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Venezuelans declare Bolivarian revolution is moving forward

International delegates meet with workers at historic gathering

By Berta Joubert-Ceci
Caracas, Venezuela

International delegations visiting Venezuela for the Third Gathering in Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution on April 13-17 had a chance to see firsthand how the working people are participating in the transformation of this country.

This event commemorates the failed coup d'etat in April 2002, when President Hugo Chávez was kidnapped by the oligarchy with instructions and collaboration from Washington. By the thousands the people marched from the hills and neighborhoods to the Presidential Palace—a ceaseless tide of outrage and determination to liberate their president.

They returned him to office in less than 48 hours, with the help of the progressive sector of the armed forces.

It can be clearly seen that this commitment to the Bolivarian Revolution, which finally has included the people and elevated their standard of living and dignity, is even firmer today.

Last year's gathering illustrated the firm decision by Chávez to elevate the quality of life of the people, particularly the poorest, through special Misiones, or alternative projects of health, education and employment.

Revolution at critical juncture

The gathering this year had exceptional significance. The revolution is at a crucial juncture. It has tremendously increased its base of support, having been ratified by nine election processes. It has survived innumerable destabilization campaigns directed by the U.S. government, both inside the country and worldwide through a hostile media campaign.

The time has come when the advancement of the process has led to a direct confrontation with the Venezuelan bourgeoisie and with the property relations that support its enormous privileges.

Contradictions are so sharp that only two roads are possible: go back or go forward. The dynamism of the revolution does not allow for anything to stand still.

Since they achieved their goal of freeing Chávez, the masses have learned much in a short time. Their political awareness has

developed as they tasted the flavor of empowerment. How can they go back?

The road forward has already been defined by Chávez himself: the Bolivarian Revolution will take the glorious road of socialism. He first announced it in January in a press conference during the World Social Forum in Brazil, and has repeated it many times since.

Chávez announced on April 13, during the opening of this year's event in the Teresa Carreño Theatre, that "After much thinking, and reading and re-reading about the world, I have turned into a socialist." This was received quite warmly by Venezuelan workers, students, government figures and international guests, judging by the prolonged applause that followed.

This statement, which closed the inauguration ceremony, was preceded by the phrase "and if these were not enough" Chávez was referring to his enumeration of the progress made by the revolution, developments that are making the U.S. government and corporations, particularly oil companies, nervous.

Ready to defend the revolution

The developments mentioned were many. They include activating a 200,000-strong Military Reserve of both women and men, of all ages, to defend the country. This will be increased to 2 million in the coming months. Venezuela is keenly aware of being a Pentagon target and thus is preparing the reserve army in every corner of the country—from the Apure region where reservists patrol on horseback to Indigenous people in the Amazon jungle. As Chávez said, "The revolution is advancing, and as it advances, the threats increase."

Chávez spoke at length on the oil question. Venezuela has the largest oil reserves in the world, he said, and they are the first interest of the U.S. The oil today is being managed by the revolution for the benefit and advantage of the people and not for the profit of U.S. oil companies, as it used to be during previous governments. Taxes are finally being imposed and enforced on foreign companies. Stealing of oil and its derivatives will no longer be permitted in Venezuela.

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Grad student-workers fight for union rights 3

Graduate students and unionists march during walkout at Columbia U. in Manhattan.



This week ...

Harry Hay heard 'siren song of revolution'

By Leslie Feinberg

Harry Hay, who had been living his life as a gay man as "out" as he could be, joined the Communist Party USA in 1934.

At that time, the CPUSA barred openly gay and lesbian members. Particularly ideologically harmful was the formulation to "justify" such a membership rule: the view that homosexuality was a degeneracy that arose from a decadent economic system.

That policy was indefensible, doing damage to homosexuals as well as to the revolutionary movement as a whole.

This political stance did not arise out of a vacuum. While the Bolshevik Party under Lenin's leadership had abolished the tsarist anti-homosexual law in 1917, by 1934 under a more politically conservative and bureaucratic grouping, an anti-homosexual law was back on the books in the USSR.

There were homosexual members in the CPUSA; they just didn't say they were. It would be wrong to glibly refer to this as a "don't ask, don't tell" policy. That phrase refers to the reign of terror the Pentagon—the military arm of the capitalist state—conducts against its own GIs.

The CPUSA was nose-to-nose against that state. The party leadership may well have feared the opening for state repression the organization could face by having openly gay, lesbian and bisexual, and trans members. After all, the party was struggling in a capitalist country in which same-sex love was illegal.

Tragically, however, the CPUSA's position on homosexual members helped create a much greater political and state vulnerability. Within a decade, the right wing of the U.S. capitalist class would unleash a witch hunt to crush revolutionary resistance to its rule by equating communists with homosexuals. And the CPUSA's position weakened the struggle to politically answer and defend victims of the anti-communist and anti-gay witch hunt.

In fairness, there was not as yet a historical materialist overview of the roots of state regulation of sexuality and gender expression. The greatest Marxist theoretical contributions had been to reveal the class basis of the oppression of women.

It would be Harry Hay who would take that Marxist analysis further, to look at the origins of oppression based on homosexuality and what would today be called transgender and transsexuality.

'You might have to start it yourself!'

Hay thrived as a communist. He caught a glimpse of the future in his work.

Hay described those experiences in the biography "The

Trouble with Harry Hay," written by Stuart Timmons.

Hay recalled, "We were involved in organizing the unorganized; the CIO had a wide open field on the West Coast. Along with the waterfront, the newspaper guilds began to organize, as did the department stores."

Hay and Will Geer continued doing "agitprop" theater—shorthand for short street dramas that taught political lessons while mobilizing audiences to take action. Hay defined it as "a responsibility for keeping spirits high at picket lines and keeping attention focused at large meetings."

Geer took Hay to Communist Party theory classes. Hay attended, but reflected, "It was disorienting to sit there with urban people, mostly film workers, discussing rural worker models of Marxism."

Geer discouraged Hay's talk of organizing a "team of brothers."

Hay recalled, "I said I wanted to get a society of 'just us' together. Bill argued that that was the theater."

Only Maude Allen encouraged Hay's dream of organizing homosexuals. While Hay and Geer argued about the possibility, she interrupted that, "this was possible, but you might have to start it yourself."



The experience that changed his life

Hay explained how the West Coast longshore workers' strike transformed him.

The 1934 strike in San Francisco inspired all the maritime workers to shut down the waterfront. The militant action by longshore workers won the support of 120 local unions.

The CPUSA sent Hay and Geer and many other organizers from Los Angeles to help the strikers. Hay and Geer collected food for the striking workers as they drove up the coast.

In early July, bosses tried to bring scabs past the picket lines, igniting battles. Gov. Frank Finley Merriam called out the state militia. This sparked the call by labor leaders for the July 1934 San Francisco General Strike.

Hay was there when troops were ordered to open fire on a crowd of more than 2,000 workers. He remembers a bullet whizzing past his left ear. Two workers were shot dead; 85 more were hospitalized.

Later, at the huge funeral procession for the two men, Hay remembered that "a posse of dock workers knocked the bowlers off the heads of bankers who refused to show respect. It was pretty damn impressive."

"The strike was just something tremendous!" Hay later told historian John D'Emilio. "You couldn't have been a part of that and not have your life completely changed."

He was 23 years old. And he was answering what he

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WW CALENDAR

BOSTON

Sat., April 23

Solidarity with the People's Struggle in Colombia & Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. Featured speakers: Gerardo Cajamarco, Colombian Trade Unionist; Dario Zapata, Permanent Committee for Colombian Peace; Jorge Marin, MLK, Jr. Bolivarian Circle; Berta Joubert, IAC; City Councilperson Chuck Turner. 6 p.m. At USWA Local 8751, 25 Colgate Rd., Roslindale, Mass. For info Int'l. Action Center (617) 522-6626.

LOS ANGELES

Fri., April 22

IAC Forum: Upheaval in Lebanon: What U.S. progressives need to know and how the U.S. presence in the Middle East hurts working people here at home. Hear Joyce Chediak, a Lebanese-American who has written extensively on the Middle East for Workers World

newspaper. Also John Parker, West Coast Coordinator of the International Action Center. 7:30 p.m. At IAC, 5274 W Pico Blvd, Suite 203 (between LaBrea and Fairfax). For info (323) 936-7266.

NEW YORK

Fri., April 22

Workers World Party Public Meeting: Hear first-hand accounts of the revolutionary process underway today in Venezuela. Berta Joubert-Ceci and Betsy Piette, WWP leaders in Philadelphia, just returned from attending mass meetings celebrating the third anniversary of the defeat of the 2002 coup against President Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

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Anti-draft meet sets goal of 100,000 resisters

By John Catalinotto
New York

The Pentagon has a campaign underway to attract 100,000 new recruits to the U.S. Armed Forces. The No Draft No Way organization plans an anti-draft campaign to attract 100,000 young people to sign a statement pledging they won't accept military conscription.

Organizers proposed this campaign at the No Draft No Way conference held April 16 in New York's Greenwich Village. Most of the over 100 participants came from the New York region. Anti-draft organizers also came from a half-dozen nearby states and Canada.

The conference focused on the draft, but also featured speakers on other aspects of the anti-war and anti-military struggle. These included opponents of the "economic draft," GI resisters, family members of people currently in Iraq or faced with orders to go there, veterans of the 1991 war on Iraq or the current occupation of that country, and student counter-recruiters. An organizer spoke of the movement in Canada to assist U.S. military resisters.

Not everyone was sure a draft was coming. But all shared an appreciation of the dilemma the Pentagon faces because it is unable to recruit enough volunteers for Bush's endless wars.

No Draft No Way organizer and Navy veteran Dustin Langley said, "The Selective Service board's goal is to ensure that they could carry out a national mobilization—for the military and for national service—within 75 days of being ordered to by the president." Langley says there "already is a draft," referring to the offer of education and jobs from the military that should be available to civilian youth.

Larry Holmes of the Troops Out Now Coalition remarked that "nothing gets people involved in activity like something that affects them personally," like a draft, and that a "draft will be the nail in the coffin for endless war." Holmes himself had been launched into political activism when he was drafted in the early 1970s and then refused to cooperate with the war against Vietnam.

Karina Schechter, a national organizer with the youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together), said that "the military has invaded our high schools and colleges" and that it was "hard for parents to keep kids' names off the Pentagon list."

In a discussion group later, people pointed out that in 34 states, when young people get drivers' licenses, their names and data are given to the Selective Service Board. And schools, obeying the so-called No Child Left Behind law, are turning over young people's names to military recruiters.

The roots of resistance

What made the talks at this conference stand out was how experiences with the U.S. military of the speakers or their relatives had led them to first question and then oppose U.S. imperialism.

