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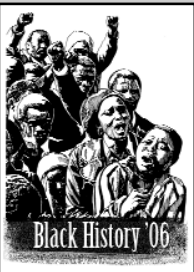
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Worldwide protests Islam bashing part of racist war for empire

By Leslie Feinberg

Feb. 8—Islam bashing has ignited a firestorm of Muslim protest. The vicious mockery of Mohammad in a Danish newspaper last September first lit the fuse. The conflagration now circles the planet.

"We are now facing a growing global crisis," Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen told a Feb. 7 media conference. Rather than apologize, which Muslims around the world demand, Rasmussen urged "dialogue." He said President George W. Bush had called him that day and agreed that was the way to go.

Too little, too late. Yet until protests turned up the heat, Rasmussen had refused to talk with Muslim leaders.

Last September, after the center-right publication Jyllands-Posten—a major Danish daily newspaper—published the "cartoons," Muslims protested to the editor. But they were ignored.

On Oct. 12, the ambassadors of Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Indonesia, Libya, Morocco, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Yemen, the Palestinian Authority—and even Bosnia and Herzegovina, an imperialist puppet after the destruction of socialist Yugoslavia—wrote Rasmussen, characterizing the depictions as part of a smear campaign against Muslims.

Rasmussen—who Bush has referred to as a "steadfast ally"—refused to meet with ambassadors from 11 countries with large Muslim populations on Oct. 21.

In December, a delegation from 21 Muslim organizations in Denmark traveled to Cairo for support. They prepared a 43-page dossier to back their assertion: "There is currently a climate [in Denmark] that is contributing to an increase in racism." The group met with Muslim leaders, including Egypt's foreign minister and the general secretary of the Arab League.

The Danish government and Jyllands-Postens still refused to back down. In January, the Danish High Court rejected the case brought to its bench by 21 Muslim organizations.

And in a Jan. 23 telephone interview, Jyllands-Postens's cultural editor, Fleming Rose, made clear, "An apology would imply we regret what we've done, which we don't."

Oppressor vs. oppressed

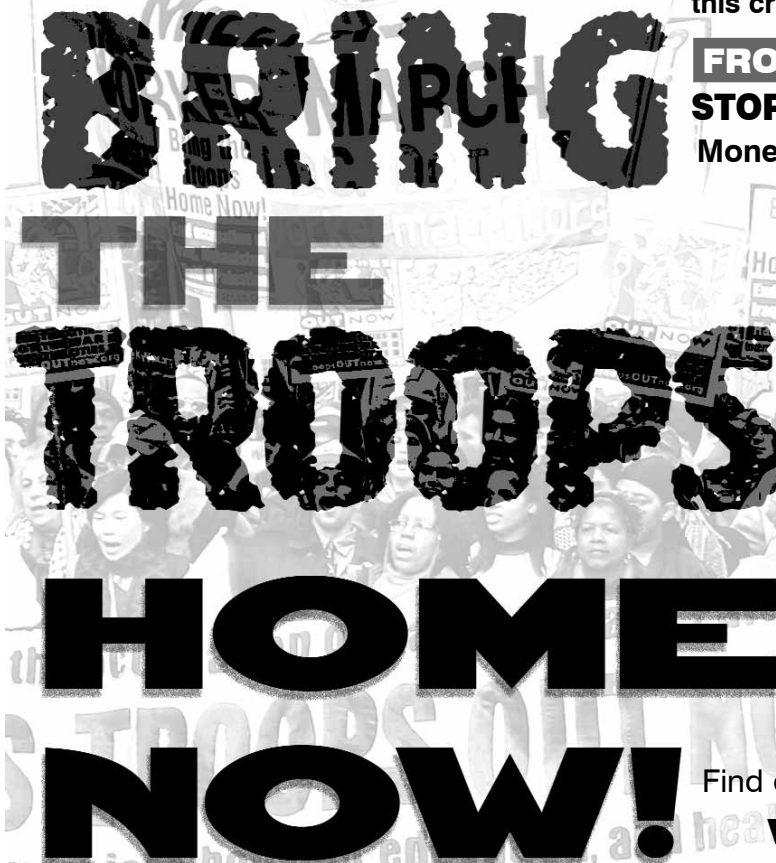
According to the big-business media, "free speech" is the core issue. In reality, this is a battle between oppressor and oppressed nations.

With the exception of Bosnia, in the Balkans, all the nations where the predominant religion is Muslim are in Africa and Asia

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ON SAT • MARCH 18

people will march against the war all over the world. Let's join them and make the 3rd anniversary of this criminal war & occupation the last one.



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1955

Black movement raised hopes of all downtrodden

By Leslie Feinberg

Although the 1955 founding of the Daughters of Bilitis in San Francisco—a group of predominantly white professional and middle-class women—was the first time lesbians organized on a national level to win some political rights, it was not the first time same-sex loving, bisexual and/or cross-dressing women had raised their voices loud enough to be heard in the United States.

No voices could have been sweeter or clearer than those of Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith and Gladys Bentley, Ethel Waters, Alberta Hunter and many other powerful Black women performers and authors. Their prominence did not offer them sanctuary.

Cops busted into Ma Rainey's home while she was holding a women's party. Bessie Smith had to bail her out of jail the next morning. Later ads for Rainey's recording of "Prove It on Me Blues" showed a Black woman in a "man's" hat, tie and suit coat, chatting with two feminine women. Behind them, watching them, is a cop.

It was the Harlem Renaissance that lifted up these voices, along with the strong and poetic articulation of Black gay and bisexual men like Richard Bruce Nugent, Elaine Locke, Claude McKay and Wallace Thurman.

The rent parties, buffet flats and other forms of community social and economic organization, from Chicago to Baltimore, Detroit to D.C. and throughout the South helped create a political network for those who were "in the life."

Harlem's drag balls, which dated back to the late 19th century and continued during the early Harlem Renaissance, drew many thousands, rivaling those held at Madison Square Garden.

African-American scholar and historian Henry Louis Gates concludes that the Harlem Renaissance "was surely as gay as it was black."

In 1949, James Baldwin tried to spark a public dialogue across the country about the struggle against racism and anti-gay bigotry in his essay "Preservation of Innocence."

Baldwin wrote, "We are forced to consider tension between God and nature and are thus confronted with the nature of God because He is man's most intense creation and it is not in the sight of nature that the homosexual is condemned, but in the sight of God. This argues a profound and dangerous failure of concept, since an incalculable number of the world's humans are thereby condemned to something less than life; and we may not, of course, do this without limiting ourselves. ... Experience, nevertheless, to say nothing of history, seems clearly to indicate that it is not possible to banish or to falsify any human need without ourselves undergoing falsification and loss."

Baldwin published fiction in 1951, 1953 and 1956 that also dealt with homosexuality.

The civil rights movement qualitatively accelerated in 1955. This dynamic stage of the ongoing struggle for long-denied democratic rights and national liberation helped inspire and buoy many in the U.S. and around the world

who longed for social and economic justice.

