

## MUNDO OBRERO

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### To the World Social Forum A time for revolutionary optimism

Greetings to the tens of thousands of progressive activists gathering for sessions of the World Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela, and Bamako, Mali. No matter what part of the world you have come from, you can help give a push to the rising up of oppressed peoples that is already so evident in Latin America, Africa and other

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WORKERS WORLD NEWSPAPER  
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# Honoring King's legacy Activists protest FEMA, racism & war

By Pam Parker  
Washington, D.C.

As part of nationwide activities marking the 20th anniversary of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, community and anti-war activists from Washington, D.C., and Baltimore joined forces on Jan. 16 by protesting at the national headquarters of FEMA to demand justice for Katrina survivors and call for an end to racism.

The group then marched to Homeland Security headquarters at the Borders and Customs office to protest the bigoted anti-immigrant bill recently passed by Congress.

Protesters chanted, picketed and unfurled huge banners. But what energized the group was the community-type speak-out that put FEMA and the Bush administration on notice that the progressive movement will not let people of color stand alone in a pivotal struggle that is clearly about racism and national oppression.

Who should control the fate of the Gulf Coast is clearly at the heart of the issue. Should the Black masses who have been brutally displaced, dispersed and murdered determine what communities are rebuilt and by whom or should the wealthy class of developers, Bush's cronies and the military determine this?

"If Dr. King was alive today, this is where he would be; in front of the FEMA headquarters to stop the evictions of the hurricane survivors and to demand justice!" proclaimed Andre Powell, representing Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC) in Baltimore. Powell co-chaired the protest along with Sharon Black, a community and union activist from the Million Worker March Movement.

"We want a moratorium on all evictions. We are also demanding that the people of New Orleans and the Delta have a right to return and a right to determine the development of the area. Even the basic democratic right to vote in the upcoming mayoral election has been denied. These were many of the same rights that Dr. King Jr. fought and died for," Black stated.

Renee Washington described the horrendous conditions that the people of the New Orleans' ninth ward have suffered. Washington recently participated in a delegation to the Dec. 9 and 10 New Orleans protest and conference lead by Katrina survivors. Her companion, Joey Wilbon, was murdered by Baltimore city police. She has remained an outspoken activist against police brutality, racism and abuse.

"You can't imagine. There is no electricity. You can't drink the water; it's poison. Nothing has been done at all to help the people. Nothing! Garbage is in the street; sewage is everywhere. You can't even stand the smell. This is criminal," proclaimed Washington.

Luis Torres, from Fight Imperialism-Stand Together (FIST), a youth group that helped sponsor the activity, pointed out, "We are also here today to oppose the racist anti-immigrant bill." Formerly from Laredo, Texas, he gave a painful and moving

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Five thousand home health care workers and their supporters marched through Harlem Jan. 16, the Martin Luther King holiday, to demand a living wage. They make less than \$7.00 an hour in one of the most expensive areas to live in the U.S. Many do not get health insurance from their employers. The march and rally were called by SEIU/1199. Go to centerfold pages 8-9 to read more on King-related events. —Photo and caption by G. Dunkel

# Teach-in defends Palestinian people's right to go home

By Bill Cecil  
New York

Activists from many different communities gathered at the First Unitarian Church in New York City on Dec. 7 for a teach-in on Palestine sponsored by the Sharon Shapiro Peace Seminary. Shapiro, who died two years ago, was raised as a supporter of Israel but came to understand and support the Palestinian people's struggle for freedom. The event was co-chaired by her life partner, Dr. Ahmed Halima and Sara Flounders of the International Action Center. Halima spoke of how much support for Palestine had grown in the U.S. since he emigrated from Egypt 30 years ago. He praised those present who had struggled for decades to make this happen.

Speakers from many different backgrounds and movements gave their perspectives on the struggle in Palestine. Gail Miller and Jan and Aisha Rehman from Women of a Certain Age gave eyewitness accounts of the day-to-day brutality of the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. The Rev. Joseph Ben David, 85, a former Israeli citizen who escaped Nazi persecution in his native Czechoslovakia, described his disillusion with the racism of the Zionist movement.

Michael Kramer, a U.S.-born veteran of the Israeli Defense Forces who served in the 1973 war, told of the vast scope of U.S. aid to Israel and supported the right of the Palestinian people to their own state in all of historic Palestine.

Labor activist Brenda Stokely, former president of District Council 1707 and a leader of the Million Worker March Movement, condemned union officials who spend their members dues on Israel bonds, which subsidize war and occupation. She pointed out that workers here and the people of Palestine have a common enemy, the racist U.S. corporate ruling class.

Lakota activist Tiokasin Ghost Horse compared the racist genocide committed against the Native people of the Western Hemisphere and the Native people of Palestine. He described the horrible poisoning of Native communities in Dakota and Montana by mining and chemical companies.

Artist Samia Halaby, whose home in Jaffa was stolen by Zionist settlers in 1948, spoke of Israel's role in the service of U.S. corporate imperialism. "Israel will collapse as soon as its capitalist masters no longer need it or are able to pay for it" she said. "Their leaders and their principles will be part of the trash heap of history. That Palestinians continue to defend themselves by all means available to them is a cause for optimism. The struggle for New Orleans, for Palestine, for the liberation of the indigenous people of the Americas and the struggle of the New York transit workers are all one and the same because the enemy is one and the same. A strike by one is a strike for all."

IAC co-director Sara Flounders described how oil interests have directed U.S. intervention in the Middle East from the 1948 creation of Israel to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Sharin Schiorazzo, the widow of Palestinian activist Farouk Abdel Muhti, spoke about the role of the U.S. corporate news media in "justifying" the persecution of the Palestinian people.

Author Lenni Brenner told of the history of collaboration between the Zionist movement and the Third Reich at the expense of the Jewish people who died in the Holocaust.

The final speakers of the day were youth from Al Awda—the Palestine Right to Return Coalition. Issa Mikel told of the growing world campaign against investment in Israel, similar to the divestment campaign against apartheid in South Africa.

Lubna Hamed exposed one of the hidden horrors of Israeli occupation, the mass imprisonment of Palestinian children. "At any one time at least 500 children are in Israeli prisons," she said.

Ahmed Daib, who was born in a refugee camp in Syria, spoke of the Palestinian people's right to return to their homes.

Rana Kassed, a leader of New York Al-Awda, said, "We will not be silenced or told what to say or believe! We are not just voices and opinions, we are a movement, and we Palestinians are not going anywhere!" □

*This week ...*



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**WW CALENDAR**

**NEW YORK**

**Fri., Jan. 20**

Workers World Party Forum. What's ahead for our fragile planet? Hear Deirdre Griswold, editor of Workers World newspaper, give a Marxist analysis of why the struggle of the working class

and the oppressed nations to end capitalist exploitation holds the key to our survival. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info phone (212) 627-2994.

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On Tuesday, Jan. 17 - the 15th anniversary of the beginning of Desert Storm - International Action Center founder and former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, center, spoke to a packed hall at Community Church in Manhattan on 15 years of war and sanctions and the danger of new wars. Other speakers included Tiokasin Ghosthorse of First Voices Radio on WBAI, William Camacaro of the Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle, Beth Lamont of the Humanist Society of Metropolitan New York, Larry Holmes, left, of the Troops Out Now Coalition, and Sara Flounders, right, of the International Action Center.

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## U.S. executions continue steady decline

# Death penalty moratorium in New Jersey

By Gloria Rubac

Amid growing national concern over flaws with capital punishment, the New Jersey Assembly approved a one-year ban on executions in the state and said it would study how the death penalty is administered. And California's State Assembly is considering a bill that would enact a two-year moratorium on executions.

New Jersey became the first state to pass a death penalty moratorium into law through legislation when its assembly voted 55-21 on Jan. 9 to suspend executions in the state while a task force studies the fairness and costs of imposing capital punishment. The Senate had passed the measure in December. Gov. Richard Codey signed the bill into law on Jan. 12.

New Jersey's moratorium will remain in effect until Jan. 15, 2007.

New Jersey is the third state to halt executions since capital punishment was reinstated. Since 2000, executions have been halted by executive order in Illinois and Maryland. Maryland's moratorium has since been lifted.

The death penalty statutes in New York and Kansas were both found unconstitutional in 2004, but have not been remedied.

California is speeding up the pace of executions as public support for the death

penalty is waning. A bill now before the California State Assembly would enact a moratorium on executions while a commission reviews the problem of wrongful convictions in the state.

A group of 40 police, current and former prosecutors, and judges at the state and federal level have urged California lawmakers to pass the legislation. These agents of the state machinery do not oppose the death penalty on the basis that it is a weapon of terror against the impoverished and oppressed. They argued instead that legal lynchings should be "just and fair" by killing those they deem "guilty."

In the letter to the assembly, this group wrote, "Given that DNA testing and other new evidence has proven that more than 120 people who sat on death rows around the country were actually innocent of the crimes for which they were convicted, we agree that a temporary suspension of executions in California is necessary while we ensure, as much as possible, that the administration of criminal justice in this state is just, fair, and accurate."

Assembly Bill 1121 calls for a moratorium on executions until Jan. 1, 2009—two years after the newly-established "California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice" is set to submit its findings to the legislature and governor.

The year 2005 was a year of extraordinary changes in the use of the death penalty in the United States.

There were fewer than 100 death sentences handed down in 2005. This is the lowest number of death sentences since capital punishment was reinstated in 1976 and it is down 60 percent since the late 1990s.

In 2005 the New York legislature refused to reinstate the death penalty after the state's highest court struck it down. Texas became the 37th out of the 38 states which have the death penalty to adopt life without parole as an option for jurors. And the Supreme Court ruled states could not execute those arrested for capital murder as juveniles and 71 juvenile offenders were taken off death rows, 28 in Texas alone. The highest court also threw out the Texas conviction of Thomas Miller-El because of racial bias in jury selection. Miller-El is now in the Dallas county jail awaiting a new trial.

The New Mexico House of Representatives passed a bill to abolish the death penalty and lawmakers in Massachusetts overwhelmingly defeated a proposal by their governor for a "foolproof" death penalty.

### Public support dropping

In October 2005, a Gallup Poll found 64 percent in support of capital punishment, the lowest level in 27 years. And a CBS News Poll found that when given sentencing options, only 39 percent chose the death penalty, 39 percent chose life without parole and 6 percent chose a long sentence.

Sixty people were executed in 2005, down 39 percent from 1999 when a record high of 98 people were put to death. On Dec. 2, the U.S. conducted the 1,000th

execution since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. But this bitter historical milestone in the history of the death penalty comes at a time when the use of the death penalty in this country is steadily declining. Death sentences, the size of death row, executions and public support for the death penalty are all lower than they were five years ago.

Editorial writers, even across the South where the vast majority of executions take place, have recently criticized the death penalty. The Birmingham News wrote that "after decades of supporting the death penalty, the editorial board no longer can do so" based on practical and ethical reasons.

After a series in the Houston Chronicle exposed that Ruben Cantu, who was executed in 1993 was probably innocent, The Austin American Statesman editorialized, "We're not talking about a few flaws, but rather deep inequities and defects that deny defendants the basics for a fair trial, including competent lawyers and investigators and thorough and rigorous appeals. ... We can't bring Cantu back. But his case can yield constructive lessons about how to fix Texas' capital punishment system."

But Texas death penalty activist Njeri Shakur answers, "The system is working just as it was intended—the racism and the anti-poor bias is at the foundation of the criminal justice system."

"The whole system is what needs changing because the one we now have does not work for us—it works for the rich, corporate elite. In a just society, people would not be in prison or be executed because they are poor or they are people of color. We have a lot of changes to make!"

*Rubac is a long-time activist in the struggle to abolish the racist, anti-poor death penalty.*

## Gay soldier discharged for being beaten

By David Hoskins

A 19-year-old Army private, Kyle Lawson, was physically assaulted and threatened for being gay at the Fort Huachuca Army Base in Arizona. The Army discharged Lawson after a fellow soldier violently beat him.

Lawson suffered a broken nose in the attack. His attacker—Pvt. Zacharias Pierre—reportedly used an anti-gay epithet during the attack. Lawson was later threatened at knifepoint by another soldier. Lawson's sexual orientation had been revealed by an acquaintance at an October 2005 battalion party.

Fearful for his life, Pvt. Lawson began to sleep on a cot in his drill sergeant's office. Local police originally charged Pierre with felony assault. Police reports confirm that the attack on Lawson was unprovoked. Fort Huachuca officials used military regulations to take control of the case away from the Sierra Vista police. The officials promptly dropped the felony assault charges after the case was successfully transferred to military jurisdiction.

Media reports indicate that Pierre has received little more than a slap on the wrist for attacking Lawson. Officials have refused to comment on why the initial charges were dropped or what actions were taken. The army claims that the knife threat is "unsubstantiated" and has refused to further investigate the incident.

Patricia Kutteles, the mother of a soldier killed by other members of the military in 1999 for dating a transsexual woman, has spoken out against the Army's foot-dragging. She criticized military policy regulating service members' sexual orientation, saying, "Don't ask, don't tell"

impacts every service member—gay and straight alike—by creating a weapon to end careers and endanger service members through accusations, finger-pointing and rumor."

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is the 1993 law that prevents lesbian, gay and bisexual GIs from being open about their sexuality. The law punishes those whose sexual orientation is revealed with the threat of discharge. Proponents of the law insist that it also protects service members who are harassed because of their perceived sexual orientation. The events at Fort Huachuca prove that claims of harassment prevention are mere lip-service as violent intimidation is still condoned by military officials and fueled by the Pentagon's anti-gay policies.

The brutal death of Kutteles' son, Army Pvt. Barry Winchell, prompted the Pentagon to outline more concrete proposals supposedly aimed at curbing harassment based on sexual orientation. In 2000 the Pentagon released its so-called anti-harassment plan. Almost five years later violent harassment still occurs with impunity.

Openly gay Massachusetts Congressman Barney Frank wrote to Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Shoomaker demanding answers for why Lawson's attacker has gone unpunished.

Military officials have failed to offer a full account and justification of their actions. Pvt. Lawson's story indicates that homophobic and anti-trans violence is still condoned and tolerated. The military remains an unsafe environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans GIs who live in constant fear of ridicule, discharge, assault and even murder. □

## Garnering support for political prisoners



Former political prisoner Herman Ferguson, second to left, chaired the 10th annual commemorative dinner to support political prisoners. The event was called by New York's Malcolm X Commemoration Committee under the theme "No Surrender, No Retreat."

With numerous speakers and Jericho's Preserve musicians to entertain and inspire, the dinner was a fundraiser to help prisoners with their needs—stamps, phone call expenses, etc.—and to build political support.

This year's dinner paid special attention to the reactionary abuse of prisoners in

Pennsylvania, where they have suffered repeated attacks by State Correction Institute guards. At SCI Greene—where Mumia Abu-Jamal is imprisoned on death row and where Abu Ghraib torturer Charles Grainer worked—prisoners suffer sleep deprivation with lights on 24 hours a day. Guards are known to withhold food, showers and water from prisoners, who are under lock down 23 hours a day. In some cases they've even been denied toilet paper, toothpaste and writing pens.

Families organizing against the attacks are also pictured here.

