. 27, representatives of the student organizations and their advisors met with the editors and professor in charge of the newspaper in an effort to put the issue to rest.

The following demands were presented to the staff of *The Sun*: 1) A printed apology from *The Sun* to the students of Southwestern College; 2) a retraction of the line that begins, "It's time to burn the leeches off of our society ..."; 3) that limitations be set on what the school newspaper can print; 4) that the student coalition's rebuttal be printed without censorship; and 5) that the school newspaper remain free of racist propaganda.

Unfortunately, the meeting ended with Nathaniel Pownell, the writer of the piece, screaming, "I am not a racist. ... I will not apologize for the article, I will never apologize for the article!"

On Jan. 31, *The Sun* sent a letter to the ERACISM coalition that failed to address any of its demands. Instead it offered free advertising for future events. ERACISM



responded with a promise that the struggle is not over.

A campus rally is planned for Feb. 10. ERACISM has received strong support from students and members of the local labor and anti-war community.

FIST stated: "The school administration, the newspaper and the entire city need to understand that this will not be tolerated! Hopefully this action will remind

those who need reminding, and teach those who have not learned, that this country was built on the backs of African slave labor and immigrants, that the land was stolen from Indigenous people who inhabited it before the immigrants arrived, and above all that THERE ARE NO BORDERS IN THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE!"

Letters supporting ERACISM's demands to *The Sun* newspaper and the administration will help in this struggle. Send them to eracismswc@hotmail.net by Feb. 17.

Vela is an organizer of the San Diego FIST chapter.

Hunger and homelessness are the crime

Group to protest building of new jail

By Larry Hales
Denver

The city of Denver is committed to building a new city jail, even though Denver voters turned down a bond initiative for \$325 million in 2001. In November 2002, the city of Denver purchased a downtown site for \$16 million, with the intention of pushing forward a new initiative to build an even more expensive jail.

This new jail is another assault on the poor and will increase the jail capacity by 75 percent, to a total of 1,500 beds, even though arrests are reportedly down by 25 percent. (*Rocky Mountain News*, Jan. 22)

Activists in Denver are mounting a campaign to stop this new jail and draw attention to the outrageously bogus claim that the old jail is in violation of human rights because it is overcrowded. The real violation of human rights occurs because so many people, especially people of color, are being locked up for offenses of opportunity—crimes that people commit because of poverty, because they are trying to make a living under dire circumstances.

The total cost of constructing the new jail comes to \$545 million over 20 years. So much could be done with this amount of money.

Crimes of survival and the capitalist dog-eat-dog mentality could easily be eliminated with a socialist reorganization of society. Imagine a workers' state: universal healthcare from cradle to the grave, free schooling up to the university, a shorter work day and week, more time to spend with loved ones, living wages, free public transportation. All this is possible, and would be just the beginning. The idea of incarcerating people for being addicted or for trying to eke out a living would just simply melt away.

However, the city of Denver is currently looking at the hard facts of a capitalist economic crisis.

Some 11,000 homeless people live in Denver alone, and the new jobs opening up are at low-wage companies like Wal-Mart. The cost of living is climbing even higher, and the Bush administration is

attacking all the social programs that workers and oppressed people won through struggle. Where will poor people go as things get worse, and the tension between the capitalist rulers and the workers and oppressed begins to strangle this inhumane system? Denver's answer: to jail or prison in even greater numbers.

As an opening barrage in the fight against jails and prisons, particularly Denver's new city jail, activists have formed a coalition dubbed the Committee of Resistance. The committee has come out with a statement of intended action, penned by founding committee member Terry Leichner, a staunch anti-war activist. The statement partly reads:

"WE SUBMIT: The City and County of Denver and the State of Colorado has failed its citizens in provision of basic needs to live a healthy life. Hunger, homelessness, addiction, mental health, prenatal care, education and freedom from oppression by police are fundamental issues of life. These issues far outweigh the need for building

more jail cells in this city and this state.

"These issues of peace and justice are basic stepping stones to ending violence and war that has plagued this country for so long. Only by caring for the weakest and the poorest can we have a great society. Only by providing opportunity for marginalized people to live in dignity can we have peace. Only by sharing our wealth and using our tax dollars on these basic issues can we prevent future problems of violence, hate and war.

"THEREFORE: A coalition of community activists, peace activists and concerned citizens of Denver and the State of Colorado will take action in peaceful protests and demonstrations during the NBA All Star weekend of February 18, 2005—February 20, 2005.

"This coalition will petition the NBA Players Association to endorse this list of priorities that should come before the construction of a new jail in the City and County of Denver.

Furthermore, this coalition intends to

inform the public and the many members of the media coming to Denver for the All Star game of the misguided proposal to build a new jail when so many issues need attention first.

"The coalition intends to dramatically but peacefully demonstrate our concerns and our objections at all events of the All Star Weekend.

"This coalition fully intends to bring all these issues to light during the time millionaire players entertain the rich and famous. We intend to make the affluent uncomfortable with the facts. We intend to fully portray the oppressed and impoverished viewpoint.

"We invite all concerned individuals and groups to join this action. Now is the time to act. This is the event to bring forth the issues of true social and economic justice. Now is the time to confront our government and the American people with reality.

"The large media turnout for this event provides great opportunity to do so." □

Despite cancelled hearing

Movement proceeds with Feb. 11 protest for Mumia

By Monica Moorehead

Why is the Feb. 11 Philadelphia event in support of death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal so important? What is the significance of this date?

This past Dec. 21, Abu-Jamal's lead counsel, Robert R. Bryan, received a letter from Judge Pamela Dembe of the Pennsylvania Court of Common Pleas in Philadelphia.

Dembe stated she would hold a hearing on Feb. 11 to respond to a writ of habeas corpus filed by Abu-Jamal's lawyers on Dec. 8, 2003. This writ raised two main issues. One was that the state manipulated a purported eyewitness to falsely identify

Abu-Jamal as the shooter of Police Officer Daniel Faulkner on Dec. 9, 1981. This false statement was in violation of Abu-Jamal's rights under the fifth, sixth, eighth, and fourteenth amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

The second issue in the writ was that Abu-Jamal was found guilty and sentenced to death on July 3, 1982, through the use of a fabricated confession, in violation of three out of the four amendments just cited.

Back in August 2001, Dembe dismissed a petition by Abu-Jamal's lawyers around similar legal issues. At the last moment, Dembe denied Abu-Jamal the right to be present in the court during the hearing.

This did not keep an estimated 1,000 Mumia supporters from rallying in the streets outside the Criminal Justice Center on a hot summer day. There has been no further court hearing since then.

Once the Feb. 11 hearing was announced, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and the newly formed Free Mumia national task force decided to organize a day of protest.

But in mid-January, Dembe sent another letter to Abu-Jamal's lawyers canceling the hearing. Instead, the judge ordered a "briefing" by Feb. 15 on the issue of whether a recent Pennsylvania Supreme Court decision in another case is applicable to whether the court has juris-

Continued on page 13

Ossie Davis (center) with Larry Holmes, Monica Moorehead, Pat Chin and Teresa Gutierrez backstage during the "Truth Behind the Coup in Haiti" rally at Brooklyn College, April 2004.

PHOTO: ROBERT J. MERCADO



OSSIE DAVIS

Remembering a great actor & activist

BY MONICA MOOREHEAD

OSSIE DAVIS, who passed away on Feb. 4 at the age of 87, was one of the greatest performing artists of the 20th century, or of any other century.

Born in Cogdell, Ga., Davis attended Washington, D.C.'s historic African American college, Howard University, where he met the great Harlem Renaissance writers Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen.

Hearing the legendary opera singer Marian Anderson perform at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939 had a great social impact on Davis's life. Anderson, who was African American, was forced at the very last moment to change her venue after being barred from Constitution Hall by the Daughters of the Confederacy.

Davis and Ruby Dee, his life partner for almost 60 years, began their stage collaboration in the 1940s in Harlem with the Rose McClendon Players. As they moved from the stage to film and television, they helped to tear down some of the racist barriers put up by the white-dominated Hollywood establishment. The two accomplished this by resisting the degrading and stereotypical roles offered to Black actors during those years.

As distinguished as Davis's career has been, he never became a Hollywood star in a traditional sense. This was true for the vast majority of Black actors. This marginalization is rooted in the racism of Hollywood and the entire U.S. entertainment industry. Although Broadway shows did dim their marquees briefly on Feb. 4 in tribute to Davis, television programs like "Entertainment Tonight" mentioned Davis's death in less than 3 minutes, compared to a whole week of coverage on the death of Johnny Carson.

Nevertheless, Ossie Davis has received more publicity with his death than when he was living—because he was an unwavering social activist. He and Dee risked losing their careers early on when they came under an anti-communist attack. It was because they supported the powerful African American actor, singer and social activist Paul Robeson. Robeson was victimized by the witch hunt during the 1950s and was forced to leave the U.S. because of it. This did not prevent him from performing all over the world, including Wales, China and the former Soviet Union, where he was beloved.

Davis and Dee were avid supporters of the U.S. civil rights movement and close friends with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The actors helped to facilitate the rally at the historic 1963 March on Washington where Dr. King made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

During that rebellious period of the 1960s, Davis became a good friend of Malcolm X, who also came under a vicious racist attack by the U.S. government for advocating Black pride and the right to self-defense. It was Davis who gave the moving eulogy at the funeral of Malcolm X in 1965. (See accompanying article.)

Even during times of political reaction, Davis supported many progressive causes until his death. For instance, when it came to supporting a new trial for African American revolutionary journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, still on death row, Ossie Davis was always there front and center. Davis spoke at the "Evening of Justice for Mumia" rally Feb. 26, 1999, at Town Hall in New York to promote the Millions for Mumia march in Philadelphia that April 24, Mumia's birthday.

A year later, on May 7, Davis spoke at the "A Day for Mumia" rally before 6,000 people inside the Madison

How women the Montg

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the launching of the historic Montgomery bus boycott. The following are excerpts from an article that appeared in *Workers World* on Feb. 16, 1995.

BY MONICA MOOREHEAD

The Montgomery, Ala., bus boycott is usually credited with giving birth to the civil rights movement. And rightfully so. It came right on the heels of the historic 1954 Supreme Court ruling proclaiming that separate but equal schools were unconstitutional.

The history books fail to record the boycott's root cause

Square Garden Theater. Also participating were actor Ed Asner, hip-hop artist Mos Def, attorney Johnnie Cochran, former New York Mayor David Dinkins and many more.

Davis also actively opposed U.S. imperialist intervention around the globe. When asked to lend his voice to an April 7, 2004, rally to help bring broader attention to the U.S. role in the coup-napping of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Ossie Davis did not hesitate to say yes, along with Congresswoman Maxine Waters.

Before a packed auditorium of mainly Haitians at Brooklyn College, Davis read a moving rendition of the 1893 speech on the impact of the 1804 Haitian revolution worldwide given by Frederick Douglass, the former slave who became the first U.S. Ambassador to Haiti.