Lesbians and gay men of many nationalities were inspired by the struggle and played an important role in the movement against Jim Crow segregation and other forms of national oppression.

The late Coretta Scott King widow of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., later recalled, "Gays and lesbians stood up for civil rights in Montgomery, Selma; in Albany, Ga.; and St. Augustine, Fla., and many other campaigns of the Civil Rights Movement. Many of these courageous men and women were fighting for my freedom at a time when they could find few voices for their own, and I salute their contributions." (Chicago Tribune, April 1, 1998)

"Thank you sister Rosa Parks"

1955—the year that Daughters of Bilitis formed the first national network for lesbian rights—the African-American civil rights movement shook up the whole country. Black working women, visible in the leadership, showed that oppression could be fought.

That was the summer that 14-year-old Emmett Till was dragged from his bed and lynched by white supremacists while he was visiting in Mississippi. His mutilated body was found in the Tallahatchie River. His murder was the third lynching of an African-American male that year.

Till's mother, Mamie Till Mobley, with courageous resolve, demanded an open casket with full publicity at his funeral in Chicago. "I think everybody needed to know what had happened to Emmett Till," she said. More than 50,000 people lined up to view his body, left unrecognizable by torture and mutilation. Newspapers across the country carried photos.

Ebony magazine later wrote that the decision by Mamie Till Mobley to open the casket "helped mobilize a fighting spirit in Black people nationally that helped spark and fuel the Civil Rights Movement."

One hundred days after Till was lynched, seamstress/activist Rosa Parks refused to surrender her seat on a Montgomery, Ala., municipal bus to a white man. Parks said she was thinking of the lynching of young Till. She later told a reporter, "I just could not get the pictures of Emmett Till out of my mind."

Parks' defiance of Jim Crow segregation, the law of the land, lit the tinder of civil rights organizing and anti-lynching efforts already going on in the Deep South. Her arrest launched a 381-day Montgomery bus boycott in which 40,000 Black people, mostly all working people, fought the segregationist bosses.

Their hard-fought-for, hard-won victory brought momentum to the mass civil rights movement throughout the South during the 1950s and 1960s to break the shackles of Jim Crow apartheid.

But wherever the civil rights struggle made gains, the FBI and other repressive police agencies used gay-baiting, as well as red-baiting, to try to break up the movement against racism.

Next: FBI brandishes weapons: red-baiting and gay-baiting.



Part 53

Lavender & Red focuses on the relationship over more than a century between the liberation of oppressed sexualities, genders and sexes, and the communist movement. You can read the entire, ongoing Workers World newspaper series by Leslie Feinberg online at www.workers.org. Stop and get a subscription while you're there!



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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. 10
Workers World Party Forum: Venezuela: Report from the World Social Forum. Speakers: Nellie Bailey, Harlem Tenants Council, Troops Out Now Coalition; Vannia Lara, Dominican community activist. 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. 3-5 p.m. At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info phone (212) 627-2994.

Fri., Feb. 10
Workers World Party Forum: The State of Black Youth in the United States. Speaker: Leilani Dowell, FIST/Fight Imperialism, Stand Together youth group. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info phone (212) 627-2994.

Thu., Feb. 23
Workers World Party Forum: Katrina: The struggle for justice 5 months later. Also, A tribute to Malcolm X. Speakers: Brenda Stokely, Million Worker March Movement, NY Solidarity Katrina-Rita Coalition; Larry Holmes, WWP, Troops Out Now Coalition; Imani Henry, playwright/performer, WWP; Gloria Verdieu, International Action Center. 6:30 p.m. (Dinner at 6 p.m.) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info phone (212) 627-2994.

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Emmett Till's murder & Katrina

'Ugly face of American racism'

Africana Studies Professor Tony Van Der Meer is co-chair of the Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee in Boston and a co-editor with Jemadari Kamara of "State of the Race," an anthology on the Afro-Cuba diaspora. The following are excerpts from part two of an interview conducted by Bryan Pfeifer of the Boston WW bureau over the course of December 2005 and January 2006. Go to workers.org to read part one. More of this interview will appear in upcoming issues.

WW: What does Rosa Parks have to do with the war in Iraq and the other wars that the United States is waging?

Van Der Meer: The connection is a moral question, a resource question. Martin Luther King said that a country that spends billions on war and undermines social programs is approaching spiritual suicide. We have a \$600 billion military budget, have billions more spent on the war [in Iraq]. We have public schools that are transporting children that don't have monitors and don't have the resources children need to get a quality education. The state can't give money because it's being cut by the federal government because it's spending money on war. So it has everything to do with the war in terms of the level of resources we have to have decent health care, housing, and have safety in our

communities. And to have the money to pay decent wages to people so that they won't be fighting over these type of things.

Considering the type of violence that's happening in Black, Latin@ and the Cape Verdean communities as youth are shooting each other, Dr. King said it is very difficult for us to chastise our children with what George Bush is doing in terms of his war in Iraq and his refusal to end the war.

Chuck Turner [African-American Boston City Councilor and member of the RPHRDC] has confronted some in the anti-war movement that claim racism is not an anti-war issue. He demands they must be connected.

Absolutely. Who is the one who fights the war? Not just the working class but they need to have a lot of people of color who, while white workers are oppressed as well, but in terms of skin color, Black workers are at the bottom of that. And so they're exposed to a lot more and a lot less in terms of what resources they should have.

So racism is definitely an anti-war platform because if you're not trying to deal with what we should be doing for people who don't have anything here and knowing who they look like, like those who were choked out in Katrina, we can begin to understand this relationship to

war and how those resources are redistributed or put in areas to keep war going or take it from those who need it the most. So we have to make that connection around the question of race and class in this society.

Would you like to expand on your connections you've made previously at RPHRDC organizing meetings regarding the connections between Dec. 1 and Hurricane Katrina?

When Katrina went into a pitch, it was the twenty-eighth of August, which is the day Emmett Till was murdered in Mississippi (in 1955). It was Emmett Till's death and his mother insisting that his body be exposed and open so people could see what they did to her child that spurred Rosa Parks into action.

And there was anger throughout this country especially in the Black community that really had people like Rosa Parks and others ready to do something about it. Emmett Till was the real spark and Rosa Parks did her job by saying we're not going to take this anymore.

So when Katrina hits—that ugly face of American racism Emmett Till's murder represented—what it did, not just to Black people but to the world, was really destroy any type of belief that the government was going to come and really



Tony Van Der Meer, left, speaks at Nov. 26 day of outreach rally to build for Rosa Parks Day.

WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN GRAPHIC, ABOVE: SAHU BARRON



Emmett Till & his mother Mamie Till Mobley

help us out. People felt very much on their own and people were very angry and very frustrated.