—Photo and story by Anne Pruden

# Criminal mine owners protested

By Sara Catalinotto  
New York

A "picketline for justice" went up on Jan. 12 around the corner of 52nd Street and Lexington Avenue where Wilbur L. Ross & Co. has its New York offices. According to the flyer for the event, put out by the International Action Center, Million Worker March, and NY Coalition to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Billionaire Wilbur Ross controls the International Coal Group (ICG)" that owns the mine in Sago, W. Va., where a dozen mineworkers died earlier this month. The organizers' intent, in addition to showing solidarity with mine workers everywhere, was to expose this individual who the media has not denounced as a criminal—in contrast to the multitudes of poor people and polit-

ical prisoners incarcerated in the U.S. prison-industrial complex.

The flyer, headlined "Twelve miners didn't have to die: Corporate greed and Bush cutbacks killed them," was received by hundreds of rush-hour commuters in midtown Manhattan. It continues, "ICG pocketed nearly \$16 million in profits from this coal mine that racked up 208 safety violations in 2005 alone, including 19 roof-falls." Apparently the investors did not see fit to use these profits to improve the conditions for the workers who made them rich. Meanwhile, a series of cuts in funding and personnel for the Mine Safety and Health Administration made it easier for the company to get away with this deadly neglect.



Miners bury their co-workers killed in unsafe conditions at the Sago, W.Va. mine earlier this month, left. Protest at the New York office of Wilbur Ross who controls the International Coal Group (ICG) that owns the mine in Sago, W. Va. right.

The first people to get the picket line going were two activists from Montclair, N.J. One of the women told Workers World, "This is another show of what the administration's cutbacks are doing. They don't care about the people—the workers." A regular participant in weekly peace vigils in her town, she added, "Bush says he's

making us safer, but what happened in the hurricanes and in this incident tell you how safe we are" when billions of dollars are diverted into the war machine. Her picket sign read, "Bush cutbacks killed in New Orleans and West Virginia."

A man rushing home stopped long enough to thank the picketers for being there and to take a copy of Workers World. He had lived in West Virginia and he said, "I see how the mine companies treat the people there." His view was that the educational level is kept low purposely so that people have no other option but to work in the mines.

From the bakery at the foot of the office building came two Black women, speaking to each other in French. They engaged in a discussion with one of the picketers, and summarized the problem in three words: "It's our government."

Another very supportive passerby turned out to be from a long line of miners—not in West Virginia but in Bolivia, where the predominantly Indigenous mineworkers have new hope for better conditions under the administration of anti-imperialist President-elect Evo Morales.

Speakers wrapped up the event by calling for more demonstrations at these and other offices of the "culture capitalists" behind the scenes of this industrial disaster in a non-union workplace. Readers can check on-line at [www.peoplesvideo.org](http://www.peoplesvideo.org) for the full text of the flyer and for footage of the picketers. □

## Exploitation from the factory to the mine

By Jerry Goldberg

There is a strong connection between the recent mining murders by the International Coal Group (ICG) and the fight of union workers against Delphi's attempt to impose draconian cuts on jobs, wages, benefits and working conditions through the use of the bankruptcy court.

The chairman of the Board of ICG is Wilbur Ross. Here is a quote about Ross from the ICG website: "International Coal Group was organized by WL Ross & Co. LLC to acquire the principal operations of then-bankrupt Horizon Natural Resources on Oct. 1, 2004. Wilbur L. Ross, ICG's Chairman."

Before he bought Horizon in partnership with A.T. Massey Coal Co., the bankruptcy courtroom of Judge William

Howard obligingly eliminated the health-care benefits for 3,800 retired Horizon miners and their widows. The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. had already assumed responsibility for Horizon's underfunded pensions.

Ross has strong connections with Steve Miller, the CEO at Delphi, hired to put Delphi into bankruptcy and destroy the workers' livelihood. Miller was previously the CEO at Bethlehem Steel. When Miller led Bethlehem Steel into bankruptcy, Ross purchased the company cheap and then sold it fairly quickly to the Mittal Steel Corp. in the Netherlands for a profit of \$500 million.

Significantly, Ross has now accumulated a \$4.5 billion war chest to buy up bankrupt automotive parts plants. □



Protest against Delphi at the Detroit Auto Show.

## PHILADELPHIA

# Class-action suit vs. Wal-Mart

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

No matter how they try to sell it, Wal-Mart's image just sustained another well deserved blow on Jan. 16 when a Pennsylvania state court judge certified a class-action suit against the billion-dollar chain store for failing to give meal and rest breaks to its workers or to compensate them for time worked through those breaks.

Philadelphia County Court of Common Pleas Judge Mark Bernstein granted the class-action treatment of the wage-and-hour claims. The Pennsylvania suit could cover nearly 150,000 current and former employees.

The proof was in the retail giant's computerized records that showed that breaks were skipped on a routine basis and there was no compensation when those breaks were missed. Instead of "slashing prices," Wal-Mart was slashing workers' wages—already almost a \$1 an hour lower than the industry average.

Wal-Mart tried to claim that their time sheets were not reliable. The company then tried to explain the discrepancy by offering up deposition testimony from some workers who said they voluntarily worked without pay.

However, under the store's own policy, each employee is entitled to one paid 15-

minute break during each three-hour shift. For each six-hour shift, an employee is entitled to two paid 15-minute breaks and an unpaid 30-minute meal break. Wal-Mart's own records revealed that over 40 percent of their employees failed to receive the required breaks.

The Pennsylvania class action suit is not the first brought against Wal-Mart, nor is

it likely to be the last. In a similar case in California, a state court jury awarded \$172 million to Wal-Mart workers when the company failed to provide lunch periods for thousands of employees or pay them for the missed time, as required by state wage-and-hour laws.

In fact, Wal-Mart's practice of failing to properly compensate its workers is so

wide-spread that a federal Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation in Orlando, Fla., will hear argument later this month to consider a motion to centralize six such suits in the U.S. District Court for the District of Nevada. The cases being considered for inclusion in the multi-district litigation proceeding come from federal courts in Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada and South Dakota. This would allow all the cases to be heard in one federal court by one judge.

The Pennsylvania class action suit is expected to be heard in September, but Wal-Mart workers aren't sitting back waiting for the courts to give them justice.

After 20 percent of the workers had their hours cut at a Central Florida Wal-Mart, they went directly to the local community with a petition to reinstate their time. After 390 signatures were collected in three days, the company was forced to restore their hours. This action and many others like it was initiated by the Wal-Mart Workers Association, representing over 300 current and former Wal-Mart workers in 40 states.

These workers aren't waiting for a court-licensed use of collective actions. Despite the lack of a union, workers are demonstrating that they have the right to organization and action on their own behalf, regardless of what the bosses say. □

## Another reason to organize Wal-Mart: RACISM

Wal-Mart has been accused of promoting racism and that is totally justified. The shopping website of the world's largest retail store recently linked together a DVD box set of "Planet of the Apes: The Complete TV Series" with documentaries on the lives of Martin Luther King Jr., actor Dorothy Dandridge, former U.S. heavyweight champion Jack Johnson and singer Tina Turner—all of whom are African American. In other words, when you click on the link to this particular television series, under the section entitled "similar items," these four documentaries are listed. Representatives of the gigantic conglomerate apolo-

gized, saying that "Walmart.com's item mapping system does not work" and that its movie recommendations section on its website was being shut down on Jan. 5.

The "apology" put aside, the damage had already been done. Wal-Mart management's action is another example of the deep-seated racism that permeates U.S. society. If Wal-Mart was really serious about repentance (which it is not), it would put its money where its mouth is by stepping aside and letting unions organize the low-wage workers, many of whom are people of color and women, at all of their stores here and worldwide.

—Monica Moorehead

# Legal abortion in jeopardy: Which road to take in its defense?

By Sue Davis

Jan. 22 is the 33rd anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. But given the impending confirmation of right-wing ideologue Samuel Alito, legal abortion is in jeopardy as never before.

During the recent Senate hearings pro-choice and civil rights advocates exposed the many bigoted, reactionary, pro-corporate, anti-Roe positions Alito took as a lawyer for the Reagan administration and later as a judge. But despite their hue and cry, Sen. Dianne Feinstein—a long-time supporter of legal abortion—told “Face the Nation” on Jan. 15 that the Democrats in the Senate will not filibuster to block the nomination.

Feinstein said that even though she might disagree with Alito, “that doesn’t mean he shouldn’t be on the court.”

That leaves many women’s advocacy and reproductive rights groups across the U.S., which have traditionally relied on the Democrats to defend abortion rights, out in the cold.

This is a momentous development. This betrayal creates an unprecedented crisis for the organized women’s movement and for the millions of women of child-bearing age in this country who will be affected if Roe is overturned. While it’s still too early to know how these organizations will respond, this historic crisis will surely instigate intense debate within many groups and among many pro-choice activists and supporters about what course of action to take at this critical juncture.

A number of options are possible. One course of action is to continue to depend on the Democratic Party. But that’s not likely to produce results, given its history over the past decade of submission to the reactionary Republican agenda. For

example, Democrats voted a few weeks ago for a budget that instituted horrific cuts in education, housing and health care while rewarding the already wealthy with more tax cuts.

Sticking with the Democrats is a dead-end strategy. A second option is to throw in the towel. But given that one out of three women in this country has an abortion as a means of birth control during her lifetime, that would mean selling out the modern-day struggle for women’s liberation. Legal abortion has become the keystone of that fight.

Though some long-time activists decry the continued focus on abortion, they don’t view it as part of the class struggle.

Just as the ruling class, whose power comes from owning capitalist private property and from controlling it through the patriarchy, backs the war in Iraq, so too it backs Bush’s anti-woman agenda. The ruling class does not want women, who represent more than half the working class and the oppressed in this country, to determine their own destiny. That would challenge its class privilege and its power to exploit and oppress at a time when it’s intent on maximizing its profits in order to dominate the world.

Despite the myth that the Democrats represent the interests of working and poor people, their purpose has always been to serve the ruling class. That’s why they’ve chosen to genuflect before the ruling class and jettison the issue.

A third option is to strike an independent course, free of both ruling-class parties, and build alliances with workers’ and civil rights movements and all those fighting for economic and social justice. That course of action would be in sync with how the most important gains for workers and the oppressed were won over the last century—through militant mass struggle.



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

April 2004 March for Women’s Lives.

Mother Jones neatly summed it up: “Don’t mourn. Organize.”

The workers’ sit-down strikes won unions in the 1930s, which bettered working conditions for all workers. And Rosa Parks’ refusal to cooperate with segregation in 1955 propelled the drive for Black liberation that continues to this day.

It’s important to note that the modern women’s movement was inspired by the civil rights struggle, just as the fight for women’s suffrage grew out of the abolitionist movement in the 19th century.

Building an independent militant mass movement, which highlights the special needs of women of color as part of the fight for all women, including lesbian, bisexual and trans women, rural and immigrant, is in the spirit of the women’s liberation movement that exploded in the late 1960s.

Though lawyers and doctors gave legal and medical reasons why abortion should be legal, it was women taking to the streets in huge numbers all around the country that spurred the Supreme Court, with seven Republican to two Democratic appointees, to decide in favor of legal abortion in 1973.

Because two cases involving abortion are already on the Supreme Court’s 2006 calendar and a third—which challenges the legality of the ban on so-called partial birth abortion passed by Congress in 2003—will soon be added to the roster, pro-choice activists and their allies will need to move decisively in the months ahead.

But they can take heart that the movement for legal abortion stretches around the world. Tens of thousands of women marched in Milan, Italy on Jan. 14 to defend the current law allowing abortions during the first three months of pregnancy.

On Nov. 17, the United Nations Human Rights Committee affirmed in a case involving a Peruvian woman that denying access to legal abortion violates women’s most basic human rights. “We are thrilled that the UNHRC has ruled in favor of protecting women’s most essential human rights,” said Luisa Cabal, director of the International Legal Program at the Center for Reproductive Rights. “Every woman who lives in any of the 154 countries that are party to this treaty—including the U.S.—now has a legal tool to use in defense of her rights.”

Over the past 33 years women’s health clinics have been blockaded and bombed, doctors have been murdered and legislation in many states has set severe limits on access to abortion. A crucial battle for legal abortion lies ahead. Just as a coalition of women’s groups—including for the first time organizations of women of color—held a multinational march of a million, young and old, in April 2004 in defense of women’s reproductive rights, it’s time to take to the streets once again.

*Sue Davis, a long-time activist for women’s rights, edited “Women Under Attack: Victories, Backlash and the Fight for Reproductive Freedom” (South End Press).*

## Rising on waves of mass struggle

# First known U.S. national lesbian group

By Leslie Feinberg

The founding of Daughters of Bilitis on Sept. 21, 1955 in San Francisco—the first known political network for lesbian rights in the United States—holds important lessons about the era of resistance to McCarthyism that may not be immediately apparent.

DOB was not founded by communists. Nor did the organization seek revolutionary change.

The group’s charter didn’t use the word “lesbian”; it referred only to “the variant.” DOB’s founding statement of purpose counseled members to adjust and adapt to dominant mandates about proper dress and behavior in order to fit in. They hoped to gradually win acceptance through education. The organization drew to its ranks lesbians who most wanted to and were most able to “fit in”—white-collar workers, professional and middle-class women, overwhelmingly white.

DOB invited academic and medical “established experts”—some distantly sympathetic, some outright hostile—to speak at their meetings. East Coast DOB founder Barbara Gittings later recalled, “We invited people who were willing to come to our meetings; obviously, it turned out to be those who had a vested interest in having us as penitents, clients, or patients.” (1974 interview with Jonathan Katz)

The DOB leadership at that time looked to these establishment figures as vehicles of social change, to help them with their goals.

So it may appear to be veering off track for this Workers World newspaper series—that focuses on the relationship between the liberation of oppressed sexualities, genders and sexes, and the communist movement—to stop to examine DOB’s formation.

## Community women march for AIDS funding

Women from the Bronx and Brooklyn—predominantly Black and Latina—marched on New York City Hall on Jan. 12 to demand reinstatement of deep cuts in monies for AIDS support work from the federal “Ryan White Emergency AIDS Funds.”

“Thousands of sick and isolated HIV-positive mothers are being literally thrown out of services,” said Chris Norward, executive director of an AIDS-support program based in the South Bronx. While 80 percent of the city’s women living with AIDS reside in the outer boroughs of New York City, Norward stressed, the Bloomberg administration is telling them, “go to SoHo” in Manhattan for services.

But the question must be asked: How could even such a politically moderate demand by lesbians—the right to fit in and just live their lives—be articulated at the mid-fifties height of the Cold War, the most focused persecution of gays and lesbians in U.S. history?

What gave these lesbians the idea that this was a good

time in history to sit down in someone’s living room, and later in publicly rented spaces in San Francisco, Boston and New York, to discuss their rights?

DOB was not formed in a political vacuum. It arose in the midst of militant struggles against Jim Crow segregation, for national liberation and to end women’s oppression. Without a deeper understanding of

that period, the establishment of DOB could make it appear that the best road forward for democratic rights in a period of capitalist reaction is to ask for them politely, hat in hand—give an inch, get an inch.