Davis openly opposed the first Gulf War against Iraq in 1991 and the present U.S. war and occupation of Iraq. He worked consistently on these activities and others with organizations such as the International Action Center in New York. The IAC issued a statement on Davis's passing (iacenter.org).

Another great artist and activist, Harry Belafonte, fought back tears at a press conference after Davis's death. Belafonte compared his friend to Dr. King, Malcolm X, Paul Robeson, W.E.B. DuBois and Fanny Lou Hamer. These comparisons help describe a great humanitarian who never separated his artistry from the struggle to liberate humanity from war and oppression. This is the legacy that Ossie Davis leaves behind for the movement today and for future struggles to come.

The writer appeared with Ossie Davis on ABC's "Like It Is" with Gil Noble in 2000 to help promote the Mumia Abu-Jamal rally at Madison Square Garden Theater.

OSSIE DAVIS ON MALCOLM X

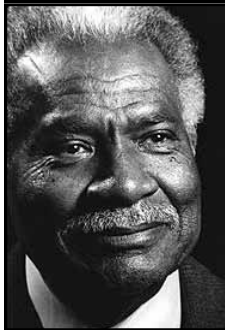


PHOTO: CHESTER HIGGINS, JR.

In honoring him, we honor the best in ourselves'

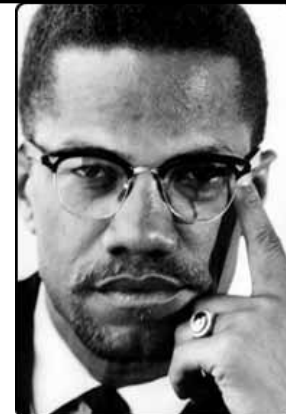
Excerpts from the eulogy delivered by the late Ossie Davis at the funeral of Malcolm X, Feb. 27, 1965.

Here—at this final hour, in this quiet place—Harlem has come to bid farewell to one of its brightest hopes—extinguished now, and gone from us forever. For Harlem is where he worked and where he struggled and fought—his home of homes, where his heart was, and where his people are—and it is, therefore, most fitting that we meet once again—in Harlem—to share these last moments with him. For Harlem has ever been gracious to those who have loved her, have fought for her, and have defended her honor even to the death.

It is not in the memory of man that this beleaguered, unfortunate, but nonetheless proud community has found a braver, more gallant young champion than this Afro-American who lies before us—unconquered still. Afro-American Malcolm was most meticulous in his use of words. Nobody knew better than he the power words have over minds of men. Malcolm had stopped being a

"Negro" years ago. It had become too weak a word for him. Malcolm was bigger than that. Malcolm had become an Afro-American and he wanted—so desperately—that all his people would become Afro-Americans too.

There are those who will consider it their duty, as friends of the Negro people, to tell us to revile him, to flee, even from the presence of his memory, to save ourselves by writing him out of the history of our turbulent times. Many will ask what Harlem finds to honor in this stormy, controversial and bold young captain—and we will smile. Many will say turn away from this man, for he is a demon, a monster, a subverter and an enemy of the Black man—and we will smile. They will say that he is of hate—a fanatic, a racist—who can only bring evil to the cause for which you struggle! And we will answer and say to them: Did you ever talk to Brother Malcolm? Did you ever touch him, or have him smile at you? Did you ever really listen to him? Did he ever do a mean thing? Was he ever himself associated with violence or any public disturbance? For if you did you would know him. And if you knew him you would know why we must honor him.



Malcolm was our living, black manhood! This was his meaning to his people. And, in honoring him, we honor the best in ourselves. Last year, from Africa, he wrote these words to a friend: "My journey," he says, "is almost ended, and I have a much broader scope than when I started out, which I believe will add new life and dimension to our struggle for freedom and dignity in the States. I am writing these things so that you will know for a fact the tremendous sympathy and support we have among the African States for our Human Rights struggle. The main thing is that we keep a United Front wherein our most valuable time and energy will not be wasted fighting each other." However we may have differed with him—or with each other about him—let his going from us serve only to bring us together, now.

Consigning these mortal remains to earth, the common mother of all, secure in the knowledge that what we place in the ground is no more now a man—but a seed—which, after the winter of our discontent, will come forth again to meet us. And we will know him then for what he was and is, our own black shining Prince!—who didn't hesitate to die, because he loved us so. □

Women led and won Montgomery bus boycott

in more intricate detail. What were the conditions facing the 50,000 African Americans who rode these once segregated buses?

What was the role of the organizations—especially those involving women—in this heroic boycott that won an important political concession from the KKK-like White Citizens Council?

For many years, African Americans were the victims of harassment, brutality and degradation due to the segregationist policies of the Montgomery City Council.

This was especially true of the buses. African Americans were forced to ride in the back even when the white-only seats were empty.

Jo Ann Gibson Robinson would become one of the most prominent leaders of the boycott. In her 1987 book “The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It” (University of Tennessee Press), she talks about the daily humiliations Black people faced riding the buses.

Black people accounted for 75 percent to 80 percent of the ridership. There were many incidents when Black riders were arrested for “disorderly conduct” when white bus drivers said they had “talked back” or “didn’t have the correct change.”

Black people visiting from the North were arrested, harassed—and even shot dead—for refusing to move to the back of the bus. In one case, police killed a man named Brooks because he did not put “his money in the meter box.” There were other cases when Black women were beaten and even dragged from the doors by racist bus drivers.

Robinson’s book also points out how the horrors of racist oppression affected the daily lives of the Black population. She writes: “Bus incidents could often lead to domestic violence in Negro families, or to juvenile delinquency. ... Grown men frequently came home on particular evenings, angry from humiliating experiences on buses, to pick fights with their wives or children. ...

“They needed a target somewhere, a way to relieve internal conflict. In 1956, the superintendent of a local hospital ... told a reporter that since the boycott began, the hospital had had fewer patients.”

Women take action

The Women’s Political Council, led by Robinson, received more than 30 complaints against the Montgomery City Lines bus company as far back as 1953.

The WPC was founded in 1946 by a group of African American women college professors at Alabama State College, a predominantly Black school. The group claimed a membership of 300 women.

The WPC had frequently discussed the idea of calling a boycott, but people felt the timing was not right. That began to change—beginning on March 2, 1955, when a 15-year-old Black student named Claudette Colvin rode the bus.

Claudette Colvin did not take a seat reserved for whites; she sat down two rows from the back of the bus. But on this particular day, the bus was so crowded that the bus driver asked her to give up her seat for a white person.

When she refused to give up her seat, the bus driver radioed ahead to the police—who handcuffed the outspoken student and physically dragged her off the bus to jail. She was charged with misconduct, resisting arrest and violating the city’s segregationist laws.

News of the arrest spread throughout the Black community. The idea of initiating a boycott was reopened.

The WPC had already drawn up a leaflet to announce the boycott; only the day and time had to be added. In the meantime, financial and moral support for Claudette Colvin started pouring in from all over the country.

She was, however, found guilty of all charges and released on probation. Another young woman, Mary Louise Smith, was arrested in October 1955 and found guilty on similar charges.

The straw that broke the camel’s back for the Black community came on Dec. 1, 1955, when Rosa Parks was arrested on the same charges.

The WPC went into action. Its members reproduced 50,000 fliers that read: “The Women’s Political Council will not wait for Mrs. Parks’ consent to call for a boycott of city buses. On Dec. 2, 1955, the women of Montgomery will call for a boycott to take place on Monday, Dec. 5.”

Mass meetings were held in Black churches to galvanize the Black community into action. The Montgomery Improvement Association was created for the express purpose of organizing every aspect of the boycott.



Participants in the bus boycott.

PHOTO: ALBANY.EDU

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was elected the president. Although most of the MIA’s major offices were held by other prominent ministers, women were responsible for the important day-to-day tasks of holding the organization together.

Jo Ann Gibson Robinson and others started the MIA newsletter, which grew from four to eight pages. This newsletter was viewed as an important organizing weapon for the success of the boycott.

Hardships and victory

The MIA transportation committee organized one of the most effective volunteer campaigns in U.S. history. An estimated 325 private vehicles picked up thousands of passengers daily from 43 dispatch stations and 42 pick-up sites.

Passengers were picked up as early as 5 a.m. and taken home as late as 8 p.m. Thousands of dollars poured in from all over the country for the transportation efforts.

A great majority of these passengers were domestic workers forced to work for privileged white families. These Black women were a source of cheap labor, very similar to those in South Africa.

Domestic workers in Montgomery received as little as \$2 a day and worked from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Many of these women worked for the boycott in the evenings after returning from work and taking care of their families. They had depended heavily on taking the bus before the boycott.

The racist White Citizens Council made many attempts to sabotage the boycott. One effort was to enforce a policy of having the police arrest any group of Black people waiting at pick-up stations along with those who volunteered to drive people to their destinations.

Another terrorist tactic was for racist whites to randomly telephone Black people and threaten them. The callers could distinguish Black people in the phone books because, unlike whites, it was the local phone company’s policy not to use “Miss” or “Mrs.” before the names of Black women.

After negotiations between representatives of the Black community and the WCC broke down, the MIA brought a lawsuit against the City of Montgomery including the mayor, city commissioner, police chief and other officials in order to integrate mass transportation.

Up until late January 1955, Black people were not trying to abolish the segregationist policy but to modify it in order to come up with a more satisfactory seating arrangement on the buses. They also wanted the city to hire Black bus drivers.

But when the WCC refused to meet their demands and at the same time tried to undermine the boycott, the Black community became more angry—and more determined to sweep away Jim Crow in the area of mass transit.

On Feb. 21, 1956, a grand jury of 17 whites and one Black declared the boycott illegal. One hundred fifteen boycott leaders—including Robinson—were arrested. None of the white officials was arrested.

On Jan. 31, Dr. King’s home was firebombed.

The arrests were appealed, and on June 5 a three-judge federal court ruled by a two-to-one vote to strike down the segregationist transportation laws in Montgomery.

The WCC refused to abide by the ruling until Dec. 20. U.S. marshals served the Supreme Court’s orders on the WCC.

After 13 months of tremendous organizing and self-sacrifice, the Black community had won a historic victory that laid the basis for many years of civil rights struggles. In the spring of 1960, students at Alabama State College took part in sit-ins at the Montgomery County courthouse snack counter. □

By Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Malcolm X’s rap of Democrats

Recently, this writer referenced the little-known and suppressed speech prepared by then-SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) leader (now U.S. Congressman) John Lewis. Lewis was urged by civil rights leaders to “tone down” his speech, and he did so.

At around the same time, another Black leader, fiery Black nationalist (and former Nation of Islam Minister) Malcolm X, was giving his own biting analysis and commentary on the duplicity of Democrats when it came to Blacks.

