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Hugo Chavez with Cindy Sheehan, left, and Elma Beatriz Rosado, the widow of Puerto Rican nationalist Filiberto Ojeda.

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Movement responds as

Bush says Iraq war will go on

International protests set for anniversary of war, March 18-19

By LeiLani Dowell

As the U.S.-British occupation of Iraq grinds on and the numbers of dead and wounded mount, President George W. Bush and Democratic Party leaders, the supposed opposition, continue to reject the growing call to bring the troops home.

In Bush's State of the Union address to Congress on Jan. 31, he stuck to his "stay the course" position and claimed he has a "plan for victory" despite all evidence to the contrary. Meanwhile, anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan, mother of slain soldier Casey Sheehan, was arrested for "unlawful conduct" when she tried to attend the event wearing a T-shirt that read "2,245 dead—How many more?" That number refers only to U.S. dead.

Sheehan had just come from a press conference called the "People's State of the Union," which included Congressperson John Conyers and New Orleans activist Malik Rahim.

Activists across the country protested during Bush's address. Over 1,000 people rallied near New York's Times Square in an action called by World Can't Wait, which has also called a demonstration in Washington, D.C., for Feb. 4.

The World Social Forum has called for coordinated international protests against the war on March 18-19, the third anniversary of the U.S. attack. One group already planning such protests is the Troops Out Now Coalition, which will focus on military recruitment centers.

TONC said Bush's speech outlined "the same brutal plan that he has been following for three years. He did not mention the more than 100,000 Iraqi people who have died as a result of the U.S. invasion and occupation. Nor did he address the fact that every reason he gave to justify the war has now been exposed as a deliberate lie. Despite his talk of 'freedom' and 'democracy,' the ghastly torture chambers of Abu Ghraib, the continued bombing of Iraqi homes, the use of depleted uranium, phosphorus, napalm and other illegal weapons of mass destruction, all reveal the brutal nature of the war against the people of Iraq."



New York protest during Bush's speech.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

In New York, TONC will hold morning coordinated actions at local recruitment centers on March 18. They will later converge for a mass protest at the recruiting center in Times Square. The coalition has vowed to uphold its right to freedom of speech by protesting there, with or without a permit from the New York Police Department.

TONC's call to action stresses the need for unity in the movement to stop the war; the need to link the struggles of poor, oppressed and working people across the United States to the struggles of poor and working people abroad, fully embracing both struggles as one; and the need for an independent movement that does not rely on the Democrats, who have, at best, protested the tactics and strategy of the war but not the war itself.

For more information on March 18-19 activities, visit www.troopsoutnow.org. □



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New study asks

Who will New Orleans be rebuilt for?

By Monica Moorehead

An important study released on Jan. 26 has confirmed what has been known for some time: the people most impacted by the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans are African-American and/or indigent. "The Impact of Katrina: Race and Class in Storm-Damaged Neighborhoods" (www.s4.brown.edu/Katrina/report.pdf) is a 16-page study headed up by John R. Logan, a sociology professor and director of Spatial Structures in the Social Sciences at Brown University.

It raises important questions such as "Whose city will be rebuilt?" Most of the data for this study came from the 2000 U.S. Census and the federal government's damage assessment maps.

One of the main conclusions of the study is that 80 percent of the Black population in New Orleans may not return, either because their homes will not be rebuilt, money to relocate them back to New Orleans is lacking, or they are deciding—or being forced—to stay in other cities.

The findings also show that upwards of 50 percent of working class whites might not return either. The bottom line is that if the local ruling class and local and state government officials get their way, New Orleans will be turned into a city catering overwhelmingly to affluent whites and big business.

Before Katrina struck the Gulf Coast last August and exposed compromised levees, 70 percent of the close to 487,000 residents of New Orleans were Black. The Jan. 26 study projects that the population could permanently lose 140,000, mainly Black, residents.

"The suffering from the storm certainly cut across racial and class lines," said Logan. "But the odds of living in a damaged area were clearly much greater for blacks, residents who rented their homes, and poor people. In these respects, the most socially vulnerable residents also turned out to be most exposed to Katrina."

The study offers statistics to substantiate its claims.

Those populating the damaged areas were nearly half Black—45.8 percent, compared to 26.4 percent in the undamaged areas. They lived in rental housing—45.7 percent compared to 30.9 percent. They disproportionately lived below the poverty line—20.9 percent compared to 15.3 percent. They were more likely to be unemployed—7.6 percent compared to 6.0 percent.

The politically appointed Bring New Orleans Back Commission recently proposed a four-month moratorium on rebuilding in the most damaged, poor areas. This has served to discourage residents from moving back to their neighborhoods.

Congress passed a \$29 billion aid package in December on top of the \$66 billion emergency bill passed last September for the Gulf region. It is to be shared by Mississippi and Louisiana, and amounts to a drop in the bucket compared to the real needs. By contrast, hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent by the U.S. government on the war and occupation of Iraq.

Housing crisis intensifies

Right now, an estimated 25,000 families are staying in FEMA-sponsored hotel rooms, the majority in Texas and Louisiana. FEMA is planning to cut off payments for these rooms in early February, which will deepen an already major catastrophe for the evacuees. In New



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Katrina survivors at a New Orleans City Hall rally on Dec 10.

Orleans, Katrina evacuees are now being evicted from hotels to make room for tourists coming to Mardi Gras, which begins in mid-February.

Both FEMA and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are attempting to drive a wedge between Katrina evacuees and long-time residents of Baton Rouge by driving up housing and rental prices. Baton Rouge was already in the throes of a housing shortage before Katrina hit and now landlords and the government are thirsting to make more profits off the misery this disaster has created.

When current one-year leases expire, increases in rental and housing prices that are beyond the means of these residents will automatically go into effect. Homeless shelters and food pantries in Baton Rouge and elsewhere are finding it harder and harder to meet the demands that the Katrina disaster and government negligence have caused.

New Orleans activists, many of them housing advocates, are organizing a campaign against Home Depot and the Housing Authority of New Orleans, which comes under the auspices of HUD. HANO signed a lease with Home Depot allowing the multi-billion-dollar company to take over six acres of vacant land, which had been used as a site for FEMA trailers and long-term housing for Katrina residents.

According to the New Orleans Housing Emergency Action Team (NOHEAT), this lease violates the promise made by city officials to use all available land for temporary housing for Katrina survivors. Home Depot has already created a temporary building supply store, along with a large tent, with the long-term goal of building another permanent store there. Because the lease lasts 364 days, Home Depot is not legally obligated to call a public hearing—a requirement when leases are for 365 days or longer.

Less than 1,000 of the 9,000 residents with section 8 vouchers have been able to find low-cost housing in New Orleans.

This important study, along with the day-to-day developments surrounding the on-going plight of the Katrina survivors, not only continues to expose that racism and poverty exist inside the U.S. but also that the struggle for real justice in the Gulf Coast region and elsewhere is primary. □



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WW CALENDAR

LOS ANGELES

Sat., Feb. 11
Black History Month Forum.
Katrina: The Struggle for Justice
Five Months Later. Featuring:
Larry Holmes, co-founder, Katrina
Solidarity Network, and secretariat
member, Workers World Party. 4-6
p.m. At 5274 W. Pico Blvd #203.
For info (323) 936-7266.

Sat., Feb. 18
Eyewitness report and video from
the World Social Forum held in
Caracas, Venezuela by John
Parker, West Coast coordinator of
International Action Center. 4-6
p.m. At 5274 W. Pico Blvd #203.
For info (323) 936-7266.

Thu., Feb. 23
IAC filmshowing: Paul Robeson:
Here I Stand. 7 p.m. At 5274 W.
Pico Blvd #203. For info (323)
936-7266.

NEW YORK

Fri., Feb. 3
Workers World Party Forum:
Michael Kramer on Hamas victory
in the Palestinian elections; Julie
Fry on Bush's state-of-war
speech; Jesse Lokahi Heiwa on
the Leonard Peltier case. 7 p.m.
(Dinner at 6:30)
At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl.,
Manhattan. For info phone
(212) 627-2994.

Sat., Feb. 11
Studying Marxism for today's
struggles. "What is Materialist
Dialectics. Part 2." Taught by Hillel
Cohen. (You can attend Part 2
without having attended Part 1.)
Cohen is the author of "Science
and Change: An Introduction to
dialectical materialism." 3-5 p.m.
At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl.,
Manhattan. For info phone
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Workers World

55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: (212) 627-2994
Fax: (212) 675-7869
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Editor: Deirdre Griswold
Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie
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National Office
55 W. 17 St.,
New York, NY 10011
(212) 627-2994;
Fax (212) 675-7869
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 424,
Atlanta, GA 30301
(404) 627-0815
atlanta@workers.org
Baltimore
426 E. 31 St.,
Baltimore, MD 21218
(410) 235-7040
baltimore@workers.org
Boston
284 Armory St.,
Boston, MA 02130
(617) 983-3835
Fax (617) 983-3836
boston@workers.org
Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.,
Buffalo, NY 14202
(716) 566-1115
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
(773) 381-5839
Fax (773) 761-9330
chicago@workers.org
Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
phone (216) 531-4004
cleveland@workers.org
Denver
denver@workers.org
Detroit
5920 Second Ave.,
Detroit, MI 48202
(313) 831-0750
detroit@workers.org
Houston
P.O. Box 130322,
Houston, TX 77219
(713) 861-5965
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
5274 West Pico Blvd.,
Suite 203
Los Angeles, CA 90019
(323) 936-1416
la@workers.org
Philadelphia
P.O. Box 9202,
Philadelphia, PA 19139
(610) 453-0490
phila@workers.org
Richmond, Va.
P.O. Box 14602,
Richmond, VA 23221
richmond@workers.org
Rochester, N.Y.
(585) 436-6458
rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
3930 Oregon St.,
Suite 230
San Diego, CA 92104
(619) 692-4496
San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco,
CA 94103
(415) 561-9752
sf@workers.org
State College, Pa.
100 Grandview Rd.,
State College,
PA 16801
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Washington, D.C.
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WW interview with Black historian & activist

'Belafonte told the truth'

Tony Van Der Meer is an adjunct professor of Africana Studies at the University of Massachusetts and an adjunct professor within the Social Science Department at Roxbury Community College in Boston. He is co-chair of the Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee in Boston. Van Der Meer is co-editor with Jemadari Kamara of "State of the Race," an anthology on the Afro-Cuba diaspora. He is also co-founder and program director of Cultural Cafe, an independent alternative cultural venue of art and politics. This interview was conducted by Bryan Pfeifer of the Boston WW bureau over the course of December 2005 and January 2006. More of this interview will appear in upcoming issues.



WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN
Tony Van Der Meer speaks at Nov. 26 Day of outreach rally to build for Rosa Parks Day.

lives on their own terms. It is to clarify the contradictions of the enslavement of African people and a reminder of our continuing struggle to control the cultural, political and economic realities of our lives as human beings, instead of being viewed as Budweiser's great kings and queens of Africa, and having bling bling and a swimming pool in our living room.

Harry Belafonte, while in Venezuela Jan. 8, said,

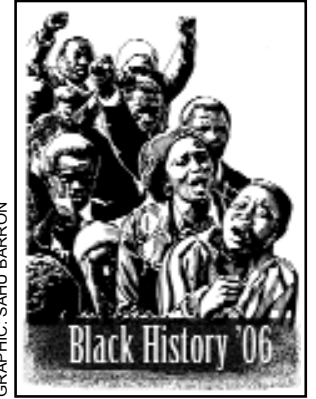
"No matter what the greatest tyrant in the world, the greatest terrorist in the world, George W. Bush, says, we're here to tell you: Not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of the American people ... support your revolution."