The truth is that Daughters of Bilitis objectively rose up on waves of resistance by the Black freedom movement and by communist women—Black and white—who were fighting for the recognition that women’s oppression is an important battlefield in the class war.

Dramatic changes in the structuring of the U.S. wartime economy, its impact on the heterosexual family, and the unbearable burden of Jim Crow apartheid and other forms of national oppression, had helped create the conditions for these struggles. . . .

*The rest of this article and the entire Lavender & Red series can be read online at [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org).*



PART 51



Ruby Garner, Bronx mother living with AIDS, speaks out against service cuts.

She told reporters her group, for example, is losing roughly 10 percent of its operating budget, forcing some 30 programs in the boroughs to be cut or consolidated.

—Leslie Feinberg



## As government continues its attack

# Campaign to free the Cuban 5 grows

By Julie Fry

Although a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals unanimously overturned the espionage conspiracy convictions of the Cuban Five last August and ordered a new trial, the Five continue to languish in U.S. prisons today. The "Justice" Department, stunned by the unequivocal defeat it suffered in August, is mounting an aggressive legal attack against the Five in order to keep them in jail and prevent a new and fair trial. In response, the international movement to free the Five heroes is increasing its work as well by launching an ambitious political campaign to win their freedom.

### The legal battle continues

After over a year of deliberation, a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals held unanimously that the Five did not and could not receive a fair trial in the hostile, anti-Cuba political atmosphere in Miami. In a comprehensive, 93-page opinion, the panel found that the conduct of the prosecutor, the media, and the anti-Cuba forces in Miami were so egregious that the Five were entitled to a new trial outside of Miami.

The 11th Circuit Court is widely considered to be one of the most conservative and reactionary courts in the nation. Its judges are by no means friends of Cuba or champions of civil liberties. The unanimous opinion of this court last August was an indication both of the weakness of the government's case against the Five and of the strength of the worldwide movement to free them, a movement which has grown exponentially since the Five were arrested in 1998.

After their convictions were struck down last August, the Cuban government demanded the immediate release of the Five. However the Five are still being held today in separate prisons all over the country. The Justice Department continues to deny them the most basic rights, such as the opportunity to visit with their wives and children.

The government was clearly surprised by the 11th Circuit ruling. This is not



because they believed in the strength of their case, but rather because criminal convictions of any kind are so rarely overturned, much less by such a reactionary court. In addition, the Justice Department was undoubtedly relying on the political hostility toward Cuba that exists in all sectors of the federal government to uphold its case. The prosecutors underestimated the strength and the impact of the vigorous campaign to win freedom for the Five that has grown in Cuba and all over the world since 1998. And they underestimated the strength of the information about the case.

Now the U.S. government, facing a potentially enormous defeat in their campaign to isolate Cuba and those that support Cuba, is engaged in a new phase of this legal battle. Instead of allowing the Five to have a new and fair trial, the Justice Department has asked the 11th Circuit court to hear the case again *en banc*. This means that, as opposed to the usual 3-judge panel, all of the judges who sit on 11th Circuit court will review the case. The judges have the authority to uphold or overturn the opinion of the smaller panel.

The 11th Circuit, in what many consider to be a somewhat unusual decision, agreed to the Justice Department's request. The lawyers in the case will present oral arguments during the week of February 13th.

This stage in the legal battle marks an

incredibly important period for the Five's case. Although the movement to free the Five is still growing, the pressure on the judges from the Bush administration and from other forces hostile to Cuba has also increased since the 11th circuit's August decision. For example, the Justice Department motioned the 11th circuit to reject two briefs written by the National Lawyers Guild, the Florida branch of the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, and the National Association of Federal Public Defenders in support of the Five. These briefs, referred to as amicus briefs, are routinely accepted by courts. On Jan. 6, the court ruled against the government and accepted the briefs.

### New campaigns launched to win freedom for the Five

In response to this growing right-wing pressure, the international movement to free the Five is stepping up its political campaign. The National Committee to Free the Cuban Five has launched the Five Heroes Freedom Fund, a fundraising campaign to raise \$250,000 to launch a major political offensive for the Five. The funds raised will go to various initiatives such as hiring a professional, progressive media company to raise awareness about the Five as well as purchasing another full-page New York Times ad about the case. In 2004, \$60,000 was raised to purchase

such an ad and tens of thousands of people around the country learned of the Five's case for the first time.

The New York Committee to Free the Five has launched a women's campaign on behalf of the Five and their families. In September 2005, the Committee delivered a letter to the Justice Department signed by dozens of prominent women leaders. The letter demanded the immediate release of the Five and the immediate granting of visas for their family members who wish to visit them. The New York Committee is continuing this campaign, demanding a meeting with officials in the Justice Department that are directly handling the case.

Priscilla Felia of the NY Committee and Cuba Solidarity New York said of the women's campaign, "Although Attorney General Gonzales has not responded to a correspondence and a visit by a group representing over more than 100 women from around the country, we hold Attorney General Gonzales accountable for the pain he has caused these honorable men and their families by not upholding the values held in our Constitution which he must do, and he must do so immediately."

There are local actions taking place across the country, including an upcoming East Coast film tour by filmmaker Bernie Dwyer, the co-creator of "Mission Against Terror," and prominent religious leader Father Geoffrey Bottoms.

Movement leaders recognize that the more people know about the Five, the harder it is for the Bush administration to deny the Five their freedom. Building a strong support movement for the Five in the next important months will be critical to their victory. Teresa Gutierrez, a leader of the New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five, said, "Part of the U.S. government's intransigence on the case of the Five is their longstanding war against Cuba. This war has escalated in the recent period with policies that aim to strike further blows. But developments from Bolivia to Venezuela indicate that a new period is rising, one that will turn the tide for justice and help win freedom for the Five." □

## U.S. prioritizes travel over safety

By Cheryl LaBash  
Detroit

When you heard about the miners trapped in West Virginia, did you think about Cuba? I did.

Twelve West Virginia workers died in the International Coal Group's Sago mine on Jan. 2. Another young man barely survived and is still critically injured. They suffocated on carbon monoxide, leaving grieving families and neighbors.

The non-union Sago mine has a record of safety violations that is criminal. Over the past two years the Mine Safety and Health Administration issued 270 citations against the horrible conditions in the mine. The owners were fined a total of just \$24,000. According to the AFL-CIO, in the past year, the mine was cited nine times for failing to enact a proper mine ventilation plan, a key to preventing fires and explosions in the mine. Those West Virginia mine safety cases are heard before Administrative Law Judges.

This is where Cuba comes in. In 2004 the price of coal was going up and the mine owners carried profits to the bank.

Instead of stepping up mine inspections and filling the hearing dockets with safety cases, the U.S. government reassigned Bureau of Mine Safety Administrative Law Judges to hear cases against people who traveled to Cuba - threatening to fine ordinary people, instead of unsafe mine owners. ([www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js1161.htm](http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js1161.htm))

The United States is the only government that tries to stop its residents from traveling to Cuba, in violation of the U.S. constitutional right to free association and travel.

In recent weeks, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), a division of the U.S. Treasury Department, has conducted a blitz attack on hundreds of travelers to Cuba. Members of the Venceremos (We Shall Overcome) Brigade and the Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravans, who have done nothing more than travel to an island less than 90 miles away, have been issued official letters demanding information and threatening more than 200 travelers with fines totaling more than \$1.5 million dollars.

Here in Michigan, the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange is threatened with a \$27,000 pre-penalty notice. Two health care workers from Port Huron are currently fighting fines for delivering medicines to a convent in Cuba. Surely traveling to Cuba cannot deserve fines larger than a corporate mine owner operating an unsafe and deadly mine.

Every year hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world go to socialist Cuba. They go for vacation. They attend conferences and concerts. They visit family. They go for school—the Latin American School of Medicine provides full scholarships for young men and women to become doctors in underserved communities in their home countries. They go for medical care—in collaboration with the Bolivarian Venezuelan government, free eye operations are restoring vision for thousands of South Americans.

And we go from the United States, too. We know that if you don't use your democratic rights, you lose them. That's why during the 2006 summer, Pastors for Peace, Venceremos Brigade, the US/

Cuba Labor Exchange and other organizations will again exercise and defend their constitutional rights by organizing and traveling to Cuba.

But fining harmless travelers while murderous coal corporations get slapped on the wrist is only the tip of the 45-year U.S. government blockade and war against that small but independent island nation.

As mine workers' advocate Mother Jones told us, "Pray for the dead, and fight like hell for the living." That fight includes safe working conditions, ending U.S. military aggressions, a national single-payer health system, the right to a job, to live free from racism and oppression and the right to travel to Cuba, too. The time to act is now — your help and solidarity will make the changes that poor and working people need.

For more information on this summer's travel challenges to Cuba: Pastors for Peace [www.ifconews.org](http://www.ifconews.org); Venceremos Brigade [www.venceremosbrigade.org](http://www.venceremosbrigade.org); U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange [laborexchange@aol.com](mailto:laborexchange@aol.com)

# In crisis, Washington manufactures new tensions

By Fred Goldstein

The Bush administration, besieged by crises at home and abroad, is manufacturing new international tensions.

It is pushing the government of Iran up against the wall, demanding that it cede its sovereign right to develop peaceful nuclear technology.

In Iraq in the last week, three U.S. helicopters have been shot down. The Iraqi resistance has escalated since the Dec. 15 election as U.S. and Iraqi puppet casualties mount. Washington has announced it is sending 2,000 military police to Iraq to “supervise” the Iraqi police. This is an open admission that the Pentagon cannot trust the Iraqi police force.

It has been over a month since the much-heralded Iraqi elections and the result has still not been announced, indicating behind-the-scenes antagonisms among Washington’s collaborators that cannot be resolved.

In Pakistan, the CIA and the Pentagon on Jan. 13 launched four missiles from a Predator drone that struck dwellings in the village of Damadora, near the Afghan border. U.S. authorities claimed they were trying to kill Ayman al-Zawahiri, an alleged al-Qaeda leader. But instead they killed 18 villagers, including children. The strikes were in complete violation of Pakistani sovereignty and provoked mass outpourings throughout the country. The strikes weakened Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, a close collaborator of the Pentagon.

In Afghanistan, a Canadian envoy and his aides were killed by the resistance on the eve of an announcement by the Canadian government that it was going to increase its troop strength in the country from 500 to 2,000. The puppet Afghan forces of the government of Ahmad Karzai have suffered heavy casualties and the resistance continues, despite 20,000 U.S. troops and thousands of German troops.

At home, the Bush administration has been rocked by the Abramoff scandal, which is aimed at numerous Bush allies in the Republican Party. Vice President Dick Cheney’s chief of staff, I. Lewis Libby, has been indicted and Deputy White House Chief of Staff Karl Rove is under investigation. Bush is facing congressional hearings, lawsuits and growing cries for impeachment because of the illegal wire-tapping of thousands of people in the U.S. without a court order.

## When in trouble, create a wider crisis

Bush’s antidote to all this is to create a new international crisis by declaring Iran to be a threat to “stability,” to the Middle East, to the U.S. and the world, because it wants to have nuclear technology to generate electric power and for a multitude of scientific purposes generally available to all the imperialist countries and many less developed capitalist countries.

Washington is going through the Iraq scenario—raising the specter of weapons of mass destruction and demanding sanctions on Iran. To this end it has bulldozed the European imperialists, the Russian capitalist government and the People’s Republic of China into calling on Iran to cease research on its program for the enrichment of uranium.

Washington claims that this program is really a cover for developing nuclear weapons and is therefore a threat. It

could not, however, get China and Russia to agree to UN sanctions.

It is now universally understood and well documented that all the U.S. government claims about weapons of mass destruction that served as the basis for the invasion of Iraq were fraudulently concocted by the White House, the Pentagon and the CIA, and underwritten by the State Department.

The Iranian government has submitted to numerous intrusive inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which concedes that it has never found any evidence of Iranian intentions to carry out a weapons program. The “suspicion” that such a program exists is entirely based upon unfounded assertions by the Bush administration and its imperialist allies in Britain, France and Germany.

The pretext for Washington creating the crisis was the announcement by the Iranian government that it was going to break the IAEA seals on its nuclear installation at Isfahan and resume its research on uranium enrichment. Washington went into high gear, whipping up fear and hysteria about the danger of Iran developing a nuclear bomb and so-called “violations of confidence.”

The facts in the case are as follows: After Sept. 11, Bush declared Iran to be part of the “axis of evil” along with Iraq and North Korea—three countries that had won their independence from imperialism by revolution and armed struggle.

Iran has a long history of nuclear research and development, which began under U.S. auspices when the Shah was still in power in the late 1960s. But in late 2003 Washington declared, without a single bit of evidence, that Iran was seeking to build nuclear arms in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

With the U.S. government in the background, the so-called E3—Britain, France and Germany—began negotiations with Iran over the issue. On Nov. 14, 2004, the Iranians agreed to cease their research but only on the ground that the E3 recognize the cessation as “a voluntary confidence-building measure and not a legal obligation.”

The E3 agreed—because it was well known that the development of peaceful nuclear technology is not only permitted under Article IV of the NPT, but encouraged. Therefore, the Iranians were acting completely within their treaty obligations in pursuing their research program and were not required to stop. They did so to make a goodwill gesture—under pressure.

## No to ‘nuclear and scientific apartheid’

After two years of negotiations with the European imperialists, the Iranians were getting nothing but inspections, harassment and demands from the IAEA, Washington, Paris, Berlin and London. Their nuclear program was in a complete

stall with no end in sight.

Frustrated by the stalling tactics of the imperialists, Iran in August 2005 began the conversion of yellow-cake uranium to gas, whereupon the IAEA issued an order for Iran to stop its conversion. The speaker of the Iranian parliament, the Majlis, then declared the IAEA order illegal under the NPT.

On Dec. 26, 2005, Iranian Foreign Minister Manoucher Mottaki declared: “We do not accept nuclear apartheid and scientific apartheid.” (Aljazeera.com, Dec. 26) Later he said that Iran was ready to discuss its nuclear program “but that does not mean that we are waiting for any country’s permission for the right of Iranian nation and the Islamic republic to enjoy nuclear technology.” (Aljazeera.com, Jan. 5)

On Jan. 5, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad insisted that Iran would resume its nuclear research. Speaking to thousands of people in the holy city of Qom and referring to the Western powers, he said: “Recently, some of them have said the Iranian nation has no right to nuclear research. But they should know that the Iranian nation and government will defend the right to nuclear research and technology and will go forward prudently.

“By relying on its young scientists, Iran will use this technology for medicine, industry, energy in the near future,” he said to cries of support.

## Washington’s nuclear policy for the Shah

Can the Iranian people regard the U.S. government as anything but a potential aggressor? It was the CIA that overthrew the popularly elected nationalist government of Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953, after he nationalized Iranian oil. It was the U.S. government that put in place the repressive regime of the Shah. The Shah then gave the oil to a consortium of U.S. oil companies.

It was the CIA that set up the Savak police torturers who tried to destroy all left and progressive forces in the country. And it is the U.S. government that has had an attitude of implacable hostility to Iran ever since the puppet Shah was overthrown by the revolution of 1979.