So there's a big importance on the question of the dignity of Rosa Parks and dignity as well as justice for Katrina survivors and what they're going through. We have to insist that they have justice and that they're also involved in their reconstruction and not have some bureaucrats do that and have some of their rich friends get contracts. The people themselves need to be involved in that process and we can never forget that. □

THE BLUES

POWERFUL MUSIC FOR BLACK LIBERATION

By Larry Hales

In the classic book, *Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Dubois relates a story about the origin of the song "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen." The story goes that, when a certain brigadier general was assigned to the Sea Islands on the Atlantic coast, upon telling the Black inhabitants that they were going to be denied the land they and their ancestors had long cultivated while suffering under the lash of brutal slave masters, the Black women began to sing this song that has been a staple in Black musical culture since then.

Blues music was born with the field hollers and work songs. However, shortly after slavery was abolished, there was a sense that justice long delayed would bust U.S. society at its seams. There were 4 million Black people in the country and that power could not be denied, nor held under foot any longer.

To understand what led to the Civil War and shortly afterwards would take a great deal more investigation than what is taught and upheld as fact. The truth is the abolishment of slavery was the beginning of a revolutionary process that was carried out by Northern capitalists and their Republican Party, and a small faction of Northern Democrats that split from the Democratic Party. Yes, the Democratic Party was then the party of slavery.

Slavery was a boon for the landed aristocracy in the South. The cruel Southern "aristocrat" slave owners were not only despised by those enslaved and the abolitionists, but as well by white farmers in the north that had to compete with the large plantations in the south worked by unpaid labor.

Also, the Northern finance capitalists wanted to break up the semi-feudal con-

ditions in the South, not out of moral compassion for those once enslaved, but out of need for cheap Black labor, for arable land, and for international trade. World commerce had earlier dealt in the buying and selling of human beings, resulting in robbing the African continent, decimating whole tribes, raping and pillaging, making African peoples the world's largest diaspora.

Racism, exploitation = the blues

Karl Marx called the commerce that laid the foundation for the Western European and North American capitalists the primitive accumulation of capital. It was primitive because of the cruel, inhumane, barbaric lengths gone to for the foundation of the countries' profit systems.

The importation of slaves to North America was made illegal in 1808. The slave masters were becoming so rich and were thirsty for slave labor, that if allowed,

they would have extended slavery and hastened their own demise and a Black revolution on the soil that was stolen from Native peoples. It should not be lost to history that the Haitian Revolution was victorious four years earlier, beating the Napoleonic army that was the scourge of Europe and establishing the Western hemisphere's first Black republic. And, in addition, the Haiti rebellions threatened to spill over and inspire poor whites and Native peoples on the U.S. mainland.

After the Civil War, when the evils of chattel slavery ended, a new form of slav-

ery began for Blacks. During Reconstruction it seemed that a genuine revolutionary process was underway. But the Northern Republicans joined with the old Confederates, much as the Allied capitalists joined with former Nazis after World War II in a bloc against the Soviet Union. Northern troops were pulled from the South and the promise of Reconstruction was overthrown, and the rise of the KKK began, with peonage laws and sharecropping that were both a part of de-facto slavery. Also, Jim Crow, a most despicable child, was born of this era.

Hence, "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," and the blues music from Black people, of which Alan Lomax wrote, "...But it was the Black African, highly rhythmic, collective and improvisatory approach to music-making that clearly sparked most new developments." He was talking about musical developments, but culture is a reflection of human movements and what is happening at that particular time in history.

Lomax collected many blues traditions—from the hellish conditions in prisons like Parchman Farm in Mississippi, and Angola in Louisiana, and in the Delta region. Prisoners on chain gangs—the brutal work crews of prisoners that produced huge financial gain and are being seen again today with the booming prison industrial complex—many of whom, criminalized for being poor, sang work songs. One of the songs Lomax recorded in 1947 was "The Murderous Home" at Parchman Farm.



PHOTO: TYPEPAD.COM

The great Billie Holiday

The song starts, "I ain't got long, I ain't got long in the murderous home... Lord, I got a long holdover and I can't go free."

It was in a prison where Leadbelly, a blues great, emerged and later went on to lament "Bourgeois Blues." Another famous blues song is Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit," which tells of seeing a lynching when she was touring down South, where the terror of the KKK was an everyday occurrence. The realities of Black life in the racist South led to Willie King and the Liberators to pen and produce the song "Terrorized" in 2003. In "Terrorized," King, an older Black man from Mississippi, shows the hypocrisy of the current so-called "war on terror." He laments, "You talk about terror/I say you talk about terror/I've been terrorized all my days/you know they hung me from a tall oak tree/they castrated me/did anything they wanted to do/I say you talk about terror/people I've been terrorized all my days."

Sources: *High Tech, Low Pay*—Sam Marcy; *Market Elections*—Vince Copeland; *The Souls of Black Folks*—W.E.B. Dubois; *The Debt*—Randall Robinson; *Peoples History of the United States*—Howard Zinn; *signifying, sancifyin, & slam dunking*—edited by Gena Dagal Caponi; *The Klan and the Government: Allies or Foes*—Sam Marcy; *Wage, Labor and Capital*—Karl Marx; *Value, Price and Profit*—Karl Marx; *A Musical Journey from the Georgia Sea Islands to the Mississippi Delta*—Alan Lomax.



PHOTO: RADIO NETHERLANDS
Arizona youth chain gang

Health care system is crumbling for many

By Kathy Durkin

Nearly 46 million people in the U.S. are without medical insurance. Millions of seniors and disabled people are in crisis due to the Bush administration's Medicare Drug Plan swindle. And millions more face great harm from Medicaid cutbacks.

President George W. Bush's State of the Union speech didn't even address the drug plan because it has been such an unmitigated disaster. Nor did he raise any proposals that would help the uninsured. Instead, he pitched health care savings accounts, high-deductible medical insurance plans and tax breaks—all that would only benefit the rich, discourage employer-based insurance, and do nothing for working and poor people.

The very next day the House of Representatives passed the "Budget Reconciliation Bill," which slashes nearly \$40 billion from essential programs over five years and nearly \$100 billion over 10 years—one-half from Medicaid and Medicare. This will be disastrous for the poorest families.

Hidden in that bill is a discriminatory provision barely mentioned in the media which can affect millions: Medicaid will require proof of citizenship. This will keep out not only undocumented workers, but many other oppressed people, seniors and children who may lack birth certificates or passports.

And then Bush dropped another bombshell: his 2007 budget proposal. It calls for a \$36 billion cut in Medicare over five years. It would cut cancer research and preventative disease programs, even oxygen equipment for the elderly.

The Bush administration has continued massive tax cuts for the rich. And the war-makers are demanding another \$120 billion for the war chest for the next two years. Congressional Republicans and Democrats alike voted for the drug plan, budget cuts, war funding and tax cuts for the billionaires.

The White House, with help from Congress, is coming up with more and more schemes that put the burden for health care costs on consumers, letting government and employers off the hook. They are viciously dismantling hard-fought-for federal medical programs that were set up to help working-class and poor families, seniors and the disabled, and are putting the financial burden on them. This will lead to enormous hardships and drive many more into the ranks of the uninsured, and thus, without medical care. The health of many, including children, will deteriorate.