God bless Harry Belafonte, may he live a long life for telling the truth. Essentially Belafonte is saying what Martin Luther King Jr. said about the U.S. government being "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world," and you can modernize that and place a cap on top of "W's" head as the greatest leader of tyranny and terrorism of the world. The American people aren't as dumb as

Bush and his corporate/media backers want us to believe. When ordinary American workers get their paychecks (those who still get them), they know they have been had. They know this when they get sick; they know this when their kids go to poor schools. Many of them can see that the revolution occurring in Venezuela is in the greatest interest of ordinary working people.

You often talk about the contributions of women in the civil rights and Black liberation movements.

That's simple. It's not a question of what came first, it's a question of what exists. Black women in the civil rights and Black liberation movements are a very important and significant component of those struggles. Living in a racist and sexist society, it is ever more important to be conscious and keep in the forefront of our work the triple oppression of Black women via race, class and gender. Otherwise, as men we are prone to internalize the "inferiority" of women instead of seeing and working with them as equal partners in our struggle. It is the revolutionary duty of men (and women as well) to struggle against the internalized racist, sexist and class "inferiorities" we have developed living in a male-dominated, white-supremacist capitalist world. □



GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

The late Lou Rawls 1933-2006

Following are excerpts from a Jan. 6 column.

His smooth voice, laced with Chicago-bred soul, and his down-home delivery, explains why he has sold over 40 million albums.

His songs were mostly ballads, love croonings, mixed with occasional social commentary as deep and as rich as that wonderful sound of his.

Lou Rawls, after nearly 73 years of life, sings no more.

But though he may be here no longer, his voice, his soulful singing, will continue to be a global presence for generations. His hits, like "Tobacco Road," "You'll Never Find," "Love is a Hurtin' Thing," "Groovy People," and "Natural Man" found homes in the music collections of millions.

His impassioned singing went straight to the heart.

Even though I acquired "Tobacco Road" shortly after its release, and thought it was a hit, a hidden, lesser-known gem caught my ear. In the cut "My Ancestors," one found a Lou Rawls that was rarely featured on top-40 or even urban radio. Yet, when news came of him passing, these lyrics leapt back to memory, flooding back from over a quarter of a century, with the poignant refrain:

**"My ancestors, were kings of old;
They ruled the world,
and all of its gold—
But, look at me; Oh-oh-oh—
Look at me; Look at me. ...
My ancestors, would fight the sun,
before they bowed down, to anyone—
Oh, but look at me; Look at me—
Look at me ..."**

His lyrical juxtapositions between the glories of Black antiquity, compared with the emptiness of the present, tore at the soul. In songs such as these, Lou Rawls expressed his pride in Black folks, and African origins, themes that were by no means common—then, or now.

His later work over the past two decades consisted not only of his trademark music, but of his prodigious fundraising telethons for the United Negro College Fund, raising over \$200 million for Black colleges.

In the age of soul, and R'n'B, Lou Rawls made wonderful, memorable music.

It will be remembered for ages to come.



Music and the struggle against slavery

By Larry Hales

"Little of beauty has America given the world save the rude grandeur God himself stamped on her bosom; the human spirit in this new world has expressed itself in vigor and ingenuity rather than in beauty. And so by fateful chance the Negro folk song—the rhythmic cry of the slave—stands today not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side of the seas."

—W.E.B. Du Bois

These words, like the music that they hearken to, were born of degradation and struggle—the former, inevitably, giving rise to the latter as human possibilities have and will always give rise to a fight-back spirit.

In DuBois' classic book, "The Souls of Black Folk," in the chapter titled "Sorrow Songs," he writes about the religious melodies that were created by Southern slaves and how those songs spoke of justice and a perception that slave and master would one day meet, with the old realities tossed aside, and that their meeting would be as equals.

Black religious music has been thoroughly studied throughout the history of this country, but what is less talked or written about is the defiant nature of many of these songs. Religion is the "opiate of the masses" as Karl Marx wrote in the 19th century, in most cases creating an invisible entity or entities above and beyond the human world and putting the possibilities of future societies in the hands of those entities.

Religion under Western-dominated class society has generally disempowered workers and oppressed peoples. In particular, during the period of U.S. slavery, the

white masters figured out that the slaves would always desire and fight for freedom and equality unless they could be convinced that they were inferior to whites and be diverted to look for solutions within a mythical world instead of spontaneous and organized mass uprisings.

Hence, a conscious decision was made by the slave masters to teach their racist view of religion to the slaves. Slaves were violently denied real education and were forcefully indoctrinated with the religion of their murderous, slave-holding captors under the guise of Christianity.

Despite the mental and physical brutality of slavery, if one were to look at some of the slave songs, "Oh Freedom" for instance, and study the words, they reveal the resolve of the throngs of African slaves in North America. The song starts with: "Oh Freedom, Oh Freedom, Oh Freedom over me, and before I be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave..." These words speak of a fighting spirit and history attests to this.

The music of Black people in the U.S. was created during slavery. The field holler started as a way of communicating with other slaves, and later became a vehicle to pass away the brutal conditions of work in the field under the lash, later evolving into a rhythmic syncopation. This tradition of song was brought over from Africa, where song and dance were seldom used for entertainment but as a part of ritual ceremonies.

The plantation masters forbade the slaves from holding on to their African culture, making sure to split up tribal affiliations using slave auctions, but some West



WEB DuBois in 1903, above.
WISC.UDU

Former slave learning to read in 1870, right.
ROOTSWEB.COM



African cultures were similar enough, and the resolve of the Africans was greater than the brutality of the slave masters.

The music was often coded when it was used for communication, and this was one of the many ways that illuminate the defiance of the slaves. Just as some historians have purposely tried to paint the slaves as meek and docile, history can only be obscured for so long.

Many slave rebellions took place. Gabriel Prosser and others planned a rebellion in Virginia in 1800 and Charles Deslondes in the same year led an uprising; Denmark Vesey and a large number of enslaved men and women planned a rebellion in Charleston, N.C., in 1822; Nat Turner and his rebels killed over 50 slave masters in Southampton, Va., in 1831, and there was the multi-racial attack on Harper's Ferry in 1859 led by John Brown. Along with these rebellions there were work stoppages and everyday acts of defiance.

Black music has been defined by the struggle for freedom and self-determination, from the defiant sorrow of anti-slavery songs like "Oh Freedom" to Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Fives' rap song, the "Message." □

WE WANT FREEDOM

A Life in the Black Panther Party

by Mumia Abu-Jamal

An important history of the founding of the Philadelphia Black Panther Party.

Mumia, known to the world as a wrongly convicted political prisoner held for 22 years in Pennsylvania's death row, is exacting and luminous in his history and his analysis of the Black liberation struggle. South End Press, 2004, 320 pages.

At www.Leftbooks.com it is \$18.



MTA renews its attack on NYC transit union

By Milt Neidenberg
New York

Once again, the Metropolitan Transit Authority is trying to provoke Transport Workers Union Local 100 and its 33,700 members.

Blinded by arrogance and self-serving interests, the transit bosses have interpreted the rejection of a tentative contract by a slim majority of the workers as a sign of weakness and division. The MTA, joined by Gov. George Pataki and other political cronies, crowed that a split had occurred in the multinational union.

Split? Formally, yes. Fundamentally, no.

Two-thirds of the total membership participated in the Jan. 20 vote. The outcome was 11,234 to reject the contract and 11,227 to accept. Those who voted yes saw that the MTA had grudgingly added a host of benefits above what was in its earlier "final offer." The members who rejected the contract never denied that the benefits won were a good deal. They were concerned that a 1.5 percent assessment on wages for health care costs would dilute the gains.

These are honest differences among union members in evaluating the merits of the contract. Roughly half rejected the recommendations of their leaders, the Local 100 Executive Board, which had voted 37 to 4 to ratify the agreement. The rank and file disagreed among themselves by the slim margin of seven votes.

Two fundamental issues define the relationship between the two groups: conditions on the job and the MTA's behavior.

Local 100 President Roger Toussaint characterized the latter as "plantation justice." Racism takes various forms in a union that, like Local 100, is made up overwhelmingly of Black, Latin@ and other oppressed nationalities. The fight against racism forges unity at the workplace.

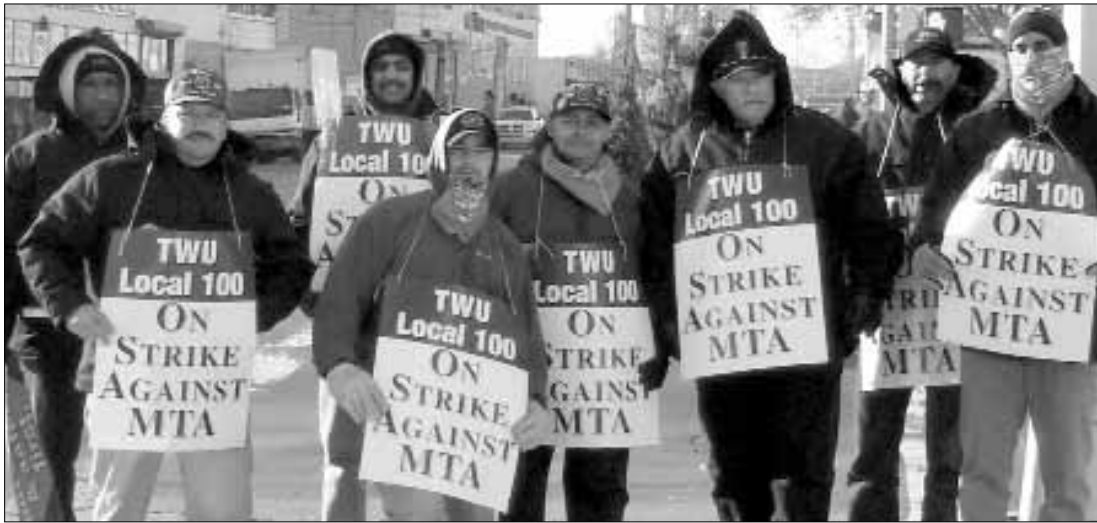
Being faced by a work environment fraught with danger above and below ground creates a sense of comradeship. Transit workers live in an atmosphere of diesel exhaust, dirt, steel dust and other noxious agents. They daily face the risk of accidents and injuries, as well as threats to their long-term health. This is the culture of transit workers, who spend most of their waking hours on the job and getting to and from the workplace.

The day the contract was rejected, the MTA called on the New York State Public Employees Relations Board (PERB), an agency administering the infamous anti-union Taylor Law, to revoke the union's dues checkoff. It formally charged TWU Local 100 with calling an illegal strike.

On Jan. 25, five days later, the MTA included in its petition to the PERB a declaration that "a voluntary resolution of the contract cannot be effected" and called for binding arbitration. It proposed a contract that would wipe out most of the gains the union had won earlier.

Toussaint, who had rejected binding arbitration, urged the MTA to return to the table and bargain in good faith. The proposal fell on deaf ears. The MTA calculated this was the moment to wipe out the workers' gains in the tentative agreement.

There have been mixed reviews by media journalists, consultants and academics following the outrageous MTA



Local 100 transit workers on the picket line, Jan. 22.

declaration of war against Local 100. Bruce C. McIver, a former chief of labor relations for both the city and the MTA, is an example. McIver told the press that "The MTA has the upper hand right now. ... Binding arbitration carries risks for the union. Rather than help Roger to solve this problem, this seems to put him in a much tougher position."

But McIver warned that the MTA's strategy could backfire. "The danger is that they can lose public support if it looks like they're being gratuitously provocative. ... At the end of the day, they have to remember that these guys run the trains. It's hard work to heal the wounds after a strike. The angrier the work force is, the harder it will be to heal." (New York Times, Jan. 26)

His message to the MTA, Governor Pataki and billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg: Be careful what you wish for.

MTA provoked strike

From day one, the MTA had made a sham of the collective bargaining process. It was the three-day strike that brought them to their senses. Following the tentative contract, Governor Pataki called it a reward for criminal behavior and began to sabotage the agreement. He challenged the payback of pension overcharges to 22,000 transit workers that would amount to more than \$131 million. In 2001 and 2002, he had vetoed bills that would have provided pension refunds of overpayments between 1994 and 2001.