As for nuclear development and the needs of Iran, it is important to note that when the Shah came to power, he and his U.S. overseers set up a plan to have 23 nuclear power stations in the country. Both Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, under President Richard M. Nixon, and President Gerald Ford signed orders authorizing U.S. government and industry support for Iran’s nuclear development.

It was not out of concern for Iranian national development that Washington promoted nuclear technology. It was for the profit of the U.S. nuclear industry and also because U.S. oil companies felt that the more Iran was able to use nuclear

energy instead of oil to generate electricity, the more oil it would make available to the oil companies to market at a profit.

So nuclear technology was good for Iran, as far as Washington was concerned, as long as the counter-revolutionary Shah of Iran was watching over the Persian Gulf, with weapons supplied by the U.S., to enforce the rule of the Pentagon and big oil. But once a revolutionary regime was set up that took the oil back and declared its independence from U.S. imperialism, then nuclear development became “a threat to stability” — that is, the stability of imperialist rule.

## The U.S. nuclear threat

The U.S. government still possesses 10,600 nuclear weapons—more than the rest of the world combined. It is the only government in the world to ever have used nuclear weapons, having bombed the civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing an estimated 200,000 with two bombs. The Pentagon is now working to develop new nuclear weapons for use on the battlefield and is incorporating the use of tactical nuclear weapons into its battle plans, to be used in conjunction with conventional weapons.

In a blunt act of international terrorism, the Bush administration recently declared openly that it reserved the right to carry out a nuclear first strike and, furthermore, that these strikes could be carried out against non-nuclear nations as well as nuclear ones. Washington has supported the development of an estimated 200 nuclear weapons by the Zionist settler regime of Israel.

These nuclear military doctrines and developments must be placed in the context of threats by Washington against Iran, North Korea, Syria, Cuba and Venezuela, and also accusations by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld about China’s military development

## Denying self-defense to intended targets

The Bush administration’s nuclear policy is that of an imperialist power that presumes to dictate to its intended victims that they have no right of self-defense. When Washington was aiming to attack Iraq, it used the UN as a cover to disarm the country. It has aimed at “regime change” in Iran with the goal of recolonizing it, even while its colonial adventure in Iraq is going down in flames. Washington’s objective is not only to keep Iran from developing nuclear technology but also to cut off any possibility of it developing weapons of self-defense against the Pentagon or its Israeli cat’s-paw.

U.S. imperialism has long sought to overthrow the socialist government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. It is trying to remove the possibility that the DPRK could have a nuclear self-defense in the event of an attack by the U.S., which has never abandoned its global ambitions to conquer Asia.

This new crisis manufactured by the Bush administration is meant to terrorize the Iranian people and their government into submission. But there is every sign that it is having exactly the opposite effect. Washington is moving towards a confrontation that is very dangerous. The anti-war movement must take heed of this new threatening development coming out of Washington, put it high on the agenda, and tell Washington: “Hands off Iran!” □

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# King marches connect racism,

By Monica Moorehead

From the East Coast to the West Coast, in small and large cities in every state, Martin Luther King, Jr. events took place during the third weekend in January involving millions of people.

Jan. 15 is the birth date of the slain civil rights leader. His contributions to the struggle for social equality and justice are commemorated by a federal holiday on the third Monday every January, won by the masses' determination.

While the majority of events celebrated the life of King as an heroic individual, many activists took the opportunity to try to strengthen today's movement by linking some of the most important social issues of the day as King did as the leader of the civil rights era.

For instance, in San Antonio, Texas—a military town—Black activists led a protest against the inclusion of Air Force jets flying above the annual King march there, saying that King was

staunchly opposed to the Vietnam War and would have been against the Iraq War if he were alive today. The anti-Air Force protesters, who wore yellow and black armbands and chanted "Shame, shame!" when the jets flew by, made national news. The Web site of the King Center in Atlanta has more information about King events here and worldwide ([www.thekingcenter.org/holiday/info.html](http://www.thekingcenter.org/holiday/info.html)). Below are just a few of the King events that occurred on Jan. 16.

## DETROIT

The third annual downtown Detroit Martin Luther King Day Freedom March demanded "Money for our cities, not for war! Bring the troops home now!" A youth drum corps led over a thousand people waving blue and white silk-screened placards along with homemade banners and signs. Demonstrators streamed in the street and sidewalks right outside the Cobo Hall convention center over police objections. The

program before and after the march featured home daycare worker union organizers, a speaker on the Delphi workers' crisis, youth performers and essay contest winners.

## LOS ANGELES

The International Action Center in Los Angeles participated with SEIU Local 660's African American Committee in this year's Martin Luther King Parade as part of the AFL-CIO Central Labor Council contingent. Unity was the theme of the labor contingent—which included both AFL-CIO unions and Change to Win member organizations—as reflected on the main placards carried by the labor contingent reading "Unite to fight war, racism and poverty" and the chants of "We are the union—the mighty, mighty union."

The large IAC banner read, "From New Orleans to Iraq, Stop the War on the Poor." Anti-war chants of "Money for jobs and health care, not for war"

were led by both SEIU and IAC members.

Towards the end of the route, where most of the television cameras were placed, a Wal-Mart store is prominently located at the Crenshaw Mall. As marchers from the labor contingent approached the union-busting store, people chanted "Wal-Mart, Wal-Mart, you can't hide, your workers will be unionized!"

## NEW ORLEANS

Over 100 residents of New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward took to the street in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., flanked by crowds of supporters. The residents—some of whom have been rebuilding their houses in spite of city threats of demolition, others still stranded in exile who traveled home for the celebration day—marched, sang and orated in a direct challenge to Mayor Ray Nagin's plan to raze the neighborhood.

"One of the lessons we learned from Katrina is that the government aban-



LOS ANGELES



DETROIT



NEW YORK



WW PHOTOS: DETROIT, CHERYL LABASH; LOS ANGELES, SEKOU PARKER; NEW YORK, G. DUNKEL



# poverty & war

done us, left us here to die. We had to depend upon ourselves to save ourselves. And today we know we have to depend on ourselves and our unity to rebuild our homes and our lives, even against the government's wishes," said Malcolm Suber, a resident and community organizer with the People's Hurricane Relief Coalition. "We're here carrying on the work of Dr. King. Just as he stood against government oppression of Black people & the unjust war in Vietnam, we today stand against the attacks on people of New Orleans and Iraq."

The Lower Ninth Ward community has already begun to rebuild homes and is making independent plans to reopen the Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School. But many residents are scrambling to find temporary housing that will allow them to begin reconstruction, since the City and FEMA have failed to provide it. The federal Environmental

Protection Agency has also so far refused to deploy its resources to remove arsenic- and diesel-infused sediment around the city.

## SEATTLE

Four thousand multinational demonstrators marched 2.5 miles to the federal building on Martin Luther King Day. They marched with a thousand signs that said, "Racism, Poverty, War—Iraq, Katrina, No More," condemning the racist Iraq war, and demanding that resources from the war go instead to help reconstruct New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. A special tribute was given for the late Rosa Parks, and a vintage 1955-era bus followed the march bearing her picture. The mass march was sponsored by dozens of community groups with strong support from labor unions.

*Community Labor United, Cheryl LaBash, Jim McMahon and John Parker contributed to this article.*



FEMA protest, Jan. 16

WW PHOTO: WASHINGTON, D.C., BUREAU

## Honoring King's legacy Activists protest FEMA, racism & war

*Continued from page 1*

description of his friend, an undocumented worker, who died trying to cross the border.

Philippine activist Rev. Renaldo Lopez, an organizer of maritime workers and from the Christian Peace Maker Team that participated in the picket line, pointed out how "the struggle against the occupation of Iraq is linked to the struggle for justice in New Orleans." This group has organized a week-long series of activities aimed at homeland security and against the occupation of Iraq.

David Hoskins, from the International Action Center, explained how many struggles are linked in the fight against imperialism. Hoskins, once a West Virginia resident, described the recent deaths of the 12 coal miners there as "murder." "It shows why poor white people have to support the people of the Gulf." The IAC provided sound for the rally.

Denise Lowery, a Baltimore All-Peoples Congress activist, stated, "This is about racism and about targeting the poor." She brought her teenage son to the protest. Lowery has also been fighting to get military recruiters out of the schools.

Anise Jenkins, representing the Stand Up for Democracy in D.C. Coalition, a group that is fighting for statehood, urged daily organizing and protesting in honor of King.

Dustin Langley, from New York TONC, told the crowd how he wanted to stand with activists in this region against FEMA. He is also a national leader of SNAFU, a GI rights group. Langley has organized protests at military recruitment offices to "shut down the war."

The excitement at the demonstration grew when Rev. Lennox Yearwood took the mike. He had come to the protest from New Orleans, where he participated in a Jan. 12-14 people's summit called by the Millions More Movement, People's Hurricane Relief Fund, Black Voices for Peace and many others. Yearwood is a leading organizer of the national Hip Hop Caucus and Summit founded by producer Russell Simmons and has also organized picketlines in front of FEMA offices.

He described how the government and developers were trying to disenfranchise the people of the Gulf. "They have stripped the area of its infrastructure and dispersed the people in hotels. FEMA has set a date in March to evict people from hotels and we need to stop this." Yearwood put FEMA on notice that the people would not tolerate evictions.

### Mothers of dead GIs speak against war

Following this rally and march, Black Voices for Peace held a dynamic rally at Plymouth Congregational Church. Approximately 500 people, mostly African American, packed the church both to show their appreciation for BVP leader, Damu Smith, who has been battling cancer, and to show opposition to the war and support for the people of New Orleans.

Damu Smith remarked, "It's not enough to be against Bush. The Dems with a capital D voted for the war." Smith expounded on the hypocrisy of the Democratic Party.

Several mothers of GIs who died in Iraq moved the crowd to stand and applaud their courage when they spoke. Visibly angry, Georgia Elaine Johnson from South Carolina described how she was shunned by the press when she participated with Cindy Sheehan in the Washington D.C. protests. "They don't want to show Black faces against the war. You would have just thought it was Cindy Sheehan but that wasn't true. Many of us were here first."

Johnson also described her meeting with Bush and how insulted she felt when she received a coin in her son's memory from the White House, Bush muttering to her, "Now don't go selling this on E-bay."

Patricia Roberts from Georgia brought tears to the eyes of rally participants as she described how her son was not supposed to be in actual combat; that he was part of the support team and was a trained computer expert. "He couldn't shoot anyone!", she said. Nevertheless he was sent to the front lines. A disproportionate number of Black and Latin@ GIs have been wounded and killed in combat in both the Vietnam and Iraq wars.

The second part of the rally was devoted to the issue of Katrina and racism in the Gulf. Felicia Eaves, co-chair of Black Voices for Peace, emceed the panel that included Melanie Campbell, National Coalition on Black Civic Participation; Colette Pinchon Battle, Operation Gulf Coast; and Concei Civela, Café Mawonaj. The crowd cheered when Yearwood called for "revolution".

The Rainbow warriors, a dynamic multi-national group of students from James McHenry Elementary School performed a rousing step performance with drums and poetry. □



FEMA protest, Jan. 16; Denise Lowery, above.



Andre Powell



Rev. Lennox Yearwood



Dustin Langley



David Hoskins

WW PHOTOS: DUSTIN LANGLEY & DC BUREAU

# Venezuela to help heat homes in Maine

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

As the ruling class and their servants savagely attack the working class and oppressed worldwide at every available opportunity, Venezuela is instilling hope through its Bolivarian Revolution by engaging in genuine unity and solidarity in the United States and beyond.

Beginning in November 2005, Venezuela's most concrete form of humanitarian internationalism for U.S. residents to date is via CITGO, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA. CITGO is the only major oil company to grant heating oil discounts to low-income people in the U.S., setting aside 10 percent of its oil production revenues to aid the poor.

Despite record-breaking profits of all of the U.S.-based Big Oil corporations in 2005—a reported \$33 billion in 2005's third quarter—none has granted one penny in discounts. But they have reduced production to drive up prices thus in effect enacting a wage cut upon tens of millions of U.S. residents, among other attacks.

## 'A human face'

Maine Gov. John Baldacci, with representatives from the state's heating oil assistance program and the Venezuelan government, signed a contract on Jan. 12 with CITGO to provide 8 million gallons of heating oil at a 40 percent discount to low-income residents.

CITGO also pledged to provide 120,000 gallons of heating oil to homeless shelters in Maine that will be delivered to more than 40 shelters by their heating oil suppliers. Residents expect to save 60 to 80 cents per gallon with the discount, a sig-

nificant savings as home heating oil costs increased on average 30 to 50 percent over the 2004-2005 winter season. Many recipients say the assistance comes just in time as an often-frigid winter arrives.

In a separate deal, CITGO will provide discounted heating oil to more than 900 households on or near the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Micmac and the Maliseet Native nations. This deal is worth approximately \$543,000. The total CITGO discounts in Maine are worth more than \$5 million, reaching more than 48,000 households.

"The Penobscot Nation is very grateful," said Penobscot leader James Sappier. In regard to Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez Frías, Sappier added, "We appreciate him very much as a leader. It's been said he's one of us. His thinking is like ours." (timesargus.com)

The Maine program follows similar ones in areas of the U.S. where extremely cold weather is a factor. CITGO's discounted heating oil could be the difference between life and death and preventing or alleviating serious physical ailments due to lack of sufficient heat, specifically for children and elders.

"This program has a human face. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez made a promise in New York City following hurricanes Katrina and Rita and this Maine heating oil program represents the goodwill between the people of Venezuela and the United States," said Venezuelan Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez-Herrera upon the signing of the Maine deals.

"Help for those who need it most is a cornerstone of the new Venezuelan economy under President Chávez," continued Alvarez-Herrera, "and this program, fol-

lowing similar ones in Massachusetts and the Bronx, is part of a new effort to increase regional integration." (venezuelanalysis.com)

A statewide heating assistance program in Massachusetts began Nov. 22 and a similar program in the Bronx started Dec. 6. More than half-a-dozen are also imminent.

After Maine, CITGO and Rhode Island completed a deal Jan. 13. CITGO will sell 3.3 million gallons of heating oil to Citizens Energy, a nonprofit company that is also distributing the discounted heating oil in Massachusetts. Homeless shelters and community clinics will also be receiving discounted oil. Community organizations will help arrange the discounted oil shipments.

"This is going to really help us out a lot," said Denise Bloomingburgh as Felix Rodriguez—president and CEO of CITGO—pumped the first discounted oil into her basement in Warwick. Bloomingburgh and her husband have two children. She said rising energy costs, unemployment and inadequate part-time and temporary jobs have hit her family and others in her community and state hard.

Talks are ongoing for similar programs in Connecticut, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Vermont and the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn, Harlem and Queens. CITGO hopes to have secured deals in place for these areas by the end of January.

Meanwhile in Chicago a battle is raging between the Chicago Transit Authority and its mostly poor riders and their allies. Since only about 12,000 households use heating oil in Illinois, CITGO offered the

CTA a 40-50 percent discount on diesel fuel for buses to offset soaring oil and gas prices for low-income Chicagoans. Riders could then receive lower fares or other discounts, proposed CITGO. The CTA has refused CITGO's proposed discounts on over 7 million gallons of diesel, worth almost \$15 million, despite the transit agency's announced budget deficit of \$17 million for fiscal 2006.