Co-chair Kim Rosario has a son in Iraq right now, and has become a spokesperson against the occupation, the draft, the economic draft and military recruiting at anti-war meetings and rallies all over the country.

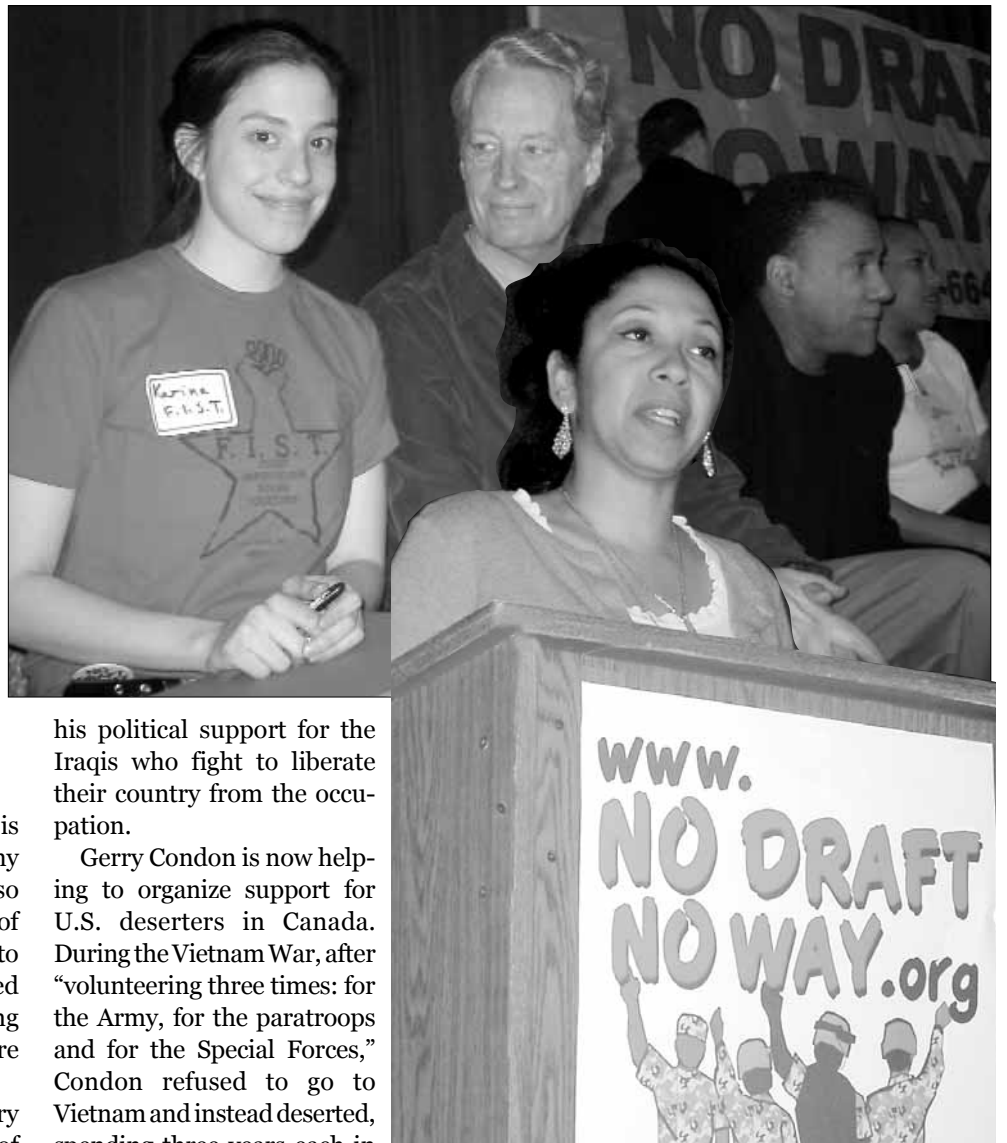
City College student Justino Rodriguez was arrested with three others at a recent counter-recruiter protest. The four have won reinstatement on campus and cur-



WW PHOTOS: J. CATALINOTTO
Carl Webb, left, Karina Schechter with Gerry Condon, Kim Rosario in front

rently are fighting criminal charges. His father, Carlos Rodriguez, was an Army professional and spent a year in Iraq, so the student says he "has the advantage of knowing the lies the government tells to get people to join the military." He called on the movement to "support resisting GIs, grow the anti-war movement here and support the Iraqi resistance."

National Guard member and military resister Carl Webb was himself a victim of the economic draft. Now he refuses to soft-pedal his principled opposition to the occupation of Iraq. "I admire resister Carlos Mejía, who said he'd 'rather do two years in prison than kill an innocent child in Iraq.' But I'll go one step further. I'd rather do two years in prison than kill anyone in Iraq." Webb also openly states



his political support for the Iraqis who fight to liberate their country from the occupation.

Gerry Condon is now helping to organize support for U.S. deserters in Canada. During the Vietnam War, after "volunteering three times: for the Army, for the paratroops and for the Special Forces," Condon refused to go to Vietnam and instead deserted, spending three years each in Sweden and Canada. Condon, who works with seven declared resisters in Toronto, says Canada is again a viable alternative for GIs and draft resisters.

Other speakers included 1991 Gulf War resister Jeff Patterson, then a Marine corporal; eight-year Navy veteran Monique Code; and Pam Africa, a national leader of

the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and a representative of the MOVE Organization. Jesse Heiwa co-chaired and IAC co-coordinator Sara Flounders wrapped up the meeting.

For more information, contact www.nodraftnoway.org or call (212) 633-6646.

At Columbia, Yale and UMass

Grad student-workers fight for union rights

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

Graduate student-workers and their allies at three of the biggest universities in the Northeast are engaging in massive, spirited work actions.

On Monday, April 18, the Graduate Student Employees United-UAW 2110 at Columbia University and the UNITE-HERE-affiliated Graduate Employees and Students Organization at Yale began a joint week-long strike for union recognition.

"By asserting this as one voice, we're identifying what we have in common: that we should be recognized as legal workers and be respected and given bargaining rights," said Dehlia Hannah, a philosophy graduate student at Columbia.

The graduate student-workers taking part are not teaching classes, grading papers or hosting review sessions this week. Their demands include health care for family members and a grievance process that would allow student teachers to raise concerns with the universities.

These strikes are the first by "Ivy League" graduate students since the National Labor Relations Board ruled in July 2004 that graduate students at private colleges are students, not workers,

and cannot form unions. This reversed a 2000 NLRB ruling in which graduate students had won the right to organize as workers. So now at private universities the administration must agree to voluntary recognition. The administrations at both Columbia and Yale staunchly refuse to recognize graduate student unions.

Walkout at UMass

Graduate student-workers at public universities, like the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, are governed under different federal and state laws through labor boards such as the Massachusetts Labor Relations Commission.

On April 21 members of the Graduate Employee Organization-UAW Local 2322 at the UMass-Amherst are walking out for that day in protest of the administration's bad-faith, union-busting bargaining tactics. The day will include pickets at various campus buildings, a rally and cultural events.

The UMass administration, bargaining for over a year with GEO, continues to propose real wage and health-care cuts, an end to health benefits for currently covered same-sex couples, and drastic increases in child-care costs. GEO came into existence in 1993 after a 10-day strike

and years of struggle for recognition.

The Take Back UMass coalition is helping coordinate undergraduates boycotting classes in solidarity. The faculty union, the Massachusetts Society of Professionals-NEA, will be leading teach-ins outside of campus buildings on April 21. Over 175 faculty members signed a solidarity statement in support of students, which was published as an ad in the undergraduate student newspaper, The Daily Collegian.

Support is national and global for all three struggles, including multiple forms of assistance from the AFL-CIO, UNITE-HERE, the UAW and scores of unions as well as progressive campus and community organizations.

"This act isn't a rejection of our faculty, whom we greatly respect. It's a rejection of an administration who won't prioritize STUDENTS, TEACHERS & BOOKS. By going to class, we pretend that the assault on student and employee rights isn't happening, we continue to act normally and do what's expected of us. By not going to class, we resist and say we won't fulfill UMass's expectation until they start to fulfill our expectations for a fair labor contract, for student autonomy and for support for diversity," declares a leaflet on the walkout. □

Day of Solidarity boosts housing workers

By Phebe Eckfeldt
and Stevan Kirschbaum
Boston

In an enthusiastic display of unity and solidarity, the Bromley Heath maintenance workers and their supporters on April 16 brought their struggle to the streets of the Black and Latin@ community where they work and live.

A sound truck filled with workers and surrounded by supporters wound its way through Bromley Heath, where 1,500 tenants live in one of the largest public housing developments in Boston. Chanting and handing out fliers to residents, the workers got out the word about their fight for a fair contract, safe working conditions and decent, affordable housing.

The Bromley Heath workers are members of SEIU Firemen and Oilers, Local 3. They are seeking fair increases in wages and benefits for their families and an end to management's unjust, discriminatory practices, such as forcing workers to handle materials like asbestos, lead paint, human waste and syringes without proper protective equipment and training.

High on the list of their demands is funding for public housing instead of the massive \$480 million in cuts proposed by President George W. Bush.

The City of Boston and management



WW PHOTOS: LIZ GREEN
Bromley Heath maintenance workers and their supporters on April 16

tried to stop the Day of Solidarity, holding approval of the barbecue permit until 15 minutes before the close of business on Friday night. The city's Transportation Department, in a blatantly racist and anti-

union act, denied permits for a street march, sound truck and stage. Workers and tenants reported harassment and intimidation attempts by management.

More determined than ever, the work-

ers plunged ahead with their organizing. "Whose streets, OUR streets!" "Whose community, OUR community," became the spirit of the event. Workers and community supporters worked late into the night making placards and assembling materials, then were up again in the early hours to construct a sound truck.

The day ended with a militant rally off the back of the truck, followed by a barbecue for the workers and tenants, hosted by Local 3. □

'Corky' Gonzalez remembered as liberation fighter

By Larry Hales
Denver

On April 17, some 2,000 family members, friends, supporters and activists marched from Escuela Tlatelolco in remembrance of Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, founder of the school, who had died on April 13. The 76-year-old had been diagnosed with congestive heart failure and renal disease.

The march ended at Curtis Park near downtown Denver. At the park, there were traditional Aztec dancers, music and other performances to celebrate the life of the activist who, in the 1960s, after having split from the Democratic Party, began the Cru-

sade for Justice, an organization whose building was attacked in 1973 by Denver police. In the pitched battle that followed, the upper floor of the building was torn apart by a blast that many attribute to the police.