In his historic 1964 “The Ballot or the Bullet” speech, Malcolm made crystal clear his view of Democratic betrayal of Black interests:

“In the present administration they have in the House of Representatives 257 Democrats to only 177 Republicans. They control two-thirds of the House vote. ... In the Senate there are 67 Senators who are of the Democratic Party. Only 33 of them are Republicans. Why, the Democrats have got the government sewed up, and you’re the one who sewed it up for them. And what have they given you for it? Four years in office, and just now getting around to some civil-rights legislation. Just now, after everything else is gone, out of the way, they’re going to sit down and play with you all summer long—the same old giant con game that they call filibuster. ...

“They get all the Negro vote, and after they get it, the Negro gets nothing in return. All they did when they got to Washington was give a few big Negroes big jobs. Those big Negroes didn’t need big jobs, they already had jobs. That’s camouflage, that’s treachery, window-dressing. I’m not trying to knock out the Democrats for the Republicans, we’ll get to them in a minute. But it’s true—you put the Democrats first and the Democrats put you last. ...

“The Democrats have never kicked the Dixiecrats out of the party. The Dixiecrats bolted themselves once [in 1948], but the Democrats didn’t get them out. Imagine, these lowdown Southern segregationists put the Northern Democrats down. ... They have got a con game going on, a political con game, and you and I are in the middle. It’s time for you and me to wake up and start looking at it like it is.”

Malcolm X reminds us all of the ongoing war at home.

He reminds us that voting is but one (and that a minor) part of politics. That it is important to speak truth to power. That it is important, indeed vital, to dissent. That it is necessary, sometimes, to step outside of a thing to see it clearly. And that political organizations have different interests from those who vote for them.

It has been exactly 40 years since Malcolm delivered his powerful speech, and, if it be admitted that—yes—things HAVE changed, we must also admit that some things have stood the test of time.

The present Democratic Party “tolerates” Blacks, but is virtually racing to the right. It tried to out-Bush Bush, by posing as the “real war” party. This despite the fact that, according to polls, Blacks were the most anti-war segment of the population. It wasn’t anti-war because of any soft, cottony reasons, but knew that young people would bear the brunt of a war, for a cause that certainly is questionable.

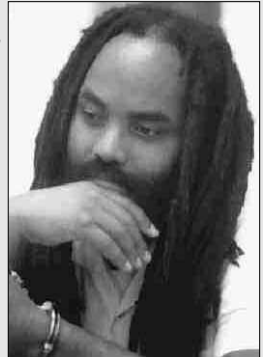
It’s been 40 years. How well have we learned Malcolm’s lessons? Or have we been conned, once again, into thinking that the ballot box is the doorway to our true freedom?

How long have we voted for people who have not voted for us?

In virtually every state of the so-called Union, there are tens (if not hundreds!) of thousands of folks who have had their votes disregarded, trashed, uncounted, “lost,” and even stolen! What kind of “democracy” tolerates such a thing?

In truth, this isn’t a democracy—it’s a kleptocracy: a government of thieves. For who else profits from stolen items? In truth, democracy itself has been stolen by computerized paperless voting machines; by ambitious party functionaries; by a political process that has grown fat by feeding on social discontent.

Let us learn from Malcolm’s insights, and build political power independent of the two, major corporate parties. □



Will Big Apple become Big Chapel?

Same-sex marriage struggle heats up

By LeiLani Dowell
New York

New York Supreme Court Judge Doris Ling-Cohan ruled on Feb. 4 that the state constitution guarantees basic freedoms to lesbians and gays—including the freedom to marry.

The ruling was the outcome of a lawsuit filed last year by Lambda Legal on behalf of five same-sex couples. The suit was a response to the denial of marriage licenses last year when more than 100 couples demanded them from the city clerk's office here. The case was the first filed in New

York since same-sex marriage was legalized in Massachusetts.

In a 62-page decision, Judge Cohan said that the state's Domestic Relations Law—which dates back to 1909 and limits marriages to opposite-sex partners—violated the guarantee of equal protection and due process found in the New York Constitution.

The ruling also stated, "The challenges to laws banning whites and nonwhites from marriage demonstrate that the fundamental right to marry the person of one's choice may not be denied based on longstanding and deeply held traditional beliefs about

appropriate marital partners."

The very next day, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced his intention to appeal the decision, sending it to the state's highest court—the seven-member Court of Appeals. Claiming that he nonetheless approved of same-sex marriage, the billionaire mayor cited the "chaos" that ensued when same-sex couples were allowed to marry in San Francisco as his reason for challenging the ruling.

The Feb. 4 ruling would have required the city to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples within 30 days. Now it is unclear when the court will hear the appeal.

Lawyers estimate that it may be anytime from this spring to well into next year.

A favorable ruling in the appellate court could broaden the application of the Feb. 4 ruling to the entire state.

Forces are already mobilizing for the fight. Pride at Work—the lesbian, gay, bi and trans constituency group of the AFL-CIO—released a statement that in the face of an appeal, they "look forward to recruiting labor organizations to sign on to an amicus brief in support of the lawsuit." The group cited the number of unions that signed a similar brief in Washington state. □

Beginning of post-war witch hunt

Before McCarthy, the Pentagon

By Leslie Feinberg

Even before McCarthyism menaced gays and lesbians in the United States in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Pentagon brass had ratcheted up an anti-homosexual witch hunt in the ranks of the military that left its impact on civilian life, as well.

Historian Allan Bérube's book "Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II" makes a great contribution towards understanding this particular period of repression.

World War II was a period of great exodus—voluntary and involuntary. Sixteen million men were conscripted into the military, leaving their farms and towns, campuses and cities behind.

An estimated equal number of civilians, mostly women, left their homes to find wartime employment. Millions more moved from rural areas and smaller towns to the burgeoning port cities and industrial hubs.

Women, Bérube notes, "filled jobs in heavy industry and other defense work, widely expanding their presence in the paid labor force and increasing their ability to live independently."

African American women and men migrated from the South to Northern and West Coast cities where jobs were available in the military industries.

Bérube stressed that the uprooting of such a large segment of the population "disrupted the everyday lives of a generation of young men and women, exposing them to the power of the federal government and the vast expanse of the United States, the great variety of its people, and ways of life they had not imagined."

In particular, "The massive mobilization for World War II relaxed the social constraints of peacetime that had kept gay men and women unaware of themselves and each other, 'bringing out' many in the process. Gathered together in military camps, they often came to terms with their sexual desires, fell in love, made friends with other gay people, and began to name and talk about who they were.

"When they could get away from military bases, they discovered and contributed to the rich gay nightlife—parties, bars, and nightclubs—that flourished in war-boom cities."

But, Bérube points out, gay and lesbian GIs caught in sexual acts, netted in methodical roundups at stateside or overseas bases, or seeking medical or religious advice about their sexuality, found themselves fighting another war.

"As officers began to discharge homosexuals as undesirables, the gay GIs who

were their targets had to learn how to defend themselves in psychiatrists' offices, discharge hearing rooms, hospital wards, and 'queer stockades.' There they were interrogated about their sex lives, locked up, physically abused, and subjected to systematic humiliations in front of other soldiers."

Some 10,000 gays and lesbians were forced to endure this harsh repression—a fraction of their estimated total numbers in the ranks, but proof of a climate of terror.

However, some brave individuals took on the military establishment. Bérube concluded, "Those veterans who fought to upgrade their undesirable discharges for homosexuality began to define their struggle with the government as one for justice and equal rights, ideas that became a prerequisite for a political movement."

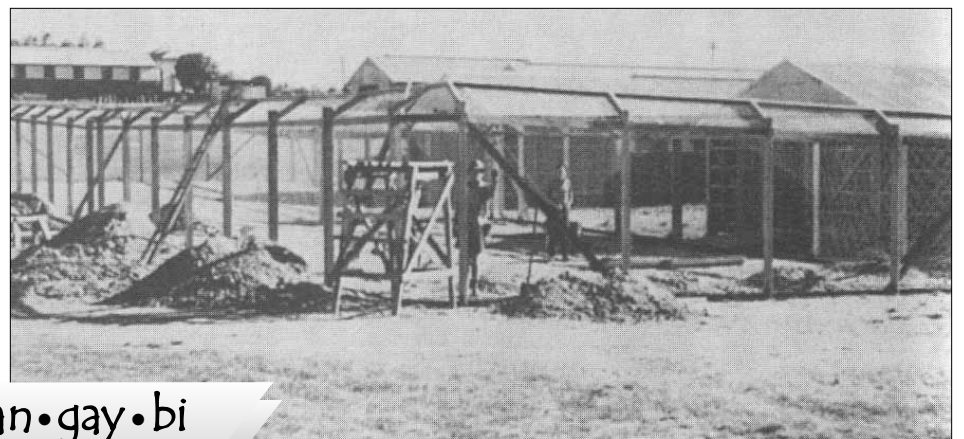
Witch hunt!

After World War II, with the ascendancy of McCarthyism in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the campaign to demonize homosexuality and transsexualism and to enforce Dick-and-Jane gender conformity became essential components of the anti-communist witch hunt.

In fact, McCarthyism inseparably linked sexual and gender "queerness" with communism, making them virtually synonymous.

Mouthpieces for reactionary titans of capital tried to define the Cold War as a battle between capitalist democratic "freedom" and communist "totalitarianism." These spin doctors even tried to equate German fascism with workers' states in the Soviet Union and East Germany (German Democratic Republic).

Capitalist democracy is itself a form of dictatorship—of the class that owns the productive apparatus over the class forced to work for wages. During the 1950s, however, even the limited democratic features of this form of state rule were seriously eroded



CREDIT: FROM 'COMING OUT UNDER FIRE'

Lesbian • gay • bi
and trans
PRIDE

SERIES
PART
26

From the time of the Revolutionary War, the Navy and Army had criminalized same-sex acts, not homosexuals themselves. But in World War II the Pentagon's policy changed drastically. GIs suspected of being gay or lesbian faced witch hunts, humiliation, brutality, dishonorable discharges and being locked up in 'queer stockades,' like the one shown above.

under the weight of political reaction.

While the period of political reaction in the U.S. during the 1950s was not fascism—it did not try to crush all the workers' organizations or carry out the systematic genocide of millions—the epoch does carry with it this lesson.

As long as the social relationship of capital rules, with exploiter against exploited, oppressor versus oppressed, hard-won social and economic gains can be quickly wiped away.

In order to understand the domestic repression during the 1950s, it's necessary to look at the international relationship of forces.

Global class war

The Cold War was fundamentally a class war against the socialist countries as well as oppressed peoples in this country and around the world.

World War II had so weakened most of the colonial powers in Europe and Japan that oppressed peoples in Asia, Africa and the Middle East seized the historic moment and rose up for real independence. The U.S. imperialists hoped to gain from this against their imperialist rivals,

but in many countries, liberation movements led by communists defeated pro-imperialist puppet governments.

The triumph of the Chinese Revolution sent the U.S. capitalist class into an enraged frenzy.