The CTA isn't a non-profit organization; it is a government agency that receives a significant amount of funding from the federal government. Just weeks after CITGO made its offer last fall, Congress passed the Federal Transportation Appropriations bill, allocating \$89 billion in CTA infrastructure projects.

Under pressure from over 20 organized labor leaders, community activists and others, CTA officials have now agreed to meet with CITGO.

## 'This revolution is real'

When the Venezuelan government announced on Jan. 8 CITGO's intent to expand the home heating oil programs in the United States, a group of U.S. activists including artist Harry Belafonte, actor Danny Glover, Princeton University scholar Dr. Cornel West, journalist Tavis Smiley and United Farm Workers leader Dolores Huerta were touring a state-funded cooperative in Caracas with Alvarez-Herrera.

Upon hearing the heating oil announcement, they immediately hailed it as an advance for humanitarian internationalism and hope, said Dr. West. "This revolution is real; it's not something that people are just talking about." (venezuelanalysis.com) □

# Belafonte tells the truth in Venezuela

By Teresa Gutierrez

The Internet is burning with the news of a statement made about President George W. Bush by well-known singer and actor Harry Belafonte on Jan. 8.

Belafonte told the truth.

Belafonte was in Venezuela as part of an important delegation that included Danny Glover, Dolores Huerta and Cornel West. At the radio show regularly hosted by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez Frías, Belafonte made comments that quickly spread around the world.

"No matter what the greatest tyrant in the world, the greatest terrorist in the world, George W. Bush says, we're here to tell you: Not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of the American people ... support your revolution," said Belafonte.

On Jan. 15, Belafonte was at Duke University in North Carolina where the Durham mayor presented him with a key to the city. Responding to both praise and criticism back in the U.S., Belafonte said, "I don't live by consensus. And when I talk about Bush, in the dictionary under terrorists there are many different subtitles and ... if people are coming to open your mail and tap your phones, and the people of Katrina are desperate for help and they are not getting it from the most powerful man in the world, he has brought terror in the hearts of people and in the dictionary anyone who brings fear is bringing terrorism and is a terrorist."

The next day, in New York City, Belafonte was at an event organized by the Children's Defense Fund, a mainstream advocacy group. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton also attended the event.

The Daily News reported that she shunned Belafonte. Despite the fact that earlier at a Black church in Harlem she called the U.S. Congress a "plantation" where dissent is not allowed, Clinton feared associating with someone who truly was dissenting.

Belafonte indeed represents the sentiment of tens of thousands in the United States who are organizing to stay the hand of U.S. imperialism in Venezuela and

wholeheartedly support the Bolivarian process.

Belafonte has it right when he said millions in the U.S. support the Venezuelan Revolution. Why? Because when confronted with the truth about Venezuela—that its government is carrying out policies contrary to the U.S. that are improving healthcare, education and welfare for the people—millions in this country absolutely agree with that kind of society. □



Harry Belafonte with workers during a visit to government-run development project Fabrzi Ojeda in Caracas Jan. 6.

## UN forces in Haiti

# Pinochet general takes over after mysterious death

By G. Dunkel

The United Nations spends more on keeping its so-called peacekeeping force in Haiti, the Minustah, supplied and paid than the Haitian government spends on its budget. Just browsing through the web pages devoted to Haitian affairs would indicate how fragile "peace" and security are in Haiti.

Twenty kidnappings a week hardly rate a mention—unless some of the people kidnapped are non-Haitian. Somebody shot to death or robbed at gunpoint will be reported—if the somebody is a UN soldier or official, or a non-Haitian journalist.

Still, it was a shock when Lt. Gen. Urano Teixeira Da Matta Bacellar, the Brazilian commander of Minustah, was found sit-

ting on his balcony early Jan. 7, with a book on his lap, shot to death. From close range.

The immediate reaction of the Brazilian authorities and Haitian cops was that he had committed suicide. Then the Brazilians tried saying he had had an accident with his firearm, even though he had been a firearms instructor.

A number of Haitian journalists, including Maude LeBlanc—co-director of Haïti-Progress, speaking on New York's WBAI-FM morning show by telephone from Port-au-Prince—say it is possible that Bacellar was assassinated. He was a devout Catholic, not demonstrably depressed, and he was reportedly opposed to the demands of the Haitian bourgeoisie to crush the supporters of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, whose

stronghold is Cité Soleil.

While Cité Soleil is often described as a "neighborhood," 300,000 very poor people make it their home.

The day before Bacellar died, the political head of the UN mission in Haiti, Juan Gabriel Valdes, announced that UN troops would "occupy Cité Soleil" and warned that "civilians could be harmed" in an interview he gave to Reuters. Bacellar opposed Valdes' plan.

The Monday after Bacellar's death, the Haitian bourgeoisie, following the call of the Chamber of Commerce, held a "general strike"—which most accurately must be called a semi-successful lockout. Most major businesses in Port-au-Prince, like banks and big stores, closed. Outside of

Continued on next page

# Impoverished West African workers organize and fight

By G. Dunkel

Mali and Niger are so poor that many young men, and some young women, spend two years walking across the Sahara desert to Morocco. There they risk their lives trying to climb the fortified fences around Ceuta and Melilla, Spanish enclaves in Morocco, or try to slip into Spain by boat.

They are in search of a job that pays enough to help their family. Many, if they are caught and deported back home, make the dangerous trip again.

The United Nations Human Development Program considers Mali, Niger and the Central African Republic (CAR) among the 10 poorest countries in the world. All are former colonies that for generations were robbed of their resources and even their people, laying the basis for their "indebtedness" today.

## CAR stops paying government workers

The CAR government was so destitute at the end of February 2005 that it stopped paying its 20,000 employees. Relying on the solidarity of their families and the community and expecting they would get paid sooner or later, they kept on working. Finally, the workers' patience was exhausted by mid-October and the Central African Workers Union (USTC) called a strike.

They went back to work in the beginning of November, under threats and promises. CAR's president, François Bozizé, said, "We don't have any money to pay you, that comes from abroad. We are between the hammer and the anvil and it's only your work that can save us."

But the workers went back out on strike in the middle of November.

In early December, France came through with a loan of 4 million euros, which allowed the CAR to pay salaries and feed its troops through April. France is the CAR's former colonial ruler and still plays a dominant economic and military role in the country.

Having received another loan, the CAR finally scraped up enough money by the end of December to pay salaries through the end of May.

The USTC, after a series of heated general assemblies, decided to "suspend the strike." Noel Ramadan, the deputy secretary general of the USTC, told the prime minister, according to the BBC, "We do not want our comrades to face administrative harassment after work resumption. We would like workers based in the various provinces to receive also their salaries. The government should ensure that all civil servants throughout the country receive their salaries till the month of May 2005."

According to the latest reports from the CAR, the workers are still back on the job. While the USTC was nominally striking against its employer, the government of the CAR, it was really putting pressure on France, which could see a small, but for Paris profitable, portion of its sphere of influence in Africa facing the real risk of chaos and a collapsed government. So it stepped in, but not far enough to satisfy the workers entirely.

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While the USTC was nominally striking against its employer, the government of the CAR, it was really putting pressure on France, which could see a small, but for Paris profitable, portion of its sphere of influence in Africa facing the real risk of chaos and a collapsed government. So it stepped in, but not far enough to satisfy the workers entirely.

## Mali: a golden poverty

Mali is one of the main producers of gold in Africa, after South Africa and Ghana. Some years Mali produces more than Tanzania, others less. There are a handful of large, modern operations in the country, mainly along its southern border with Burkina Faso, the Ivory Coast and Guinea, as well as a large number of sites where hand panning is done.

Gold is now more important to Mali than its traditional cotton.

Yet Mali is so poor and so indebted that the research group CADD-Mali (Coalition of African Alternatives, Debt and Development-Mali) estimates it will take 106 years for Mali to pay off its loans.

Mali avoided the extreme hunger that killed hundreds of people a week in neighboring Niger, where locusts ate whatever the drought left. But Mali still had a lot of trouble feeding its people in 2005.

The open pit mine at Sanso, a small city in southwest Mali, is run by the Morila Co., a subsidiary of the South African transnational Randgold. In July 2005, 530 Malian workers walked out and the struggle is still going on. A subcontractor called Somadex manages its day-to-day operations.

Somadex refused to pay the bonuses it was contractually obliged to pay since 2000. After the union took it to court, Somadex paid the bonuses but treated them as a salary advance, which meant the workers really didn't get anything.

So the union struck for what was supposed to be three days. The workers had other grievances. Their housing had no electricity, no running water, no plumbing. Their rates of pay were not fixed. The cyanide and arsenic Somadex used to extract the gold polluted the air the workers had to breathe and the ground water.

Somadex fired 17 miners for striking and accused a union leader, Amadou Nioumanta, of being a "thief" and a "communist."

The union then decided to stay out indefinitely. After 25 days, Somadex tried to break the strike by locking out the workers. After two buses transporting scabs were burned, the cops arrested 35 miners.

Nine of them were still in jail as of Jan. 15. Four members of the union's executive board and Amadou Nioumanta are underground. The Morila mine, according to a Jan. 11 report in the South African newspaper Business Day, is set to resume shipments any day now, once its differences with the Malian government over tax payments are resolved.

One of the points the miners' strike raised was a sweetheart deal that Randgold had gotten from Mali.

Another mine opened up in September 2005 near Sikasso on Mali's southern border with the Ivory Coast. More than 20,000 West African nationals from Mali, the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Niger and Ghana showed up looking for work. This is the context in which the strike at Sanso took place. The miners there knew very well what they faced but they also knew what they had to do to get what they needed. □

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

## When the press serves power



The recent news report that media outlets kept mum on American secret prisons in Eastern Europe for nearly a year, has erupted in the midst of the NSA's (National Security Administration) spying scandal.

Both events reflect the massive power of the state; the power to gag the press when it suits them; and the power to blithely violate the U.S. Constitution at will.

Today, the Bush Administration has resurrected an old Nixonian idea: executive privilege or the notion that whatever the president does is inherently constitutional.

What is surprising is the surprise!

This isn't the first time that the White House has killed or delayed a story; nor will it be the last; nor is the idea new that presidents seek to expand their power, without serious regard to provisions in the constitution.

Presidents, both Republican and Democrat, have spied on Americans, invaded their privacy, wiretapped their phones, and broken into their homes. In this regard, the FBI served as a kind of presidential police, who bugged, spied on, tapped anyone that their boss in the White House wanted them to.

Anyone who doubts this fact, need only read my book on the history of the Black Panthers, entitled *We Want Freedom* (South End Press, 2004).

We were all raised with the dogma of the First Amendment, which 'guarantees' (among other things) the freedom of the press.

What is less known is how often the press surrendered those freedoms, to the White House, the FBI, the CIA, or some other government entity.

Remember the infamous Bay of Pigs? This was a CIA-backed invasion of Cuba, fronted by Cuban exiles. The April 17, 1961 invasion was crushed by the Cuban army, and is remembered on the island as the battle of Bahia de Cochinos, a victory that has all the significance of David and Goliath for the Cuban people.

The New York Times knew about the invasion, and planned to editorially denounce it. President John F. Kennedy persuaded the Times to not run their denunciation, citing national security.

The rest is history.

The CIA has (secretly) owned hundreds of media outlets, and thus employed many journalists who didn't know (or didn't want to know) who they worked for. It has used the services of at least fifty journalists both here and abroad, among them writers for Newsweek, TIME, the New York Times, United Press International, CBS News, and other periodicals published in English all around the world (Howard Zinn, *Declarations of Independence: Cross-Examining American Ideology*, N.Y.: HarperPerennial, 1990, pp. 215-17.)

As historian Howard Zinn has documented in his book, *Declarations of Independence* (1990), the cases are, quite literally, legion in which government has changed stories, had reporters transferred, or had other stories killed.

Even now, in the midst of the NSA spying scandal of "thousands" of Americans, the political elites have targeted journalists, not those who have done the illegal spying!

There is a reason why circulation in many major papers is rapidly declining; and while most point towards the lack of interest among young folks, surely another element is distrust.

One need only look at this war and the media's role as chaperone to imperial power, to see why there is such massive distrust.

The press, far too often, reflects the world of the powerful, not of the people. It begins by observing the feasts of the famous and the powerful, then, through the power of the media, it becomes a diner at the feast. The interests of the wealthy becomes their interest, and coverage certainly reflects it.

Major news outlets boasted anchors and reporters who became wealthy celebrities, miles removed from the best reporting, or street reporting that began their careers. As they moved farther from the streets, so did their product, which should now be called 'narrowcasting.'

To call "this" a free press is but to demean it.

Go to [leftbooks.com](http://leftbooks.com) to order "We Want Freedom."

## Haiti

Continued from page 10

the capital, life went on as usual.

The aim of the lockout was to put pressure on the UN to smash Cité Soleil.

The temporary replacement for Bacellar is Chilean Gen. Eduardo Aldunate, who graduated from the U.S. School of the Americas in 1974 after participating in the attack on Chile's presidential palace in 1973. He worked in Chile's military intelligence under the U.S.-backed Pinochet dictatorship.

The U.S., France and Canada are determined that Haiti hold a presidential election on Feb. 7, the date set by the constitution for an elected president to take office. They do not want any poor, bitterly determined opponents to stand in the way of the election/selection they have scheduled, which is meant to validate the U.S.-led coup that overturned Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's real, democratically elected president. □

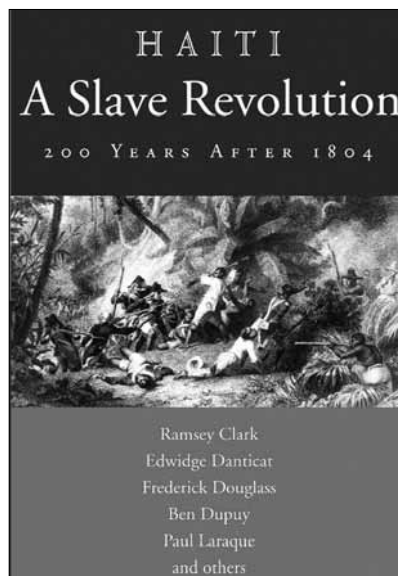
## HAITI A SLAVE REVOLUTION

The Haitian Revolution is a singular event in history. Never before or since has an enslaved people risen up, broken their chains, and established a new state. Haiti was a beacon of hope and inspiration to the enslaved Africans of the United States.

Drawing from a wide range of authors, experts, and historical texts, this book reveals the intertwined relationship between the U.S. and Haiti, and the untold stories of the Haitian people's resistance to the U.S. aggressions and occupations.

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## Bourgeois pessimism vs. revolutionary optimism

# Two views of our fragile planet

By Deirdre Griswold

The British scientist James Lovelock—who 30 years ago put forward the view that a balance of global systems, which he called Gaia, keeps the Earth fit for life—now says that global warming has already passed the point of no return. Changes in these interlocking systems, says Lovelock, will accelerate to destroy much of the existing biosphere, and human civilization is therefore doomed along with most of our species.

It is the most pessimistic view of climate change to emanate from the scientific establishment so far.