Peter Kalikow, appointed by Pataki to head the MTA, is a real estate tycoon and former owner of the racist, right-wing New York Post before the current reactionary owner, Rupert Murdoch. Though he signed off on pension retroactivity, he began to sow doubts among the rank and file that Pataki could veto it. Kalikow was Pataki's co-conspirator from the get-go in provoking the strike.

Fight the Taylor Law!

For now, the struggle is moving back to the courts and to PERB, the agency that conducts the administrative procedures set up under the Taylor Law. The TWU said in response to the MTA's attack that its extreme provocation helped to cause and prolong the strike.

The Brennan Center for Justice, a public-interest law firm, has filed a brief in federal court contending that the fines administratively imposed on the union were unconstitutional because it was entitled to a jury trial under the Sixth Amendment. In a separate contempt case, Local 100 has appealed a state judge's decision to fine it up to \$3 million, Local 726 up to \$150,000 and Local 1056 up to \$225,000. (New York Times, Jan. 28) The

last two locals were still working for private bus companies at the time of the strike.

Toussaint charged in state court that the MTA also broke the law when it imposed a two-tier system on pension contributions for new hires.

History—a guide to action

Being right is no guarantee that TWU Local 100 can win in the courts or with PERB. It will take a mass mobilization of the workers and allies in the labor movement to reverse the anti-union attack. The shackles of the Taylor Law must be removed from public sector workers. The transit workers must end up with a decent contract, dignity and respect.

On Jan. 1 exactly 40 years ago, 35,000 transit workers walked off the job and shut the city down for 12 days. They struck in defiance of the Condon-Wadlin Act, a state law that forbade strikes in the public sector under penalty of dismissal and a three-year pay freeze for those reinstated after they were fired or jailed.

The labor movement closed ranks and fought back. The TWU, led by President Mike Quill and the AFL-CIO, mobilized over 15,000 members to converge on City Hall and demand the penalties be removed. Mayor John Lindsay agreed to waive the penalties and, backed by Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, decided to terminate Condon-Wadlin. One year later, in 1967, the Taylor Law was passed. The municipal unions filled the old Madison Square Garden in May 1967 to condemn it.

In the January 2006 issue of Local 100 Express, headlined "Countdown to Success," the words of the local's founding president seem as alive as they were 40 years ago. Quill, an Irish revolutionary in exile, had been jailed during the strike. He died just two weeks after the settlement and a few days after his release from prison.

"Whatever the problem, your efforts will be crowned with success only if your union is sound and united. It takes planning, patience, vigilance and determination to win any struggle, regardless of the arena. Above all else, the membership must wholeheartedly believe in its organization and the role it can play in building a better world. We have learned that a labor union is not a gambling table; it is not a bingo game where you hit the jackpot once in a lifetime. Membership in a union is a way of life. Dues payment is not enough. You must attend meetings, prepare yourself for leadership. ... You must invest a part of yourself."

The 33,700 members, overwhelmingly workers of color, face "plantation justice." The fight for unity in the spirit of Mike Quill is indispensable. □

ON THE

NYU strikers ignore deadline

The Graduate Student Organizing Committee, UAW Local 2110, has kept its word. The GSOC strike, begun on Nov. 9, continues despite New York University President John Sexton's ultimatum that all stipends and teaching assignments would be stopped for those who continued to strike after a Dec. 7 deadline.

Support for the GSOC continues to pour in. It held a rally, including representatives of national and local labor organizations, on the day of the deadline. A petition signed by more than 5,000 scholars around the world urges Sexton to recognize and negotiate with the union. (Read it at petitiononline.com.)

On Dec. 3 the Collective Bargaining Congress of the American Association of University Professors, on behalf of the 28,000 unionized academic employees it represents, called on Sexton "to rescind immediately his threat to retaliate against workers exercising their democratic rights."

A letter signed by about 90 international graduate students notes their special concerns: "We, as international students, feel especially vulnerable to your antagonizing, intimidating and outrageous threats. Many of us have had to deal with increasingly restrictive U.S. immigration policies, enhanced surveillance and record keeping and with hostility when being questioned by immigration officers. Some of us have suffered the threat of deportation. Thus, we are concerned with maintaining our legal status in this country." Despite that, the letter affirms the students' support for the right to unionize.

In the meantime there have been several new proposals to create various graduate-student bodies at NYU. GSOC spokesperson Susan Valentine said of them: "All the proposals say the same thing—to get rid of our union. And nothing has shown us that we need a union more than the administration's willingness to threaten and intimidate us as we try to bargain for better working conditions."



Labor support rally at NYU.

PHOTO: UAW

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE

- ◆ **Racism, national oppression & the right to self-determination** Larry Holmes
- ◆ **Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery** Sam Marcy
- ◆ **Reparations & Black Liberation** Monica Moorehead
- ◆ **Harriet Tubman: woman warrior** Mumia Abu-Jamal (*Guest Commentary*)
- ◆ **Black labor & the fight for reparations** Bill Cecil
- ◆ **Alabama's Black Belt: Legacy of slavery, sharecropping & segregation** Consuela Lee (*Guest commentary*)
- ◆ **Black farmers demand justice** Monica Moorehead
- ◆ **Greetings from Mumia Abu-Jamal to the 3rd UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia & Related Intolerance**

PICKETLINE

By Sue Davis

NWA mechanics hold the line

Mechanics at Northwest Airlines (NWA), who've been on strike for nearly four months, are continuing to walk picket lines despite freezing weather. Rallies were held recently in the Minneapolis area and in Detroit.

At the Dec. 7 rally for all NWA workers in Minneapolis, the mechanics' union handed out a leaflet that expressed solidarity with all the workers. It pointed out that NWA's ultimate aim is crush all the unions and just "monitor outsourcing contracts." The final paragraph reads: "As an employee group that has been under attack and forced to strike by NWA management, we recognize and unconditionally support the efforts of all other groups to defend themselves, their jobs, and their living standards from company assault."

Breakthrough for unionization in South

In what has been described as "the biggest unionization drive in the South in decades," the Service Employees union has just won collective bargaining rights for thousands of janitors in Houston as part of its Justice for Janitors campaign.

The janitors, nearly all of them immigrants, earn just over \$100 a week on average, usually working part time for \$5.25 an hour. No wonder the union billed the union drive as an anti-poverty movement. Of course, the workers do not receive benefits.

Because the union movement is not strong in Texas, the union had to use creative ways to pressure the companies that employ the janitors. Calling a strike at one building in Houston helped, but sympathy strikes at 75 office buildings in four other states really stepped up pressure.

Office building janitors average \$20 an hour in New York and \$13.30 in Chicago and Philadelphia, where office rents are comparable with those in Houston. In New Jersey a recent union contract boosted wages for 4,500 janitors from \$5.85 an hour three years ago to \$11.90 an hour today. Many workers also achieved full-time status with health benefits.

NYC security guards unionize

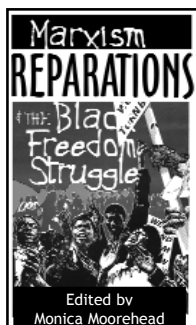
As part of its program to organize 75,000 security guards nationwide, Service Employees Local 32BJ will now represent 1,000 security guards with Burns International Security Services in New York City. This is the union's first victory to unionize 10,000 security guards there. Local 32BJ will soon negotiate better wages and benefits for guards at City University campuses, Yeshiva University, AT&T and Pfizer. □

◆ Nigerian women take over Chevron Texaco
Monica Moorehead

◆ Nigerian women's takeover ends in victory
Monica Moorehead

◆ Causes of turmoil in Jamaica
PART I PART II PART III
Pat Chin

◆ The driving force behind the land seizures
Monica Moorehead



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Cherokee high court upholds lesbian marriage

By Stephanie Hedgecok

The Judicial Appeals Tribunal of the Cherokee Nation, the highest Cherokee court, upheld the marriage of a lesbian Cherokee couple on Dec. 22 in Tahlequah, Okla.

Dawn McKinley and Kathy Reynolds of Owasso, Okla., were issued a marriage certificate from the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma in May 2004 and were married shortly afterward. But after they were wed, a temporary moratorium was placed on any marriage registrations and the couple were not allowed to register their certificate.

Todd Hembree, the Tribal Council's attorney, filed a suit in opposition to the marriage and argued before the court that the Cherokee Nation had no right to recognize the marriage. That suit was defeated last August when the court ruled Hembree had no right to sue on the grounds that he could not show that he had suffered any harm from the couple's attempt to be recognized as a married couple.

A second challenge to the marriage was filed in August 2005 by a group of elected councilors of the Nation represented by Hembree after the Cherokee Nation Tribal Council approved language that legally defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Again the Cherokee high court found that the complainants had no standing to do so because they had not been harmed by McKinley and Reynolds' attempt to be recognized as a married couple. Under the laws of the Cherokee Nation, only someone who can demonstrate personal harm by a couple's marriage would have standing.

In that suit Hembree claimed that tribal laws previously used gender-specific language to define marriage, such as "husband" and "wife." According to the January 2006 Cherokee Phoenix, McKinley and Reynolds contended those terms are not gender-specific and that in Cherokee the words used in a marriage ceremony are "cooker" for wife and "companion" for husband.

Prof. Brian Gilley, who is of Cherokee ancestry and an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Vermont, said in a brief filed with the court, "There is overwhelming evidence for the historic and cultural presence of multiple gender roles and same-sex relations among most if not all Native North Americans, including the Cherokee, and that they historically shared in the institution of marriage." (Muskogee Phoenix, Jan. 5)

Reynolds and McKinley were represented by the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR). Staff attorney Lena Ayoub, who represented the couple, stated, "We are pleased that that Court protected the fundamental principles of the Cherokee legal system, which prevents government officials from dragging private citizens into court unless the officials

have a direct personal stake in the lawsuit. The Court held that the legislators must demonstrate a specific, individualized harm in order to challenge the validity of a person's marriage, regardless of whether the marriage is between a different-sex or a same-sex couple."

Ayoub interprets the Cherokee court's decision to mean that the moratorium on marriage filings ended with the December ruling. She has also stated that the ruling may be used as a precedent for any future same-sex Cherokee couples seeking the right to marry.

Indigenous First Nations that are recognized by the United States government have the legal status of "domestic dependent sovereigns," which means that they are only under federal jurisdiction and are not subject to state and local laws. □

NEW YORK CITY

Rally for Leonard Peltier!

Supporters of U.S.-held political prisoner Leonard Peltier will rally in New York City on Feb. 6 to demand his release.

Peltier has been behind bars for 30 years, despite evidence that the U.S. government withheld, fabricated and coerced the "evidence" it needed to convict this member of the American Indian Movement. The demand to free Peltier has been voiced by millions of people all over the world.

A hearing on the legality of Peltier's sentence will be held on Feb. 13.

On Feb. 6, activists will rally from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on the east side of Manhattan's Union Square park at 15th St.—the site of a plaque honoring Indigenous settlements on the island. Organizers say that the rally and speakout on the 30th anniversary of Peltier's imprisonment will "mark the launch of a series of actions this year as we struggle to free Leonard Peltier."

For more information about Peltier's case and how you can become part of this



WWW.LEONARDELTIER.ORG

Self-portrait by Leonard Peltier.

struggle, visit www.freepeltier.org or call (212) 633-6646.

—Leslie Feinberg

Legal update on Mumia Abu-Jamal's case

Below are excerpts from a public letter sent out on Jan. 24 by Robert R. Bryan, the lead attorney for death-row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Dear Friends:

Last month, the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, Philadelphia, issued the most important decision affecting my client, Mumia Abu-Jamal, since his arrest nearly a quarter of a century ago. This is the first time any court has made a ruling that could lead to a new trial and his freedom. The court has accepted for review the following issues raised on federal habeas corpus and in the subsequent appeal, all of which are of great constitutional significance concerning the right to a fair trial, due process of law, and equal protection of the law under the Fifth, Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution:

Claim 14: Whether appellant was denied his constitutional rights due to the prosecution's trial summation?