The ruling class in this country was also deeply worried about the developing relationship between China, the Soviet Union and those fighting colonial domination.

By 1952, the Pentagon was mired in a war to keep Korea under its capitalist dominion.

Does this look like 'freedom'?

Life in the U.S. didn't look much like an ad for "freedom," either.

Jim Crow apartheid-like conditions predominated, not only in the South but in many Northern cities, as well.

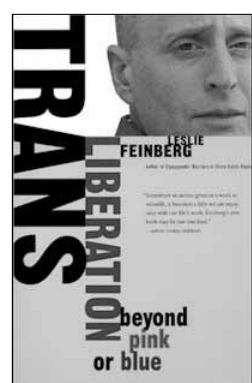
Post-war "Father Knows Best" campaigns were designed to push "Rosie the Riveter" out of the factories and back into the kitchen.

Sen. Joseph McCarthy was empowered to hunt down communists and progressives, and to crush or intimidate dissent or resistance. Gains in civil liberties, union organizing and political expression were overturned.

Jewish revolutionaries and progressives who had been in the forefront of movements for social and economic justice bore an onslaught of anti-Semitism and anti-communism, unleashed in relative tandem.

It was in this political context that a wave of anti-homosexual and anti-transsexual rhetoric and repression reached a fevered pitch.

Next: *Homosexuals, transsexuals in McCarthy's sights.*



TRANS LIBERATION

More exists among human beings than can be answered by the simplistic question I'm hit with every day of my life: "Are you a man or a woman?"

Trans Liberation is the phrase that has come to refer to all those who blur or bridge the boundary of the sex or gender expression they were assigned at birth: cross-dressers, transsexuals, intersex people, Two Spirits, bearded females, masculine females and feminine males, drag kings and drag queens. In this inspiring collection of speeches and new writing, Leslie Feinberg argues passionately for the acceptance of all trans peoples.

Order at leftbooks.com for a copy signed by the author

BOSTON

Event builds unity with Haitian struggle

By Peter Cook
Boston

A multinational crowd, mostly Haitian, filled the union hall of the Boston School Bus Drivers Feb. 5 for an "Evening in solidarity with the people of Haiti."

The New England Human Rights Organization for Haiti organized the event. Supporting organizations included Fanmi Lavalas, International Action Center, MLK Jr. Bolivarian Circle, Haiti Support Network, Fight Imperialism—Stand Together (FIST), and the Women's Fightback Network.

This important meeting was held at a crucial time: just days before the anniversary of the overthrow of the U.S.-backed Duvalier regime in 1986 and during Black History Month. As in Iraq, resistance against the U.S.-led "regime change" and the occupation of Haiti is growing. Mass demonstrations and resistance of all forms are happening on an almost daily basis.

This meeting made a strong statement of international solidarity for those fighting back against imperialism and oppression.

Famous Haitian singer and Fanmi Lavalas activist Farrah Juste co-chaired the event with Kim Ives of the Haiti Support Network. There was a wide range of speakers.

Following a cultural performance by Bichet Lakay, Juste sang the Haitian national anthem. Frantz Mendez, vice-president of USWA Local 8751, welcomed everyone to the union hall.

Kim Ives stated that, "The struggle in Haiti is the same struggle that we see in Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia, the Philippines and Palestine. We see it across the globe—people saying no to the attempts to crush the people's struggle."

Yves Alcindor, a well-known activist in the Haitian community and a leader of the New England Human Rights Organization for Haiti, set the tone with an historical overview of the Haitian independence struggle. He reminded the audience that, "In 1803 the people of Haiti defeated the French for their independence. At that time the French had the most powerful military in the world, similar to the U.S. today."

Alcindor said that in spite of intense repression today, the people are resisting. "Those that think they are bringing democracy to the world are the ones who



Ronald St. Jean, Kim Ives and Pat Chin.

are responsible for what is happening in Haiti, just like in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and elsewhere around the world."

Alcindor closed by stating: "They did not give Haiti its independence, we struggled for it and we will continue to struggle for it and Haiti will win its independence."

'Take to the streets!'

Chuck Turner, a member of the Boston City Council, made clear his solidarity with the people of Haiti. Turner stated, "We must stand together and make sure that we never again allow the U.S. government to use the resources that have been stolen from the workers of this country to oppress people around the world so that U.S. corporations can exploit their natural resources."

Turner concluded by issuing a call for on-going demonstrations to occupy Washington, D.C. He stressed, "Corrupt and tyrannical governments have never been removed through the ballot box, they have always been removed when the people take to the streets to demand it."

Pat Chin, a leading organizer for the International Action Center who has traveled to Haiti many times, made reference to Black History Month. She reminded everyone that, "Haiti was the first Black Republic and that inspired enslaved Africans in the United States and throughout the Americas to rebel."

Chin pointed out that, "In 1802 the French kidnapped and exiled Haitian leader Toussaint Louverture, but this led to the rise of Jean-Jacques Dessalines who took the struggle to a higher level and drove the French out. Today, President



WW PHOTO: LIZA GREEN

Jean-Bertrand Aristide has been exiled, but the fighting, uncompromising spirit of Dessalines is now moving the popular movement forward."

Chin emphasized that the struggle against the occupation of Haiti is intimately linked to that in Iraq and Palestine. And she pointed out that the anti-imperialist, anti-war movement must be linked to the fight for international workers' rights and against racism—especially in Haiti where workers are super-exploited by some of the same corporations that exploit the workers here.

Chin closed by calling for a united front against imperialism and for people's power, leading everyone in the chant: "On your feet, on your feet and get back into the streets!"

'Solidarity is fundamental!'

Ronald St. Jean, a journalist/author and a leader of the Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Haitian People, traveled from Haiti to participate in this meeting. St. Jean was a leader in Gonaives during the 1985 uprising that led to the overthrow of the Duvalier dictatorship. He was also the head of International Relations for the General Confederation of Workers.

St. Jean said that the situation in Haiti since the intervention by U.S., Canadian and French troops and the kidnapping of Aristide is more serious than during the period following the first coup in September 1991.

St. Jean exposed the U.S./CIA role in the destabilization and "coup-napping" of Aristide, and exposed so-called aid or

human rights organizations that act as nothing more than a branch of the U.S.-installed interim government.

He pointed out that the "interim government" of Haiti and its agents are executing the poorest people in Haiti daily. St. Jean explained the systematic approach this puppet government has taken—arresting many Fanmi Lavalas leaders, forcing hundreds into hiding or exile, and assassinating many. These are attempts to intimidate and disrupt the resistance to the occupation.

But this brutal policy has failed, he said. The people of Haiti have not been intimidated. In fact, their resistance to the occupation and the interim government continues to grow. St. Jean explained that solidarity between Haitian and U.S. workers is fundamental to defeating the occupation.

Steve Gillis, president of USWA Local 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers, spoke about his participation in a delegation to Haiti last fall. The group visited political prisoners, including singer So-Anne and Aristide's prime minister, Yvon Neptune.

Gillis drew the connection between the hundreds of billions of dollars being spent on the Pentagon wars and occupations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Haiti, and the lack of adequate funding for jobs, housing, healthcare and education in this country. Gillis also appealed to those in attendance to participate in the March 19 anti-war protest in New York City. In addition to commemorating the second anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, the demonstration will demand an end to the occupation of Haiti.

Dario Zapata gave a message of solidarity from the Colombian people. It stated that the occupation of Haiti is condemned in all the mass demonstrations in Colombia and that they consider President Aristide to be the legitimate leader of Haiti. Zapata pointed out that the forces responsible for the coup in Haiti are now at work in Colombia assassinating labor and community leaders.

Other solidarity messages were delivered by Stephanie Nichols of FIST; Oslyn Brumant, a shop steward of USWA Local 8751 and a representative of the Committee to Stop the Illegal Deportations of the People from Montserrat; Liza Green, Women's Fightback Network; and John Harris, Chelsea Uniting Against the War.

□

L.A. forum

Continued from page 3

stripped of its resources and suffered two centuries of brutal colonization. Williams pointed out that the Haitian people, whose 1804 revolution established the first Black republic, don't want sympathy or pity—they want the kind of solidarity that will help them rebuild a sovereign Haiti and get the U.S. off their back.

Harold Green of the West Papua Action Network denounced behind-the-scenes U.S. support for the Armed Forces of Indonesia and efforts by the State Department to lift the ban on U.S. training of the Indonesian military. Indonesia is trying to stamp out the movement for West Papuan independence.

Julia La Riva, whose photographs often appear in Workers World, appealed for support of the Cuban Five, who are serving sentences in U.S. jails for trying to defend their country from U.S.-sponsored terrorism. □



Workers World Party is commemorating Black History Month with a series of national public forums.

PARTIAL LIST:

Sat.	Feb. 12	San Francisco	Clarence Thomas, Monica Moorehead, Henry Clark	415-561-9752
Fri.	Feb. 18	San Diego	Monica Moorehead	619-692-4496
Thurs.	Feb. 17	Baltimore	LeiLani Dowell	410-235-7040
Fri.	Feb. 18	Wash., DC	LeiLani Dowell	dc@workers.org
Fri.	Feb. 25	Philadelphia	LeiLani Dowell	610-453-0490
Fri.	Feb. 25	Chicago	Larry Holmes	773-381-5839
Fri.	Feb. 25	New York	Pat Chin, Imani Henry, Monica Moorehead	212-627-2994
Sat.	Feb. 26	Detroit	Larry Holmes	313-831-0750

For information on a listed event, call the local phone number. For more info and updates, call the national office at 212-627-2994.

'Chavez, Venezuela & the New Latin America'

By Adrian Garcia
Los Angeles

Aleida Guevara, daughter of legendary revolutionary leader Che Guevara, traveled to Venezuela in February 2004 to experience the "Bolivarian Revolution" first hand. Guevara, herself a Cuban pediatrician, compiled invaluable interviews with President Hugo Chávez, his supporters, Cuban doctors serving in Venezuela and others. From all this, she has created a riveting and informational documentary entitled, "Chávez, Venezuela and the New Latin America."

The documentary begins with images of pro-Chávez demonstrators, mostly poor and working people of color, converging in the thousands, proclaiming their loyalty to the advances promulgated by the "Bolivarian Revolution."

Chants of "Chávez no se va!"—Chávez will not go!—are a testament to the dedication of the people not to allow Washington or anybody else to usurp their sovereignty.

Guevara's extensive interview with Hugo Chávez reveals his revolutionary awakening while serving in the military as

a young poor worker with indigenous roots. He describes, with great historical analysis, the conditions of poverty and submission to capitalist bosses Venezuela was experiencing when he and other military officers attempted to wrest power from the subservient government in 1992 in an unsuccessful coup.

Chávez also recounts the struggles and achievements of the Bolivarian Revolution following his electoral victory in 1999 and the looming recall attempt last Aug. 15.