Contrasted to this is a recent report by the Worldwatch Institute called “State of the World 2006—Special Focus: China and India.” The authors look at these two giants of the developing world and find hope that they are already studying and implementing technologies that can avoid the ecological disasters created by the growth of so-called Western civilization.

Christopher Flavin, president of the environmental research group, predicted at a news conference announcing the Worldwatch report that “China and India are positioned to leapfrog today’s industrial powers and become world leaders in sustainable energy and agriculture within a decade.”

More than a third of the world’s people live in these two countries. As consumers of the earth’s bounty, however, most have been peasants forced by poverty to live very austere. Even today, after several decades of rapid economic growth, their per capita consumption of the world’s resources trails far behind that in the developed capitalist countries—particularly the United States.

According to the report, while the average person in China has an “ecological footprint” of 1.6 global hectares, and in India 0.8 global hectares, the average person in the United States has an ecological footprint of 9.7 hectares. And that grew by 21 percent between 1992 and 2002.

An ecological footprint is defined as the biologically productive area required to produce the natural resources an individ-

ual consumes. A hectare is approximately 2.5 acres.

Even though the Western diet is based much more on meat and dairy products, the U.S. still consumes three times as much grain per person as China and five times as much as India, notes the report.

U.S. per-capita carbon dioxide emissions are six times the Chinese level and 20 times the Indian level.

Nevertheless, xenophobic politicians and commentators in the U.S.—and there are plenty of them—have treated the development of China, especially, as a major threat to the world. They make dire predictions of future conflicts, perhaps even wars, over shrinking world energy resources. This view is not shared by commentators in the rest of the world, who see the U.S. as by far the biggest problem when it comes to global warming and depletion of the earth’s resources.

### Efforts to build sustainable economies

The Worldwatch document points out that China and India, respectively, are already the world’s third and fourth largest producers of ethanol—a renewable energy source.

China now has equipped 35 million buildings with solar panels to produce hot water.

It is the world’s leading developer and producer of low-energy fluorescent light bulbs.

It is refining the development of nuclear power, focusing on new technologies like the “pebble-bed” reactor first developed in South Africa. This small-size reactor is considered “meltdown proof” and safe for the environment because it does not use water as a coolant.

Several Chinese cities are investing in Bus Rapid Transit systems, which move people as quickly as subways but with greater flexibility, thus reducing traffic jams and air pollution. It is also mass-producing electric bicycles.

And China can plan for the future—really plan. That is a legacy of its socialist revolution. While China’s leaders since the 1970s have introduced what they call

**The extreme pessimism of a James Lovelock flows from the world imperialist system, which is incapable of putting the long-term needs of humanity ahead of its short-term appetite for profits. To the extent that China is not fully part of that system, it offers hope that is recognized even by environmentalists here.**

“market socialism,” trying to pull the country out of poverty and underdevelopment by opening up the market and allowing foreign capitalist investment, there is still a formidable state sector and the political ability to organize the allocation of resources and people for the long-term benefit of the country.

China is working on a 50-year plan for economic development that puts a strong focus on building the infrastructure to lift up its poorer regions in the west. Having input into this kind of long-term planning are many official and unofficial scientists and specialists in the environment.

According to the Worldwatch report, China’s tenth Five-Year Plan, just completed, was the “greenest” ever, with investments to meet environmental objectives set at \$85 billion. These targets were nearly met. There are now at least 2,000 registered independent environmental NGOs in China, and more than 200 university green groups are found throughout the provinces.

All this shows that there is strong sentiment in China at all levels of the political structure to use the wealth it has accumulated in recent decades for sustainable, environment-friendly development while trying to raise up the standard of living of the workers and the rural population, in particular.

### Class struggle is crucial

However, none of this can be seen in a social vacuum. The very forces unleashed in China that have caused its economy to expand rapidly have also created great

inequality. Private investment does not just create wealth for society as a whole. It also concentrates much of that wealth in the hands of a new class of capitalist owners, who, like the sorcerer’s apprentice, are then driven to increase it in a process that has no limits and no end. They seek political power to enhance their class position while corrupting officials with their abundant wealth.

China has been in the news recently because of a string of terrible coal mine disasters and a toxic chemical spill that polluted the river flowing past the major city of Harbin in northeast China. In both mining and petrochemicals, investment by imperialist corporations is introducing profit pressures that increase the risk to the workers and the environment.

This alone does not change the class character of People’s China, which should be defended against imperialist threats, pressure and intrigues. But, as we wrote in *Workers World* (Dec. 29, 2005), “it is important that progressives understand the debilitating side of these market reforms and the deep problems they are presenting for the workers and farmers of China, who have been the backbone of the revolution.”

The extreme pessimism of a James Lovelock flows from the world imperialist system, which is incapable of putting the long-term needs of humanity ahead of its short-term appetite for profits. To the extent that China is not fully part of that system, it offers hope that is recognized even by environmentalists here.

But the actions of the U.S. and the other imperialist powers are still what are decisive when it comes to global warming. Their system is what is driving the whole world toward ever bigger “natural” disasters.

Hope for the future depends on the struggles of the working class, the oppressed nations and all progressive people to break up these concentrations of corporate power, assume ownership and control over production and natural resources, and establish planned economies dictated by human needs, not private greed. □

## ITALY

# Marches defend abortion, LGBT rights

By Leslie Feinberg

Women marched through the streets of Milan tens of thousands strong on Jan. 14, in defense of an Italian law that legal-

izes abortions within the first trimester of pregnancy. The same day, gay and lesbian activists rallied in Rome to demand legal rights for same-sex and unmarried heterosexual couples.



From the reactionary summit of billionaire Premier Silvio Berlusconi’s government to the towers of the Vatican, top officials denounced both demonstrations in vile and divisive language.

Both burning issues have become hot potatoes for the country’s capitalist politicians in the upcoming general elections.

The Catholic hierarchy is reportedly the force pushing to totally outlaw abortion again. This is the first time the bishops have openly worked to overturn abortion rights since Italian voters upheld the law in a 1978 Vatican-backed referendum.

The Milan demonstration was organized by women determined to keep the law from being removed from the books. They marched under the slogan: “Let’s emerge from silence!”

The Vatican’s opposition to same-sex love was underscored when the Pope spoke out against legal recognition and

rights for unmarried couples less than 48 hours before the Jan. 14 protests.

Thousands of gays and lesbians and their supporters filled the Rome square to demand legal recognition of both same-sex couples and unmarried heterosexual partners. “Let’s free love from religious phobia,” read one banner.

At the same time, Giovanni Palombarini, a senior Italian judge from the country’s highest bench—the Court of Cassation—symbolically wed 10 unmarried same-sex and heterosexual couples. Palombarini’s action defied Pope Benedict XVI and the Italian government—including a direct order from Justice Minister Roberto Castelli not to perform the ceremony.

The movement for state recognition of the rights of unmarried couples, and the right to marry, has been inexorable worldwide. Same-sex marriage is already a legal right in several countries in Europe, including Spain—in which the Catholic Church has historically wielded much political power. □

Milan, Italy January 14

# The real Ariel Sharon

By Michael Kramer

*At the Jenin refugee camp this week, we met some people who were praying for Ariel Sharon not to die: Some wished him a longer, more agonizing death; others hoped he would recover so he can be tried in court for war crimes.*

—Haaretz Magazine, Jan. 13, 2006

Jan. 15—Since an 1897 meeting in Basel, Switzerland, the mission of the Zionist movement has been to occupy and colonize Arab Palestine with Jewish people from all over the world.

Not all Jews are Zionists and many Zionists today—especially in the United States and Western Europe—are members of various Christian sects and denominations.

The political-bureaucratic body that directly administers the colonial enterprise is called the State of Israel. While it is recognized as an independent country by the United Nations—and receives billions of dollars a year in financial and military aid from the U.S.—hundreds of millions of people worldwide view it as illegitimate, illegal and in violation of a multitude of international laws as well as the United Nations Charter itself.

The movement has always included many different political parties, factions, coalitions and trends. Some like Meretz are social-democratic, the Labor Party is centrist and others like Yisrael Beytenu are outright fascist. Political formations based in religious communities and others based on the sharing of the same country of origin (e.g. the former Soviet Union) are also active.

Over the years the Zionists have organized and sponsored a constellation

of autonomous organizations operating inside Palestine and in other countries to care for the needs of the settlers. Some are focused solely on fund raising while others are concerned with issues like health care, housing, higher education and vocational training. Most are given a special status by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, which encourages monetary donations.

Ariel Sharon, the prime minister of the Israeli settler state, has been all over the news recently. As of this writing he is in a vegetative coma in a hospital in Jerusalem. His political and military career appears to be over.

Sharon suffered a devastating stroke a few days after news reports that the Israeli police had obtained evidence he had illegally accepted \$3 million from an Austrian gambling casino owner.

The Zionist enterprise in Palestine has always required armed bodies to defend itself against the indigenous Palestinian population and its allies in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and other Arab countries. Many settlers are armed with handguns and automatic weapons. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are armed by the U.S. with state-of-the-art air, naval and ground weapons systems; the paramilitary Border Police; national and local police formations.

There are also secret police agencies that conduct surveillance and hit-squad operations against Palestinian militants and political activists. They also focus on settlers and their descendants who have broken with the Zionists and identify and struggle with the indigenous Palestinian population.

These armed bodies have always been Ariel Sharon's base and compass. Maximum territory and minimum Arabs has always been his creed.

Sharon was born in Palestine in 1928 to a family of European settlers. As a junior military officer he founded and commanded the infamous "101" special commando unit, which conducted the My Lai-like operation in the West Bank village of Qibya on October 14, 1953 resulting in the execution of 69 civilians—about half of them women and children.

During the 1956 Arab-Israeli war Sharon commanded a brigade of paratroopers that invaded Egypt through the Sinai Peninsula. As commander he set the tone. The brigade was implicated by one of his subordinates—a company commander who later became a general—in the massacre of hundreds of Egyptian prisoners of war and 50 Sudanese civilian road workers.

In 1969 he was appointed head of the IDF Southern Command. According to The Independent (Jan. 21, 2001) "In August 1971 alone troops under Sharon's command destroyed some 2,000 homes in the Gaza Strip, uprooting 12,000 people for the second time in their lives."

By 1982 he had become minister of defense in a government led by Menachem Begin, who was a settler from Poland. Within the government, Sharon successfully pushed for an invasion of Lebanon to destroy the Palestinian political, military and cultural infrastructure that was based in exile in Beirut. The June 1982 invasion resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Lebanese civilians and Palestinian refugees. It also gave rise to the Hezbollah resistance movement which after much self-sacrifice defeated Sharon's army and on May 26, 2000 forced it out of Lebanon in a humiliating retreat.

Between Sept. 16-18, 1982, close to 3,000 Palestinians were massacred in two contiguous refugee camps—Sabra and

Shatilla—by Lebanese allies of the Zionist invaders. The IDF had surrounded the camps and lit flares to show their allies the route in. It has been documented by an Israeli investigation that Sharon met with his allies shortly before the massacre took place.

Since then Sharon has continued to be the consummate insider in Zionist politics, serving at various times as Minister of Construction and Housing, Minister of National Infrastructure, Foreign Minister, and since March 7, 2001 as elected Prime Minister.

While the corporate press—from CNN to the New York Times—has projected a grandfatherly image of a hospitalized Ariel Sharon, a better description is given by Zakariya Zubeidi, the underground commander of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Jenin:

"From the day he entered the occupation army to the day he entered the hospital, he hasn't done one good thing for the Palestinian people. Sharon is a criminal in terms of the Palestinian people. ... He was never a man of peace for a minute. ... Sharon is a good leader for the occupation. Not a good leader for the Israeli people, and not a good leader for the Jewish people, but a good leader for the occupation. ... And we, the Palestinian people, won't be sorry when this man dies. We would like to see him tried in court and judged for the blood of the Palestinian people that he spilled, but this is how he's ending up. ... There's nothing to feel sorry about with a person like Sharon. We say: One of the great leaders of the occupation, one of the world's great terrorists has gone. ... I hope that when Sharon dies, the people of the left and of peace in Israel will stand up and take power." (Haaretz Magazine, Jan. 13, 2006) □

## Pakistanis protest U.S. terror raid on village

By John Catalinotto

Unnamed operatives of either the Pentagon or the CIA bombed homes Jan. 13 in the Pakistani village of Damadola. The explosions killed between 18 and 30 civilians. Thousands of Pakistanis went into the streets all over Pakistan to condemn this terrorist attack against the Pakistani population.

Unlike the roadside bombings of U.S. troops in Iraq or suicide bombings carried out against occupying powers in Palestine, whatever U.S. force carried out the attack in Pakistan was exposed to minimal personal risk. The bombs were fired at a safe distance from the village where they exploded.

In Karachi on Jan. 15, some 10,000 people protested the bombing. They chanted, "Death to America" and "Stop bombing innocent people," and burned U.S. flags. They also demanded that U.S. forces leave Afghanistan. The Pentagon invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 and still has 20,000 U.S. troops there, along with others from the U.S.'s NATO allies.

Demonstrators condemned Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf, a military dictator closely allied to the U.S.'s "war against terrorism," for being a U.S. puppet. "Our rulers are traitors," and "Our rulers are cowards and surrogates of

America," protesters chanted in the capital, Islamabad.

"There will be more ... bigger protests," said Shahid Shamsi, spokesman for an alliance of Islamic groups. "Pakistani civilians, including children, were killed," he said. "Principles cannot be broken in the name of [fighting] terrorism." (Associated Press, Jan. 16)

The Musharraf government was forced to condemn the bombing attack. Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed called the attack "highly condemnable." At the same time, Musharraf warned the population not to shelter those forces fighting against U.S. rule in the region, which he called "terrorists."

U.S. officials claim the attack was aimed at Ayman al-Zawahiri, whom they describe as "the No. 2 leader of Al Qaeda." So far there is no indication anyone was killed but children, women and men who lived in the three homes in Damadola hit by the bombs.

The Musharraf government with U.S. help is trying to quickly examine the remains of the people killed in Damadola in the hope of finding something that proves they succeeded in killing Zawahiri or some other Al-Qaeda figures.

According to the Jan. 16 New York Times, "The raid is believed to have been carried out by the CIA, using missiles fired

by a remotely piloted Predator aircraft, on the basis of information gathered in an aggressive effort to track Zawahiri. An American counterterrorism official declined to discuss details of the attack, but said: 'My understanding is that it was based on pretty darned good information.'"

According to the Times, the U.S. has only 100 troops in Pakistan, ostensibly helping with hurricane relief. But



January 18, Karachi, the banner reads: "We condemn the barbaric U.S. bombing in Bajour."

Pakistani officials have again warned the U.S. not to allow its troops in Afghanistan to carry out raids across the border in "hot pursuit" of Afghan resistance forces. They had issued the same warning Jan. 9 after U.S. troops crossed the border and killed eight Pakistanis. □



To the World Social Forum

## A time for revolutionary optimism

Continued from page 1  
parts of the world.