Big business is getting even richer in the process. The federal government's top officials are working hand-in-glove with the big insurance and drug companies to maximize their super-profits. Other big corporations are gloating too, as they pay less for retirees' health benefits.

Seniors and disabled people in every state have been angrily voicing complaints to their representatives about the hurdles they've faced, as they struggle to get drugs or supplies covered. Many are going without. The poorest and sickest, those who were on Medicaid and Medicare, are facing daily nightmares.

The government and insurance companies no doubt are hoping that the poorest and most disabled drop out of these pro-

grams altogether because they incur more costs—a cruel fact of how insurance works under capitalism. This phony idea that "free market" health care is a good thing has been shown to be a lie to the millions who are being held hostage by these companies and who have no recourse for their myriad of problems.

Seniors who appealed to Congress for relief on the drug plan were turned down flat. Two days after Bush's speech, the Senate rejected an attempt to postpone drug plan enrollment from May 15 to Dec. 31, without penalties, and they denied dissatisfied beneficiaries the right to change drug plans.

But what will turn things around? What is needed is more Medicare and Medicaid, not less! Health care should be guaranteed to all who need it, with full benefits, including for medications, dental care, mental health treatment—paid for and administered by the government directly, without unnecessary middlemen insurance companies, and certainly with no say by the drug industry.

Only a mass movement for a national health program—which puts people's needs first and not the profits of insurance and drug companies or the war budget—can help solve the growing health care crisis.

It will take organizing and building grassroots opposition and a real fighting movement to win this—just like the women's, civil rights and workers' movements have done over decades to win everything from the 8-hour day to reproductive rights to affirmative action. That's what won Medicare and Medicaid in the first place. □

ON THE

Machinists picket NWA at Super Bowl

The 4,300 members of the Aircraft Mechanics (AMFA) have taken every opportunity since they went on strike Aug. 20 to get their message across. They won't quit until Northwest Airlines offers them a decent contract.

Their latest action was an in-your-face demonstration against Doug Steenland, NWA's CEO. A member of the Super Bowl XL Host Committee, Steenland was scheduled to attend a gala at the Fox Theater on Jan. 30. Despite the fact that the union formally requested to picket there and the city okayed it, members of the FBI, Secret Service, ATF—which regulates tobacco and firearms—and Detroit police all tried to keep them away. But while progressive lawyers argued persuasively, the machinists muscled into position to hand out 300 flyers to those walking the red carpet.

As a message posted on the AMFA website on Feb. 1 read, "Mr. Steenland, we are not going away. Not ever. We are looking forward to negotiating a contract with you in the near future—or we can just keep on striking. You decide."

Boeing machinists ratify new contract

The 1,500 machinists at Boeing plants in Alabama, California and Florida—represented by the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM)—voted to ratify a new contract on Feb. 1. Negotiations on Jan. 27, according to IAM spokesperson Bob Wood, were the first productive talks since the strike began on Nov. 2.

Though Boeing did not increase the total financial amount in its pre-strike offer, it did change the medical plan, which was a major issue triggering the strike. Boeing agreed to lower deductibles and monthly premiums and to cap the maximum amount of premiums.

"For three months, we have fought Boeing to a standstill. We have taken on a giant like Boeing and persevered," said Wood in a Jan. 28 IAM press release. "We are fighting a battle most people in this country have been unwilling or unable to take on. We are on strike not

Katrina survivors, supporters target FEMA

National actions were held on Feb. 7 outside of local FEMA offices and temporary housing sites by Katrina survivors and their supporters to protest the latest deadline put forth by FEMA headquarters in Washington D.C. to displace Katrina survivors from temporary housing, in hotels or trailers. Actions were scheduled for New Orleans; Jackson, Miss.; Atlanta; Oakland; Raleigh and Washington, D.C.

In New York, a press conference took place on Feb. 7 on the steps of City Hall denouncing FEMA's actions (above). Katrina survivors, labor and community activists and Black elected officials participated. This delegation connected the issues at home and abroad with demands such as "Money for Katrina survivors, not war in Iraq."

The People's Hurricane Relief Fund put out a statement regarding why the Feb. 7 protest took place. It reads in part:



New York press conference, Feb. 7

WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

"These actions are part of a growing number of survivors and support organizations that are working toward a just and equitable recovery and reconstruction of New Orleans and the Gulf South and to demand the right of return and ultimate control over the federal resources necessary to reconstruct their lives and communities."

— Monica Moorehead

National caravan for migrants sets out

By Ruth Vela & Justino Jiménez
San Diego

Members of the San Diego International Action Center and the Fight Imperialism-Stand Together (FIST) youth group along with other human rights organizations and thousands of individuals have supported Gente Unida, an immigrant rights group formed last summer to oppose the Minutemen, in initiating a national march for migrants that began in San Diego Feb. 2 and will end in Washington, D.C.

The caravan will encourage communities across the U.S. to denounce the assassination of Guillermo Martinez Rodriguez by the San Diego border patrol in December and HR 4437, a bill that seeks to increase the already deadly militarization of the border and attempts to continue the criminalization of migrants, their employers and supporters.

The caravan will also pay homage to the 4,000 migrants who have died since the inception of the racist, INS-sponsored "Operation Gatekeeper" in 1994. Crosses will be planted across the U.S. in their

honor. According to one of the caravan organizers, Enrique Morones of Border Angels and Gente Unida remarked, "It's time our community march on Washington and across the country to let the world know we demand to be treated with respect and dignity; we ask for nothing more and will settle for nothing less."

This historic march for migrants began on the anniversary of the signing of the 1848 treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo at the "wall of shame & the wall of death" located at the border crossing in San Ysidro, Calif., before moving on to Calex-

ico, Calif., in the Imperial Valley where members of the United Farm Workers and Braceros Pro-A gathered on both sides of the Mexicali border fence.

Over the next two weeks, the caravan will travel to Los Angeles, Fresno, San Francisco and Sacramento, then move into Arizona, Texas, Atlanta, Raleigh, Cleveland and Chicago, with plans to arrive at the final destination of D.C. on Feb. 18. Information on the caravan schedule can be found at www.borderangels.org. □

PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

only for our families and communities, but for everyone who works for a living.”

Verizon workers vote on contract

On strike for 13 weeks, four Communications Workers (CWA) locals in New York state voted on a new contract with Verizon Information Services on Feb. 2. According to the tentative agreement, the 300 Yellow Page workers will receive raises of about 3 percent per year beginning in April and their health plan contributions will be capped.

CWA members “should be proud for standing up for themselves and their brothers and sisters in a way that management never thought we were capable of,” said CWA District 1 Vice President Chris Shelton in a Jan. 27 CWA media release.

NPR charged with unfair labor practice

Nearly 100 skilled technicians, members of Communication Workers (CWA) Local 52031, filed an unfair labor practice charge against National Public Radio (NPR) after a non-technical employee was assigned to film an interview with Sen. Evan Bayh on Jan. 17.