Chávez's head of the Venezuelan Armed Forces, Gen. Jorge Garcia Carneiro, speaks in detail about the U.S.-sponsored coup in April 2002 which brought out hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans to take over the Presidential Palace of Miraflores demanding the return of their president.

Heartfelt testimonials give insight to the progressive nature of the Bolivarian Revolution. A mother at a demonstration tells how her daughter is in a university as a result of the Bolivarian Revolution. An indigenous woman from the Amazon speaks about gains achieved in the most remote regions of Venezuela under Chávez.

Cuban doctors who work under the



WW PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA

Los Angeles premiere of Guevara's film at International Action Center Office, Jan. 28.

Barrio Adentro program, serving the most marginalized neighborhoods of Caracas, talk about their mission to serve the oppressed.

"Chávez, Venezuela and the New Latin America" provides a unique insight into the changing political atmosphere in

Latin America.

Chávez quotes Fidel Castro when asked what is on the horizon for Venezuela: "A new wave will arrive in Latin America, but in a different form."

The Bolivarian Revolution is at the forefront of that new wave. □

CHICAGO

Venezuela reaches out to Latin@s

By Lou Paulsen
Chicago

Close to 100 people, mostly Latin@ workers and youth, crowded the basement of Amor de Dios Methodist church in the working-class neighborhood of La Villita (Little Village) here on the night of Feb. 4. Seated on folding chairs, with the face of Che Guevara looking down from a banner on the wall, they ate arepas (cornmeal buns) and quesillo (custard) prepared by official representatives of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

It was the anniversary of the 1992 attempt by Hugo Chávez—then a lieutenant colonel, now the elected president—to overthrow the government of the Venezuelan oligarchy. The meeting in soli-

dirity with the Venezuelan Revolution was sponsored by the Circulo Bolivariano "Amada Libertad" and a dozen other progressive groups in the Latin@ community.

The audience applauded the dramatic video "Venezuela Bolivariana: the People and Struggle of the Fourth World War," with its strong revolutionary, anti-capitalist message.

Then a young, spare man in jeans who looked like a website developer addressed the crowd. A year ago Martin Sanchez was doing just that for the University of Iowa—but was better known for his work as a radical Venezuelan web journalist and the founder of the radical website aporrea.org.

Now he is the Venezuelan consul in the Midwest, and describes the Bolivarian Revolution: "This is not about one person,

it's about people who have awakened and taken destiny into their hands."

He talked about the healthcare offensive undertaken by the government, and about the 14,000 Cuban doctors who are working in poor communities throughout Venezuela. "I was in one of these clinics, and I talked with an old woman during the referendum campaign. I asked what she would do if the opposition won, and she said, 'I'll pull out my knife from my kitchen and my machetes, and I won't allow anyone to take away my doctor. It's the first time my grandchildren have seen one.'"

The people here in one of the poorest neighborhoods of Chicago had no trouble with this message. They are fighting for healthcare and literacy. The right to stay and work in this country is their daily life, and the daily work of Amor de Dios Church and its pastor, the Rev. José Landaverde.

Sanchez warned of a new propaganda offensive being waged in the U.S. press. "Last week NPR [National Public Radio] had a story about a middle-class family [in Venezuela] who wouldn't buy a car because they were afraid the government

would take it away. Actually, car sales in Venezuela were up 140 percent last year.

"Two percent of the people own 85 percent of the productive land. We are in the initial stages of the land reform, surveying to find out what productive land is not being used, but already NPR says 'They are taking away the land.' Every two days or so, the same topic comes up in the briefings at the White House and the State Department."

There are many consulates in Chicago. The representatives of imperialist countries meet with big bosses here as friends, and the representatives of bourgeois governments of the oppressed countries offer deals to U.S. firms and serve their countries' elites.

But the consular staff of Venezuela are reaching out to the working people and community activists of Chicago.

They are also encouraging the building of the U.S. delegation to this year's World Youth Festival in Caracas. Dozens of young people have already met to discuss how to publicize and raise funds for the trip. □

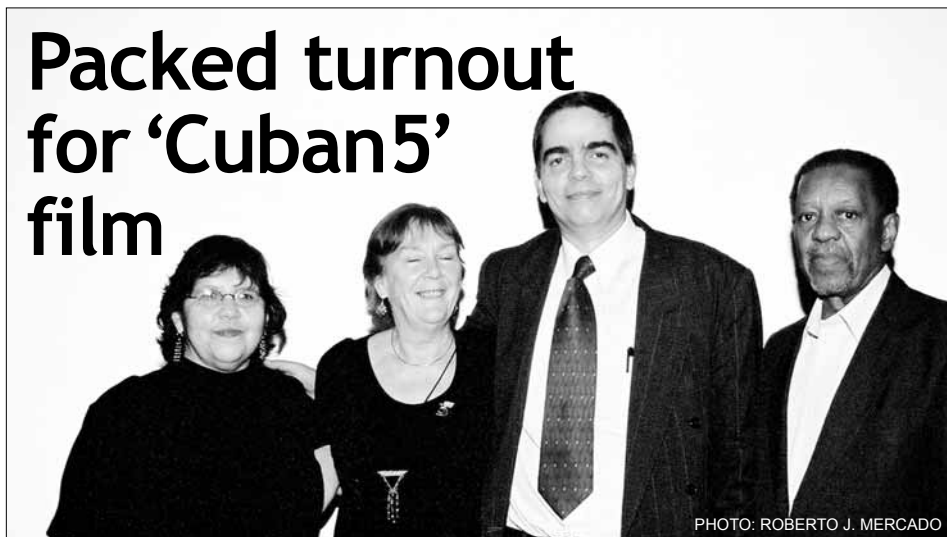


PHOTO: ROBERTO J. MERCADO

As part of a national tour, the New York Committee to Free the Cuban 5 premiered the award-winning documentary "Mission Against Terror" in Manhattan on Feb. 3. Attendance was standing-room only. Speakers at the event, from left to right above, are Teresa Gutierrez, New York Committee to Free the Cuban 5; Bernie Dwyer, co-producer "Mission Against Terror"; Cuban UN Ambassador Orlando Requeijo Gual; and the Rev. Lucius Walker, executive director IFCO/Pastors for Peace.

Dwyer, co-producer of the film with Roberto Ruiz Rebo, gave a stirring presentation on the case of the five political prisoners held in U.S. jails: Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, Ramón Labañino and René González.

The "crime" of these political prisoners

is that they tried to monitor and halt Miami-based right-wing terror attacks against Cuba.

Cuban UN Ambassador Orlando Requeijo Gual closed the event with a moving testimony of gratitude to the solidarity movement.

Teresa Gutierrez from the committee stated that the packed event was "yet another breakthrough on the work of the five." The film showing, held at the Swayduck Auditorium at the New School, attracted students and others who had not previously attended a Cuban 5 event.

Events have also been held in Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and other cities. To find out if the film is showing in your area, visit freethefive.org.

—Leslie Feinberg

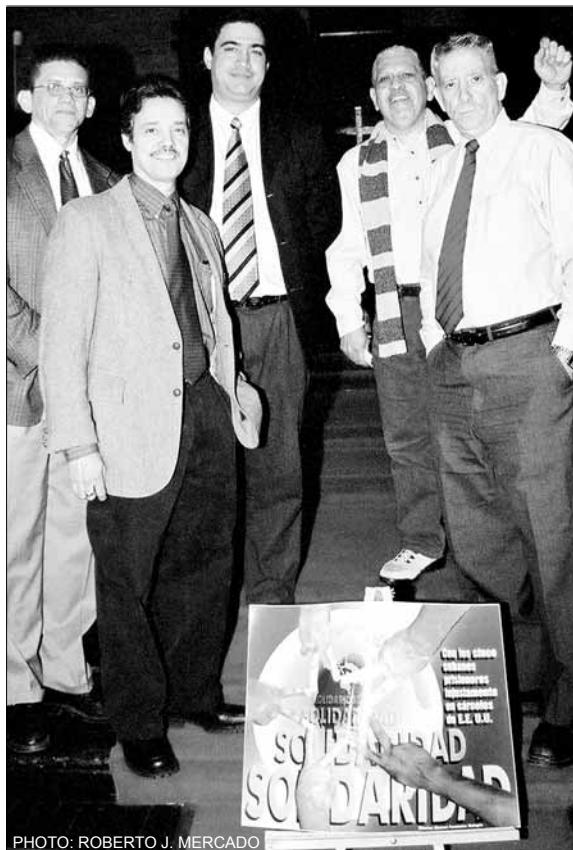


PHOTO: ROBERTO J. MERCADO

'Free the Cuban 5'

An event celebrating the resistance movements and revolutionary struggles of the Latin Caribbean was held Feb. 4 in upper Manhattan. Entitled, "Jose Martí, Ramon Emeterio Betances and Juan Pablo Duarte: a legacy of patriotism and revolution," it was dedicated to the freedom of the Cuban 5 and the Puerto Rican political prisoners, all held in U.S. jails.

Speakers pictured at left are Rafael Rodriguez, lawyer for Cuban political prisoner Rene Gonzalez; Rhadames Morales, Fuerzas de la Revolución Dominicana/ Iglésia San Romero de las Américas; Jorge Peña, first secretary, Cuban Mission to the United Nations; Frank Velgara, ProLibertad Freedom Campaign; and Luis Miranda, Casa de las Américas.

—Teresa Gutierrez

World Social Forum

Latin Americans look to Venezuela

By Berta Joubert-Ceci
Porto Alegre, Brazil

The World Social Forum just held here was filled with debates, including ones about its future.

Despite the criticism of many world progressives that the WSF does not meet a revolutionary standard, the fact remains that it is still an international forum where worldwide progressive forces converge and can debate and put forward coordinated plans of action, even if not within the scheduled forum events. Where else could progressives from Africa and Asia share plans with their counterparts from the Middle East and the Americas—North, Central and South? Even those intellectuals who say that the WSF has no relevance attend it.

The initiation of the WSF in 2001 was an attempt to bring together worldwide organizations to plan the construction of alternatives to neoliberalism and globalization. Since its beginning it has been dominated by social democratic forces, and even funded by many corporations. It is timed to coincide with the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, an elite gathering that became the focus of militant protests.

Originally, political parties and government personalities were excluded from participating formally in the WSF. However, left parties and revolutionaries have always attended and held their own alternate meetings and demonstrations, even within the grounds where the “official” meetings are held. This year, political parties and more revolutionary forces were part of the formal events.

The last time the WSF met in Porto Alegre, in 2003, prominent speakers, mostly social democrats, held huge meetings of several thousands. This year, the format was changed to accommodate more events, a total of 2,500, where the largest could seat no more than 1,000 people.

Spread along the banks of the Guaíba River were huge tents in what was called the World Social Territory, where 11 different encampments corresponded to 11 themes.

From 20,000 participants in 2001, the WSF this year grew to 155,000 people representing 135 countries. The Youth Camp had 35,000 participants.