"Corky" Gonzalez was a boxer in his earlier life who became a fighter for justice and the liberation of Chicanos and all people of color. He began to realize that a capitalist party like the Democratic Party would not and could not truly advocate for people of color.

In his poem "I am Joaquin," which states emphatically "I shall endure! I will endure!" he blends together the many aspects of being from Mexico, of trying to

hold on to those roots and culture in a country that sought and still seeks to strip people of color of pride in their history and culture. In doing so, the essence of a people's struggle is lost, and without knowing what is capable, mounting a further struggle for liberation is extremely difficult.

In his active life, "Corky" Gonzalez understood the importance of the culture of Mexican people in resisting racism. The school Escuela Tlatelolco was opened because of the failure of



Denver march remembering Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, shown here on far left

Denver schools to educate Chicano students and to instruct them in both Spanish and English.

He also linked up with Cesar Chavez and leaders of the Black struggle, fought against police brutality and protested the Vietnam War, and in 1968 led Chicanos in the Poor People's March on Washington. □

Haitians protest racist abuse of school children

By G. Dunkel
New York

For a month the New York Board of Education has been "investigating the incident." And while it is "under investigation," school officials won't comment.

According to parents and children involved, on March 16, two fourth-grade Haitian students got into a scuffle at PS 34 in Queens Village. Assistant Principal Nancy Miller screamed at them in front of all the other students in the lunchroom: "In Haiti they treat you like animals and I will treat you the same way here."

She forced all 13 Haitian students in the school's only bilingual class to sit on the floor and eat their rice and beans with their hands.

Some of the children were sobbing and couldn't eat, but Miller didn't relent. She

wouldn't even let them share a plastic spoon.

The principal of the school, Pauline Shakespeare, backed up her assistant. She called the bilingual students out of their classes, tried to convince them it never happened, and offered some of them ice cream if they changed their stories.

According to one Haitian parent who spoke to Marguerite Laurent of the Haitian Lawyers' Leadership Network, the principal described her child's behavior as "animalism."

The ad-hoc Committee for Justice for the 13 Haitian Children at PS 34 held a picket line in front of the school on April 12 to express the burning indignation in the Haitian community and to demand that Miller and Shakespeare be fired.

"The community is definitely outraged about this," said Dahoud Andre, host of

the radio program "Lakou Nouyòk."

The outrage and burning indignation drew some political support from city politicians, who held a press conference at City Hall demanding that Mayor Bloomberg, who now controls the city schools, go to PS 34 and apologize to the students and their parents.

The Department of Education announced April 15 that Miller had requested a transfer to the district office because she was concerned for her personal safety. Elsie Saint-Louis Accilien of Haitian Americans United for Progress responded, "Nobody threatened that woman's life."

The Department of Education has also said it is treating this incident seriously, but after a month, it still has not concluded its investigation—the classic sign of a cover-up.

The Committee for Justice is therefore

calling on all progressives to contact Regional Superintendent Judith Chin at (718) 281-7528, e-mail JChin@nyboe.net, or Jennifer Graham, head of the Response Team for Chancellor Joel Klein on this PS 34 matter, at (212) 374-5156.

The ruling class of the United States has spent 200 years actively denying the humanity and heroic accomplishments of the Haitian people, whose ancestors rose up and militarily destroyed the class that was trying to keep them in slavery. The two coups against President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, which were financed, organized and controlled by the United States, are another expression of this lengthy campaign.

Miller's racist and anti-Haitian comments, as well as the cover-up by the Department of Education, also have to be seen in this context. □

HARLEM, PHILLY, S.F.

Events planned to 'Free Mumia!'

By Monica Moorehead

On April 24, African American revolutionary journalist and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal will turn 51 years old. He has spent almost 23 years on Pennsylvania's death row for a killing that he did not commit—the fatal shooting of a white cop, Daniel Faulkner, in 1981 in Philadelphia.

Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther, has maintained since his arrest until the present that he did not carry out the shooting—that he is in fact the victim of a racist frame-up spearheaded by the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police and their allies. Why else will the courts not allow important suppressed evidence to be heard?

This evidence includes a video confession from someone who admitted to shooting Faulkner. It also includes an affidavit from a white stenographer who overheard the original trial judge, Albert Sabo, use a racist epithet against Abu-Jamal.

April 24 is also the ninth anniversary of the signing by President Bill Clinton of the notorious Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. This act placed severe restrictions on the ability of state and federal prisoners to get federal courts to review their sentences and convictions under habeas corpus relief. It also created a six-month statute of limitation within which habeas corpus petitions must be

filed after appeal in death penalty cases.

In other words, if a death row inmate wants to use a federal appeal to challenge the biased ruling of a state court, the federal court can use a technicality like a passed time limit as an excuse not to hear that appeal. And it doesn't matter one iota if the inmate has any vital evidence to prove his or her innocence. The result can be the speeding up of an execution. The courts have used this act to deny Abu-Jamal's appeals time and time again.

In December 2001, a federal district judge overturned Abu-Jamal's death sentence but not his first-degree murder conviction. This means that Abu-Jamal could face a re-sentencing hearing which could either sentence him to life imprisonment or reimpose the death penalty. Abu-Jamal's lawyers are appealing this ruling, stating that nothing short of a new trial to prove his innocence is acceptable.

The attempts to legally lynch Mumia Abu-Jamal have not deterred the political movement here and worldwide from organizing and fighting for his freedom. On the contrary, many in the movement understand that ultimately Abu-Jamal's freedom will be won not in the courts but in the streets. Many understand that the courts, the police and the government want to silence Abu-Jamal's voice because he speaks out so clearly and strongly in his audio and written commentaries on international and domestic issues—including

the war and occupation of Iraq and the struggle to save Social Security.

Three important Free Mumia events will coincide with his birthday:

*On April 22 in Philadelphia, "It's time for the African/Black Community to take a serious STAND" and "Get Up, Stand Up Cultural Celebration, Edutainment, and Freedom Bash" will take place at 7:30 p.m. at the Mantis School of Boxing, 4522 Baltimore Ave. Guest speakers will include Pam Africa, national leader of International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Basiymah Mu-Bey.

Performances will include: Universal Dance and Drum Ensemble; South African percussionist Magauwane; hip-hop/poet Maj Toure; poetry and lyrical verse, Seasons of the Mind; rap artists Seeds of Wisdom, and many more. Call: 215-213-0078 or Email: BlacxPhilly@aol.com for information.

*On April 23 in Harlem a 1 p.m. outdoor rally at the Harlem State Office Building will be followed by a 3 p.m. indoor meeting and concert at the Salem United Methodist Church. Speakers will include Mayor David Dinkins; Million Worker March leader Brenda Stokely; City Council persons Charles Barron and Margarita Lopez; Pam Africa; MOVE representative Ramona Africa; Rev. Luis Barrios; International Action Center co-director Larry Holmes; former political prisoner Herman Ferguson, and many



more. Cultural performances will be given by Nana Soul, Camille Yarborough, Spirit Child from Movement in Motion, Seeds of Wisdom and Hasan Salaam, to name a few. Call (212) 330-8029 or (212) 633-6646 for more information.

*On April 24 in San Francisco, a "Michael Franti and Friends in Concert to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal" will be held at the Mission High School at 2 p.m. Besides Franti, other rally participants will include Lynne Stewart, New York human rights attorney facing a 35-year federal prison term for "abetting terrorism"; Pam Africa; Robert Bryan, Abu-Jamal's lead attorney; Barbara Becnel, literary agent for death row inmate Stanley "Tookie" Williams, and others. Call (415) 255-1085 for more information. □

Struggle over new jail heats up

By Larry Hales
Denver

The fight against a proposed new Denver City jail is at its peak, with the vote on it scheduled for early May. Some of the jail's opponents have banded together in a broad coalition called Denver City Residents for Responsible Spending, and some in this coalition are even calling on the city to review alternatives for a cheaper jail or repairs on the existing city and county jail.

However, the Committee of Resistance to Jails, Prisons and War has taken a stand against jails on principle and recognizes that any expenditure on incarceration will be a blow to the throats of poor workers and people of color.

Recently, Denver mayor and millionaire restaurateur John Hickenlooper was named one of the five top mayors in the country by Time magazine. One feat credited to him is the elimination of a \$70-million deficit "without major service cuts or layoffs."

The Time article highlights that Hickenlooper took a 25-percent pay cut himself. However, it is a pittance considering how much money he is worth. Hickenlooper also forced city workers into accepting pay cuts.

Part of his idea of balancing the budget was to see that substitute teachers receive a 30-percent pay cut and \$11.6 million is cut from city spending—all while the Denver public school system has no substitutes, has a ratio of 35 students per teacher and is closing several schools throughout the city.

When city residents and activists demanded justice in the wake of rampant police brutality and the murders of five disabled people—two Black males, one Black female and one Latino male—the mayor responded by creating a benign city

monitor position at city residents' expense. This position will pay anywhere from \$74,000 to \$114,000. The monitor can only make recommendations but will have no real power to go after killer cops.

Now the city is forcing a "Justice Center" down the throats of residents, costing a whopping \$600 million—and this is only for the repayment of the bonds needed to construct the jail facility. The mayor and other city administrators have crisscrossed the city, paying special attention to communities of color, to sell the new proposal.

Of course, nothing is being said about the fact that Black males are seven times

as likely to be arrested in Denver as whites, and Latino males twice as likely, and that 60 percent of those in jail have not been tried but are awaiting trial, many because they cannot afford to post bail. Some 42 percent of the new felony cases are for drug possession, yet the city is allocating only \$1.3 million for drug treatment and few decent-paying jobs are opening up.

City administrators have gone as far as to call the jail proposal an issue of human rights, because the conditions in the current jail are so deplorable. To be sure the conditions are bad, but to call the building of a jail a matter of human rights is sick

and twisted. The true human rights abuse is a society that puts profit before human need. Many of those in jail and prison are there because of crimes of opportunity and these crimes won't go away until the for-profit system is abolished.

This proposal for a jail is really part of the war being waged against workers, poor people and communities of color. The proposal for a new jail in Denver is part of a trend in this country. Here in Denver, the call to retake May Day is being heeded and used as part of the struggle against the jail proposal, behind the slogan, "Money for jobs, health care and education, not for war and incarceration." □

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Gov't 'biodefense' increases danger

Deadly flu virus shipped out

By Hillel Cohen

Live samples of a deadly flu virus were recently sent out accidentally to over 5,000 laboratories. Most labs were in the U.S., 14 others were in Canada and 61 were scattered among 16 other countries. As of April 15, almost a week after the laboratories were instructed to destroy the thousands of vials, about a third of them were still unaccounted for.