Claim 16: Whether the Commonwealth's use of peremptory challenges at trial violated appellant's constitutional

rights under *Batson v. Kentucky*, 476 U.S. 79 (1986)?

Claim 29: Whether appellant was denied due process during post-conviction proceedings as a result of alleged judicial bias?

Claim 14 relates to the prosecutor's prejudicial argument to the jury including the comment that if convicted Mumia would have "appeal after appeal." That reduced the burden on the jurors, and turned the concept of reasonable doubt and presumption of innocence on its head.

Claim 16 concerns the prosecutorial use of peremptory challenges to remove African-Americans from the jury. The record establishes that race is a major thread that has run throughout this case since Mumia's 1981 arrest.

Claim 29 is about the bias and racism of the trial judge, Albert Sabo. Evidence was discovered in recent years through a courageous court stenographer, who overheard the judge say during a trial recess that he was "going to help 'em fry the n****r."

Another issue under consideration by

the federal court, Claim 25, pertains to the death penalty. It addresses whether the death judgment can stand due to an unfair jury instruction. *Mills v. Maryland*, 486 U.S. 367 (1988).

The case is now moving rapidly. The court has issued a schedule for extensive briefing, with the first brief to be filed by the prosecution. The District Attorney made a 30-day extension-of-time request, which has been granted, so its initial brief is now due on Feb. 16. The complicated briefing process will go through the spring. Then we will present oral argument before a three-judge panel in the U.S. Court of Appeals.

This is a giant step in our effort to secure a new and fair trial for Mumia. Our goal is to win in this life-and-death struggle and see him walk out of jail a free person. However, we must not forget that Mumia remains in enormous danger. If the case is lost, he will die in the execution chamber.

Thank you for your concern and support in this campaign for justice.

Cordially yours,
Robert R. Bryan

Women & the Bolivarian Revolution

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

In a moving and historic evening, a distinguished panel of Venezuelan women leaders brought the visionary realities of their Bolivarian Revolution to New York City on Jan. 24. The Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle hosted the event, held at the Community Church of New York.

The speakers included women who had been in revolutionary struggle in Venezuela for over 40 years, veterans of armed struggle, student struggles and women's struggles for equality. Speaking were Maria Leon, president of the National Institute for Women (INAMUJER); Nora Castañeda, president of the Women's Development Bank; Ana Elisa Osorio, member of the board of directors of INAMUJER; Maria del Mar Alvarez Lovera, National Defender of Women's Rights; Reina Arratia, member of the Presidential Commission to Prevent and Eliminate Racial Discrimination; and Doris Acevedo, secretary general of INAMUJER.

Their presentations made clear the dramatic advances in women's economic, legal, reproductive and educational rights and realities that Venezuela is pursuing under the leadership of President Hugo Chávez. They were introduced by activists from the U.S. progressive movement.

Welcoming the panel and the audience, Leonor C. Osorio Granado, the Consul General of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in New York, noted with pride that the current Venezuelan constitution is the first in Latin America to use non-sexist language in its entirety in order to acknowledge the needs of both women and men, girls and boys. The constitution grants full citizenship to women, full equality in employment between men and women, and deals with discrimination, sexual harassment and domestic violence against women.

In Article 88, the constitution also "recognizes housework as an economically productive activity, thus entitling housewives to social security benefits." Article

Speakers at solidarity event for Venezuelan women's delegation.

PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO



75 declares that "family relations are based in equality of rights and duties, in solidarity, in mutual comprehension and in reciprocal respect," in an attempt to alleviate the long, double workday of most women. (www.venezuelanalysis.com)

The president of INAMUJER, Maria Leon, stressed that the peaceful nature of the Bolivarian Revolution meant that women had been able to put their needs forward rather than make them secondary to dealing with the wounded and displaced of a violent conflict. However, she noted that Venezuelans were a "peaceful revolutionary people, but not unarmed," and that the military forces in the country were in unity with civilian needs under President Chávez.

She said that before the revolution small groups of women were struggling for their rights, but progress was very slow. The millions of women and men in the streets during the revolution also helped create the glorious possibility of revolution in the U.S. and around the world.

Leon was introduced by Leslie Cagan, coordinator of United for Peace and Justice, a major U.S. anti-war coalition, who spoke of the urgent need to stop the war on Iraq and bring the troops home

now. Monica Somocurcio, a representative from the ANSWER coalition, another major anti-war group, praised the panelists for carrying out "a heroic struggle, not just for women, but for humanity," and she introduced Nora Castañeda, president of the Women's Development Bank (BANMUJER).

Castañeda, an economist, pointed out that women are the poorest of the poor in the world, with perhaps 70 percent of impoverished humanity being female. Thus, she stressed, to bring down the level of poverty worldwide the needs of women must be addressed, including overall health, sexual and reproductive health, literacy and economic needs.

The bank administers both social and financial programs, on the principle of "para todo a los todos," or a popular economy that benefits everyone. The bank gives workshops on sexual and reproductive rights and works with the Ministry of Health and the Barrio Adentro, community health clinics run by Cuban doctors. The bank also grants micro-loans to groups of women for projects that could raise the standard of living for them, their families, and the community at large.

The third panelist, Ana Alisa Osorio, a

former Minister of Environment and Resources, and member of INAMUJER, was introduced by Teresa Gutierrez, a co-director of the International Action Center and member of the Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC), another major anti-war coalition.

Gutierrez welcomed the delegates and applauded the wide spectrum of U.S. political organizations and points of view represented both in the audience and on the platform. She expressed excitement that this could strengthen unity in the U.S. and increase solidarity for Venezuela's right to build the society it desires. She also noted: "When we defend Venezuela, we also defend our beloved Cuban Revolution, and the Cuban Five, still in prison here in the U.S. We are fighting for Venezuela, for Cuba, for all of Latin America."

Osorio pointed out that a central problem for Venezuela was that it had inherited "social debt" from the previous centuries of exploitation of its people. She emphasized that the goal was "a society built on revolutionary ethics" and on the principle of "equality in diversity," rather than on a "First World model." The Venezuelan constitution grants all rights, including the right to return to their lands, to the country's Indigenous peoples, and a mass campaign, Mission Guaicaipuro, was set up to focus on their needs.

The needs and knowledge of Indigenous people are incorporated in other mass campaigns. For instance, Mission Robinson, which virtually eliminated illiteracy in 2005, including women, who made up 65 percent of those unable to read and write, used bilingual educational materials in Spanish and in Indigenous languages. Health initiatives in the countryside incorporate Indigenous medical knowledge; teams of nurses are recruited who blend modern and traditional medical practices developed over thousands of years.

Hye-Jung Park of the Korean Action Network for Unification and the Congress for Korean Unification spoke passionately of the hope the Bolivarian Revolution has aroused among women all over the world who struggle against war, displacement, poverty, hunger and AIDS. "Women together—mothers, lesbians, housewives and workers—nurture this hope. Let us struggle together for solidarity, let us not let go of each other's hands," she said.

She introduced Maria del Mar Alvarez Lovera, National Defender of Women's Rights, who spoke with sadness of the many Venezuelans killed, tortured and disappeared under the 40 years of U.S.-supported "so-called democracy" that preceded the current revolution. She said that the job of INAMUJER is to make this secret history known to the younger gen-

Venezuelan oil flows to Philly

'A humanitarian gesture of extraordinary magnitude'

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Philadelphia has become the latest major U.S. city to receive discounted home heating oil from revolutionary Venezuela. Citgo, the Houston-based arm of Petro-Venezuela, will ship 5 million gallons of oil for distribution at a steep discount.

Geraldine Shield, who had been using her oven to heat her North Philadelphia home, became the first beneficiary of the program that will provide heating oil at a 40 percent discount to 25,000 low-income families in the five-county Philadelphia region. Shields was so short on money after paying her December heating bill that she couldn't buy Christmas gifts for her grandchild. "Maybe I can now," she said. (Philadelphia Inquirer, Jan. 29)

Venezuela's ambassador to the U.S., Bernardo Alvarez, was on hand as a truck brought the oil to Shield's home. He was joined by U.S. Rep. Chaka Fattah, who brokered the arrangement, and State Sen. Vincent Hughes.

Fattah described Venezuela's program as "a humanitarian gesture of extraordinary magnitude."

Hughes challenged other oil companies to follow Venezuela's example. "Citgo has stepped up, where's everybody else?"

No other companies have offered sub-

sidized heating oil. John Palomo, a spokesperson for the American Petroleum Institute, said he knew of no plans to do so. U.S.-based oil companies reported \$33 billion in 2005 third-quarter profits, while they reduced production to drive up prices.

Since the election of President Hugo Chávez and the launching of the Bolivarian Revolution, profits from oil production in Venezuela—the world's fifth-largest producer—have been used to finance much-needed social programs for literacy, health care, job training and childcare. After visiting the Bronx, N.Y., earlier in the year, Chávez offered to help the poor in the U.S. who faced a winter with record high oil prices.

Citgo's program in Pennsylvania follows similar heating assistance programs offered by Venezuela to Boston, the Bronx, Rhode Island, Vermont and the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Micmac and Maliseet Native nations in Maine.

Talks are ongoing for similar programs in Connecticut, Delaware and in Harlem and Queens, N.Y.. Citgo has worked with the non-profit group Citizens Energy Corp. to facilitate the distributions.

In Philadelphia, the discounted oil will be offered initially to more than 7,602 families who have exhausted their LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) aid. Fattah announced that Citgo

officials and his aides also plan to meet with Gov. Edward Rendell to discuss expanding the program to the rest of the state.

In September, PGW (Pennsylvania Gas Works) and other area utility companies were quick to capitalize on the devastation from Hurricane Katrina. Gas rates shot up between 30 to 50 percent over the last year. The rate hikes took effect on Dec. 1.

In addition, changes made by the Pennsylvania Legislature last year allow utility companies to shut off power without notice if just one payment is missed. High fees add to the financial burden of restoring service.

Fattah and Philadelphia community leaders who praised Venezuela's aid dismissed a verbal attack on Chávez this week by U.S. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). McCain said that the United States must explore alternative energy sources to avoid "being held hostage by Iran or by Venezuelan 'wackos.'"

Commenting on Venezuela's act of solidarity in coming to the rescue of poor people in Philadelphia, Jonathan Stein of the Community Legal Services here said: "The issue is whether you freeze to death in the winter. No one, Democrat or conservative Republican, should raise questions about where it comes from, but should applaud it." □

Continued on page 10

World Social Forum

Progressives meet in a seething Latin America

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Caracas, Venezuela

Tens of thousands of delegates and participants in the sixth World Social Forum crowded the streets here from Jan. 24 to 29. Huge numbers came from all parts of South and Central America and the Caribbean—especially Brazil, Cuba and Colombia.

The presence of Indigenous groups from throughout the hemisphere was noticeable in many events and the issues of cultural, land and water rights were highlighted throughout the discussions.

In addition, sizable delegations came from the United States, Canada and Europe. Anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan was one of many well-known leaders from the U.S. who attended the WSF, as well as Curtis Muhammad from the People's Hurricane Relief Fund of New Orleans and Lucius Walker from IFCO/Pastors for Peace.

Founded in 2001 to counter the annual meeting held in Davos, Switzerland, at which executives of multi-national corporations, government heads and other power brokers strategize on global matters, the World Social Forum brings together diverse elements from civil society—workers, students, peasants, intellectuals, activists of all kinds—who are in opposition to the neoliberal policies that are impoverishing the vast majority of the world's people.

This year the World Social Forum was polycentric, holding three sessions on three continents. The first session was held in Bamako, Mali, which drew 10,000 participants, mostly from Africa; the one in Caracas followed and the last will be held in March in Karachi, Pakistan.