The workers have been negotiating with NPR for months. They rejected a management proposal in December that “would have jeopardized jobs and quality” and “management has now acted to undermine the contract,” said Local President Mike Peach, in a Jan. 20 CWA media release.

“Management wants to shift greater amounts of what is highly skilled work to non-technical employees,” said Peach. “This demand not only is contrary to NPR management’s own policies requiring that it meet industry standards, but is an insult to the skilled and talented technicians who are responsible for a quality product.”

Union members in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C., are asking newsmakers not to give interviews to NPR if field production is not done by a CWA technician. Peach also asked supporters to contact NPR to urge management to negotiate a fair agreement that affirms the role of trained technicians in producing a quality network.

IBM accused of not paying overtime

On Jan. 25, IBM was accused of denying overtime pay to tens of thousands of workers in California and New York.

A federal lawsuit claims that IBM violated federal and state labor laws by misclassifying full-time computer installation and maintenance workers as exempt from overtime. The suit also seeks an injunction to stop IBM from continuing this unfair labor practice.

Another recent IBM move to steal from its employees was ending its contribution to pensions. □

Prison fatality exposes inhumane conditions

By John Parker
Los Angeles

A 45-year-old Black inmate was killed and over 100 others injured during a fight on Feb. 4 at the North County Correctional Facility that involved 2,000 inmates, according to the sheriff’s department. The department said this latest incident may have been in retaliation for the stabbing of a Latino inmate by a Black inmate earlier in the week at the Men’s Central Jail, a major downtown Los Angeles facility.

Violence at the North County facility is commonplace. More than 150 “racially motivated” fights have occurred since 1990, police said. In 2000, 81 inmates were injured at the prison. Sheriff Lee Baca ordered a system-wide lockdown affecting over 20,000 prisoners in Los Angeles County.

None of the law enforcement officials has cited the much criticized overcrowded prisons or lack of recreation or learning facilities for inmates as contributing factors for the ongoing violence.

Yet California, the largest state prison system in the U.S., is known to be plagued with problems that include overcrowding and the denial of inmates’ basic health and safety.

According to Penal Reform Interna-

tional, which provides training kits for prison management: “Crowding prisoners into confined spaces meant for far fewer people is inhumane, violates international standards, and contributes to a wide variety of social ills that plague communities as a whole.”

In a March 13, 2005 Los Angeles Times article, correctional officials in Sacramento said they could find no statistical correlation between crowding and violence. Yet the same story points out, “In February, the state’s nonpartisan legislative analyst’s office reported that the rate of inmate “incidents,” including assaults, had risen 18 percent from 1997 to 2003—a period of significant population growth.”

Overcrowding and stress is further encouraged when recreation—which can alleviate stress—is eliminated. In many California prisons, recreational facilities have been turned into housing units to deal with the increased population. The Times article described one such prison: “In a gymnasium now called “G Dorm,” the basketball hoops are folded back to make room for row upon row of triple-deck bunk beds. The noise—from televisions, radios, yelling and laughter—is constant, and the smell is about what you’d expect from 225 men living cheek by jowl who must use overworked toilets

and wait in line for the few showers.”

Believing that “race” is the determining cause for the violence, Sheriff Baca ordered Latino and Black inmates to be segregated. However, the U.S. Supreme Court in February, 2005, ruled that the California Department of Corrections must stop segregating inmates by race unless it was the only way to maintain security since that would violate the U.S. Constitution’s ban on racial segregation by the government.

Baca, as if speaking about lab rats, said that racial violence in the jails “is impossible to prevent.” “They will divide on racial lines,” he said. “There is a code of race. [You] are required to defend your race.”

Unity amongst inmates is undoubtedly a bigger threat to officials. Many inmates have spoken of correctional staff inciting violence and divisions between inmates of different ethnicities. Some California prisons have even been caught promoting “gladiator” bouts between Black and Latino inmates.

The Feb. 4 incident shines a big spotlight on horrendous prison conditions that must lead to increased community involvement in fighting the prison industrial complex and help end the isolation and repression facing both male and female prisoners. □

California ‘time-out’ on executions is stalled

By Joan Marquardt
San Francisco

A two-year moratorium—or “time-out”—on executions in California was delayed indefinitely on Jan. 19 when the Appropriations Committee of the State Legislature put Assembly Bill 1121 on hold.

The moratorium plan, first announced last June 14, was subsequently co-authored by Assembly members Paul Koretz, Sally Lieber, Mark Leno and Mervyn Dymally. At that time Koretz stated, according to the San Francisco Chronicle, that California stands “at grave risk of executing an innocent person.” Lieber said the death penalty is “quite infected with racism.” Mark Leno called it a “lethal lottery” riddled with “significant racial bias.”

At that initial announcement in June, six people wrongfully convicted of serious crimes in California and the parents of a young woman killed by a mentally disabled man all spoke in support of the moratorium plan.

Formally introduced this Jan. 9 by Koretz and Lieber, and signed by an additional 40 judges, prosecutors and other officials, AB 1121 was approved by the Assembly Public Safety Committee the next day. Koretz said, “There is no doubt that there are innocent people on death row right now in California.”

The legislation would have suspended all executions in California for two years, from January 2007 until January 2009. But partisan politics and lack of moral backbone, at least until after elections,

stalled the measure. Had it passed, it would have allowed time for the California Commission on the Fair Administration of Justice, a bipartisan committee established a year ago by the California State Senate, to carry out a comprehensive study of the state’s legal procedures, including the effectiveness, accuracy and fairness of capital punishment as it is carried out here.

Also there would have been time for the state legislature to review the commission’s findings and recommendations. Koretz is quoted by the organization Californians for a Moratorium on Executions as saying, “For the state of California to continue to execute prisoners while an official governmental body investigates the findings of error and injustice and unfairness in the criminal justice system just doesn’t make sense.”

Another group, Death Penalty Focus (DPF), says that the commission is empowered “to study the extent to which California’s criminal justice system has failed in the past, resulting in wrongful executions or wrongful convictions of innocent persons” and “to examine ways of providing safeguards and making improvements in the way the criminal justice system functions” in the largest state in the country.

Not surprisingly, race is a major determining factor in the decision of who lives and who dies in California’s prisons. For example, on Dec. 13, Stanley Tookie Williams, an African American, was executed amid local, statewide and national protests. Clarence Ray Allen, a Native American, was executed on Jan. 17. And on Feb. 21, Michael Morales, a Latino, is also scheduled to die in California’s death chamber at San Quentin Prison.

The racism is so obvious that a 1990 federal General Accounting Office report said that “in 82 percent of studies [reviewed], race of the victim was found to influence

the likelihood of being charged with capital murder or receiving the death penalty, i.e., those who murdered whites were more likely to be sentenced to death than those who murdered blacks.”

Illinois Gov. George Ryan declared a moratorium on executions in his state when a student research paper revealed evidence that at least 13 innocent people were on Illinois’ death row.