The virus, known to biologists as H2N2, is believed to be responsible for up to 4 million deaths in 1957-1958 in one of the worst flu pandemics of the last 50 years. A pandemic is a worldwide epidemic.

Meridian Bioscience Inc., a U.S. biotechnology company under contract with the College of American Pathologists, sent out "proficiency samples" to help laboratories test whether they can detect and identify viruses in specimens taken by doctors from ill patients. Meridian claims it didn't know H2N2 virus was among the samples.

News of the accident became public more than a week after it happened, when one of the labs that received the virus warned the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the United Nations' World Health Organization (WHO).

The CDC urged all laboratories to incinerate the samples without opening them. The WHO had previously been asking all laboratories around the world to destroy H2N2 stocks and not to include the deadly strain in proficiency samples. But, just as

the U.S. government simply ignores UN resolutions that do not conform to its policies, U.S. health agencies and laboratories do not feel obligated to follow WHO recommendations.

The CDC quickly announced there was no danger to the public. The agency, which once had a reputation for scientific integrity, has in more recent years come under intense criticism for being a mouthpiece for the Bush administration's political agenda.

In the run-up to the invasion of Iraq, the CDC took the lead in propagating the administration's scare campaign over smallpox. While health specialists everywhere else in the world knew that Iraq did not have smallpox weapons and that there was no danger, North American GIs were forced to submit to unnecessary and dangerous vaccinations.

Health professionals were urged to get the vaccinations, too. While the majority of doctors and nurses refused the vaccine out of fear for their own safety, the Bush administration's smallpox scare campaign, with assistance from the CDC, was one part of the "weapons of mass destruction" fraud used to drum up support for the war.

Spending billions of dollars on a hugely exaggerated threat of bioterrorism has ironically created very real threats to the health and lives of people here and around the world.

The anthrax spores that in 2001 were sent out in the mail and caused the deaths

of five people have been traced to the U.S. military's "biodefense" program, even though the specific individuals responsible have not been openly identified. The billion-dollar bioterrorism program has been opening up many more such laboratories at universities and research centers, in spite of opposition from local communities.

Government, university and private laboratory officials all swear that the labs are fool-proof and fail-safe and that dangerous viruses and other pathogens could never escape. The latest Meridian fiasco shows how fail-safe these programs really are.

An April 12 Associated Press article by Malcolm Ritter tried to assure people that there was no danger of the H2N2 flu virus ever getting out of the laboratories. It quoted virus expert Dr. Adolfo Garcia-Sastre of Mount Sinai Medical Center as saying he thinks the risk of a resulting pandemic is very low and that "it will be very unlikely this will happen again."

What the AP story did not mention is that Dr. Garcia-Sastre has a major financial connection to a controversial program to reconstruct and test the 1918 pandemic flu virus, which is believed to have killed more than 50 million people worldwide at that time.

According to the Sunshine Project, a progressive organization that monitors biological and chemical weapons development by the Pentagon and its allies, Dr. Garcia-Sastre is linked to projects to

reconstruct that deadly virus and to infect laboratory primates with aerosol sprays to study the effects in experiments at the University of Washington, University of Wisconsin and at a facility in Athens, Ga. Other researchers are also working, with U.S. government and Pentagon support, on genetic manipulations of the 1918 flu virus and genetic alterations of avian flu virus.

Rather than making the public safer, these programs sponsored by the Pentagon and "Homeland Security" are putting the public in grave danger.

By building more facilities and multiplying the number of researchers and laboratories handling these dangerous pathogens, the "biodefense" program greatly increases the risk of a repetition of the 2001 anthrax attack or the accidental release of deadly viruses and other disease organisms, whether they be historic ones or newly created in ultra-modern labs.

These programs also raise the danger that, under the cover of "biodefense," the Pentagon is rebuilding a biological and chemical weapons program in violation of treaties that the U.S. signed long ago.

Community and environmental activists who have tried to get information about what is being done in these labs and what safety measures are being taken have been denied access in the name of "national security." Meanwhile, companies like Meridian will get richer while the health of the country and the world is put at risk. □

Why hospitals and patients are sick

By Sharon L. Eolis, N.P.
New York

Imagine going to the hospital for an operation and being told the surgery was canceled and you need to reschedule.

With many hospitals in deep financial trouble, there is a good chance of such a postponement, often due to the lack of a piece of equipment for an orthopedic procedure or some other necessary device. Many hospitals are over-extended and in debt to the companies that equip and supply them, which will provide the materials only after they receive payment from the hospital.

In New York state, as elsewhere, the hospital business represents a very large section of the economy. And the hospital industry here owes \$15 billion in outstanding long-term debt. (New York Times, April 11) Many of the most prestigious teaching hospitals in Manhattan, like Mt. Sinai and St. Vincent's, as well as nearby Westchester Medical Center, have been operating in the red over the past five years, to the point of "hemorrhaging money."

In the past 15 years, 20,000 beds have been lost in the state. A dozen hospitals have closed over the past two years and another dozen are at risk.

In this period many technological advances have impacted on health care, from new drugs to treat infections to laser equipment that allows smaller surgical incisions so people can go home shortly after surgery. In the 1990s a new class of anti-viral drugs was produced, making it possible for thousands of people with HIV-AIDS to be treated in outpatient clinics rather than spending weeks in the hospital. All these changes decreased the need and length of stay for thousands of

A Haitian boy in Petite Riviere is examined by Magdalena Mauri Gomez, one of more than 500 Cuban health care professionals serving in Haiti.



patients.

Several factors contribute to the present crisis. Health maintenance organizations (HMOs), which are turning enormous profits, have taken the hospitals to the cleaners by negotiating rates that do not cover the actual cost for procedures and hospital admissions. They have also pressured hospitals to shorten the time they keep patients.

Another cause for lost revenues is that millions of people have no health insurance. Their only access to health care is to go to emergency rooms. If they have serious conditions, they may require admission to a hospital.

In 1997 New York Gov. George Pataki got rid of price-setting laws that protected the hospitals. The rise in managed care organizations squeezed the hospitals nationally. New York, already in debt, was harder hit than other parts of the country.

Kenneth E. Raske, president of the Greater New York Hospital Association, says: "These HMOs have eaten the hospitals' lunch. They have made obscene profits by strip-mining communities."

In the 1990s a "medical arms race" began in New York with hospitals rushing to get in on high-profit businesses. They began opening cardiac centers, orthopedic surgery centers and cancer centers. With

many institutions vying for patients, there was often saturation of the market—capitalist overproduction—and these projects then lost money. The state had some responsibility because it approved the projects.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes to affect the national health-care system is in federal aid policies.

The federal government has spent billions of dollars on the invasion and occupation of Iraq—at the expense of the people in the U.S. There have been draconian cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, family planning, pre-natal care and Ryan White funds. Those hardest hit are poor and working people in the oppressed communities. Meanwhile the U.S. government is spending \$10 million per hour for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This money brings death and destruction to the people of Iraq and to the U.S. troops, who are into extended terms of duty. Since the first Gulf War, GIs have been complaining about a variety of illness called Gulf Syndrome. In the second Iraq war the troops have had extended expo-

sure to depleted uranium and are coming back with multiple health problems. The federal government is nevertheless closing down Veterans Administration hospitals, even though some returning veterans have to wait up to a year to be seen.

Need for universal health care

All this amounts to an urgent need for a universal health-care system that plans for people's needs, not corporate greed and profits. A system that provides free, quality health care to all the people—disabled, seniors, immigrants, people of color, infants and children, straight or gay—from the cradle to the grave. A system based on socialist planning.

Such a national health program would provide health care to all sectors of the country, urban and rural. It would train a variety of health care providers at government expense so there would be enough health workers to take care of the people.

Cuba has a socialist health-care system that meets the basic needs of all the people even though it was developed with limited resources—a consequence of the 45-year-old U.S. blockade. In fact, the Cuban system is world-famous for having radically reduced infant mortality and for producing new vaccines for meningitis and hepatitis before any other country. Presently the Cubans are working on developing vaccines for cancer and HIV-AIDS.

The small island of Cuba has provided thousands of doctors and nurses to countries hit by natural disasters and has helped develop health care programs in many countries in Latin America and Africa. The Cuban example in the health-care field is an example for the world today.

Eolis is a nurse practitioner in New York City.

Sabotaging Social Security

New phase of Bush's sinister scheme

By Milt Neidenberg

Will mid-April's three-day stock market crash, when the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell over 400 points, dampen the Bush administration's enthusiasm to invest workers' retiree accounts in the Wall Street stock market?

NASDAQ also took a dive, partially connected to losses in blue-chip IBM stocks. Standard & Poor's 500 took big-time hits, sending markets around the world reeling with heavy losses. Will this stop the anti-worker president's hard sell to privatize Social Security?

Not likely.

The snake-oil salesman in the White House hears only the demands of the one percenters—the wealthiest sector of society. There is no turning back for this master of deception and his co-conspirators, who are determined to coerce the workers into giving up their Social Security accounts to the financial institutions.

In a sinister preemptive strike, he has marshaled government agencies, their bureaucracies and Wall Street lobbyists in a country-wide 60-day promotional blitz. The aim is to bamboozle millions of hard-working Social Security participants, primarily the baby boomers, into believing that Social Security is in crisis and that only private accounts will provide them with a secure retirement.

The Bush administration has siphoned off government funds from the Small Business Administration, Social Security itself, the Treasury Department and other bureaucracies, illegally commandeering the vast resources of the federal government in order to promote the privatizing of Social Security.

Taking security out of the trust fund

Recently, Bush traveled to the Bureau of the Public Debt in Parkersburg, W.Va., a secretive institution unknown to the average worker/retiree. He went there to prove to the millions of baby boomers his contention that the Social Security trust fund is in crisis and may go broke.

Referring to a file cabinet in Parkersburg filled with securities purchased for the Social Security system, Bush remarked, "There is no trust fund—just IOUs that I saw firsthand." (Wall Street Journal, April 13) He blamed the government and questioned whether the government should control it.

But Bush is no innocent bystander! He is the CEO of this government. And he has commanded it to serve a capitalist empire that has plundered and profited from imperialist wars as well as the war against U.S. workers.

Alarmed and angry, Charles Rangel, a Black Congress member from New York and the top Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee, wrote to Treasury Secretary John Snow, point man for Bush's privatization plan: "I urge you to clarify whether these bonds are real, and whether the U.S. intends to honor them."

The truth is, there are no bonds or other marketable securities in the trust fund. They have been totally replaced with IOUs from the government that are not marketable. In 1985 the trust fund was put at the disposal of the Reagan administration to use on an emergency basis for non-pension liabilities. But since then, both Democratic and Republican administrations have extended this provision, allowing them to use its assets to cover other debts.