Lula and Chávez speak at forum

Unlike previous years, two heads of state were part of this year’s official forum events: President Jose Ignacio “Lula” Da

Silva of Brazil and President Hugo Chávez Frías of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, both speaking at the Gigantinho Stadium.

Lula spoke at the beginning of the WSF, calling for a worldwide campaign to eradicate poverty. The Global War Against Poverty, initiated in 2004 in South Africa, will be Lula’s goal for discussion with world leaders in the coming period. Unlike in 2003, when Lula was newly elected and thousands poured into an open space to listen and cheer him, this time there was a divided public. Some cheered but others loudly showed their opposition, reflecting divisions in his Workers Party of Brazil.

Since his ascent to office, Lula has not met the expectations of the poor majority, including the well-known movement of the landless, MST. A wealthy and vast country, with a powerful oligarchy allied to U.S. and other imperialist transnational corporations, Brazil is an illustration of who really holds the power.

There were some attempts to pit Chávez against Lula. The Venezuelan president later called for patience, reminding everyone, particularly Lula’s critics, that Brazil is in a different situation than Venezuela.

When Chávez spoke, at the end of the WSF, 15,000 people cheered and thousands more who could not get in listened through speakers posted outside the stadium. He spoke at length about several topics he had raised in a press conference earlier that day. Entitled “The South Is Our North,” his speech was a stirring exposition of his vision of the future and the steps that the Bolivarian Revolution is taking to make that a reality.

Some of the subjects he touched on during both events reveal the dynamism of the revolution, which he said is centered in five axes or concepts. First, the political, which he described as the construction of a participatory—not representative—and revolutionary democracy. Second, the

social, or creating a society of equals. And thirdly, the economic.

This point was especially important, since it was the first time he addressed it publicly outside Venezuela. He said that it is “necessary to transcend capitalism. There is no solution [to globalization, poverty, etc.] within capitalism, we have to revindicate socialism as a project and as the road to follow.”

Later, Samuel Moncada, the new Venezuelan secretary of higher education, stated that Chávez’s speech clarified his option for socialism in Venezuela. The focus of discussion there over the next several weeks will be to define the Venezuelan way, he said, since socialism has to grow from the real conditions of every country, which in Venezuela’s case is called Bolivarianism.

The fourth base of the revolution is territorial, which Chávez described as a model of endogenous development, growing from within. Venezuela has signed important economic agreements with the international community recently, especially with China. The 19 accords signed with China include one in which China will build 100,000 housing units for poor people. However, the Venezuelan president cautioned that the revolution needs to be self-sufficient and not depend only on outside sources.

The fifth and last concept had to do with international relations. He stated that Venezuela is dedicated to the construction of a pluripolar world and the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean.

He mentioned the ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas), which counters Washington’s Free Trade Agreement of the Americas with a proposal for integration and cooperation among the countries of the region. A concrete first step, an accord recently signed with Cuba, took place in December.

One ALBA project is already in the

works: the television network Telesur. Originally known as an “anti-CNN,” Chávez described it instead as a network of stations throughout the region and beyond that will bring to vast audiences the reality and the struggles taking place in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is expected to air next month on an experimental basis.

Chávez also raised the kidnapping of Rodrigo Granda last December in Caracas. Granda is an international representative of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP). Chávez described the kidnapping carried out in his country by Colombian agents as a provocation set up by the United States to destabilize the Bolivarian Revolution and find justification to invade Venezuela. He also stated that, so far, the situation has been handled within the region.

Chávez was forced to recall Venezuela’s ambassador to Colombia after that government publicly admitted it had bribed Venezuelan officers, in an act against the Bolivarian Republic’s sovereignty, in order to kidnap Granda. However, Colombia and Venezuela not only share a border, but important trade relations, and Venezuela threatened to shut down an important pipeline to its neighbor. Colombian President Álvaro Uribe then called Cuban President Fidel Castro asking for help to mediate in an attempt to normalize relations. Cuba sent representatives to help negotiations—a move that is sure to displease Washington.

Chávez also sent greetings to the people of Haiti, stating that Jean-Bertrand Aristide is the legitimate president, kidnapped by the U.S. in the same way he was during the April 2002 coup in Venezuela. He mentioned that in the last meeting of the region’s presidents, he stated that any solution to the crisis in Haiti will have to incorporate Aristide, that the solution could not be in the hands of the United Nations or any group of presidents—who should not interfere in other nations’ problems—but in the hands of the Haitian people. He proposed a National Constituent Assembly, as was done in Venezuela, where the Haitian people could be consulted freely, without pressures or manipulation, to decide their destiny.

The Bolivarian Revolution needs solidarity from progressives worldwide, particularly here in the United States. The WSF next year will be decentralized, with five different forums in five different countries. The Americas Forum will be held in Venezuela and promises to be very action-oriented. □



Ivette González, right, daughter of Rene González, one of the Cuban 5, opened the WSF Jan. 27. Banner is from Jan. 26 march of 200,000 in Porto Alegre.

Movement proceeds with Feb. 11 protest for Mumia

Continued from page 7

diction to proceed in Abu-Jamal’s request for a third Post Conviction Relief Act petition.

Previous PCRA hearings for Abu-Jamal took place in 1995 and 1996 and were conducted by the late Judge Albert Sabo. Terri Maurer-Carter, a court stenographer, has made a sworn statement that she overheard Sabo say he was going to “fry the n—r,” in reference to Abu-Jamal.

Dembe’s cancellation of the court hearing has made Abu-Jamal’s supporters more determined than ever to move forward with the Feb. 11 protest.

The groups will march from the American Friends Service Committee building to the Criminal Justice building and then hold a press conference. A people’s court will be held at the AFSC office.

These events will ask: Why was the hearing cancelled so abruptly with no clear political or legal explanations? Why do the courts continue to suppress the vital evidence that proves Abu-Jamal’s innocence? Don’t the people deserve to hear this evidence?

The people’s court will include progressive lawyers, activists and original eyewitnesses providing written, verbal and visual evidence on how Abu-Jamal has been a legal and political victim of a racist governmental conspiracy to silence him ever since he joined the Black Panther Party in Philadelphia.

The movement must not fall in the trap of becoming complacent when it comes to saving Abu-Jamal’s life. Federal District Judge William Yohn overturned Abu-Jamal’s death sentence back in December

2001 but not his murder conviction. This ruling was used as a vehicle to both confuse and lull the movement into a false state of security. The Yohn ruling did not take Abu-Jamal off death row and it won’t necessarily prevent him from receiving the death penalty once again, if the powers-that-be have their way.

The Philadelphia prosecutor’s office appealed the Yohn ruling, hoping to bring back the death penalty for Abu-Jamal. Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell, a former prosecutor, was elected on a reactionary platform of vowing to execute Abu-Jamal.

Abu-Jamal’s lawyers are doing everything legally possible to win him a new trial. This is his only chance of being liberated. The political movement must continue to do its part. The courts, on their own, cannot be relied on to grant Abu-

Jamal a new trial. The courts, the police and the U.S. government want to silence Abu-Jamal’s revolutionary voice, either by lethal injection or by keeping him behind prison walls for the rest of his life.

The movement has to continue to find imaginative ways to broaden out the struggle to free Abu-Jamal. Resolutions passed by groups such as the NAACP, San Francisco Board of Supervisors and others demanding a new trial help get out the word about Abu-Jamal’s case.

The movement must continue to politicize the legal case of Abu-Jamal. He is one of countless victims of the racist use of the death penalty. And as the “voice of the voiceless,” Abu-Jamal continues to commit himself to fight war, racist oppression and exploitation with his written and audio commentaries. □

Slavery and debt

JP Morgan Chase, the second-biggest bank in the U.S., put it ever so delicately: “[The bank] had predecessors that had customers that appear to have used enslaved individuals.”

That is how a Jan. 20 statement began that was written so as not to offend—well, not to offend those tied to the slave owners, anyway. JP Morgan Chase offered its “apologies” for its links to slavery, admitting that its predecessor banks had “accepted approximately 13,000 enslaved individuals as collateral on loans and took ownership of approximately 1,250 of them when the plantation owners defaulted on the loans.”

It is the tip of an iceberg. The role of the banks in financing slavery, particularly New York banks that were also tied in with the cotton trade, remains mostly a hidden history in this country. Even JP Morgan Chase’s statement hides this history, attributing all of its transgressions to a Louisiana-based bank that it merged with in the 1930s. This month—Black History Month—would be a very good time to expose the full history of JP Morgan Chase and the other Wall Street institutions in the enslavement of African peoples before slavery was abolished by the Civil War.

A movement has grown up in this country among the descendants of the enslaved Africans to demand reparations from those who became rich through slavery. One case brought to court named JP Morgan Chase as one of 18 companies involved in slavery. The list also included Lloyds of London, FleetBoston, RJ Reynolds Tobacco, Brown & Williamson, CSX Corporation and Lehman Brothers.

The wealth of these giant banks, financial institutions and corporate monopolies is immense. Yet it was gained from the stolen labor of enslaved peoples. Any fair-minded person would agree that they owe reparations, big time.

There’s really no reason that the reparations owed should be limited to those who live in this country. The countries of Africa were devastated by the European

slavers, who delivered their human cargo mostly to the Americas. The devastation was so deep that recovery has been impossible to this day.

In “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,” Walter Rodney gives the details: “No one has been able to come up with a figure representing total losses to the African population sustained through the extraction of slave labor from all areas to all destinations over the many centuries that slave trade existed. However, on every other continent from the 15th century onwards, the population showed constant and sometimes spectacular natural increase; while it is striking that the same did not apply to Africa.”

Rodney explains further: “All of the countries named as ‘underdeveloped’ in the world are exploited by others; and the underdevelopment with which the world is now preoccupied is a product of capitalist, imperialist and colonialist exploitation. African and Asian societies were developing independently until they were taken over directly or indirectly by the capitalist powers. When that happened, exploitation increased and the export of surplus ensued, depriving the societies of the benefit of their natural resources and labor. That is an integral part of underdevelopment in the contemporary sense.”

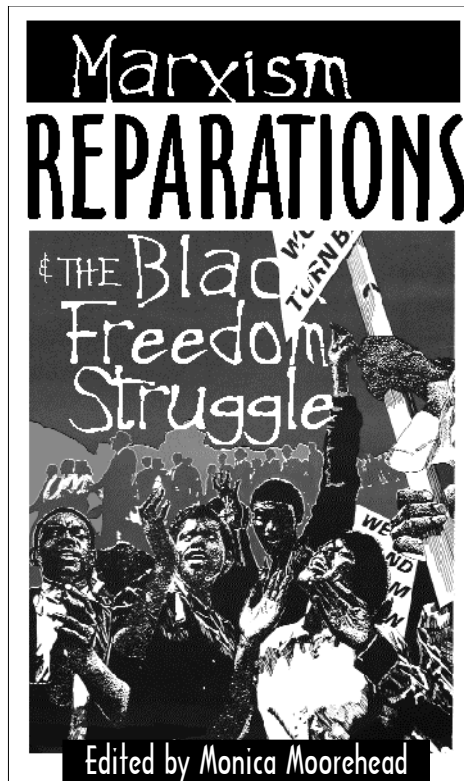
So what happened when the world’s seven imperialist powers—the U.S., Britain, Japan, France, Germany, Italy and Canada—met as the Group of Seven in early February? They made a showy announcement of an “African debt relief plan.” The news reports said that they would be “forgiving the debt of some of the world’s poorest countries.” The fine print of what they are actually doing was quite different.