As your meetings and exchanges are taking place, the peoples of all continents face grave and growing dangers on many levels. We speak to you from the United States, the “belly of the beast.” We agree with the view held in so much of the rest of the world: the main source of these problems, whether it is war, environmental degradation or the polarization of wealth, is here. The U.S. imperialist ruling class, along with its political and military establishments, still believes it can dominate the world with its fearsome and costly military machine. Its destructive geopolitical agenda is driven by an insatiable appetite for super-profits.

We are sure you will put opposition to the continued U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan high on your agenda, along with the Israeli occupation and repression in Palestine. We have marched in coordination with you many times since the U.S. embarked on its new stage of aggression and military expansion after 9/11. Together, we all have demanded an end to the war and then to the occupation of Iraq. These demonstrations, which sometimes numbered in the millions, gave great encouragement to everyone in the U.S. trying to stop the war. And they helped turn the tide of public opinion here against it.

Now the Bush administration, besieged on many sides, is doing what the Johnson administration did during Vietnam: it is talking peace while continuing to wage war. Every day many more lives are lost—especially among the Iraqi people—as the Pentagon attempts to consolidate a puppet regime and an effective state that will remain subservient to U.S. interests. But it is a hopeless task; the Iraqi people have shown their determination to continue this struggle until they have won true self-determination and expelled the invaders.

The people in the United States want the troops brought home now and the huge sums spent on war and occupation allocated instead to social services in crisis—health, housing, education and pensions. But, in the political establishment, there is no real opposition. The Democratic Party, which voted for the war, criticizes Bush’s methods but supports the occupation.

We hope you will take a clear anti-imperialist position on these questions: 1) that the U.S. and other occupying nations withdraw all their troops from Iraq and let the people there decide their own future; 2) that the movement recognize the validity of the resistance in Iraq; 3) that the movement show solidarity with soldiers of the occupying forces who refuse to participate in the war effort;

4) that activists everywhere join in coordinated anti-war efforts on the weekend of March 18-19 to end the occupation. This will strengthen the anti-imperialist, anti-war movement here at the very center of the problem.

The anti-war, anti-imperialist struggle is a critical part of the growing movement of the working class and all oppressed peoples for a society based on cooperation and sharing—not class domination, racism and exploitation. In the United States, this was made crystal clear during the New Orleans crisis after Hurricane Katrina. Hundreds died, mostly poor and African American, because the state was organized to protect the interests of a privileged few, not the needs of the people. They died for lack of food, clean water and transportation out of the flooded areas. The U.S. government refused emergency help offered by both Cuba and Venezuela. When U.S. troops were finally brought in, it was to repress the people as much as to help them. New Orleans was like a war zone, and Black people were treated like the enemy.

Today, the survivors of that disaster are organizing and demanding the right to return to their city and to determine how it will be rebuilt. They are demanding money for jobs and reconstruction, not for war.

Everyone knows that more and bigger “natural” disasters lie ahead as global warming wreaks major changes on our planet. Just as with the tsunami, the Caribbean and Gulf Coast hurricanes, the earthquake disaster in Pakistan, and the droughts and famines in Africa, it will be the poor, those without options, those already without adequate food and shelter, who bear the brunt of them.

But where the people have rebelled against imperialist control and reorganized their society to put human needs first—as in Cuba—the effects of such disasters have been mitigated. While the U.S. authorities, who boast of their awesome military strength, responded to Hurricane Katrina with total disorganization and chaos, Cuba has withstood many violent storms by mobilizing the people, thereby saving countless lives and showing it can be done. It is a lesson in what kind of society is really more powerful and can endure.

Those of you meeting in Bolivarian Venezuela can feel the spirit of revolutionary struggle that is inspiring new generations to stand up to imperialism and dare to hope for a better world. With capitalism and imperialism, there is no future. But with the revolutionary struggle of the people, we can build a new, socialist, humane world capable of overcoming every obstacle. □

## MUNDO OBRERO

# Detrás de la arenga de Bush, una economía turbia

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Los salarios, con el ajuste de inflación, están todavía por debajo de lo que estaban al comienzo de la recuperación en noviembre del 2001. La productividad, sin embargo, ha ascendido en un 13,5%. El crecimiento de los salarios ha sido acortado porque el 35% del crecimiento del ingreso total se ha ido hacia las ganancias de las corporaciones.

Los ingresos medios de los hogares con un ajuste inflacionario, han caído por 5 años consecutivos; Eran \$46.129 en 1999 y solo \$44.389 en el 2004. Por lo tanto se ve que el ingreso en los hogares ha caído en un promedio de casi \$2000.

En los últimos 4 años las deudas de los hogares en los Estados Unidos se han elevado un 35,7%, el nivel más alto de deuda en la historia, y ahora es de 115% del ingreso luego de pagar los impuestos. En promedio, la gente está pagando un 13,6% de su ingreso en intereses a los bancos y las compañías de tarjetas de crédito para poder cubrir esta deuda.

El porcentaje de la población que tiene empleo no se ha recuperado desde la última recesión y todavía está en un 1,3% más bajo que en marzo del 2001. Se han perdido más de 3 millones de empleos en la manufactura desde enero del 2000.

La pobreza creció del 11,3% en el año 2000 al 12,7% en el 2004 y la cifra de la gente que vive en la pobreza ha incrementado 5,4 millones en el mismo período. La tasa de pobreza entre l@s niñ@s ha subido del 16,2% en el año 2000 a 17,8% en el 2004. El costo del cuidado de salud en los hogares ha subido entre un 43 y un 45% entre los años 2000 y 2003. El año pasado el porcentaje de la gente que recibe cuidado de salud con subsidio de los empresarios bajó una vez más por el cuarto año consecutivo. Casi 3,7 millones menos de personas tuvieron seguro de salud en el año 2004 que en el año 2000.

Según la Fundación de la Familia Kaiser y el Fondo Educativo de Investigaciones de Salud, desde el año 2000 los patrones han incrementado el costo de los pagos de seguro para l@s trabajador@s en un promedio del 50% o cerca de \$1000 dólares por familia. Sólo un 63% de la población obrera tiene cobertura de salud, lo que quiere decir que más de un tercio de la población de edad laboral, o casi 45 millones de personas, no tienen ninguna. (Los Angeles Times, Oct. 10, 2004)

Y mientras que los patrones añadieron 2 millones de empleos en el año 2005, ellos también despidieron por lo menos a 1,56 millones entre enero y noviembre del 2005, según el Buró de Estadísticas Laborales. Y este cálculo es muy inexacto. Sólo menciona los despidos de 50 o más trabajadores, quienes no tienen empleos por 31 días o más y se basa totalmente en los testimonios de los patrones al Buró de Estadísticas Laborales

### ‘Recuperación’ para ricos

En los despachos ejecutivos y en los campos de golf hay una recuperación, y no debe producir sorpresa. El promedio de acciones Dow Jones finalmente ha subido a 11.000, el Producto Bruto Nacional (GDP por las siglas en inglés) incrementaron un 4,2 por ciento y, según la columna de Paul Krugman en el New York Times del 5 de diciembre, las ganancias han subido más de un 50 por ciento desde el último trimestre de 2001 mientras que los salarios y los sueldos subieron un 7 por

ciento durante el mismo período. Esta cifra de salarios y sueldos está distorsionada sin embargo, porque incluye los salarios de los ejecutivos en jefe de las corporaciones, y otros ejecutivos altamente pagados y gerentes de toda clase. Los salarios de obrer@s que no son supervisores, ajustados por la inflación, están ahora más bajos que cuando comenzó la “recuperación”.

Toda referencia a una “actuación fuerte” de la economía significa poco para l@s 35.000 trabajador@s de la GM que ahora enfrentan despidos en 10 fábricas o l@s 25.000 trabajador@s de la Ford, que también enfrentan la terminación de sus empleos. Ell@s y sus familias, al igual que las cientos de miles de personas en las comunidades donde están ubicadas las fábricas, están viviendo en un estado de ansiedad y tensión sobre los cierres inminentes. La GM y la Ford están a punto de la quiebra y posiblemente están mirando a las cortes de quiebras para que les ayuden de la misma manera que las cortes ayudaron a la aerolínea Delta. Están trabajando con la corporación productora de repuestos para autos Delphi para tratar de romper los contratos sindicales.

### El asalto de IBM contra las pensiones

La IBM anunció a principios de enero que va a congelar el fondo de pensiones en un valor de \$48 billones para sus 125.000 empleados comenzando en 2008 y empujarlos hacia planes de ahorros para la jubilación del tipo 401K.

En vez de poder depender de beneficios de jubilación fijos, pagados por la IBM basados en sus años de servicio a la compañía, realmente años de explotación, l@s trabajador@s tendrán que contribuir de sus propios salarios, en fondos utilizados por corredores de bolsa para jugar en la bolsa de valores o invertidos en cuentas del mercado monetario. Y esto en un momento cuando los “fundamentos” del mercado están inestables.

La IBM va a hacer contribuciones pequeñas a los planes del tipo 401K, pero estarán muy por debajo de las contribuciones a los beneficios de fondos de pensiones fijos que la compañía pagaba antes. IBM espera ahorrar entre \$450 y \$500 millones sólo este año y hasta \$3 mil millones entre los años 2006 y 2010.

Mientras que corporaciones como Delta, Delphi y Bethlehem Steel han utilizado a las cortes de quiebra para deshacerse de sus obligaciones con las pensiones para l@s trabajador@s, la IBM es la primera empresa grande que simplemente abandona sus pensiones como una norma a tal escala.

Por supuesto, la IBM es una compañía no sindicalizada y se siente libre para imponer unilateralmente lo que es en realidad un recorte salarial masivo. Los beneficios de pensiones son en verdad salarios aplazados, que la corporación tiene legalmente la obligación de mantener y proteger para l@s trabajador@s hasta su jubilación.

Este asalto frontal por la IBM es muy probable que sirva como una señal a otras empresas para que intenten escapar de sus planes fijos de pensiones.

### Los bancos y el fraude del Capítulo 11

Según un escrito de Mark Ruetter en el periódico Washington Post el 23 de

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## MUNDO OBRERO

# ‘La recuperación’ trae más sufrimiento para l@s trabajador@s

Continúa de página 14

octubre, “Alrededor de 150 corporaciones están ahora en alguna etapa de reorganización bajo la ley de quiebra, incluyendo a cuatro de las principales aerolíneas. Mientras que la posibilidad de que otras empresas grandes se amparen en el Capítulo 11 se vuelve en un tema discutido extensamente en los círculos corporativos, (‘posibles’ en la lista incluyen tales iconos como la General Motors y la Ford), las tácticas utilizadas en las cortes de quiebra están sacudiendo los cimientos del lugar americano de trabajo”.

Ruetter destaca que mientras las nuevas leyes de quiebra personal hacen más difícil para un individuo declarar la quiebra y borrar sus deudas provenientes de las tarjetas de crédito, que ahora llega aproximadamente a \$800 mil millones, las cortes de quiebra se están volviendo en un instrumento importante de las corporaciones para destruir los derechos de sus trabajador@s.

El fraude del Capítulo 11 es una conspiración entre los bancos, las corporaciones y las cortes en contra de la clase trabajadora. Delphi es un ejemplo gráfico de esta conspiración. Justamente antes de que la Delphi declarara su quiebra, no solamente había obtenido \$1,6 mil millones en efectivo disponible, sino que había asegurado \$2 mil millones en préstamos y crédito rotativo del Citigroup y el banco JP Morgan Chase.

La pregunta obvia que hace Ruetter era, “Si Delphi no tiene dinero por la carga salarial insostenible y el aumento de obligaciones en pensiones, ¿porqué están los bancos más grandes del país ofreciéndole hacer un préstamo con términos muy favorables?”

“La respuesta: Por la misma razón que el Bank of America, General Electric Capital Group, UBS Securities y ... ‘capitalistas rapaces como buitres’ han invertido miles de millones de dólares en compañías supuestamente en problemas que han entrado al Capítulo 11 desde 2001. Los inversionistas pueden recibir buenas ganancias del colapso de compañías establecidas ...”

Al hacer grandes préstamos, estos bancos se vuelven en acreedores protegidos, mientras que l@s trabajador@s se quedan sin protección. Los bancos pueden colaborar con los reorganizadores y las cortes para nulificar los contratos colectivos con sindicatos y obtener el dinero en efectivo de esas compañías mientras están en quiebra —y entonces volverse en jugadores claves una vez que emergen del Capítulo 11.

## Lucha global por las ganancias

Estos asaltos contra l@s trabajador@s están impulsados por la avaricia de ganancias y la necesidad de estos gigantes monopolios transnacionales de ubicarse bien en la cruel lucha que están conduciendo por la supervivencia y la dominación en los mercados globales. Están luchando una contra la otra para incrementar su rentabilidad, y lo hacen atacando a l@s trabajador@s. Bajando los salarios de cualquier modo, ya sea recortando pensiones y beneficios de salud o simplemente recortando los salarios y despidiendo a l@s trabajador@s, esta es la forma principal como las corporaciones capitalistas luchan entre sí. Ellos la llaman ser “competitivos”.

No es simplemente la codicia individual de los patronos que los impulsa a

atacar l@s trabajador@s. Es el sistema de ganancias en sí el que impulsa los ataques. La revolución científico-tecnológica ha acelerado la construcción de una red global de producción capitalista, con comunicación instantánea, transporte barato, control computerizado de producción, pedidos y envíos, y una división global sofisticada de división en el trabajo en la producción y en los servicios.

Cada avance en la tecnología y en la organización incrementa la productividad del trabajo, o en términos marxistas, incrementa el índice de explotación del trabajo y la ganancia potencial de los patronos. Pero con cada avance, hay que vender más mercancías a precios que obtengan ganancias. Esto significa que tienen que producirse en menos tiempo mientras que l@s trabajador@s trabajan con más velocidad, con más fuerza y por más tiempo, ya sea en máquinas nuevas y costosas, o en fábricas supermodernas manejadas por computadoras, o en líneas de producción aceleradas en plantas avícolas y plantas procesadoras de carne, en las minas, pesquerías y en casi todos los lugares de trabajo.

En la lucha global por las ganancias, todos los procesos laborales, ya sea en hospitales, oficinas o campos, son sometidos a presión cuando los patronos oponen a l@s trabajador@s un@s contra otr@s.

## La crisis de sobreproducción del capitalismo estadounidense

Pero en este proceso, la clase capitalista aumenta su propia crisis, la crisis de sobreproducción la cuál trata de vencer. La meta de cada facción capitalista es producir más, vender más, y reducir o eliminar la mano de obra. Esto resulta en una creciente crisis para l@s trabajador@s.

Después de las últimas cuatro crisis económicas, durante cada período de recuperación se ha hecho más y más difícil para el sistema, el absorber y reemplazar a l@s trabajador@s. Según estadísticas compiladas por el Instituto de la Política Económica, publicada el 6 de enero en un documento titulado “El estado del empleo”, las cifras de crecimiento de empleos por 49 meses en cada período de recuperación han disminuido:

- marzo 1975 a abril 1979: 16,7 por ciento
- noviembre 1982 a diciembre 1986: 13,2 por ciento
- marzo 1991 a abril 1995: 7,8 por ciento
- noviembre 2001 a diciembre 2005: 2,7 por ciento

Después de cada crisis se ha hecho cada vez más difícil para l@s trabajador@s encontrar trabajo. Con cada crisis las corporaciones gigantes se combinan. Despiden a nombre de promover “la eficiencia”. Hacen nuevas inversiones en maquinaria y tecnología economizadora de mano de obra para incrementar sus ganancias. Construyen medios de producción más y más poderosos.