Workers get their first social security cards at the end of the depression.

Thus, hundreds of billions of workers' retirement money has been spirited away without transparency, or oversight, or any independent working-class trustee to monitor these illegal transactions. Will future governments honor these IOUs?

Bush is doing everything he can to undermine confidence in Social Security—not to fix it, but to destroy it.

Former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill spoke the truth before he was forced out of the Bush administration. He warned the public in 2001 that "unlike private pension funds, the trust fund holds zero marketable assets, even though workers paid in cash surpluses. It contains only non-marketable bookkeeping IOUs for which no budget commits their pay-back and no cash interest is paid." (Associated Press, July 10, 2001)

There are no appropriations in past, present, or future fiscal budgets to replace the surpluses created by the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA). The IOUs have yet to be backed by U.S. dollars, bonds or Treasury notes that could gather interest and add many billions of dollars to the trust fund. Bush's outrageous plan is to continue these illegal transactions and be sure the trust fund has no marketable funds.

The total government debt at the end of fiscal 2004 was \$7.4 trillion, according to the Federal Debt Report. The total amount siphoned off from the Social Security trust fund to date is \$1.5 trillion; an additional \$1.6 trillion has been ripped off from a variety of other trust funds: the Federal Employees Retirement System, Federal Hospital Insurance Trust Fund, Railroad Retirement Fund, Military Retirement Fund and others. This doesn't include what it would cost the government to set up private Social Security accounts: over \$2 trillion.

Here is the fundamental question: Will Bush ultimately succeed in depleting the Social Security trust fund, with no plan to restore the surpluses needed to support future retirees? Shifting Social Security funds into private accounts is the first step in this sinister process.

The half truths from the Bush neo-con inner circle smell of a neo-fascist technique—a broadside attack against the workers

and the oppressed and poor while posing as their savior. The Bush-created crisis is blamed on those who oppose him privatizing Social Security.

Inflation and stagnation

The practice of ripping off trust fund surpluses to cover deficit spending hides the true costs of debt incurred by the capitalist government. With inflation and stagnation surfacing, the Bush administration will deplete these funds at a more rapid rate.

Funds have been siphoned off in the hundreds of billions to expand the Pentagon and to pay for the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. The money is also used to service the huge budget deficit—in other words, to pay the interest on huge loans from banks and other financial institutions.

Nevertheless, Social Security continues to generate a huge surplus each year—workers are paying much more into it than retirees take out. In that sense it is alive and well and has a surplus of cash for at least the next four decades. That surplus would last much longer if the government were to protect the current trust fund accounts. But they have not and will not. In fiscal 2004, over \$139 billion that went into the trust fund has since been removed to pay for non-pension liabilities.

Bush and his conservative ideologues are well aware of these facts. So are Wall Street accountants and actuaries, as well as informed academics and politicians of both capitalist parties, all entwined in a conspiracy of silence. The Bush strategy is to sow confusion and fear in order to win over the baby boomers to the campaign to create private Wall Street accounts.

Social Security is one leg of a three-legged stool that seniors and baby boomers hope will provide them with a modicum of security. The other legs of the stool have virtually disappeared: savings

accounts, which have largely dissipated due to credit card and other consumer debt, and private and corporate pensions. From the cradle to the grave, poverty looms larger than ever.

The income gap between the wealthiest one percenters and the workers and oppressed grows rapidly.

The capitalist government is raiding Social Security—not saving it. It is of deep concern to the workers and the oppressed that Social Security could become nothing but a memory—a social safety net won toward the end of the 1930s Depression through labor's heroic battles with its class enemies.

While Bush is barnstorming the country with lies about a Social Security crisis that he is causing, the Democrats have now agreed that there will be a crisis down the road. They have shown a willingness to discuss the problem if Bush would give up his proposals to privatize Social Security. A compromise that would increase the current tax, postpone the age of retirement, and maybe even reduce payments is on the table.

Hands off Social Security!

There must be no compromise on these potential concessions. Millions of workers and oppressed, their families and loved ones, the disabled and others are totally dependent on Social Security. With inflation and a stagnating economy, a militant campaign is necessary to stop the government from raiding the trust fund.

Social Security must be the line in the sand that will marshal an independent class-wide struggle in the spirit of 1938, when Social Security was won. It is an issue that can win the hearts and minds of young and old, whites and people of color, the organized and the unorganized. The fight to retain and expand Social Security will be historic—no less than the struggle over a century ago to gain the eight-hour day, which is commemorated the world over on May Day. □



Ray Rakow, 1929-2005

A doctor who fought sterilization abuse

By Sue Davis

Ray Rakow, jazz aficionado, polemicist on sexual politics, psychiatrist, political activist and long-time friend and supporter of Workers World, may have been born in 1929 but he came of age politically during the tumultuous 1960s.

The son of Jewish immigrants from Poland who spoke only Yiddish until he was five, Rakow worked his way through medical school at the University of California/Berkeley and practiced internal medicine for several years before going to the Mayo Clinic to earn an advanced degree in psychiatry.

Shunning a lucrative private practice, Rakow chose to deliver health care to workers and the oppressed in East Harlem. In 1962 he opened a walk-in psychiatric clinic at Metropolitan Hospital to serve the predominantly Spanish-speaking community. There, he became aware of the discrimination, alienation and misery experienced daily by the Puerto Rican, Dominican, Mexican and other immigrant peoples in that neighborhood. He also noted the high incidence of sterilization among Puerto Rican women.

Avidly against the war in Vietnam and for national liberation movements, Ray and Cornelia, his equally activist partner of 37 years, began attending meetings of the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee in 1975. That's where they met Dr. Helen Rodriguez-Trias, a Puerto Rican pediatrician.

Rodriguez-Trias had started the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse (CESA) in 1973 after the sterilization of two African American teen-agers made national headlines. Outraged at the government policy in the 1950s of promoting sterilization as a form of birth control for Puerto Rican women, Rodriguez was determined to expose and stop the racist, genocidal practice of sterilizing women of color and poor white women.

The Rakows became active in CESA, which at the time was gathering data on sterilization abuse cases. When CESA learned that Dr. Antonio Silva, the primary architect of the government's sterilization program and then director of the obstetrics and gynecology department at a major San Juan hospital, was about to be appointed to a similar position at Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx, Rakow chose to leverage his job

to further his politics.

Going undercover as a visiting medical practitioner, Rakow got Silva to talk at length about how he had implemented the sterilization program. Then Rakow gave an in-depth interview to the daily San Juan Star and to Claridad, a pro-independence weekly, detailing how 30 percent of Puerto Rican women of child-bearing age had been coerced into becoming sterilized. Silva never got the job at Lincoln, and Rakow eventually lost his.

But Rakow was justifiably proud of his exposé. Indeed, he signed on as a plaintiff in the lawsuit that led in 1977 to the adoption of guidelines designed to stop sterilization abuse in New York City. That victory led to similar regulations instituted by the federal government in 1979.

After CESA disbanded, the Rakows became active in New York's Committee for Abortion Rights and Against Sterilization Abuse (CARASA), which helped formulate the many-faceted political position that women's liberation could only be achieved when the many social, economic, political and cultural components of reproductive rights were met for all women.

"Ray had strong opinions about everything," says Cornelia. Among the topics that fired him up were gender issues and Zionism. "Ray thought that people being locked into gender roles put a real brake on them politically. He never missed a Gay Pride march."

While Rakow identified himself as culturally Jewish, he was adamantly opposed to Zionism and all forms of racism. He once sent a strongly worded letter to protest the pro-Israel position of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis. Rakow was particularly drawn to Workers World's analysis of and support for the global class struggle.

Known for his dry wit and a matching twinkle in his eye, Rakow fought lung cancer and other ailments in the same relentless way he fought imperialism. After he died on April 10, Cornelia elected to donate Ray's body for medical study at Einstein Hospital in the Bronx. She says, "It's fitting that Ray, who was born in the Bronx, is returning to the Bronx."

Davis met the Rakows while representing Workers World Party in CESA and CARASA.

Venezuela gathering

Continued from page 1

Companies used to pay a ludicrous amount of rent for the land they occupied—just pennies per year per acre. The royalties on oil ran as low as 1 percent on heavy crude. That has been raised to 16 percent, and under a new law the royalty on regular crude is raised to 30 percent and could be increased further. Thorough investigation by the Bolivarian government discovered that the foreign companies were not paying rent for their land. Now this robbery will stop.

Chávez also mentioned trade relations with other countries. Venezuela will supply nearby Argentina with oil for the first time in 100 years. It will exchange 8 million barrels of fuel oil for pregnant cows, nuclear medical equipment for cancer treatment and agricultural machinery. This avoids having to use so-called hard currencies.

"Similar treaties have been established with Cuba, Jamaica, Uruguay, Paraguay and many other countries of the Caribbean and Central America," said Chávez. "Now we have a strategic agreement with China, to supply oil, and with India."

He explained that Venezuela, together with Brazil, "will form Petroamerica, a grouping of oil and oil-related companies; and soon Petrocaribe will be born in the Caribbean."

He also mentioned the new initiative of Telesur, a television network based in Caracas and several other South American countries. Venezuela is also proposing a "Bank of the South" to "break the oppressive chains of economic imperialism of the IMF and World Bank."

Needless to say, the U.S. CIA is operating 24 hours a day to break the revolution. However, the political will of the masses is progressing in spite of this.

Participatory and protagonist democracy, the cornerstone of the Venezuelan revolution, was palpable in the sessions where a six-person delegation from the U.S. organized by the International Action Center participated. They were Steve Gillis and Frantz Mendes, president and vice president, respectively, of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union; Julie Fry from Fight Imperialism, Stand Together

Third Gathering in Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution on April 13-17. Event commemorates failed coup d'etat and abduction of President Hugo Chávez in April 2002. Chávez standing stage center.

WW PHOTOS: BETSEY PIETTE



Steve Gillis, right, gives a MWM shirt to a Venezuelan trade unionist.

(FIST); Lourdes Bela of the Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle, and Betsey Piette and this writer from the Philadelphia IAC.

Workers are taking over plants

These delegates attended three of the eight different working sessions held during the gathering. They covered "Farmers facing the challenge of making the agrarian reform irreversible," "The role of workers in the management of companies" and "Education for the social transformation and construction of the ethical project of the human subject." Betsey Piette attended the session on the role of the workers.

She said that over 500 Venezuelan workers gathered for the two and a half



day workshop, which focused on Bolivarian co-management and alternative economic models. They were joined by international delegates from other Latin American countries, Canada and the U.S. The program was organized and facilitated by the National Workers Union of Venezuela (UNT).