In Caracas, approximately 2,200 different organizations held almost 1,800 seminars, panels and workshops on a broad range of topics. In addition, there were art exhibits, concerts, street theater and poetry as well as spontaneous marches, singing and dancing.

While the WSF is an international meeting place where ideas, experiences and tactics are shared and debated, it increasingly serves as a mobilizing center where expanding networks undertake concrete campaigns and actions.

Numerous proposals for coordinated activities were presented and accepted, such as global days of protest of the U.S. occupation of Iraq on March 18-19, the third anniversary of the war.

Buoyed by change sweeping the continent

The Caracas meeting was buoyed by the tremendous social and political gains sweeping South America; for example, on the eve of the WSF, Evo Morales became president of Bolivia—the first elected Indigenous head of state there and another outspoken opponent of imperialist domination and privatization of natural resources.

Thousands of Venezuelans attended the various meetings and spoke about the Bolivarian revolutionary process taking place in their country, with its emphasis on participatory democracy and advancement of social justice.

Many delegates had the opportunity to see the free health care instituted by the Hugo Chávez government and carried out by a mobilized population throughout the country.



Workers World banner at World Social Forum in Caracas.

WW PHOTO

Cuba has sent a large brigade of doctors and nurses who are assisting Venezuelan medical teams in setting up clinics. Each clinic serves 250 families, providing free basic and preventive health care such as vaccinations, prenatal services and birth control.

The poor neighborhoods that cling to the steep mountains around Caracas had been ignored by the previous ruling class governments and were bereft of basic services. Now clinics, community grocery stores with subsidized food stuffs, recreation facilities, community kitchens that provide one meal a day for the elderly, children and the ill, and computer centers with free and accessible equipment have elevated the living standards of millions of Venezuelans and cemented their support for people's power.

Members of the UNT, a progressive national labor federation formed in 2003, spoke in numerous panels describing the role of workers in the Bolivarian Revolution and how that affected the programs of the Chávez government.

Under the former constitution, all strikes were illegal and unions were small. Since 1999, however, the minimum wage has been increased above or at least equal to inflation every year; all attempts at privatization have been stopped; democratically elected safety committees have been established at job sites; and 18 trade unionists from the Bolivarian Force were recently elected to the Venezuelan Congress.

José Ramón Rivero, one of those elected labor leaders, told delegates from the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange that the new Congress would be changing labor laws this session to legalize worker takeovers of factories and to recover lost jobs caused by corporate layoffs.

The U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange invited

the UNT to tour the U.S. this spring to promote worker-to-worker solidarity.

Throughout the WSF, Colombian trade unionists raised the issue of the tremendous government repression in their country, where paramilitary forces have murdered more than 4,000 union leaders and members.

The thousands of Colombian activists who came to Caracas enhanced international awareness of their struggles. They focused on campaigns against Coca-Cola and Nestlé, in particular, for their complicity in the deaths, disappearances, imprisonment and torture of members of SINALTRAINAL, the Colombian food and beverage workers union.

Much support for the Cuban 5

The highly visible Cuban delegation, with their red baseball caps and shirts, turned out in impressive numbers at every event concerning the case of the Cuban 5, a heinous example of U.S. injustice.

Gerardo Hernández, René González, Fernando González, Ramón Labañino and Antonio Guerrero had volunteered to quietly gather information on the terrorist activities of the right-wing Cuban exile groups in Miami, following an escalation in bombings of tourist hotels in the Havana area that resulted in the death of a young Italian man.

After collecting evidence of violations of U.S. and international law by exile groups such as "Brother to Brother" and others, Cuba turned this information over to the FBI. Rather than taking steps to stop terrorist activity from being organized on U.S. soil, the U.S. arrested the five Cuban patriots in Miami in September 1998, charging them with conspiracy to commit espionage and other related charges. They were convicted in a sham trial in 2001.

On Aug. 9, 2005, a three-judge panel

from the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta overturned their convictions, based on the many violations of law and procedure in their trials. The Bush administration then appealed that decision and requested that the entire 11 members of the court hear the case. The legal arguments for reversing the convictions will be heard on Feb. 14.

Chávez says revolution is urgent

On Jan. 27, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez spoke to thousands of WSF delegates at a rally in a huge stadium.

In a two-hour speech, interrupted repeatedly by thunderous applause and chants, Chávez exhorted the crowd to "take the revolutionary energy from those who have struggled in the past," naming Simón Bolívar, Che Guevara and Schafik Handal, among many others, to "make the new world possible now."

Chávez stressed unity and inclusiveness during his speech. On the prospects for socialism in Venezuela, he made it clear that this would be a socialism rich in the experiences of the Indigenous cultures there. He emphasized that Venezuela is a country containing the blood of African and Native peoples, and said that attempts at change in the past that did not include the struggles of Africans failed as a result.

Citing the many destructive characteristics of the capitalist economy and imperialist war machine, he stated that the world does not have centuries to achieve this goal of a cooperative and just society.

"Socialism or death" is more than a slogan, Chávez said. "The human species is in danger because capitalism is destroying the environment and life of all kinds."

He declared that "the empire is not infallible. It has failed in Iraq and in Venezuela and in Cuba."

Chávez asked the crowd to imagine what a progressive government in the U.S. could do for the world if all its resources, technology and skills were directed for social progress, not profit and domination.

Addressing the many activists from the U.S., he said, "We in the rest of the world are counting on you sisters and brothers" to join in this global march towards victory over death. □

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'Schafik Handal, presente!'

Tears & cheers for Salvadoran revolutionary

By Heather Cottin Hempstead, L.I.

While half a million people mourned former rebel leader Schafik Handal in the streets of San Salvador on Jan. 30, Salvadorans in the U.S. and Canada celebrated the life of this leader of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). In Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Long Island and Toronto, Canada, supporters of El Salvador's liberation struggle organized films, people's masses and meetings to commemorate Handal's life.

At an FMLN office in a basement called "the bunker" here in Hempstead, L.I., Salvadorans from Long Island and New Jersey gathered to honor their comrade, who died of a heart attack at the age of 75.

U.S.-sponsored repressive military governments ruled El Salvador from 1931 through the 1990s. The election of a communist government in 1931 prompted the U.S. to install strongman Gen. Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez to establish martial law. Hernandez Martinez is infamous for saying: "It is a greater crime to kill an ant than a man."

With U.S. warships stationed offshore in 1932, Martinez' armed forces and U.S. advisers conducted "La Matanza," the Massacre. They killed over 40,000 people, mostly Indigenous peasants who supported the people's government. Faribundo Marti, a leading revolutionary, was killed in this bloodbath.

U.S. imperialists conspired for years with El Salvador's 14 ruling class families who owned over 80 percent of the arable land. They protected the regime from labor unions, land reform or any programs that could help the people.

There were years of fraudulent elections,

poverty and repression. In the 1970s, revolutionary struggles in Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East inspired Salvadorans to take up the gun. Workers, peasants, intellectuals and liberation theologians picked up the banner of Farabundo Marti and formed the FMLN. From the late 1970s to the 1990s, they waged an armed struggle for justice and economic democracy, for land, for dignity, for humanity.

Handal was the leader of the Salvadoran Communist Party and its representative on the directorate of the FMLN. The guerrillas of the FMLN waged a mighty war against the Salvadoran military and its U.S. advisers. The Salvadoran army, trained at the notorious School of the Americas, was brutal and relentless—getting arms from both the U.S. and Israel.

Years of massacres by the army and death squads took their toll: the murder of peasants, priests—including Archbishop Oscar Romero—workers and intellectuals. Some 75,000 were killed in a war promoted by three U.S. presidents: Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. When the Soviet Union fell, liberation struggles all over the world suffered. So too in El Salvador.

The FMLN decided to lay down its arms, and Schafik Handal signed a peace accord with the U.S.-backed regime in 1992. It became a legal party in El Salvador, but when Handal ran for president in 2003, intimidation by former death squads and the U.S. government produced a victory for the right-wing ARENA party.

To escape civil war, landlessness, unemployment and the death squads, Salvadorans have been coming to the U.S. since the 1970s. FMLN members organize widely among day laborers. Its mem-



Hundreds of thousands attend funeral for guerrilla hero in El Salvador.

bers provide legal, social and political leadership among support networks in solidarity with Central America throughout the U.S. and Canada, wherever Salvadorans live.

On Long Island, the Salvadoran diaspora remains true to its revolutionary origins. On Jan. 29, in Hempstead, pastor Jaime Barrios led a "misa popular," a people's mass, in celebration of the life of Handal. Barrios and the FMLN activists who spoke emphasized the continuation of his work, of their struggle for equality, unity and liberation.

Barrios repeated the words of Cuban President Fidel Castro: "Schafik was a great leader of workers, a great revolutionary leader and an extraordinary human being ... a man who lived with dignity, faithful to his principles, and who never gave in."

It was those principles that moved the people sitting in the "bunker." Each person who stood up to give testimony vowed to uphold Schafik's principles. Mario Avellar said that Schafik served as an inspira-

tion to continue the struggle for the revolution in El Salvador, a struggle that will produce a better society. He said that the huge crowds in the streets of El Salvador showed that the people realize that Schafik was a man who believed in justice and dignity.

Barrios referred to the revolutionary movements underway in Cuba, Bolivarian Venezuela and Bolivia. While poverty in El Salvador is growing, a new Latin America is emerging, fighting imperialism and its privatization schemes. Change is coming. This struggle for change was the focus of the life of Schafik Handal and the objective of FMLN members everywhere.

FMLN member Carlos Canales read his tribute to Schafik in the Hempstead bunker:

"While there is a single worker living with injustice or pain, Schafik is not dead.

"While hunger and death still travel in the Third World, killing a thousand people an hour, Schafik is not dead.

"It is a lie that Schafik is dead, it is a lie.

"Let us celebrate his life. Hasta la victoria siempre!" □

Haiti under occupation

Struggle wins provisional release for Jean-Juste

By G. Dunkel

Widespread support has won the provisional release of Fr. Gerard Jean-Juste from a prison cell in Haiti. Jean-Juste is probably the most influential leader in Lavalas—President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's party—after Aristide himself. A 2004 U.S.-backed coup deposed Aristide, the elected president of Haiti, and drove Lavalas from office.

An interim government set up by Washington threw Jean-Juste in jail this past fall on murder charges. The charges were widely seen as trumped up to keep Jean-Juste from running in the election. He clearly would have been the front runner in the contest for president.

Just a week before Jean-Juste's Jan. 29 release, a Haitian judge dismissed the murder charges but slapped this political prisoner with charges of "illegal weapon possession" and conspiracy.

Occupation-appointed Interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue offered Jean-Juste a deal: if he agreed not to appeal the weapons indictment, he would get a speedy trial. And if convicted, the government claimed it would commute his sentence.

The pressure to accept a guilty verdict was intense. Jean-Juste has leukemia. A commuted sentence would have allowed him to seek treatment in the U.S.

But both sides agree on what happened: Jean-Juste refused the deal. On Jan. 27, he appealed.

Two days later, he was flown to Jackson Memorial Hospital's cancer center in Miami for treatment of leukemia and pneumonia. Jean-Juste—who founded the Haitian Refugee Center in Miami—has won deep and widespread support in the South Florida Haitian community. Plans had already been announced for a Jan. 28 Miami vigil for his release.

Under the terms of his release, Jean-Juste is supposed to return to Haiti after treatment to face criminal charges.

The duplicity, brutality and maneuvers of the current, illegal government in Haiti have been apparent in its treatment of Jean-Juste. Now new "elections" are scheduled to take place there.

'Selections' under guise of 'elections'

When election authorities in Haiti announced there would be no polling places in pro-Aristide Cité Soleil—a poor,

sprawling seaside section of Port-au-Prince with 300,000 to 600,000 residents—they were implicitly confirming that they do indeed intend to hold "elections" on Feb. 7. These officials are under strong pressure from the United States to "finalize" the coup that the U.S. organized and implemented on Feb. 29, 2004.