More than 100 convicted individuals across the country have been found to be innocent and released from death row. The mistaken or wrongful execution of anyone is an act of brutality that can never be rectified.

New Jersey and Maryland have imposed moratoria on executions.

Even better, Kansas and New York have declared capital punishment unconstitutional. The death penalty is a weapon of terror, used disproportionately against the poor and people of color.

But in 38 states, including California, the death penalty remains legal.

While at least 117 countries worldwide have abandoned capital punishment in law, or at least in practice, the U.S. remains in the small group of nations where over half the states are still licensed to kill. California Gov. Arnold “The Terminator” Schwarzenegger, a death penalty enthusiast, is not expected to sign any anti-death penalty legislation that reaches his desk until he is forced to.

But the growing number of death penalty opponents are heartened that more than 170,000 Californians, some 425 organizations, all the big newspapers, 11 city councils and four counties in California have all supported the suspension of executions.

The struggle to end the very real “crime against humanity” executions of the more than 640 men and women now on California’s death row will continue. Those of us on the “outside” can do no less. □

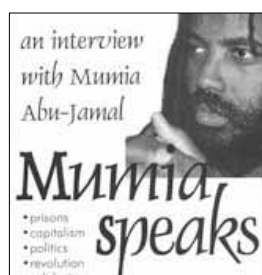
MUMIA SPEAKS

An interview with Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Columns by the Black journalist on prisons, capitalism, politics, revolution and solidarity. Additional essays on the prison-industrial complex by Monica Moorehead, Larry Holmes and Teresa Gutierrez.

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450,000 NGOs IN RUSSIA

U.S. finances opposition forces

By Sara Flounders

A struggle is developing in Russia over legislation regulating non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that is due to go into effect in April.

The new law was passed by both houses of the Russian legislature, called the Duma, and signed by President Vladimir Putin on Jan. 10. Resistance to it has opened a window on the level of Western and especially U.S. intervention in Russia today.

Under the new law, foreign organizations and groups receiving funding from outside Russia have to register with the government. Russian officials say the legislation is necessary to combat the hundreds of millions of dollars flowing from foreign governments to organizations in the country.

An original version of the law was toned down under an intense campaign of pressure from the NGOs themselves and from the U.S. government. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pressured Putin, expressing concern for “democracy.” The legislation was on the agenda at the recent G-8 meeting.

The law imposes restrictions on the financing, registration and activities of NGOs. This term originally meant any non-profit, voluntary, civic, humanitarian, health, human rights, service or environmental organization. Now a huge number of organizations that claim to be non-governmental, but rely on the U.S. and other major imperialist countries and on big corporations for their funds, operate in Russia and in many countries around the world. They dispense aid, set policy and intervene in political life based on the political agenda and economic interests of the funders.

The sheer number of organizations described as NGOs and the number receiving foreign funding is staggering. Since 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union, hundreds of thousands of NGOs have sprung up in Russia. Members of the Russian Duma say over 450,000 NGOs operate in Russia today. The Yale Center for the Study of Globalization puts the number even higher, saying that “There are at least 600,000 registered non-governmental, non-commercial organizations operating in Russia. At least as many may be working in the country without official registration.”

Duma deputy Alexei Ostrovsky, a co-author of the new law, estimates up to a quarter of Russian NGOs receive money from abroad. These include environmental groups, human rights monitors and consumer advocates.

President Putin, in supporting the legislation, said: “Whether these organizations want it or not, they become an instrument in the hands of foreign states that use them to achieve their own political objectives. This situation is unacceptable. This law is designed to prevent interference in Russia’s internal political life by foreign countries and create transparent conditions for the financing of nongovernmental organizations.”

The cross followed the gun

When the European capitalist nations first established colonies around the world, the cross followed the gun. Thousands of missionaries were an integral part of the machinery of conquest and subjugation.

Establishing a colonial administration meant reorganizing society and the ownership of property in a way that benefited the colonizers. It involved schools, training and political orientation for those

U.S.-funded NGOs trying to impose “regime change” in Cuba, Venezuela, Chile, Nicaragua and Haiti are understood. These same subversive organizations in Eastern Europe and former Soviet republics are less understood

among the local elite who would become collaborators. Religious conversion helped to pacify a whole section of the population, and paved the way for some to become loyal and fervent servants of the new power structure.

Today in Russia, not just religious organizations have been flooding into the region. The primary role of proselytizing capitalist values is played by “human rights” NGOs.

In response to these new restrictions, the volume of political pressure and protests from Washington has been turned up. But it is sheer hypocrisy. Regulations that are far more restrictive and intrusive monitor organizations in the U.S.

Any individual or organization here that accepts money from a foreign country must register with the U.S. government under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Charitable donations are a matter of public record. Imagine Russia, China, Cuba, North Korea or Iran pumping millions of dollars into political organizations in the U.S. Even U.S. allies such as Britain, France, Germany or Japan cannot secretly fund political organizations within the U.S.

Alexei Pankin, writing in the Jan. 25 issue of the magazine *Russia Profile*, described his relation with two NGOs. “I ran a USAID-funded three-year program supporting Russian media, with a total budget of \$10.5 million, and a Soros Foundation program supporting Russian media with an annual budget of \$1.8 million. The number of supervisors, bosses, inspectors and advisers who I had to deal with (or had to deal with me) defies belief. I am sure there were intelligence officers among them.”

Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB), successor of the KGB, on Jan. 23 accused four British diplomats of spying. It said it had caught one of them “red-handed” channeling funds to several Russian non-governmental organizations. London denied misconduct, saying it openly funded NGOs in Russia.

Significant foreign funding comes directly from U.S. sources, such as the quasi-governmental National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and from the European Union’s Tacis Program. Millions of dollars in funding originates with foundations that represent the interests of the wealthy elite, such as the Ford, MacArthur, Carnegie, Rockefeller and Soros organizations.

Regime change in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan

The role of U.S.-funded NGOs in trying to impose “regime change” in Cuba, Venezuela, Chile, Nicaragua and Haiti is increasingly understood. The role of these same subversive organizations in Eastern Europe and the countries that made up the former Soviet Union is less well known, even though they operate on an even larger scale there.

Russia’s FSB security service chief,

Nikolai Patrushev, recently blamed foreign-funded NGOs for fomenting coups in the post-Soviet states of Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.

The active and open role that foreign-funded NGOs played in the overturn of these three governments is what is setting off alarm bells in Moscow. The imperialist media fondly call these coups “velvet revolutions” and sometimes “color revolutions” for the colors chosen by the opposition forces.

Ironically, the political leaders who were overthrown—especially Eduard Shevardnadze in Georgia and Leonid Kuchma in Ukraine—had in the past been the U.S.-chosen candidates. Both had carried out policies that brought their governments into the U.S. orbit. They had pushed for joining NATO’s “Partnership for Peace.” Both had agreed to send troops to Iraq.