Among the program participants were the head of the UNT; representatives of the Bolivarian Workers Force; the president of the Invepal workers' union; Venezuela's minister of labor; labor leaders of the transport sector; Cuban representatives, and representatives of workers' struggles in Brazil and Argentina. Among those attending were workers from the oil, aluminum, transport, education and electric industries.

The national director of the UNT and a representative from Invepal described the three-year struggle of the workers there to stop the shutdown of that paper plant through the development of a union, occupation of the plant, and finally a takeover of the facility with government support in January 2005. The workers will reopen the plant later this month, producing books for

use in Venezuela's literacy program.

An alternative example of co-management at the electrical plant CADAPE was presented. The facility includes a recreation area for workers and their families and a cooperative cafeteria. Conference participants were able to visit CADAPE and also tour the Invepal plant.

Repeatedly, conference participants stressed that whatever the model used, the struggle for workers' control in Venezuela should not be limited to the public sector or to a takeover of failed industries abandoned by their former capitalist owners.

Speakers received resounding applause when they raised that co-management is not about Venezuelan workers becoming "shareholders who own capital," but about overturning capitalist property relations and replacing them with workers' control over all the industry through socialism.

Steve Gillis, president of USWA Local 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers Union, presented T-shirts from the Million Worker March and messages of solidarity to the Venezuelan workers.

Gillis denounced Condoleezza Rice's criticism of Chávez as the leader of a "failed revolution." "It is capitalism that is the failed system," Gillis noted, "because it has shown itself incapable of providing for the basic needs of working and poor people." □

U.S. harbors terrorist in Miami

By Gary Wilson

Luis Posada Carriles is a terrorist. He admits it.

In a 1998 interview with a New York Times reporter, Posada took credit for being the mastermind behind the bombing of a dozen hotels in the Caribbean in which a tourist was killed.

This is just one of many terrorist acts by Posada. He was convicted of a terrorist bombing plot in Panama that targeted the University of Panama, an act that would have killed more than a thousand students. At the time of his arrest on Nov. 17, 2000, Posada had 33 pounds of C-4 plastic explosives in his possession.

Posada is a fugitive from Venezuela, where he is wanted as one of the masterminds of a terrorist bombing of an airliner that killed all 73 on board in 1976. He escaped from a Venezuelan prison in 1985 while being held for trial on the airline bombing.

Last month, Posada entered the United States from Mexico and on April 12 he requested asylum.

How could a terrorist get past Homeland Security, racist vigilantes on the Southern border and the Bush administration's so-called war on terror and land safely in Miami?

Because Posada is a U.S.-sponsored terrorist. He began his lifelong career as a professional terrorist when he was trained in the early 1960s by the CIA. He was part of the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba that was soundly defeated by the Cuban people. The attorney handling his asylum request says that Posada continued to work for the CIA for many more years.

Posada says he worked for the U.S. Army in Vietnam in the 1960s. After that he became head of the Venezuelan secret police, where he oversaw a campaign to purge the country of leftists, including the secret assassinations of many. In 1976, he was arrested in Caracas for the bombing of a Cuban civilian airliner that killed all 73 passengers.

Later, Posada went to Central America where he oversaw supply operations for the CIA Contra army fighting the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

In 1997 he organized a bombing campaign that targeted tourist hotels in Cuba.

Fabio di Celmo, a visitor from Italy, was killed in one of those explosions.

In 2000 he was in Panama plotting another bombing, this one of a conference being held at the University of Panama where Fidel Castro was scheduled to speak.

According to Dagoberto Rodriguez, chief of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, "On April 11, Cuban President Fidel Castro demanded that U.S. President George W. Bush respond before the world whether it was true that his government was harboring in its territory this well-known international terrorist.

"Up to now, no U.S. government authority has said a word on this matter. The silence of the U.S. government does not surprise us. It has been its historical behavior to harbor terrorists of Cuban origin on U.S. territory, giving them shelter and protection. For a long time, terrorism was the favorite method applied by the U.S. in its efforts to overthrow the Cuban government and that is why it trained,

armed and financed them."

In fact, it is because the U.S. has an army of terrorists in Miami that Cuba has taken extraordinary measures to defend itself from terrorist attacks.

Today, five Cuban men who were working to stop terrorism in Miami are in U.S. prisons for their efforts. The five had been sent by Cuba to Miami in an effort to protect the island from terrorist attacks.

The U.S. government charged the five with engaging in espionage. In fact, they were trying to monitor and prevent terror attacks from U.S. soil against their island nation and had even notified the FBI when they learned of impending attacks.

They were given unprecedented sentences, longer terms than any other espionage convictions in decades. Their trial took place in Miami where the anti-Cuban right wing is so strong that a fair



trial is impossible.

Now they are known as the Cuban 5. Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González are currently awaiting the appeal of their convictions.

An international solidarity movement has grown over the last year to support the Five and demand their immediate freedom. More information is available at www.FreeTheFive.org. □

Washington worried

Nicaragua and the 'Axis of Good'

By Heather Cottin

The Bush administration and its pundits have launched a full-court press in the media as part of a campaign to destabilize the upcoming presidential election in Nicaragua.

On a visit to Latin America in March, Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld announced the suspension of all U.S. military assistance to Nicaragua—about \$2.3 million—for its failure to destroy its arsenal of SA-7 missiles. As long as the government in Managua was on Washington's leash, this didn't bother them. But now Rumsfeld is said to be worried that the Sandinistas may win the upcoming election, and they still have deep roots in the Nicaraguan Army.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) led a popular army in a guerrilla struggle that overturned U.S.-backed dictator Gen. Anastasio Somoza

Garcia on July 19, 1978. In response, the Reagan administration set up, funded and armed a group of counter-revolutionaries—who came to be known as "Contras," for short—to carry out a dirty war against the revolutionary process.

The Soviet-made SA-7 shoulder-to-air missiles that the U.S. now wants destroyed are part of the military aid the socialist USSR had sent to help the Sandinista-led movement defend itself against U.S.-armed terror.

As the CIA-orchestrated Contra war ground down the population, Washington also spent money hand over fist to manipulate an election to get the Sandinistas out and a U.S.-financed puppet in. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter traveled to Nicaragua in 1990, ostensibly to observe the voting. But on the eve of the election he appeared on the front page of the daily newspaper with Violeta Chamorro—the opposition candidate and owner of the

newspaper. Their hands were clasped together, raised in a salute to her anticipated victory.

Now Washington and Wall Street are orchestrating another media campaign and manipulation of Nicaragua's elections aimed against the Sandinistas, who reportedly still have many supporters in the barrios and in the army.

Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega has opened up his fourth campaign for the presidency of Nicaragua. Ginger Thompson wrote in the April 5 New York Times, "Particularly among Nicaragua's desperately poor masses, Ortega, now 59, has remained popular, and he has been able to call on his support to make the country ungovernable."

Thompson added in another article on April 10 that it has been more than two decades since the struggle in Nicaragua "kept Washington awake at night." But,

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News from Puerto Rico

Anti-colonial, economic struggles intersect

By Rebeca Toledo
New York

A serious crowd gathered here on April 16 to discuss the struggle in Puerto Rico for independence from U.S. colonial rule and to hear about recent developments on the island, including a massive student walkout against tuition increases. Convened by supporters of the Socialist Front of Puerto Rico, the event was co-sponsored by Pro-Libertad, Vieques Support Campaign and others.

The featured speakers were Ismael Guadalupe Ortiz, a leader in the struggle to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques, and Jorge Farinacci of the Socialist Front.

Guadalupe told the audience that abuses by the U.S. continue in Vieques. "The U.S. Navy got out of Vieques," he explained, "because we kicked it out, but the struggle is not over." The process of cleaning and decontaminating the small island after the U.S. Navy used it for bombing practice for more than 60 years is enormous. Guadalupe said, "The U.S. is doing nothing to clean up the mess it made."

The territories that the Navy vacated in May 2003 were turned over to the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife. "Residents are restricted to two beaches on the entire island by the Fish and Wildlife Department," Guadalupe said. "The other beaches are off-limits from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. We, the people of Vieques, get ticketed if we go into the restricted areas. But we are returning to these areas in acts of civil disobedience to reclaim our land."

The civil disobedience also serves to bring up issues such as development. Guadalupe explained, "Our presence forces the issue of the development of Vieques. We have our plan for tourism based on resident guest houses, not on big corporate hotels and properties. They are buying up the island and gaining control of everything. But we will fight them."

Jorge Farinacci emphasized that the struggle in Puerto Rico is a struggle of the poor against the rich. "Unemployment is rising, food prices and healthcare costs are rising. The gap between rich and poor is

growing. There is no base for industrial growth. This has led to an economic crisis."

Farinacci explained that this crisis has led the ruling class parties in Puerto Rico to call for a process of decolonization, and added, "Let's be clear, the lackeys of U.S. imperialism will never lead the fight to decolonize."

"What is clear is that they would like to get out of this crisis by taking it out on the backs of the poor, like all capitalists." He explained, "For example, the government has said there will be no wage increases for the next four years."

"There will be struggle," Farinacci promised, "The question is who will lead this struggle to get out of this crisis."

An indication can already be seen with the university students, he said. "One of the hikes pushed through by the government is a 33-percent tuition increase. Here they have made a mistake."

Farinacci recounted how the students at the University of Puerto Rico in Rio Piedras have called for a general strike against not only the tuition hike, but all the attacks on the poor. They are making it a

working class issue.

"Some claim that these youth are being manipulated," Farinacci said. "But the youth know, just like the youth who went up to the Sierra Maestra, the youth who are fighting in Iraq, the youth in Venezuela. They know their role is to defend the rights of the majority."

Farinacci took a moment to explain what the Socialist Front is. "We bring in all the fundamental struggles of the workers. That includes women, homosexuals, blacks and immigrants."

"We always say we identify more with the black Dominican woman worker than with the whites born in Puerto Rico who have sold out our country."

Also present at the event was Rosa Meneses Albizu Campos, president of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico and granddaughter of Puerto Rico's great independence figure, Don Pedro Albizu Campos. She said the ruling elite in Puerto Rico and U.S. imperialism "may loosen the chain or tighten the chain, but it is only the Puerto Rican people who can break the chains of colonialism. And we will be victorious." □

Ratzinger & Berlusconi

Historical forces work in mysterious ways their wonders to perform. In the very same week and in the very same city where Cardinal Ratzinger caught the brass ring and ascended to supreme leader of the Catholic Church, horrifying Catholics who had hoped for a kinder, gentler figure, an equally reactionary figure who had risen to head the Italian government after building a media empire and fortune, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, was forced to resign and prepare to submit to a new election.

One was elected by a secret conclave of bishops. The other will have to go before a public electorate and hope that his ability to project his image into every living room via television, radio and newspapers will keep him in power.