Rosemond Pradel, head of the Provisional Electoral Council, claimed that Cité Soleil was disenfranchised to avoid the intimidation of voting officials and voters by "criminal gangs"—meaning the many supporters of Aristide.

A better term for elections held under foreign military occupation would be "selections." The authorities are deliberately excluding poor and working people, the vast majority of whom support Aristide.

The last three "selections" were postponed due to "technical difficulties." A more likely reason is that the election authorities weren't sure who would win.

Rene Preval is the leading candidate. Preval was Aristide's prime minister and was president from Feb. 7, 1995, to Feb. 7, 2001. He is bitterly opposed by the local bourgeoisie and big landlords and the current occupation "government." They feel

that he is too closely tied to Aristide.

Preval himself has emphasized his differences with Aristide. But that didn't stop town officials in St. Marc, a small seaside town between Port-au-Prince and Gonaïves, from burning down the offices of his party, Lespwa (Hope), on Jan. 18. Preval was due to arrive in town the next day.

Preval's election material was destroyed in Cayes, a town in the southwest, and a pickup truck carrying a depiction of Preval was burned in Gonaïves.

While Lespwa has called for calm and political dialog, the police and the United Nations forces in Haiti, called Minustah, have done nothing to stop the violence directed against Preval's organization.

Haiti-Progress—a widely distributed weekly edited in Port-au-Prince that reflects the views of Haiti's National Popular Party—sees three possible outcomes to this "election/selection." A massacre, like the one in 1987. A selection of a candidate other than Preval. Or a "victory" for Preval, but one in which his opponents gain control of parliament and tie him tightly to the wishes of U.S. imperialism.

Haiti-Progress is referring to the Nov. 29, 1987, massacre that the generals then

Continued on next page

Palestinian vote jolts the imperialists

By Michael Kramer

U.S. imperialist policy and its plans for the Middle East have been in more disarray and failing at a faster rate with every explosion and guerrilla ambush in Iraq. Now every election in Palestine is adding to the misery in the Bush administration and all its generously funded government think-tanks and pseudo-research institutions full of recycled State Department bureaucrats, retired Pentagon officers and right-wing academics.

For the second time in a six-week period Palestinians have voted in elections that they have run themselves. The results were not what the Bush administration had expected or had wanted them to be.

The elections were conducted much more fairly and efficiently than those held in Florida and Ohio during the U.S. presidential elections of 2000 and 2004. In the U.S., millions of African-Americans, Latin@s, immigrants, youth and a transient working class in general face a gauntlet of local, state and federal laws regarding residency and past experiences with the police, courts and jails that effectively prohibit them from voting.

In Palestine, only Palestinians living in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem—areas occupied in June 1967 by the U.S.-armed and U.S.-financed Zionist settler movement—were allowed to vote. Millions living in areas of Palestine occupied in 1948; in refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan; and in a diaspora that

stretches from Paterson, N.J., to Sydney, Australia, were denied the right to vote through a combination of apartheid-like Zionist election laws and the 1993 U.S.-sponsored Oslo Accords.

Municipal elections were conducted in the West Bank on Dec. 15. On Jan. 25, elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council were held in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

The U.S. favored the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, or Fatah, in both elections. Fatah was given millions of dollars, both above ground and under the table, to help fund its campaign. While many in its leadership have been cultivated by the U.S. since the early 1990s and have overtly cooperated with the Pentagon and CIA, rank-and-file members—especially youth—have been militant, heroic and self-sacrificing in confronting the Zionist occupation since the resistance group's first military operation on Jan. 3, 1965.

The organization has recently split into at least two factions and is in the midst of a serious internal crisis. Marwan Barghouti is the most popular and charismatic leader of Fatah. He has been imprisoned by the Zionists since April 2002.

The big winner in both elections was the

Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas. It was organized in 1987 by a current in Palestinian society based in the religious community that was not comfortable working in secular political organizations. It has always shown a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances, however.

In the past it refused to take part in any Palestinian election because of its association with Annex 1 of the Oslo Accords. The Hamas charter calls for the destruction of the Zionist colonial enterprise. It also bars negotiating, recognizing or making any compromise with the so-called state of Israel.

Support for the Zionist occupation of Palestine has been a fundamental tenet of U.S. imperialism since the 1930s. Like the resistance in Iraq, the victory of Hamas calls into question the future of U.S. imperialism and its allies in the region.

There are many reasons for the recent electoral successes of Hamas. Palestinian voters were fed up with the rampant corruption and disorganization of the Fatah-led government of the recent period. Fifteen years of negotiations and compromises with the Zionists had not produced any improvement in daily life.

Thousands are jailed. Precious land continues to be ruined or confiscated and

turned over to Zionist settlers—many of whom are new arrivals from the U.S. and Russia. The monstrosity of the apartheid wall that cuts through Palestinian towns insults the senses of all who love Palestine.

Hamas has a high level of organizational ability and has established an extensive social service network in Gaza. The distribution of material, educational and medical aid is done with great efficiency. This is what the population demands.

Within hours of the outcome of the election the Bush administration began demanding that Hamas recognize the Israeli settler state and end armed resistance to occupation or else face a cutoff of all aid from the U.S. and European Union. Hamas has refused these demands.

At this time it is most important for all those active in the Palestine solidarity movement, as well as anti-Zionists and peace activists, to maintain and continue their work. U.S. imperialism will try its best to encourage civil war in Palestine. Its allies are already trying to divide the solidarity and peace movements by raising certain contradictions in the religious-based social program of Hamas, as well as historical inaccuracies in its charter.

Imperialism must not be allowed to succeed. □

IRAQ

New Year off to rocky start for would-be colonizers

By David Hoskins

The U.S.-led occupation of Iraq has been plagued by financial and torture scandals, as well as determined resistance, since the outset. If recent events are any indication, U.S. and British imperial forces have a long road ahead if they intend to stay in the country.

Basra's provincial governor, Mohammad Walli, announced at the end of January a suspension of cooperation with British security forces until the British release five Iraqi police they have kept in custody. Walli has promised to use "all available means" to secure their release. British troops initially detained a total of 14 Iraqi police officers, but nine have been released.

These Iraqi authorities have been part of the political framework set up by the occupation. Yet even they can't afford being seen by the people as complete pup-

pets or as covering up for atrocities committed by the occupying forces.

The tensions in Basra first broke into the open on Sept. 19, when British armored vehicles backed up by helicopter gunships broke down the wall of a prison to extract two British commandos who had been detained by the Iraqi police. The Iraqis said the two had been armed and wearing Arab clothing when they were caught attempting to plant a bomb. At that time, there had been several mysterious bombings in the area that could have been intended to stir up antagonisms between Shia and Sunni Muslims.

Large, angry crowds gathered when the British assaulted the prison. Several civilians were killed by the occupying troops. Now these tensions have broken out again.

The U.S. Army is in the middle of another scandal. It has been seizing and holding captive the wives of alleged insurgents in an attempt to use them as leverage and force their husbands to surrender.

An unnamed civilian Pentagon intelligence officer described the detainment of a 28-year-old mother of three. "During the pre-operation brief it was recommended by TF personnel that if the wife were present, she be detained and held in order to leverage the primary target's surrender." (Associated Press, Jan. 27) TF refers to a special operations task force established to manage "sensitive" targets.

U.S. forces recently released five Iraqi women detainees. The release of all female captives has been a primary demand of the resistance, and anger is high in Iraq over this U.S. tactic. Recently, the Vengeance Brigades detained U.S. journalist Jill Carroll who writes for the Christian Science Monitor. The resistance group has asked for the release of all female Iraqi prisoners as a condition for

Carroll's release.

While most U.S. officials have denied any direct connection between resistance demands and the release of the five Iraqi women, Iraqi Maj. Gen. Hussein Ali Kamal said major efforts were in progress to free Carroll.

Detaining noncombatant family members of individuals suspected of engaging in armed resistance shows the imperial forces' frustration and inability to subdue the Iraqi people. So far, more than 2,338 U.S. and British soldiers have died trying to enforce neocolonial domination of Iraq while deaths on the Iraqi side, civilians and combatants, are believed to be over 100,000.

U.S. forces are over-extended. Gen. George Casey, U.S. commander in Iraq, said on Jan. 26 that U.S. forces "are stretched ... and I don't think there's any question of that."

President George W. Bush has brushed off claims of an overextended military and recently threatened an indefinite occupation of Iraq. He recently compared the U.S. troops deployed in Iraq to the tens of thousands still in South Korea, more than 50 years after the Korean War ended in an armistice. He didn't mention the huge movement that has grown up in South Korea demanding that the U.S. leave.

Bush has yet to come to terms with the level of resistance to U.S. political and military policies in the Middle East. His administration has employed a Vietnam-era "destroy the village to save it" mentality in relation to Iraqi military operations—seen most starkly in the bomb-devastated town of Falluja. But Washington's trail of war crimes against the Iraqi people has earned it international condemnation and only stiffened the resolve of the resistance to reclaim true sovereignty. □

Haiti

Continued from page 8

running the country carried out when they were pushed to hold an election after the departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier, also known as Baby Doc.

Haitian anger felt in Canadian election

The Haitian community in Montreal played a role in the Canadian election on Jan. 23.

The Canadian government supplied 500 soldiers for the initial occupation of Haiti and then Royal Canadian Mounted Police to "train" the Haitian police. And, through the Canadian International Development Agency, it has funded non-governmental organizations operating in Haiti to "stabilize" the situation for the current, illegal government.

So when Pierre Pettigrew, Canada's foreign minister, ran as a Liberal in the district of Papineau in Montreal, he ran right into anger at the government's role in Haiti.

Two committees—the support group Haiti Action Montreal and the Haitian Committee for the 2006 Federal Elections—organized a major campaign against Pettigrew.

They handed out more than 12,000 leaflets and put up over 2,000 posters in a two-month campaign. The literature pointed out that "Pettigrew is lending Canada's support to a government that is killing thousands of people, holding political prisoners and allowing the country to degenerate into chaos," according to Dru Oja Jay of Haiti Support Montreal.

They held protests and demonstrations whenever Pettigrew appeared in public. All this work energized the Haitian community, which voted solidly against Pettigrew. □

HAITI A SLAVE REVOLUTION

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There was more to Coretta Scott King

One of the most recognizable photos of Coretta Scott King was captured during the April 9, 1968, funeral of her spouse, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who was assassinated on April 4 of that year. The photo showed a very somber Ms. King giving loving comfort to her very young daughter, Bernice.

Now the world is paying tribute to Coretta Scott King, who passed away on Jan. 31 at the age of 78. Her health had deteriorated after suffering a stroke and heart attack last year.

While her world-renowned spouse was alive, Ms. King was seen mostly in his shadow—thanks mainly to the sexist-oriented mainstream media. But so many times she was in the forefront of marches for civil rights, especially in Alabama, and helped raise funds for the struggle at “Freedom Concerts.”

Following Dr. King’s death, Ms. King continued to champion various causes for more than civil rights, while at the same time raising four children as a sin-

gle parent. Born into rural poverty in Alabama, she supported the demands of striking sanitation workers in Memphis as did Dr. King; spoke at rallies against the Vietnam War, such as the one held in Central Park on April 27, 1968, and marched against apartheid South Africa during the 1980s. She was also a vocal critic of the Iraq War until illness overcame her.

Ms. King was instrumental in leading a massive campaign to win an official federal holiday recognizing the Jan. 15 birthday of Dr. King, which is now commemorated on the third Monday of every January. This holiday was first implemented during the reactionary Reaganite era on Jan. 20, 1986.

Coretta Scott King should be remembered not just as the partner of the most beloved civil rights leader of the 20th century but as someone who was her own person, with her own convictions, that led her to make important contributions to the struggle for social justice and equality. □

Women and the Bolivarian Revolution

Continued from page 6

eration, as part of fighting against domestic violence. In addition, the women’s institute conducts classes in all communities to educate people that domestic violence is not the fault of women, and to render legal assistance in the court system to women who have been assaulted.