Yet both politicians were unceremoniously thrown out when they were not totally compliant with U.S. corporate demands. Both of their replacements—Mikheil Saakashvili in Georgia and Viktor Yushchenko in Ukraine—had served in the governments of their predecessors.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said after attending Yushchenko’s inauguration as president of Ukraine on Jan 23, 2005, that he was “proud to have been associated with both events”—in Georgia and Ukraine.

Much insight into U.S. plans for the future and evaluations of past interventions can actually be found on the web sites of the foundations behind these regime changes.

40,000 NGOs in Ukraine

In an article on the World Bank’s website entitled: “Civil Society Development in Ukraine and the Orange Revolution,” Vira Naniivska, director of the International Center for Policy Studies in Ukraine, brags: “Today some 40,000 NGOs in Ukraine involve 12 percent of the population—and these organizations have been a key active force in the Orange Revolution.” (www.worldbank.org)

She describes how international consultants, policy experts and technical assistants work in coordination to change legislation, develop interest groups, set up media centers and develop protest movements. NGOs affect legislation, train civil servants, establish community councils and business associations, and push to revise the state budget in their own interests.

Young people and student organizations are drawn in through campaigns around HIV/AIDS, protection of minority rights and fighting child abandonment. The whole aim of this web of projects, she explains, is to prevent any “backsliding towards the old regime” and to push for “Euro-integration,” meaning integrating into international and European organizations like NATO and the World Bank.

The overturn of socialist ownership and the breakup of the Soviet Union is a process that did not end in 1991. Shaping the laws on property, the rights of foreign capital, justifying the expropriation and privatizing of the socially owned resources, industry and services for individual profit, dismembering social programs, shaping the media, education and culture, and undermining any assertions of sovereignty are a much longer process.

These funds have an even greater impact in a region where the centralized socialist planning that once guaranteed pensions, full employment, free health care, free education and subsidized housing is gone. Its brutal dismembering has

affected millions of people, leaving them intensely angry with the leaders who betrayed them.

Funding youth movements

A significant part of the U.S. corporate funding is to create youth movements. The Soros Foundation, USAID and the NED together funded the Serbian youth group Otpor. Young people were provided specialized training and seminars in Budapest, Hungary, along with t-shirts, stickers, posters, office rent and a newspaper, as part of the successful campaign to overturn the Milosevic government in Serbia.

In Georgia, the Soros Foundation budgeted \$4.6 million for the youth group Kmara, which became a primary weapon against the government. In Ukraine, Soros budgeted \$7 million for the youth group Pora.

The opendemocracy.net web site is funded by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. An article there by Sreeram Chaulia analyzes the role of U.S.-funded NGOs from Georgia to Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. The blurb for it is provocative, saying that “new forms of youthful, tech-savvy mass mobilization are impelling regime change from below. But is the phenomenon as benign as it appears? Are the movements who inspire the ‘color revolutions’ catalysts or saboteurs?”

The author is not criticizing these NGOs; he is evaluating their effectiveness in implementing “regime change.” A few of his observations give insight into how these political organizations operate as just another weapon in the U.S. arsenal.

“Sabotage can suffice in some countries while full-scale military offensives may be needed in others,” Chaulia says.

“These three revolutions—the ‘rose revolution’ in Georgia (November 2003-January 2004), the ‘orange revolution’ in Ukraine (January 2005) and the ‘tulip revolution’ in Kyrgyzstan (April 2005)—each followed a near-identical trajectory; all were spearheaded by the American democratization Ingos [international NGOs] working at the behest of the U.S. foreign policy establishment. ... Rarely has the U.S. promoted human rights and democracy in a region when they did not suit its grander foreign-policy objectives. ... Ingos heavily dependent on U.S. finances have been found to be consciously or subconsciously extending U.S. governmental interests. ...

“NED’s first president, Allen Weinstein, admitted openly that ‘a lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA. ... NED was conceived as a quasi-governmental foundation that funneled U.S. government funding through Ingos like the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), and Freedom House. ...

“The U.S. Embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, worked closely with NGOs like Freedom House and the Soros Foundation—supplying generators, printing presses and money to keep the protests boiling until President Akayev fled. Information about where protesters should gather and what they should bring was spread through State Department-funded radio and TV stations.”

Today’s new and developing anti-war movement needs an understanding of the many forms of U.S. intervention, along with the chaos and instability that it breeds. This will build anti-imperialist awareness and strengthen the growing global demand of “U.S. out now!” □

BUSH'S BUDGET PLAN

More war at home and abroad

By Fred Goldstein

There is nothing more political than the budget of a capitalist government. And the budget that the Bush administration has submitted to Congress truly embodies the reactionary politics of the White House. Hundreds of billions of dollars for present and future wars. Hundreds of billions in tax cuts for the super rich. Cutbacks and hardship for the workers and the poor.

The proposed \$2.7 trillion budget gives \$439 billion to the Pentagon, an increase of 6.9 percent. In addition, there is \$120 billion more in "emergency" funds for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The total military spending will be \$560 billion this year alone.

There is \$84 billion for weapons and \$73 billion for weapons development. This does not count the estimated \$5 billion for nuclear weapons development that goes to the Energy Department.

The stocks of the corporations of the military-industrial complex are going to rise based on the upcoming lush handouts. No weapons system was cut and new weapons systems were funded. Boeing will get \$3.5 billion to make 42 advanced F/A-18 Navy fighter jets. General Dynamics and Northrop Grumman will get \$2.5 billion for joint development of two new high-tech DDX Navy destroyers. The two corporations will also get \$2.4 billion for a Virginia-class attack submarine.

Textron subsidiary Bell Helicopter will replace the CH-46 transport helicopters damaged in Iraq with new V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft for the Marines. Lockheed will get contracts for more C-130 cargo planes. Appropriations for missile systems will rise from \$8 billion to \$10 billion.

The active-duty military forces are scheduled for a slight reduction but the Special Forces such as Army Green Berets and Navy Seals are going to be strengthened. The Marines are going to get their own special operations unit. These forces are going to be trained for interventions in the oppressed countries and for training counter-revolutionary forces of client states of the U.S. government. This is part of the Rumsfeld "transformation" of lighter, more mobile and lethal units to respond to threats to U.S. imperialist interests any place on the globe.

But this spending on military "shock and awe" will not stop the struggle. The budget is meant to add new terror weapons and bolster "special operations." However, the combination of military might and Special Forces has not been able to subdue the Iraqi resistance and deliver the country into the hands of the U.S. oil giants, transnational corporations and the Pentagon.

Furthermore, despite the threats to use the U.S. military arsenal, the peoples of the Middle East have not been intimidated. On the contrary, Washington has experienced one setback after another since its post-Sept. 11 offensive to recolonize the region under U.S. rule. Fighting is now raging at unprecedented levels against the U.S.-NATO occupation forces in southern and western Afghanistan. The attempt to destabilize the Syrian government has failed so far. Washington branded Hezbollah in Lebanon as a "terrorist" organization and demanded that it be disarmed. But its popularity as a national liberation organization is as strong as ever. And the overwhelming victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections was a vote against U.S.-backed Israeli colonialism and occupation.