Of course, if only Italian bishops had been voting for a new pope, the result might well have been different. The truth is that Catholicism has greatly weakened in the very country that is its historical seat, and church officials there know they have to make compromises or their ranks will shrink even faster. Even the crowds that hung out in Vatican Square waiting for the white smoke were very split over the choice of Ratzinger, and reports abounded that some were downright indignant.

Not hard to figure out why, since he not only has a past in the German Hitler Youth but was Pope John Paul's closest collaborator in rejecting any moderation of the church's stand on divorce, contraception, abortion, clerical celibacy, women in the priesthood and lesbian and gay rights.

Most Catholics in the United States, it turns out, don't practice what their church preaches on most of these issues, even though they supposedly risk damnation and an eternity boiling in hell. (Many priests don't practice it either, as the widespread child abuse scandal has shown.)

And yet, Ratzinger is in for life, however long that may be. And reactionaries

of all stripes are quite happy about that.

And Berlusconi may be out, the casualty of tagging along with Bush on Iraq, as well as carrying out an austerity offensive against Italian workers that is particularly hard to swallow coming from a multi-billionaire.

The monopolized media so epitomized by Berlusconi was also extremely instrumental in numbing any critical thoughts about the church as John Paul lay dying and the struggle over his successor had already begun. It was, in fact, an ideological onslaught of required reverence like few before it, a paean to mysticism delivered by the most scientifically advanced communications media.

The church is so top down that it can withstand new winds of change for a long time. It's harder in a capitalist democracy, which is why the ruling class will often abandon that political form when it becomes an impediment to their rule and opt for something more in keeping with their class dictatorship over the people. But that has its risks, too, as both Hitler and Mussolini found out.

What's important, however, is that the masses of people have moved forward. Women are not content with being little more than vessels to produce heirs for their husbands. They want a life. People who decide to move on to another partner before "death do us part" do not feel ashamed. Emotional growth and change are part of life.

Loving someone of the same sex is not considered a sin any more by many of those whose churches preach otherwise.

But they are deeply distressed by a war for conquest and profit, even when it has the blessings of politicians, press and pulpit.

The popes and press magnates who try to hold back this growth of consciousness have vast resources at their disposal, but it is they who are becoming isolated and disregarded. □

Harry Hay heard 'siren song of revolution'

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called "the siren song of Revolution."

Hay in the thick of struggle

In 1935 and 1936, Hay was in the thick of the struggle. He took part in fundraisers and demonstrations against the rise of fascism in Spain and Germany, and in support of African American civil rights and union organizing.

From 1936 to 1938 he worked on the End Poverty in California campaign, the Hollywood Writers' Mobilization, the American League Against War and Fascism, the Mobilization for Democracy, the Workers' Alliance of America and Labor's Non-Partisan League.

He was active in the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, organized by Dorothy Parker in the spring of 1936. Supporters included Paul Muni and Boris Karloff.

Biographer Stuart Timmons wrote, "The Anti-Nazi League was a typical mass organization, which, while independent,

relied heavily on leadership from the CPUSA and served to introduce sympathetic people to Marxist principles and to the Party. The structure of the Mattachine Society, 14 years later, was strongly influenced by this model."

Hay still frequented gay bars, describing his experiences this way: "Gay life was not so much a life as an aggregate of cliques."

Just as earthshaking as the 1934 San Francisco General Strike had been in changing his life, Hay explained how three years later a panoramic Marxist view transformed his thinking.

Screen writer Viola Brothers Shore invited Hay in late 1937 to a Marxist discussion group in the home of film director Frank Tuttle.

This experience was "wildly exciting," Hay described. "Suddenly it all made wonderful sense."

Next: Bringing communist experience to building a new mass movement.



A tribute to TWO WOMEN WARRIORS

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta



CARRIE LUE MORRIS

The Atlanta community and the progressive movement are mourning the deaths of two of the city's most passionate and determined leaders for economic and social justice.

On March 14, Ethel Mae Mathews died at her home of heart failure at the age of 72. Born in Loachapoka, Ala., to a sharecropper family and married at the age of 12, her early experiences with the poverty and racism at the hands of "Mr. Charley"—the term that signified all the indignities and cruelties of the segregated South—shaped her deep hatred of injustice.

In 1950, she moved alone to Atlanta to raise her four children. It was there, she said, that she discovered that she had rights when she met community activists associated with the Emmaus House. As president of the Atlanta Welfare Rights Organization, Mathews became a loud and persistent voice for the poor, the elderly and children. For decades, she was a leader and participant in countless marches and sit-ins; stood in front of bulldozers to stop the destruction of a community center; confronted mayors, governors and presidents over their policies that hurt the poor.

This writer happened to be in a food stamp office in August 1975 when in marched Mrs. Mathews and dozens of others demanding to see the program director over the difficulties that were being placed in the way of people receiving what was rightfully theirs. That encounter began a long alliance and collaboration between Mathews, the Atlanta Welfare Rights Organization, the Emmaus House and Workers World Party. Together, the three groups worked together on numerous campaigns for housing, health care and against cutbacks of social services. Mrs. Mathews spoke at rallies against apartheid in South Africa and the wars in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Iraq.

Ethel Mae Mathews was a fierce fighter for poor people and workers. She always knew which side she was on.

Carrie Lue Morris, president of the All-Peoples Congress chapter in Atlanta, an activist for senior citizens and the poor who could be seen and heard at public hearings, community meetings, marches and demonstrations for decades, died of a massive heart attack on March 29. She was 74.

Morris was born in Watkinsville, Ga. She often recalled the intimidating presence of the Ku Klux Klan in the rural community where her extensive family lived. She and her five young children came to

Atlanta where she worked long hours as a low-paid home health care worker.

She joined the rapidly growing civil rights movement and found her voice to challenge all that she found unjust. Morris never stopped advocating "taking it to the streets."

In the 1970s, she became an activist in the emerging tenants'

councils being formed in housing projects. As president of Harris Homes, she fought for decent housing for the poor and against cutbacks in social services. She, along with a number of other Black women, including Ethel Mathews, became a powerful force in the city, not afraid to confront government officials and big business leaders.

Following the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, Morris helped organize buses to a march on the Pentagon that brought 100,000 people to D.C. to say no to cutbacks, war and racism.

She became president of the Atlanta chapter of the All-Peoples Congress. Years of intense activity followed with the APC organizing against fare hikes, utility increases, and cutbacks at Grady Hospital. The APC mobilized against marches of the Ku Klux Klan in College Park and twice in Atlanta, where masses of people chased the racists out of town.

With her grandchildren in hand, Morris picketed presidents, attended countless organizing meetings, distributed fliers and collected petitions. Morris and the APC went to numerous national marches in D.C. against war, the Klan marching in Washington, and for women's rights. She always brought delicious food for the people on the bus. Morris attended local and national programs and conferences organized by Workers World Party and was valued as a strong ally and friend in the struggle.

In recent years, health problems prevented her from marching on long demonstrations. So instead she rode in the sound truck and led the chants at protests for Mumia Abu-Jamal in Atlanta or worked the literature tables at the October 2003 national demonstration against the war on Iraq.

Carrie Morris had a booming voice, a feisty manner and a warm and caring personality. She loved to sing; she loved her family, her friends, her people.

Morris was the last speaker at the funeral of her friend and ally, Ethel Mae Mathews, two weeks before her own death. She called for the renewal of a people's movement that took their power to the streets.

The struggle continues—that is the legacy of these two warrior women. □

War isn't 'winding down'

Resistance attacks rise in Iraq

By Leslie Feinberg

Just when Washington, the Pentagon and the corporate media thought it was safe to hype that the war in Iraq was "winding down" because the Iraqi insurgents were being defeated, the resistance has proved them wrong again.

This upsurge in resistance has not made headlines in the U.S. monopolized media, which has such strong ties to the military-industrial complex that it marches in lock-step on the war.

But here is some of the news coverage gathered from the media abroad of attacks that targeted U.S. forces from just a two-day period—April 15 and 16.

Three GIs were killed and seven wounded in a mortar attack on the U.S. military camp in Ramadi, west of Baghdad.

A suicide car bomb detonated as a Pentagon military convoy passed through Mosul.

A Turkish truck carrying supplies to refresh U.S. troops came under siege in Baiji and was burned. Also near Baiji, in Al-Fat'ha, insurgents attempted to attack the oil pipeline.

A military base for U.S. troops and puppet Iraqi forces in Al-Touz, north of Baghdad, came under rocket fire.

A GI died during an attack on the Pentagon base in Tikrit.

Two other U.S. troops were killed in Al-Anbar Province on April 13 and 14.

Divide and conquer tactics

Would-be emperors in Washington have borrowed a page from the military manuals of the Roman Empire by using divide-and-conquer tactics to try to drive wedges between Shias, Sunnis and Kurds.

The Pentagon brass ordered their troops and three battalions of Iraqi soldiers to cordon the town of Madain on April 17. The rationale was that there

were rumors Sunni militants had kidnapped as many as 100 Shiite residents.

An estimated 1,000 families live in the town, 15 miles south of the capital. The population is half Shiite and half Sunni.

An AP photographer and a video journalist reported that the Pentagon-led troop force sealed off the town April 17 based on the story of "mass kidnappings" and threats of large-scale executions of hostages inside Madain.

Inside the town, however, "People were going about their business normally, shops were open and tea houses were full, [the video journalist] said. Residents contacted by telephone also said everything was normal in Madain. And American military officials said they were unaware of any U.S. role in what had been described as a tense sectarian standoff in which the Sunni militants were threatening to kill their Shiite captives if all other Shiites did not leave the town." (AP, April 18)

Boston.com reported, "[B]ut residents disputed that, with some saying they had seen no evidence of any hostages."

Sheikh Abdul Salam al-Kubaisi, spokesperson for the Sunni clerical Association of Muslim Scholars, also refuted the claims of hostage taking.

"This news is completely untrue," he told Al-Jazeera television.

Iraqi quisling troops, backed up by U.S. military forces, began raids in the town April 16 under the guise of freeing hostages.

The following day Haidar Khayon—an official of the U.S.-appointed "Defense Ministry" that operates under imperialist occupation—reported that Iraqi forces had freed about 15 Shiite families and captured five hostage takers. "By the end of the day, however, Iraqi officials had produced no hostages, and Iraqi military officials and police who had given information about the troubles in Madain could not be reached for further details." (Boston.com)

Madain is in what the U.S. military has dubbed the "Triangle of Death" because of the strong Sunni resistance to the imperialist occupation.