Turns out to be another publicity stunt, when what is really needed now is not just full cancellation of all “debt,” but also payment of reparations. Only such a payment can begin to end the poverty and devastation that is the legacy of slavery and imperialism. □

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Communist parties at World Social Forum

By John Catalinotto
Porto Alegre, Brazil

Representatives of about 30 communist parties were among the 155,000 people from 135 countries taking part in 2,500 separate events at the 5th World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, held Jan. 26-31.

It may seem normal enough that at a gathering of people who believe “another world is possible,” communists would be present. After all, they are resolute fighters for a socialist alternative to war, capitalist economic depression and exploitation. This is just what is needed to build that other world.

Yet the communist participation marked a big step forward for this year’s WSF.

Two years ago in Porto Alegre, the Cubans had no official standing, either as a country or a communist party. No parties were allowed. Even the Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B) had to hold its activities outside the WSF.

This year the Cubans and Venezuelans shared a solidarity tent. The PC do B and other parties had welcoming tents near the administrative center of the WSF. The Vietnamese comrades both explained about their economic opening to the world market and campaigned against Agent Orange’s ravages on their country.

The WSF organizers—most of whom represent either newer tendencies in the anti-globalization movement like ATTAC, social-democratic tendencies from the “South” like the Workers Party in Brazil, or older social-democratic groupings like the Socialist Party in France—focused on controlling the final statement and overall thrust of the WSF. They more or less let the different other tendencies—whether more revolutionary or more conservative—organize their own activities without interference.

The communist parties, which are beginning to recover from the breakup of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from 1989-1991, focused on two main areas: anti-war activities and analysis, and preparing a struggle for socialism.

CP of Brazil

Since the WSF was meeting in southern Brazil, it was no surprise that about 70 percent of the participants came from Brazil and another 25 percent from across Latin America. The second-largest grouping came from Argentina. More than 30,000 were young people camping out in a park along the shore of the Guaiba River. There seemed to be more young women than men.

Among the communists, the PC do B had the largest presence. This party claims 60,000 members and 140,000 sympathizers throughout all parts of Brazil and had a large, youthful delegation at the WSF. It played the central role among the communist parties in the WSF.

During the WSF, the PC do B announced the publication of a new book about the 1972-1974 guerrilla uprising against the military dictatorship. The party led this struggle in one of the Amazonian states, holding a 10,000-troop army at bay for three years.

The anti-war organization close to the PC do B is called CEBRAPAZ. This group organized a meeting of 1,000 people on Jan. 27 to hear anti-war and anti-imperialist organizations from around the world, including the Palestinian ambassa-

dor to Brazil.

Cuban Vice President Ricardo Alarcon showed up by surprise during the meeting to explain the danger that there could be an attack from U.S. imperialism against Cuba. He also appealed for support for the Cuban 5 political prisoners, who he described as “fighters against terrorism.”

About 20 speakers from different countries took part, including representatives of both the International Action Center and the World Peace Council from the U.S. movement. Speakers from Vietnam, China, Venezuela, Greece, India and movements in other countries from Europe and Latin America also took the floor.

Fight for socialism

On Jan. 30, the Mauricio Grabois Institute—a publishing center associated with the PC do B—hosted a meeting of 26 Marxist institutes, publications and parties. The goal was to bring the need to struggle for socialism to the anti-globalization movement.

Among the communist parties represented were those of Cuba, China, Vietnam, Uruguay, Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Catalonia, Greece, Paraguay, Portugal, Venezuela, France and Spain, as well as the Workers Party of Belgium, the CP of India (M), the CP of Denmark-ML, the New CP of the Netherlands, the Refoundation CP of Italy, and the CPUSA and Workers World Party from the United States.

Renato Rabelo, president of the PC do B, described the current international economic situation as “unsustainable” with the tremendous development of the productive forces taking place on one side and unemployment and marginalization for millions of people on the other.

He also evaluated the strategic setback of the loss of the Soviet Union toward the end of the last century. It hurt the communist parties but the people in each area were gathering experience and new struggles could break out on a much larger scale.

The PC do B participates in the Workers Party government led by President Luis Ignacio “Lula” da Silva, who is the first president of Brazil from a working-class background and party. The role of the Lula government is controversial on the Brazilian left, and was the topic of many debates among Brazilian trade unionists and political activists during the WSF. This is true especially as President Lula has compromised on many fronts with the Brazilian ruling class, which still holds the real power in the country.

Rabelo of the PC do B defended the decision to bloc with Lula as necessary to “defeat the neo-liberal project” that imperialism is trying to impose on Latin America.

Many of the speakers pointed to the dangers of new wars from U.S. imperialism. A number also called attention to the heroic struggle of the Iraqi people as a lesson that U.S. imperialism could be defeated.

The Workers World Party speaker said: “We live in the center of world imperialism, but we can still contribute to the struggle. Our working class is under attack and must fight back. Our youth are avoiding entering the military because of the experience with Iraq. We pledge ourselves to join the struggle in solidarity with those fighting for their rights against imperialism. The struggle is certain. Victory for a socialist world is possible.” □

Wars are about freedom? Marine general spills the beans:

'It's fun to shoot some people'

By John Catalinotto

"Actually it's quite fun to fight them, you know. It's a hell of a hoot," Marine Lt. Gen. James Mattis, who commanded U.S. Marine actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, told those gathered at a San Diego panel discussion on Feb. 1. He added, "It's fun to shoot some people. I'll be right up there with you. I like brawling."

While the Marine brass chided Mattis for speaking so frankly, they still consider him one of their own. The Marine commandant, Gen. Michael Hagee, defended Mattis, calling him "one of this country's bravest and most experienced military leaders" and a "superb leader."

Mattis's horrific statement doesn't clarify the underlying reasons U.S. bankers, oil magnates and military contractors were overjoyed that Bush ordered the Pentagon to invade and seize Iraq.

But it does go a long way toward explaining the racist, sadistic mentality rampant in the Marine Corps officer caste and the rest of the Pentagon brass. This is the same attitude they try to inculcate in U.S. youths who they are trying to train as troops.

Fewer are joining

If January was any indication, fewer youths are volunteering for the Marines.

The Corps missed its self-imposed recruiting goal for the first time in years, falling 84 recruits short. Some of the brass think it might have something to do with the war in Iraq.

Despite this early warning, the Marines were still doing better than the National Guard. About 43 percent of the 155,000 troops in Iraq are National Guard members or reservists. According to the Feb. 7 Oregonian, the "Army National Guard reported earlier this month that it missed its recruiting goals for the second straight quarter. The Guard has added recruiters this fiscal year in an effort to reach its full-year goal of 350,000 recruits.

"I have a feeling a lot of guys won't reenlist," said Master Sergeant Steve Little of Eugene, Ore. "We know we're going to be deployed in the next three years."

Both the Guard and the Army Reserves had been selling themselves over the past 20 years as a way to earn extra money or put oneself through college. But now, everyone knows that if you join one of these outfits it means more than spending a few weekends camping out and doing a little marching. It means you can be sent to occupy a country, and its citizens could be quite unhappy about being occupied.

Little said many National Guard recruits sent to Iraq "got more than they bargained for."

The resistance continues

The Iraqi resistance fighters have not yet set up a centralized, national leadership. Still they continue to fight, have brought vast areas of central Iraq out of the control of the occupying armies and have wreaked havoc on any attempt to create a puppet military force.

On Feb. 8, a suicide bomber set off an explosion in the midst of recruits for the U.S.-trained and controlled Iraqi Army, killing 16 recruits and five others.

In the period from the so-called elections on Jan. 30 to Feb. 8, some 153 Iraqis

were reported killed by guerrilla forces. Of them, 106 were soldiers, police officers or army and police recruits, according to figures released by the U.S. military and Iraqi authorities.

In addition, 15 U.S. soldiers were killed.

In all, about 1,450 U.S. troops have been killed and somewhere between 10,000 and 20,000 injured since the March 20 U.S. invasion of Iraq.

While the Jan. 30 election has been a temporary propaganda victory for Washington, it has done nothing to reduce the human cost of the occupation of Iraq. □

ED MERRILL

Continued from page 2

countless classes and educational talks and recall his beautiful soft tenor voice and gentle manner—never formidable or bombastic.

All this understanding and knowledge would have meant little if kept to himself. The richness and value of his historical and theoretical knowledge lay in the life-changing influence he had sharing it with all who thirsted to understand their world. But knowledge and understanding are worth little without the spark which inspires an individual to commit to the struggle. Eddie, by his own life and being, provided that spark.

Many party leaders in New York, Philadelphia, Buffalo, San Diego, Rochester and San Francisco, who remain steadfast in the struggle, name him as their mentor or as the primary person who influenced them to become Marxist revolutionaries.

For five decades Ed never wavered. He took up the fight against racism—supporting the Mothers Alliance in its fight to stop racist school segregation and to end dis-

crimination in hiring at Grant's and Woolworth's. He struggled to free fighters for liberation in the Black Panther Party as well as Mae Mallory, Robert Williams and the Deacons for Defense, Martin Sostre and Geraldine Robinson. Robinson, now Geraldine Pointer, spoke at Ed's funeral, recalling that Ed and Jeanette, representing the Martin Sostre Defense Committee, had supported her and her



WW PHOTO: LESLIE FEINBERG

children during the frameup of the African American bookstore owner.

Ed was an anti-war activist—from Korea to Vietnam to the wars of aggression against Iraq. He longed to see Cuba, but sadly never got there. He defended women's rights and the rights of transgender and transsexual, lesbian/gay and bisexual people from the early stirrings of those movements.

And when he carried the heavy weight of illness, over the span of many years, he did so with courage, optimism and a sense

of humor, remaining a loving husband, father and grandfather. He continued doing political outreach the whole time he was ill, giving perspective to all around him, from the road workers outside his home to the hospital workers at his bedside.

In the struggle for a communist world, all that Comrade Ed Merrill brought lives on.

Comrades and friends of Ed Merrill in Buffalo and New York contributed to this article.

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MUNDO OBRERO

Iraquíes quieren retomar su país

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conseguirlo". Bush quería una elección. Dado que la ocupación va a continuar, la razón para la insurrección sigue estando vigente.

La elección abre paso a otro camino político de presión masiva para terminar la ocupación. Cualquier político en Irak que desee retener el apoyo de las masas tendrá que ejercer presión para terminar la ocupación, restaurar la soberanía y empezar la reconstrucción del país. Esto

es precisamente a lo que se opone el imperialismo estadounidense.