Nieves Ayres of La Pena del Bronx and Women Workers for Peace acknowledged the unnumbered and unacknowledged women who had been tortured or killed as they resisted, from Puerto Rico to Palestine to Chile. She spoke of the need for a revolution to begin “in our own households.”

She introduced Reina Arratia, member of the Presidential Commission to Prevent and Eliminate Racial Discrimination, who said with great emotion that “Black women, Indigenous women, all women have been given hope by the Bolivarian Revolution,” so much so that during the hours of the attempted coup against Chávez in 2002, engineered by the U.S., she felt “like my life was over.” Instead, with the return of Chávez, hope was restored to women like her, of African descent, a large portion of whom are in poverty but who are now participating in the transforming process of political struggle. She noted that before President Chávez no woman of African descent had ever been part of any international Venezuelan delegation, as she was able to do.

The final speaker, Doris Acevedo, secretary general of INAMUJER concentrating in health and labor research, was introduced by Dr. Andree-Nicola McLaughlin, founder of the Black Women’s Institute and Dr. Betty Shabazz Chair in Social Justice at Medgar Evers College. Dr. McLaughlin noted the contrast between the government of Venezuela and that of the U.S. in relation to the needs of their people. She pointed out that New York City was experiencing the highest rate of homelessness since the Great Depression, and spoke of the “naked racism and clas-

sism” that were rampant after Hurricane Katrina. She spoke of the need to end the U.S. war on Iraq and said: “To have peace, we need true freedom. To have freedom, we need social justice. And to have justice, we need revolution.”

Acevedo said one of the key campaigns of INAMUJER is for women to attain 50 percent of the positions in the National Electoral Commission, the National Assembly, governorships and other popular vote positions. Currently only 12 percent of the deputies in the National Assembly are women.

However, since the new constitution, women “have played key roles, both in government and NGOs, in drafting, advancing and reforming a wide array of legislation in diverse fields, including but not limited to health care, education, the environment, land reforms, Indigenous rights, and reproductive rights. Participation by women in civil society has been instrumental in carrying out public campaigns to increase awareness of women’s issues and creating programs for women.”

Acevedo then appealed to the audience, saying, “We need your help, your solidarity. This is a struggle of the Americas—north, central, south—all the Americas—with women at the forefront in the streets.” She ended, “A revolution is not a revolution of speeches. It is a revolution of action. We are permanent workers in struggle and we want your solidarity. From you to us, and us to you!”

Just before a reception with music provided by the women’s drum group, Las Yaya, there was an emotional culmination to the evening.

William Camacaro of the Alberto Lovera Circulo Bolivariano stepped forward with a plaque for Maria del Mar Alvarez Lovera, who had been married to the martyred freedom fighter for whom the group is named. She read the inscription aloud, ending with the words, “Alberto Lovera. Still with us!” □

1955:

Lesbian organizing & ‘red feminism’

By Leslie Feinberg

The 1955 national lesbian organization known as Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) was built on the bedrock of deep economic and social changes in the United States. This first-known national lesbian political rights group, formed in San Francisco, did not emerge out of a political void.

Even in the icy blast of the Cold War, women were fighting for their rights. California—from San Francisco to Santa Cruz to Los Angeles—was a hotbed of organizing where communist women, Black and white, were in the forefront of militant struggles.

While Daughters of Bilitis was not formed by communists to fight for revolutionary goals, it crested in this combative era.

Despite 1950s propagandistic sitcoms like “Father Knows Best,” revolutionary women—Black and white, immigrant and U.S.-born—were widening the battle for women’s liberation and deepening an ideological understanding that the struggle against women’s oppression is a key battlefront in the class struggle.

The nascent military-industrial complex had pulled 6 million women out of their unpaid labor at home into the work force. After World War II, as predominately white male soldiers were cashiered out of the military, women were ordered back to their family homes again, to dawn-to-dark housework and no wages.

Historian Kate Weigand, in her well-researched book “Red Feminism,” explains that while many women who got pink-slipped did return to the patriarchal-dominated, heterosexual family home, a significant number also fought for their

jobs.

“Those who liked their jobs and depended on the wages that came with them staged picket lines and petitioned their unions to protest their forced withdrawal from the skilled industrial workforce. Some women, particularly those who were members of such left-leaning unions as the United Auto Workers and the United Electrical Workers, made explicitly feminist arguments as they pressed their male bosses and co-workers to abandon traditional sex-based job classifications.”

She added, “But although the UAW women’s postwar efforts succeeded in winning permanent status for their Women’s Bureau within the union’s Fair Practices and Anti-Discrimination Department, it would be years before they made any significant progress in their quest for gender equality.”

Weigand makes this important observation: “The anti-feminism of the post-World War II period was both intense and widespread, but it did not impede every segment of the [U.S.] women’s movement to the same degree. Mainstream feminists lost ground after 1945, but progressive women, who were accustomed to defining themselves in opposition to dominant

political and cultural ideologies, continued to see the postwar period as an opportunity for new beginnings. ...”



To read the rest of this article and the entire series, “Lavender & Red,” visit www.workers.org.

Next: **FBI gay-baited civil rights struggle.**

‘Poison DUst’ issued as a DVD

A documentary video that opened many eyes to the criminal use by the Pentagon of depleted uranium (DU) in modern weapons has just been reissued as a DVD. “Poison DUst” has been made into an 84-minute DVD by Lightyear Entertainment. It also includes a short piece on DU issues in Vieques, Puerto Rico, and an article by Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center. It is now available in stores and through leftbooks.com.

Filmmaker Sue Harris interviewed U.S. soldiers returned from Iraq, where they had been exposed to the radioactive dust created when shells coated with DU are fired. Many suffer mysterious ailments and have children with birth defects. The Pentagon uses DU to coat projectiles and even vehicles because it is extremely hard—and it is cheap, the unwanted byproduct of nuclear energy and weapons programs.

The film points out that one-third of the U.S. soldiers who participated in Desert Storm, the first war against Iraq, have disabilities today. The Iraqi people have even more to worry about. They live in an environment that will be poisoned by DU for hundreds of thousands of years.



The Poison DUst DVD can be ordered at www.leftbooks.com

The film includes interviews with former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, New York Daily News reporter Juan Gonzalez, noted physicist Dr. Michio Kaku and many others.

—Deirdre Griswold

BAMAKO, MALI

World Social Forum puts Africa up front

By John Catalinotto
Bamako, Mali

For those who know that Mali's capital, Bamako, has only a handful of large buildings—some government offices, a 15-story luxury hotel, an international bank and a large mosque—it may have been a surprise that this city was picked for the African session of 2006's Polycentric World Social Forum (WSF).

But Mali has a rich history that reminds people of the high point of African civilization before the slave trade decimated the continent. In the early 14th century, Mali was the leading power in an empire bigger than medieval Europe, on the trading route from the Middle East to the African Gold Coast.

On that route was the legendary city of Timbuktu, located in the dry region of northern Mali known as the Sahel, on the edge of the Sahara desert. It is said that Mali's 14th-century ruler Mansa (or Kankan) Moussa once traveled to Mecca with an entourage of 60,000 retainers, each carrying a bar of gold. Arriving in Cairo, he gave away so much gold that his generosity collapsed the medieval market for that precious metal.

Landlocked and extremely poor today, Mali still produces and exports gold, along with cotton. These two products account for 80 percent of Mali's exports. Its territory of 480,000 square miles is almost twice that of Texas, but only 4 percent is arable, mostly in the inland delta of the mighty Niger River. The river starts in the mountains of neighboring Guinea and flows northeast, then switches to southwest through Niger and Nigeria, finally emptying into Nigeria's oil fields in the Gulf of Guinea.

Over a million of Mali's 12.5 million people inhabit Bamako, a city of tree-lined streets with small wooden buildings and the feel of a giant village. Many Malians live in crushing poverty at a survival level, statistically about the same rate as Bolivia, and 10 percent of the population are nomads, mostly Touaregs in the North.

Mali's infant mortality rate is over 100 per 1,000 live births. The adult literacy rate is under 50 percent.

But anyone walking across the Bridge of Martyrs from the south to the north side of the Niger will see a beehive of activity and traffic. People ride mopeds or drive old cars at a density familiar in any modern city. In the blocks-long market area, near the grand mosque, people mostly walk through the busy, narrow, crowded streets.

Everyone is selling and some are buying on these streets—mostly cheap manufactured goods from all over the world.

Mali had a progressive government when it won independence from the French Empire in 1960, but now, like most of Francophone Africa, it is ensnared in French neocolonialism. Mali's currency, the CFA, is locked into the euro, as the currency of the Bahamas or Ecuador is to the dollar. The few real jobs are in government services, on a railroad now facing privatization or in the gold mines. But 80 percent of the people live off the land and cotton prices are so low on the world market that imperialist agribusiness is wiping out the local producers.

Africa front and center

The organizers of the World Social Forum chose this city to host the African session of its 2006 gathering from Jan. 19-23. Malian activists organized, with a minimal infrastructure, a series of 600 meet-

Imperialist trade policies are ruining farmers like these in Mali.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO



ings over those days in the universities, government buildings, museums and conference centers of Bamako. According to these intrepid organizers, including former Minister of Culture Aminata Dramane Traore, between 15,000 and 20,000 people, mostly from Francophone Africa and including many from farming villages, attended the Bamako WSF.

For the first time in the five years of the WSF's existence, the issues of Africa were at its center. According to Malian organizer Mamadou Goita, "We had over 300 people from the rural areas of Mali alone, while another 8,000 came from neighboring countries. All of them participated in the forum and enriched the discussions. This has never happened before."

At the opening demonstration on Jan. 19, thousands of people marched through Bamako's streets to the National Stadium demanding fair trade policies, no privatization of the railroad, an end to subsidies to imperialist agribusiness, freedom for Western Sahara and an end to Third World debt.

For the peoples of Africa, who for the first time had the opportunity to discuss their day-to-day problems before the world, the forum meant a chance to raise some of the most basic demands—fair trade for agricultural products with an end to subsidies for imperialist agribusiness, development of industry in Africa, fair treatment of immigrants in Europe, protection of the environment of the poor countries, an end to the crushing debt burden. All were on the agenda.

On Jan. 23, a group of international guests from Lebanon, Turkey, Syria, Sweden, Belgium and the U.S. stopped at a local restaurant near the train station. As we left, some young Malian men implored us to bring this message back to the WSF and to the world: "All we want is work. We would prefer to stay here and work. Or we will go to Europe and work."

The train station is at one end of the railroad from Dakar, Senegal, to Bamako, which was the scene of an historic 10-month-long strike in 1947-1948. The strike played a big role in the region's struggle for independence from France. Senegalese author and filmmaker Sembene Ousmane brought the story of this strike to the world in literary form in his novel, "God's Bits of Wood."

Malians at the WSF raised as a major issue the attempt to privatize the railroad and sell it to a Canadian-based transnational corporation.

A fate worse than debt

Because the media has hyped the imperialist banks' Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, people may think these countries' debts have been canceled and the debt problem substantially relieved. In reality, this initiative has achieved little.

Throughout the 1990s and in the 21st century, the major imperialist powers

have used the leverage of the crushing debt to enforce, through the International Monetary Fund, what is known as "neoliberal" policies on the indebted countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Without IMF approval, the countries can't get the new credit they need to function in the world economy.

The IMF demanded that African governments cut trade barriers that protected local producers, denationalize industry, cut government spending on health care, education and food subsidies, and open their markets. In this way their economies remained as sources of cheap raw materials and labor for transnational corporations while ensuring continued interest payments to the banks. In 1999, for example, the HIPC countries repaid \$1,680 million more than they received in the form of new loans.

As a result of World Bank and IMF policies, average incomes in Africa have declined and the continent's poverty has increased. These policies are still imposed on the HIPC countries that received debt "relief," including Mali.