Armed with what have proven to be baseless reports in an occupation in which all news is ultimately controlled by the Pentagon, "National Security Minister" Qassim Dawoud announced to "Parliament" on April 17 that the U.S. and Iraqi forces sent to Madain were planning a large-scale assault on the region by week's end. (Guardian Unlimited, April 18) □

Courts and social movements

To many progressives, it might appear that the way we change the law is by supporting politicians who can appoint judges. Your article on the case of Kathy Hoskins, the African-American and out lesbian UPS driver who won her sexual harassment claim against her employer, illustrates the more profound way that progressive social movements shape the law. (Workers World, March 30)

Hoskins told the jury that her UPS supervisor had said she wasn't "feminine enough," and had subjected her to a hostile work environment.

The employment law provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, often referred to as Title VII, make it unlawful for an employer to discriminate on the basis of race or sex. The law was won by the massive struggles of the African-American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

Yet Title VII says nothing about sexual harassment, hostile work environment, or gender expression. The U.S. Supreme Court did not recognize sexual harassment as a legal claim under Title VII until 1986. It is only within the last year that two federal courts of appeal have ruled that transgendered persons can bring Title VII claims alleging that they were discriminated against in employment because they were not "masculine" or "feminine" enough. The San Francisco court's interpretation of the law in Kathy Hoskins' case—that an employer cannot treat an employee differently because of her or his gender expression—reflects four decades of struggle by the women's movement and the LGBT movement since Title VII became law.

During those four decades, judges repeatedly denied or dismissed claims like the ones that Hoskins won. These judges interpreted discrimination "because of sex" in a narrow way that suited the interests of the employers and

gave them free reign to harass, abuse and fire individuals who refused to conform to gender stereotypes about how "real" women and men must look and act. So for 40 years after sex discrimination became illegal, many people were still being denied meaningful access to the court system to challenge discrimination.

This is nothing new, of course. Federal laws passed during the post-Civil War Reconstruction era gave African-

American people the "right" to vote, but that right did not even begin to become effective in some parts of the U.S. until eight decades later. It was the civil rights movement, not the politicians, who made the right to vote more than words in a law book.

In the same way, the recent shift in how sex discrimination law is interpreted is not because liberal politicians appointed more enlightened or progressive judges. It's society itself that has changed. And that is first and

foremost because of heroic struggles such as the struggle for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender liberation.

Peter Goselin

The author is a labor and employment lawyer practicing in Hartford, Conn.

Injured at protest

Because the cops sealed off the easiest and quickest entrances to use at the March 19th anti-war demo, I wound up breaking my knee trying to get in by hopping over the wall.

Do you think I have a chance to sue the city over this? I am out of work with no income since the accident. If so, do you know or have any lawyers who handle cases like this? Please either call me or e-mail me ASAP. Thanks.

In solidarity,

Roy Rollin

(College Voice)

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Nicaragua and the 'Axis of Good'

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she added, "In recent months, new fears, but the same old politics, have revived that tossing and turning."

Specter of struggle

A specter is haunting Washington.

"What is happening in our neighborhood?" howls neo-con Otto Reich, U.S. assistance secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere. This right-wing Cuban exile and longtime Republican dirty-tricks operator added that "a leftist-populist alliance is engulfing most of South America. Some Andean and Central American countries are sliding back from economic reform."

The U.S. government is preparing to confront what it will call a threat of terrorism in Latin America with economic, military and political might. Reich says bluntly, "The first task of the U.S., and whatever coalition of the willing it can muster in the region, is to confront the dangerous alliance posed by Cuba and Venezuela."

In an article called "Defeating the Cuba-Venezuela Axis" in the April edition of the right-wing National Review, Reich asserts "Pro-democracy, anti-radical civil society is under violent threat—violence is the favorite tool of the radicals—and thus needs the moral, political, and material support of the free nations of the world."

Violence is the favorite tool of the radicals? One media analyst calls the media campaign and the Bush administration "irony-impaired." (FAIR, April 6)

Resistance to U.S. military and economic repression is burgeoning in Latin America. Sounding the tocsin for U.S.

intervention in Latin America, Reich's warning that some countries are "sliding back from economic reform" is an admission that U.S. imperialist trade demands, like the new Central American Free Trade Agreement due to be completed in May, are facing serious challenges.

Guatemalans mounted major demonstrations in March against CAFTA and the resumption of U.S. aid to the Guatemalan military. The Guatemalan government responded with violence and a new round of disappearances.

In response to the proposed free trade agreement that presaged CAFTA, the Sandinistas warned that such agreements would cause bankruptcies in Nicaragua and allow "poverty and unemployment to increase." (Prensa Latina, March 30)

Nicaragua since 1990 has been a prime example of the aggressive economic programs that have privatized land and resources, deepened the misery of the poor and cut social services to the majority of the population.

Throughout the region the devastating free trade neoliberal reforms have "vastly increased the numbers of the poor and 'extremely poor,' and widened the gulf separating rich and poor in Latin America and the Caribbean." The number of poor in this vast region has been estimated at between 130 and 196 million people. (Atilio Borón, "Democracy or Neoliberalism," Boston Review)

At the same time, Cuba and Venezuela are providing a beacon by continuing to focus on improving conditions for the masses while withstanding U.S. aggression.

The threat of what Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has called the "Axis of Good" has Washington worried. □

Gigantesca protesta en Bagdad dice '¡EEUU, fuera ya!'

Por John Catalinotto

El Secretario de Defensa, Donald Rumsfeld dijo a los soldados estadounidenses en Irak el 12 de abril que "Nosotros no tenemos una estrategia de salida, tenemos una estrategia para la victoria." Solo tres días antes, el día del segundo aniversario de la captura de Bagdad por los Estados Unidos, cientos de miles de iraquíes habían enviado un mensaje diferente.

Acudiendo al llamado del clérigo chiíta, Moqtada al-Sadr, se llevó a cabo la manifestación más grande hasta la fecha en contra de la ocupación en la Plaza Firdos en el centro de Bagdad el 9 de abril. Su mensaje, "¡EEUU, fuera de Irak!". Algunos estimaron la cantidad de manifestantes hasta 300.000.

Al siguiente día los organizadores dijeron que le seguirá a la protesta una

campaña pacífica para sacar a los Estados Unidos y otras tropas extranjeras de Irak.

La policía iraquí había bloqueado las vías principales en el centro de Bagdad y dos puentes principales sobre el Río Tigris, el cual corta a la capital en dos. Tropas estadounidenses armadas estaban estacionadas en los techos de las casas.

Mientras tanto, la multitud marchó coreando: "No, no USA No, no América. No, no a la ocupación."

Los manifestantes llevaban figuras de cartón del Presidente George W. Bush y del Primer Ministro, Tony Blair, llamándoles "terroristas internacionales." Mientras que algunas consignas también criticaban al ex presidente iraquí, tales críticas contra Saddam Hussein eran por su cooperación con los Estados Unidos en contra de Irán en la década de los años ochenta.

La protesta en Bagdad, aunque su mayoría era chiíta, también fue apoyada por la

Asociación de Escolares Musulmanes del sector religioso sunita. Iraquíes cristianos también participaron. También hubo protestas similares contra la ocupación en Ramada, mayormente sunita y en Baiji y en Nayaf, donde el ejército de al-Sadr Medí resistió más fuertemente el año pasado.

El discurso escrito por al-Sadr precisó cómo las fuerzas de ocupación militar han unido al pueblo iraquí contra ellos: "en nuestra unión, usted le ha cortado la lengua a toda la gente que dice que si la ocupación se va, se produciría una guerra civil." Para seguridad de Sadr, su representante, el jeque Nasir al-Saaidi pronunció el discurso.

"No habrá paz ni seguridad hasta que la ocupación se vaya," al-Sadr escribió.

Los organizadores querían que el mundo entendiera el mensaje directamente, y por eso algunos llevaban banderas escritas en inglés. Una leía, "Forcemos a las fuerzas de

ocupación a que dejen nuestro país." Para enfatizar sus sentimientos, los manifestantes tumbaron de su plataforma las efigies de los líderes de la ocupación, simulando el derribamiento de la estatua de Saddam Hussein hace dos años.

En el 2003, la estatua de Saddam Hussein fue tumbada por un equipo con tanques de las FFAA de los EEUU y unos cientos de iraquíes, muchos de ellos traídos recientemente desde su exilio en el exterior. Las cámaras de televisión hicieron aparecer a la muchedumbre más densa de lo que era, y las escenas fueron difundidas en varias ocasiones por la máquina de propaganda más eficiente del mundo.

Interpretaciones subjetivas de los medios de comunicación

Las FFAA de los EEUU y otras fuerzas de la ocupación militar también intentaron dar su propia interpretación de la ocupación y de la demostración del 9 de abril. Mucho se hizo para intentar reducir al mínimo el impacto en la opinión mundial de esta protesta en Bagdad contra los EEUU.

Muchos de los artículos acentuaban las diferencias entre las respuestas de las comunidades sunita y chiíta al llamado. Otros acentuaban las diferencias entre los iraquíes que desean realizar demostraciones y los que continúan con la lucha armada. Algunos prestaban más atención a una supuesta disputa sobre si la resistencia debiera señalar a las tropas de los EEUU o a las fuerzas títeres iraquíes.

Ya que no hay reconocimiento público del liderazgo nacional de la resistencia, es muy difícil verificar o negar estos informes. Pero es fácil ver lo que los medios imperialistas de comunicación masiva se niegan a publicar: que la gran mayoría de iraquíes quieren que los Estados Unidos y las otras fuerzas de ocupación se vayan de su país, que decenas de miles lucharán por este objetivo y que cientos de miles más arriesgarían sus vidas en ese intento.

Los comandantes del Pentágono están hablando ahora sobre la salida de las tropas estadounidenses de Irak en los próximos dos años, "si todo va bien". Tratan de poner una cara sonriente en las noticias, diciendo que los ataques a las tropas estadounidenses por las fuerzas de la resistencia han disminuido y que más iraquíes están siendo entrenados para la policía y el ejército.

Informes semejantes de hace algunos meses fueron rápidamente expuestos como total fantasía. Aún ahora, muchos observadores creen que las fuerzas títeres iraquíes están totalmente infiltradas por activistas de la resistencia. Con una parte tan grande de la población simpatizante a la resistencia, esto no debe ser gran sorpresa, menos quizás para Rumsfeld.

Mientras tanto, los comandantes del Pentágono tienen sus propios problemas de llenar las filas de tropas estadounidenses con nuevos soldados, marineros y marinos. En el periódico New York Times del 12 de abril, había un anuncio de toda una página para la Guardia Nacional que apareció en la página opuesta a las noticias de Irak. Es difícil creer que un ser humano, y no una computadora, decidió colocar allí ese anuncio. □

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