Sami Ramadani, un refugiado político del régimen de Saddam Hussein quien da cátedra en la Universidad Metropolitana de Londres, escribió en la edición del 1 de febrero del London Guardian:

"George Bush y Tony Blair dijeron charlas heroicas el domingo pasado en las cuáles implican que los iraquíes votaron para aprobar la ocupación. Aquellos que insisten en que los Estados Unidos están

desesperados por una estrategia de salida están equivocados al interpretar así sus intenciones. Los hechos, incluyendo la construcción de bases militares masivas en Irak, indican que los Estados Unidos esta atrincherándose para instalar y respaldar a un régimen títere a largo plazo. Por esta razón, la ocupación encabezada por los Estados Unidos va a continuar, con todo lo que ésta ocasiona en cuanto a deramamiento de sangre y destrucción.

"Un análisis honesto del mapa social y

político de Irak revela que los iraquíes están más y más unidos en su firmeza por acabar con la ocupación. No importa si participaron en la elección el domingo o si la boicotearon, el lazo político entre ellos pronto va a reafirmarse -al igual que pasó en Vietnam — a pesar de las diferencias tácticas, y a pesar de los intentos de la ocupación encabezada por los Estados Unidos de dominar a los iraquíes alentando las divisiones sectarias y étnicas. □

Vietnam también tuvo elecciones falsas Iraquíes quieren retomar su país

Por Fred Goldstein

El 4 de septiembre de 1967, el periódico The New York Times, puso en primera plana este titular: "EEUU contento por el Voto en Vietnam: Oficiales citan una concurrencia del 83% a pesar del terror de Viet Cong."

El reporte de Peter Grose comenzó: "Oficiales de los Estados Unidos se sorprendieron y se animaron hoy al ver el tamaño de la concurrencia a las elecciones presidenciales del Sur de Vietnam. Unas elecciones exitosas han sido vistas por mucho tiempo como pilar principal en la política del Presidente Johnson de alentar el crecimiento del proceso constitucional en el Sur de Vietnam. Las elecciones fueron la culminación de un desarrollo constitucional que comenzó en enero de 1966, al cual el Presidente Johnson se comprometió personalmente..."

Entonces Washington tenía 500.000 tropas en Vietnam. Estados Unidos bombardeaba masivamente el territorio desde aviones B-52 lanzando Napalm, y Agente Naranja, destruyendo villas y asesinando a gente sospechosa de pertenecer al Frente de Liberación Nacional. El gobierno títere estaba torturando a los prisioneros en secretas "jaulas de tigres". Aún así pudo organizar elecciones fraudulentas y engañarse a sí mismo de que las elecciones eran un "punto crucial" en sus inútiles esfuerzos de querer conquistar y colonizar a Vietnam.

Hoy el Pentágono está llevando la "democracia" a Irak con bombas, balas, asaltos, puntos de inspección, prisiones y las cámaras de tortura de Abu Ghraib. Más de 100.000 iraquíes han sido asesinados por las fuerzas estadounidenses. El país está en caos. Faluya ha sido destruida; Ramadi y otras ciudades están en estado permanente de guerra contra la ocupación. Los servicios de electricidad, agua potable y servicios públicos apenas existen y el desempleo está entre el 60 y 70 por ciento.

Hoy Washington se engaña a sí mismo sobre sus pretendidas elecciones "democráticas" en Irak. De hecho, estas elecciones terminarán complicando allá la crisis de la administración de Bush. El país aún está siendo manejado desde la embajada de los Estados Unidos-la embajada más grande del mundo-encabezada por John Negroponte, ex organizador de los escuadrones de muerte en Honduras entre los años 1981 y 1985, y por los generales del Pentágono, George Casey y John Abizaid.

De ahora en adelante se verán enfrentados no sólo a la insurgencia, sino que tendrán que manejar un proceso político en el cual los partidos y los candidatos estarán bajo intensas presiones de las masas populares para sacar las tropas estadounidenses del país. Cualquiera que haya sido el resultado en las elecciones, las expectativas de las masas iraquíes son de que las elecciones llevarán al retiro de los Estados Unidos de su territorio. Esta es una de las cosas en que las masas populares están apasionadamente unidas y por lo que no pudieron votar en estas elecciones fraudulentas.

El Presidente George W. Bush y el Secretario de Defensa, Donald Rumsfeld, rehúsan fijar una fecha para el retiro de las fuerzas estadounidenses. Y el presidente títere de Irak, Ghazi Yawar, dijo en una conferencia de prensa, "es un tremendo disparate pedirle a las tropas su retirada en este caos y con este vacío en el poder." (Washington Post, 1 de febrero)

El principal reportero del diario The New York Times en Bagdad, John Burns tuvo que admitir que el pueblo de los Estados Unidos no podía "dar por hecho que las elecciones creadas por el poder militar de los Estados Unidos revertirían, excepto brevemente, la hostilidad hacia su país."

Burns citó a Ahmed Dujaily, de 80 años, ingeniero entrenado en Londres quien fuera ministro de agricultura bajo el Rey Faisal II. Dujaily dijo sobre al gobierno de los Estados Unidos: "Ahora sabemos lo que ellos están buscando. Están buscando petróleo, y bases militares y la dominación del nuevo régimen. Ellos tendrán sus cuarteles militares para la región en Irak y cuando se irán, nadie sabe."

Un voto contra la ocupación

Dahr Jamail, un periodista independiente quien ha reportado regularmente desde Irak, ha advertido de la "tergiversación" de la elección por los medios noticieros comerciales. Después de explicar que la cifra de votantes que participó era dudosa, agregó:

"Lo que tampoco revelaron fue que los votantes, ya sean un 35 o un 60 por ciento de los votantes elegibles, no votaron a favor de una ocupación continuada de su país por los EEUU.

"De hecho, estaban votando precisamente por lo opuesto. Todos los iraquíes votantes con quien he hablado explicaron que creen que la Asamblea Nacional que pronto será formada señalará el fin de la ocupación.

"Y tienen la esperanza de que el retiro de tropas extranjeras en su país se va a producir más temprano que tarde.

"Esto hace que uno vea las imágenes de iraquíes ovacionando y contentos de otro modo, ¿no es cierto?" (Zmag, 1 de febrero)

La elección misma fue una demostración masiva de la brutal ocupación por las 150.000 tropas esta-

dounidenses. Washington organizó esta llamada "elección democrática" con helicópteros de ataque, tanques Abrams, vehículos de combate Bradley y francotiradores en los techos de los lugares de votación a través del país, apoyando a tropas títeres iraquíes que usaban capuchas para evitar su identificación.

Ciudades y pueblos fueron cerrados y paralizados por casi una semana. El tráfico vehicular fue prohibido. Los periodistas no pudieron viajar libremente; solo podían ir donde el Pentágono les permitía. No se permitió ningún observador internacional.

Los nombres de los 7.700 candidatos fueron publicados sólo 6 días antes de los comicios y, excepto los oficiales gubernamentales y líderes religiosos, son completamente desconocidos por el pueblo. Los candidatos habían estado ocultos y la dirección de los lugares de votar era secreta hasta pocos días antes de las elecciones.

Los medios comerciales, desde el New York Times hasta el Washington Post, el Wall Street Journal y las redes de televisión, se regocijaban por las elecciones, alabando el aumento de la "democracia" y citando cifras de participación de 8 millones de personas y un 57 por ciento como si fuera la absoluta verdad.

¿Votando para tener raciones de alimentos?

Hubo poca o ninguna concurrencia a las urnas en el centro y el norte de Irak, excepto en partes de Bagdad y en las regiones Curdas. No hubo inscripción de votantes. El gobierno declaró arbitrariamente que unos 14 millones de personas eran elegibles para votar usando el sistema de racionamiento de alimentos desarrollado en el programa Petróleo por Comida. Los votantes fueron enviados a votar a centros donde se reparten las raciones de comida y se sospechaba que la renovación de los cupones de racionamiento de comida estaba ligada a la votación.

La títere comisión electoral al principio declaró que un 72 por ciento de votantes había participado. Luego redujo la cifra a un 57 por ciento, con 8 millones votando. Esto fue mucho antes de que los votos fueran contados. El sistema de comuni-

cación en el país está en caos y era físicamente imposible llegar a una suma con tanta rapidez.

Las cifras fueron reveladas por Farid Ayar, vocero de la Comisión Independiente Electoral de Irak, un partidario del gobierno de Allawi y de los EEUU. Cuando se le preguntó en una conferencia de prensa sobre las cifras, Ayar dijo, "Los porcentajes y las cifras se producen sólo después de contar y serán anunciados cuando todo se termine. ... Es demasiado temprano para decir que esas cifras son oficiales".

Mientras tanto, las papeletas han sido llevadas a la Zona Verde y están siendo contadas por el ex agente de la CIA y ahora primer ministro. El mundo todavía desconoce cuantos votos fueron depositados en Ohio durante la elección presidencial de los EEUU, y jamás aparecerá un resultado verdadero desde los altos mandos de los EEUU en Irak. Este es el proceso de fabricación del resultado deseado por los imperialistas.

Sin duda las fuerzas eclesiásticas chiítas encabezadas por el Gran Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, están participando en este proceso. Las elecciones no hubieran tenido lugar sin la colaboración de al-Sistani. Siendo el líder chiíta más prestigioso en Irak, él dijo a sus seguidores que votar era su deber religioso. Este hecho es de gran importancia para los imperialistas estadounidenses cuando evalúen el significado de la elección.

La participación en la elección de las zonas chiítas en el sur y en ciertas partes de Bagdad no muestra apoyo a la ocupación. Lo que más necesita Washington en Irak es construir una base social para poder estabilizar el régimen neocolonial, apoderarse del petróleo, completar su proyecto de construcción de bases militares, y reducir su presencia militar.

Lo que reveló la elección no fue que los Estados Unidos hayan ampliado su base sino que al-Sistani todavía tiene una base social. Y aunque él tal vez haya consentido colaborar con las elecciones por propósitos oportunistas, el hecho es que las masas esperan que él insista en el fin de la ocupación.

Salim Lone, quien fuera director de comunicaciones de Sergio Vieira de Mello, el representante especial de la ONU que murió en un bombardeo en 2003, escribió un artículo en el London Guardian del 31 de enero, encabezado: "Una elección para permitir una ocupación". Lone escribió que "Los Estados Unidos tienen poco apoyo en el país. Sin embargo, han ganado el apoyo del extremadamente influyente Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani quien tolera una ocupación odiada por sus seguidores."

Presión masiva para la retirada de las tropas

Ahí está la nueva contradicción con la cual va a enfrentarse el imperialismo estadounidense como consecuencia de estas falsas elecciones. George Bush debía prestar atención al viejo dicho, "Ten cuidado con lo que deseas porque podrías