In Guinea and Zimbabwe, where the governments stopped paying interest on their foreign debts, the Fund, the World Bank and Western countries have frozen all aid, causing the economic situation to deteriorate there.

With an investment of just \$80 billion, all the people of Africa could have basic medical care, primary education and clean drinking water, said delegates from

the Democratic Republic of Congo. This would go a long way toward lifting the continent out of poverty. However, they said, the poorest nations are saddled with more than \$300 billion in debt to developed countries.

Enormous wealth, in people and resources, has been stolen from Africa over the last five centuries. It is actually capitalist Europe and the U.S. that are in debt to Africa, not the other way around, and they must be made to pay reparations.

The Bamako WSF scheduled 600 meetings at nine sites throughout the capital. Many were focused on the issue of immigration. A whole group of West African immigrants had just been expelled from Morocco after spending up to a year walking north in the hope of ending up in Europe with some sort of job, no matter how hard or how ill-paid.

At one forum, Africans told of their plight, and European progressives, mainly from France and Italy, told of trying to work in solidarity with the Africans and to fight for the rights of all workers. A man from Angola told of being separated from his family without contact for seven months as he tried desperately to get to Europe. He had still only reached Mali.

The WSF does not make overall demands, let alone organize to carry them out. But participants expressed their satisfaction in meeting others from the continent also working for human progress.

However, at a separate meeting of Marxist intellectuals and activists, called on the eve of the WSF by economist Samir Amin, a list of demands on relevant issues was approved. (See the Bamako Appeal, WW, Feb. 2.)

In Caracas, Venezuela, where the second of the Polycentric WSF sessions finished Jan. 30, President Hugo Chávez called for an international organization to take anti-imperialist action.

The 2007 WSF is scheduled for Nairobi, Kenya.

Catalinotto represented the International Action Center at the meetings that issued the Bamako Appeal.

EUROPE

Anti-communist proposals protested

By John Catalinotto

Hundreds of communists from 15 countries in Europe gathered Jan. 24 in Strasbourg, France, to protest an attempt by center-right forces in the European Parliament to pass an anti-communist resolution.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) did pass the resolution on Jan. 25. But the attempt to have the European government take follow-up repressive measures failed to get the necessary two-thirds majority.

Some 15 European communist parties have circulated a petition against the anti-communist resolution. The demonstrators handed a first set of 3,901 signatures to the president of the PACE, René van der Linden, following the protest action Jan. 24. Delegations from several European countries also handed over declarations, resolutions and motions with thousands of signatures.

The campaign continues to demand the withdrawal of this resolution, which begins:

"We the undersigned, independently of our views on the ex-socialist countries, appeal to the members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to firmly reject—at a following session of the PACE—the resolution 'Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes,' voted on 25 January 2006."

The resolution is seen as an attempt to equate communism with fascism and to set up a situation where it will be possible to pass anti-communist laws.

That the capitalist parties have taken up such an initiative indicates increasing popular awareness of the failure of capitalism throughout Europe to resolve the problems of the workers.

For more information or to sign the appeal, see www.no2anticommunism.org. □

La bancarrota significa **Empresarios más ricos, trabajadores más pobres**

Por Martha Grevatt

Llegar a la quiebra es un buen negocio. No, esta frase no es una frase cínica de doble sentido como la frase “La guerra es la paz.” Esta es la conclusión a la que más y más ejecutivos están llegando. Este consenso empresarial es el tema de un reciente artículo publicado por el periódico The New York Times, “La Bancarrota Nunca Se Vio Tan Bien.”

La aerolínea United Air Lines (UAL), acaba de salir de bancarrota, esta proclamó su solvencia después de robarles las pensiones a los trabajadores y extraer grandes concesiones de los sindicatos. Por haber llevado a cabo con gran habilidad este robo, los ladrones empresariales están siendo recompensados. Como lo dice en artículo del New York Times, el 12 de enero, “prestamistas no asegurados y ejecutivos en la Corporación UAL... llegan a un acuerdo en el cual 400 ejecutivos compartirían 10 millones de acciones... con un valor estimado de \$115 millones.”

¿Cómo se les está recompensado a l@s trabajadores? De ninguna manera. Pero los empresarios que no perdieron nada, justifican sus prioridades. En las palabras de la vocero de la UAL Jean Medina, “Es para el interés de todos que la gerencia tenga este componente gerencial atado al futuro funcionamiento de los precios de las acciones de la United.”

La UAL no es una excepción sino la regla. Las cortes de bancarrota aprobaron fuertes bonos para los ejecutivos de la US Airways después que los fondos pensionarios de los trabajadores fuera tirados y estos tomaran tres recortes consecutivos en sus salarios. Estas concesiones permanecerán congeladas hasta el año 2009.

El 16 de enero, la aerolínea Northwest Airlines pidió a una corte de bancarrota que cerrara sus contratos con las azafatas, pilotos, agentes de servicio al cliente, los trabajadores de los pasillos colectivos, aún después de que estos trabajadores ya habían acordado a varias concesiones. Este patrón se repitió de nuevo en todo el sector de la industria del acero y también ha tocado a la industria automovilística y los fabricantes de repuestos de automóviles con la compañía Delphi apelando para la bancarrota en octubre del año pasado.

Algunas veces las compañías que se cobijan con la ley de bancarrota, son compradas por gente como Wilbur Ross, Gerente Ejecutivo de la compañía de carbón, la International Coal Group, la cual ha sido acusada de trágicas muertes de mineros en Sago, en West Virginia.

Según dice esta compañía en su página de Internet, “La Internacional Coal Group fue organizada por WL Ross & Co. LLC para adquirir las principales operaciones de la ya declarada en bancarrota compañía Horizon Natural Resources el 1 de octubre del año 2004.” Ross tiene también fuerte conexiones con Steve Miller, quien fuera empleado para llevar a la compañía Delphi a la bancarrota y destruir la vida de los trabajadores.



FOTOS: DAVE SOLE

Cuando Miller llevó a la compañía Bethlehem Steel a la bancarrota, Ross compró la compañía a un bajo costo y después la vendió rápidamente obteniendo una ganancia de \$500 millones de dólares. El 11 de enero se reportó que Ross estaba revisando los bienes activos de los sofocados suministradores de repuestos para una posible compra y se declaró que una consolidación era algo “aún más imperativo” en el año 2006.

En casi todos los casos, la empresa sale de quiebra “más delgada y más mala”. Después de recortar salarios exageradamente y utilizar el dinero reservado por la jubilación de l@s emplead@s en gastos de operación normal, está en mejor condición para explotar a una fuerza laboral y reducida y salarios recortados. Es todo un fraude perpetrado por los estafadores corporativos.

Pensiones y trabajos bajo ataque

Bancarrota o no, empresas grandes están atacando a las pensiones y beneficios de la salud de emplead@s jubilad@s. A los principios de enero, IBM suspendió su programa de pensiones. Alcoa, la compañía de mayor producción de aluminio en el mundo, anunció que l@s nuev@s emplead@s a sueldos no recibirían una pensión tradicional. ¿Están las pensiones de trabajadores sindicalizados en la mira?

La GM y la Ford pidieron y recibieron del sindicato United Auto Workers un incremento en los gastos para cubrir el seguro de salud.

¿Igualdad de sacrificio? Que va. El presidente de la GM, Rich Wagoner, declara, “Aquí es donde la gente malinterpreta dice: ‘¿Porqué los ejecutivos son muy bien pagados? Hay que preguntarse: ¿Porqué se les paga tanto a los atletas profesionales?’ La habilidad de volver una empresa de automóviles que está fallando a un estado de rentabilidad es un talento muy poco frecuente y muy solicitado.”

En el año 2004 este “talento” de Wagoner le ganó un sueldo de \$2,2 millones al año, más un aguinaldo de \$2,5 millones y 400.000 la opción de acciones con un valor de \$5,1 millones.

Mientras tanto, l@s trabajadores de la GM y la Ford y Daimler Chrysler están con

la duda si tendrán su trabajo por tiempo suficiente para poder recibir una pensión. El mes pasado la GM anunció planes para eliminar 30.000 trabajos. Recientemente, la GM reveló planes para atacar el programa “banco de empleos” que permite a trabajadores ya despedidos recibir pago por 40 horas. La Ford acaba de anunciar despidos masivos. La edición del 22 de enero del periódico Detroit News describe como Daimler Chrysler está tramando para eliminar los trabajos de los trabajadores especializados por combinar clasificaciones.

Los jefes de la industria automovilista se refieren a la pérdida de su participación en el mercado a compañías extranjeras para justificar estos recortes drásticos. Esto es un argumento falso porque están vendiendo mas carros que antes. En el 2005 la GM vendió 9 millones de vehículos alrededor del mundo. Daimler Chrysler vendió un récord de 4 millones de vehículos, liderado por su Grupo Chrysler.

Trabajadores de Delphi señalan el camino del futuro

Estos ataques están extendidos ampliamente y la situación puede parecer deprimente y sin esperanza, pero la resistencia inevitable a la reestructuración capitalista está emergiendo.

Una tremenda lucha de autodefensa se está extendiendo por toda la corporación Delphi, empezado por miembr@s de la base del UAW que se les llama l@s “Soldados de la Solidaridad” (SOS por las siglas en ingles.) Como fue reportado en este periódico, los SOS ha podido frenar la producción por medio de una acción laboral.

SOS se ha suplido su estrategia de trabajar dentro de las fábricas con manifestaciones públicas, incluyendo un piquete el 8 de enero frente de la Exposición Internacional Norteamericana de Automóviles y un piquete el 23 de enero frente a la dirección general mundial de Delphi. Después del piquete de la exposición de autos, el conjunto capitalista de medios publicitarios de Detroit no podía ocultar su nerviosidad sobre SOS.

El periódico Flint [Michigan] Journal lamentó que SOS estuviera creando un

ambiente militante y que Toyota, después de todo, decidiera no construir una fábrica allí. “Se puede contar con que los oficiales de Toyota lean los periódicos locales cuidadosamente y que entérense de las actividades de los SOS,” escribió Tom Walsh en el periódico Detroit Free Press (la Prensa Libre de Detroit.) La situación en total se le está poniendo nerviosa a la clase gobernante, hecho aún más evidente por una visita por el FBI a dos abogados progresistas en Michigan que trabajan con SOS.

Delphi actualmente está manifestando señales de conciliación. El 16 de enero, el jefe ejecutivo Miller le dijo al Congreso Automovilístico Mundial que su “objetivo comprometido es llegar a una resolución consensual”. El presidente de UAW Gettelfinger dijo que éste fue “ciertamente un paso en la dirección correcta”.

Lenguaje más fuerte fue usado por un líder de SOS, Gregg Shotwell, quien es de Flint, Michigan, el sitio de la primera huelga de ocupación de una fábrica en 1937. “Un periodista me preguntó, ‘¿Si ustedes se lanzan a la huelga y cierran a la GM, no sería eso, como morderle la mano a los que les dan de comer?’ No estamos mordiéndole la mano que nos da de comer. Estamos mordiéndole la mano a los que nos golpearon, nos engañaron, y nos robaron. Primero vamos a morder la mano. Luego, vamos a cogerle por la garganta. ¿Qué tenemos a perder?”

Los tribunales de bancarrota conspiran con los Estados Unidos corporativo y las instituciones financieras y banqueras de Wall Street para sacar ganancias a las expensas de los sindicatos y sus miembros. Sentado también en la junta directiva del UAL, la cual aprobó los beneficios para los ejecutivos del UAL, está Miller quien fuera el arquitecto de la insolvencia de Bethlehem, y ahora está haciendo lo mismo a UAW y sus miembros en Delphi.

Si l@s trabajador@s pueden parar a Miller y salvar su contrato, se levantarán las esperanzas a toda la clase trabajadora e inspirará una campaña de lucha.

La escritora es miembro de la junta ejecutiva de UAW Sucursal 122 en la fábrica Ohio Stamping Plant de Daimler-Chrysler. □