Y tienen que vender más y más mercancía para recuperar el costo de las costosas tecnologías y fábricas, y tener todavía bastante dinero de sobra para sacar las ganancias fabulosas que son su razón de vivir. Las corporaciones chocan con la sobreproducción capitalista una y otra vez. Y cada vez es más difícil para ellos sacar ganancias.

Para mantener la producción ellos recurren al crédito, del gobierno federal

## Las cifras de crecimiento de empleos por 49 meses en cada período de recuperación han disminuido:

- marzo 1975 a abril 1979: .....16,7 por ciento
- noviembre 1982 a diciembre 1986: .....13,2 por ciento
- marzo 1991 a abril 1995: .....7,8 por ciento
- noviembre 2001 a diciembre 2005: .....2,7 por ciento

en la forma de tasas bajas de interés o del crédito del consumidor. Según el Wall Street Journal del 10 de enero, el crédito consumidor, sin contar las hipotecas, ya llega a \$2.1 trillones (millones de miles de millones).

En el ámbito de la producción y la explotación, ellos contratan la mano de obra en áreas del mundo donde hay sueldos muy bajos, enfrentan a l@s trabajador@s de otros países contra l@s trabajador@s de los Estados Unidos, y atacan los sindicatos, los sueldos, las pensiones, y los beneficios.

En la actualidad, las corporaciones han acumulado enormes ganancias que no pueden reinvertir. Las corporaciones estadounidenses son ricas en dinero en efectivo. Según el Wall Street Journal del 3 de noviembre, “Las pensiones, seguros y fondos mutualistas del mundo tienen \$46 trillones a su disposición, lo cual ha subido un tercio desde el año 2000. En el mismo período las reservas globales de los bancos-centrales se han duplicado llegando a \$4 trillones, y otros índices de capital disponible han subido también.”

El Journal señala que los inversores globales se están metiendo en una gama amplia de bienes arriesgados. Todos son especulativos y casi ninguno tiene que ver con la producción de riqueza. Ellos compran instrumentos financieros, bienes raíces, y deudas apoyadas por hipotecas, etc.

De esta riqueza, alguna sólo tiene valor de papel, el resto no es nada más que la ganancia sacada del proceso laboral, sacada de l@s trabajador@s en la forma de plusvalía. Está siendo guardada porque no se puede invertir en producción y sacarle ganancia. Las restricciones crecientes del mercado mundial sobre la economía cada vez más productiva de los Estados Unidos y de toda la clase capitalista mundial, tienden a limitar las inversiones. Ésto a su vez resulta en el desempleo y la explotación acrecentada para sacar más ganancias de l@s trabajador@s.

## Crisis aquí, guerras en el exterior

Esta lucha global por mercados, recursos e inversiones impulsa a los patronos a fomentar guerras. Eso es lo que impulsó a la administración de Bush a tratar de conquistar el petróleo de Irak. Eso es lo que les está impulsando tratar de conquistar a Irán y Corea de Norte, amenazar a China, tratar de derrocar a Hugo Chávez en Venezuela, y bloquear a Cuba.

Sus aventuras en el exterior son sencillamente una extensión de sus prácticas crueles, racistas y abusivas en este país. El racismo contra los iraquíes es sólo un

ejemplo de la manera en que el racismo y el chauvinismo en general han sido utilizados al servicio de la guerra imperialista, desde la guerra de 1898 con España cuando los Estados Unidos se apoderó de las Islas Filipinas, Cuba y Puerto Rico hasta la Guerra de Vietnam.

Esta situación no puede proseguir en una línea recta.

De hecho, l@s trabajador@s de la Delphi están empezando a luchar contra el intento de cortar drásticamente su sueldo y beneficios con la excusa de la ley de quiebras.

El sindicato de trabajador@s del tránsito (TWU) en la ciudad de Nueva York tomó una posición histórica contra el mismo centro del capital financiero estadounidense en Wall Street y dejaron sus puestos de trabajo para parar el asalto contra sus pensiones y luchar por dignidad. Convocaron a una huelga retando a la Ley Taylor que prohíbe las huelgas por empleados de la ciudad, y confrontaron a los tenedores de bonos de la Autoridad Metropolitana del Tránsito (MTA), al alcalde y al gobernador del estado, feroces adversarios de los sindicatos.

Los conserjes en Tejas han organizado recientemente y han ganado una victoria sin precedencia.

La clase capitalista y su sistema han asegurado que la lucha de clases se agudice y sea más grande en el porvenir. Es el renacimiento de la lucha de la clase trabajadora lo que llevará a toda la sociedad hacia adelante.

Los patronos estadounidenses han tenido un período relativo de tranquilidad laboral por varias décadas. Pero en su sed insaciable por ganancias y su necesidad de vencer la crisis de sobreproducción, ellos inevitablemente despertarán una respuesta de la clase trabajadora multinacional que irá por el camino de la rebelión y abrirá una contraofensiva.

La contradicción entre el gran aparato mundial operado socialmente por una producción coordinada, por una parte, y la propiedad privada de la economía mundial por un grupo pequeño de multimillonarios corporativos por otra, sólo puede ser vencida a través de la lucha. Los medios para producir toda esta gran riqueza han sido construidos por la clase trabajadora, no por los explotadores. L@s trabajador@s deben apoderarse de los medios de producción y usarlos no para la ganancia privada, sino para satisfacer las necesidades humanas—para el cuidado de la salud, la vivienda, la educación, los empleos y todo lo necesario para llevar una vida decente. Eso es la esencia precisa del socialismo. □

## NUEVA ORLEÁNS

# El pueblo detiene a la ciudad en su plan de destruir el distrito 'Lower 9th'

By LeiLani Dowell

En un evidente intento de excluir a personas pobres y negras de los planes de reedificación, cuatro meses después del Huracán Katrina, funcionarios de la ciudad de Nueva Orleans procuran demoler los hogares del "Lower 9th" —un barrio de concentración negra en el área, y también uno de los lugares más pobres— aunque muchos residentes hayan sido incapaces de volver al área desde que el huracán golpeó.

Una declaración hecha por el colectivo "Common Ground" describe el área así: "El 'Lower 9th' personifica el corazón de una comunidad que evolucionó durante el tiempo, de familias afroamericanas de muchas generaciones, los residentes comparten lo que llega a ser cada vez más escaso a través del país, una devoción y un orgullo por sus hogares y sus vecindarios."

En enero 5, activistas de la comunidad y abogados del Fondo de Ayuda a Víctimas del Huracán (PHRF por sus siglas en inglés) protestaron por los planes que cursan en la alcaldía, los cuales son la demolición rápida del "Lower 9th". El Fondo había recibido una información de que los funcionarios de la ciudad avanzaban con sus planes para demoler— en infracción de una orden temporaria dada el 28 de diciembre que prohibía la destrucción de los hogares hasta que se hiciera una revisión por el tribunal de distrito civil. La rápida respuesta de los activistas y abogados forzó la ciudad a retroceder, parando la demolición por ese día y con-

cordando a una reunión al día siguiente con el Juez de distrito Martin Feldman.

En diciembre los abogados de la PHRF sometieron un pleito de clase contra la ciudad que llegó al tribunal federal esta semana. Ellos afirman en el pleito que la ciudad violaría el derecho que se tiene a un proceso legal si destruyen la propiedad sin notificar o buscar el permiso de sus propietarios. El juez emitió una orden de restricción que frena la demolición, en respuesta a este pleito y la ciudad ha acordado no derribar los hogares hasta que el tribunal federal vea el caso el 19 de enero.

Mientras tanto, reaccionando a la indignación pública por sus decisiones, el gobierno de la ciudad continúa hablando acerca de cuáles hogares han dispuesto para la demolición. Hace dos semanas, el Oficial de Tecnología Greg Meffert, del Departamento de la Seguridad y Permisos dijo que alrededor de 2.500 hogares serían derribados dentro de pocas semanas. En enero 5, la ciudad hizo pública una lista más pequeña, de 1.957 hogares en peligro inminente de desplome, sin embargo ese mismo día el Alcalde de Nueva Orleans, Ray Nagin dijo a la prensa que las autoridades planeaban proseguir con la demolición de menos de 100 de esas casas— "ésas que se destruirán, son aquellas que tienen daños severos."

Meffert dijo a los concejales ese día que el número de casas era cerca de 120. De acuerdo al periódico Times Picayune "luego de él hablar, la abogada en jefe de la ciudad recordó a los concejales que una ley de la ciudad permite que las estruc-

turas en peligro inminente de desplome sean derribadas sin el consentimiento o notificación a su dueño. Una portavoz de Nagin también dijo luego "que la ciudad no necesita un permiso del dueño para derribar algunos hogares."

### El papel de FEMA en la demolición

Parte de la prisa por derribar hogares, sin tener en cuenta a los propietarios que ya han sufrido tanto, es que la Agencia Federal de Administración de Emergencias (FEMA por las siglas en inglés), ha puesto una fecha límite, el 30 de junio, para FEMA pagar por el costo total de la remoción de escombros.

La demolición de hogares en una de las áreas más pobres de la ciudad viene también a la vez cuando funcionarios del estado indican abiertamente que ellos no enfocarán sus esfuerzos en la recuperación de esas áreas. En un artículo del 6 de enero, el New York Times informa que "funcionarios del estado advierten que algunos vecindarios en terrenos bajos puede que no tengan derecho a reedificarse con ayuda federal." El artículo cita a Sean Reilly de la Autoridad de Recuperación de Louisiana diciendo, "Alguien tiene que ser duro, pararse, y decir la verdad. Cada vecindario en Nueva Orleans no será capaz de regresar seguro y viable. La ARL habla la verdad con el dinero que controla."

El artículo del Times dice que las autoridades acordaron no gastar dinero en reedificar lo que no se conforma con los mapas federales de inundación. Por esto, el costo

de reconstruir para los que viven en áreas como el Lower 9th es muy alto, pues se tendría que construir por encima del nivel de inundación— lo cual aumentaría decenas de miles de dólares, haciendo virtualmente imposible para familias de bajos ingresos reedificar su hogar.

Brandon Darby, de Common Ground y organizador del barrio, explica la realidad de la situación en una declaración: "La Parroquia de Bernard está a menos de dos millas. Hay partes que se dañaron tanto como en el Lower 9th. ¿Por qué obtienen las comunidades predominantemente blancas remolques de FEMA y la libertad de decidir lo que sucede a su propiedad privada, cuando los residentes del Lower 9th predominantemente negros tienen a empresarios ricos que deciden acerca del futuro de sus hogares y comunidades?"

Los activistas de la comunidad y los abogados demandan que todos los residentes reciban notificación de la demolición, y que ninguna demolición prosiga a menos que los residentes den el permiso— "después que hayan tenido la oportunidad de evaluar su propiedad, y hayan podido tomar las decisiones acerca de cómo proceder," según dice una declaración del Fondo de Ayuda.

Bill Quigley, un profesor de Leyes de la Universidad de Loyola que ayudó a preparar la demanda, expresó la determinación de los residentes en el Estándar Nuevo: "Si perdemos en el tribunal, usted sabe, las personas no pararán de resistir. Ellos tratarán y pararán las excavadoras por cualquier medio necesario." □

## Detrás de la arenga de Bush, una economía turbia 'La recuperación' trae más sufrimiento para los trabajadores

Por Fred Goldstein

Un día después de que el reporte sobre los empleos fuera publicado por el Departamento del Trabajo, El Presidente George W. Bush se dirigió a los asistentes en el Club Económico de Chicago diciendo, "La economía americana entra al año 2006 con mucho vigor. ...Somos productivos. Somos inventivos. Somos empresariales".

La base para esta exaltación cuidadosamente formulada casi no tiene sustrato: un ascenso en los empleos nuevos de 108.000 en el mes y una baja en la cifra oficial de desempleo del 5% al 4,9%.

En una movida que tuvo un toque al estilo de Karl Rove, Bush envió al vicepresidente Dick Cheney y un grupo de su gabinete a una gira para hablar sobre la economía y tratar de hacer que estas cifras anémicas aparezcan como un camino hacia un futuro mejor para la economía del 2006. Cheney fue a una fábrica de motocicletas Harley Davidson en Kansas City, en Missouri, el secretario del Tesoro

John Snow al mercado de acciones de Nueva York, el secretario del Comercio Carlos Gutiérrez a Louisville, Kentucky, el secretario del Trabajo Elaine Chao a Baltimore y el secretario de Energía Sam Bodman a Pittsburg, en un gran esfuerzo de tratar de levantar los bajos puntos de Bush en los sondeos.

Bush fue forzado a moverse por el resultado del sondeo Gallup, el cual encontró que 63% de la población ve a la economía como "mediocre a muy pobre" y el 58% dice que las condiciones económicas se están empeorando. Así que la creciente economía, para la mayoría de la población no es más real que las armas de destrucción masiva en Irak.

Por supuesto que ni Bush ni sus emisarios mencionaron que las cifras de creación de empleos son la mitad de lo que los economistas de Wall Street habían pronosticado. Ni tampoco mencionaron que se necesitan 150.000 empleos por mes sólo para mantenerse al nivel del crecimiento de la población. Y tampoco mencionaron que la cifra total de desempleo es

aún menor porque más y más gente ha dejado de buscar empleos y por ello no son contadas en la fuerza laboral, o sólo pueden encontrar empleos a tiempo parcial. En el mundo de la clase obrera, empleada y desempleada—la gente que crea la riqueza y las ganancias están siendo desposeídas por los banqueros y los patrones—el cuadro no es de color rosa.

### No hay recuperación para los obreros

Los salarios crecieron en un 3,1% pero la inflación creció un 3,5%. Esto es un recorte en los salarios de un 0,4%. El promedio de hora trabajada bajó un 0,2% a 33,7 horas y el ingreso promedio semanal es de \$550.66. Esto no toma en cuenta los cientos de miles de obreros y otros trabajadores indocumentados, cuyos bajísimos salarios ni siquiera se reportan.

Poco o nada fue dicho sobre la manera en que el racismo y el sexismo se reflejan en las estadísticas. Algo que raramente se menciona en el reporte mensual del

Departamento del Trabajo es el hecho de que el desempleo entre la población africana-americana es más del doble que la de los obreros blancos, un 9,3% en comparación a un 4,2%; el desempleo entre la población latina es un 6%; y entre las mujeres de por lo menos 20 años de edad, es un 8,5%. El desempleo entre adolescentes es de un 13,4%. No hay estadísticas para las cifras de desempleo de obreros gay, lesbianas, bisexuales o transsexuales.

Por supuesto que aún estas cifras oficiales son sospechosas, dándose el hecho de que la mitad de hombres africanos-americanos en el barrio de Harlem en Nueva York, se sabe que están desempleados.

La masa de trabajadores está sufriendo y no sólo por un mes de la economía capitalista. Aquí hay algunas de las cifras compiladas por el Presidente Lawrence Michel y el Director Ross Eisenbrey del Instituto para la Política Económica publicada el 21 de diciembre.

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