Now Washington is facing the intran-

sigence of the Iranian people and its government. Iran will not surrender its hard-won national sovereignty by giving up its right to nuclear energy at the dictate of U.S. imperialism and its European junior partners.

Iran defends its sovereignty

Washington has threatened the Iranian government with sanctions and military action for two-and-a-half years. It has been maneuvering to bring Iran before the United Nations Security Council and has finally succeeded.

But just as the Bush group totally miscalculated the anti-colonial spirit of the Iraqi people and the Palestinian people, they have totally underestimated the spirit of anti-U.S. resistance of the Iranian people.

Washington counted it as a great victory that it twisted the arms of China and Russia to join the so-called Euro 3—France, Germany and Great Britain—in backing the referral of Iran to the Security Council. The U.S. imperialists thought that this would bring unbearable diplomatic and political pressure on the Iranian government to reverse course. Instead, the Iranian government has stood up to the so-called "great powers" and announced its intention to resume experimentation with uranium enrichment.

The government of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, with virtual universal support among the population, has declared that Iran will never give up its right to peaceful nuclear technology. The development of nuclear technology has been on hold in Iran since the 1979 revolution that overthrew the U.S. puppet Shah and nationalized U.S. oil holdings.

Commander in Chief George W. Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld have been issuing warnings that "the world" will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon.

In the first place, Iran has declared its intention to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It is allowed to use and encouraged to use peaceful nuclear energy under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, of which it is a member.

But if the Iranian government—seeing the Israeli Zionist state armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons, and what happened to Iraq after it allowed itself to be disarmed by the U.N. operating under the instructions of the U.S.—should decide to acquire a nuclear weapon as a matter of self-defense, it has the right as a formerly oppressed nation in the struggle against imperialism and Zionism. It is Washington, with its 10,000 nuclear warheads and its current program to develop new nuclear weapons, that is the prime candidate for being brought before the International Atomic Energy Agency.

'Regime change' dropped from Pentagon report

This latest crisis is the culmination of a campaign that was begun by the Bush administration after 9/11. The White House was riding high after the invasion of Afghanistan and the demonstration of all

This budget cannot bring victory over the people of the world and it is bound to increase social and class tensions in the U.S. While it will fill the vaults of the merchants of death, it is designed to empty the pockets of the poor.

its "smart bombs," killer gunships, 15,000-lb. "daisy cutter" bombs and Predator drones against a defenseless population with no army. It threatened Iraq with the terror visited on Afghanistan.

Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and company promised that "shock and awe" would bring Iraq to its knees and the next stop on the road to conquest would be Iran—part of Bush's "axis of evil" which was on the list for "regime change" along with Syria and North Korea.

Since then, the Bush administration has been stalemated on every front. It is beset with crises of its own making that have forced a shift in the Pentagon. In its recently released Quadrennial Defense Review—a forward strategy report to Congress—the reference to "regime change" that was in the 2001 strategy report was conspicuously missing. The strategy report accompanies the military budget.

While there is money in the budget for special forces and special operations and "irregular warfare"—i.e., counterinsurgency—the Pentagon brass has no intention of being tied to the neo-con doctrines. It is not that the generals are opposed in principle to the doctrine. But they do not want to experience anything like the disastrous adventure in Iraq again any time soon.

The Los Angeles Times carried a dispatch dated Jan. 24 that quoted a Pentagon official working on the Quadrennial Defense Review who characterized Iraq as "clearly a one-off." The official added, "There is certainly no intention to do it again. The human and financial costs of the war have made many senior generals eager to turn the page on Iraq."

Bush's budget is meant to tell the world that in spite of the disaster in Iraq, Washington still has the determination to rule the world and is making full-scale military preparations. In fact, many of these large weapons systems are meant for combat with large militaries. And one clear target of this large-scale military development is the Peoples Republic of China. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has described China as a "threat" and the Quadrennial Defense Review also mentions China.

But this new budget cannot bring victory over the people of the world and it is bound to increase social and class tensions in the U.S.

Budget a full-scale attack on the poor

While the proposed budget will fill the vaults of the merchants of death, it is

designed to empty the pockets of the poor. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a major liberal think tank, did a preliminary overview of the budget. (www.cbpp.org/2-6-06bud.htm)

A sample of their findings should ring alarm bells in the labor movement, among community organizations and in the anti-war movement.

The budget would cut \$27 billion from social programs in 2007 and a total of \$165 billion by 2011. This would amount to a 13 percent cut. "Cuts would be made in hundreds of domestic discretionary programs across the budget including education programs, environmental protection programs, numerous programs to assist low-income families, children, and elderly and disabled people, and research related to cancer, heart disease, and other medical conditions," states the report.

Among the programs with deep cuts:

- Section 2 housing for low-income elderly — **a 26 percent cut.**
- Section 811 housing for low-income people with disabilities — **a 50 percent cut.**
- The Community Development Block Grant program — **a 30 percent cut.**
- The Child Care and Development Block Grant program would face **cuts of \$1.03 billion** in the next five years. This means that the number of children receiving child care assistance would drop by 400,000 by 2011 compared to 2005.
- The Social Services Block Grant, which provides funding to states for social services for low-income and vulnerable populations, would be cut by **30 percent** or \$500 million.
- Medicaid, which provides health insurance to low-income children, parents, seniors and people with disabilities, would **lose \$13.8 billion** in five years through combined funding cuts and regulatory changes.

Other programs would be terminated altogether. For example:

- The Commodity **Supplemental Food** Program, which provides nutritional food packages for less than \$20 a month to more than 400,000 low-income elderly people, one-third of whom are over 75.
- The **Preventative Care** Block Grant, which is operated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and provide grants to states for preventative health services for poor populations.
- The **TRIO Talent Search** program, under which colleges and universities—in many cases historically Black colleges and universities—assist disadvantaged secondary school students to prepare for college.
- The **Community Services** Block Grant, which provides funding for a variety of social services and other types of assistance to low-income families and elderly and disabled people.

If the budget is enacted, it would give an average of \$136,000 in tax relief for people who make over \$1 million a year. Making the cuts permanent would hand these millionaires \$900 billion in the next ten years. More than \$600 billion of this would go to the .2 percent of the super-rich families making over a million dollars a

Continued on page 10

By Osborne P. Anderson, a Black revolutionary who was there. With an essay on 'The Unfinished Revolution' by Vince Copeland and prefaces by Mumia Abu-Jamal and Monica Moorehead. 128 pp, photographs. World View Forum. \$18 online at www.leftbooks.com

A VOICE from
HARPER'S
FERRY
1859



Worldwide protests

Islam bashing part of racist war for empire

Continued from page 1

and are formerly colonized by oppressor nations. These oppressed countries are all still under the economic domination of imperialist finance capital, or, like Iran, are threatened with war. Iraq and Afghanistan are occupied by U.S.-led forces.

Comparisons with other religions are rife now after the struggle unleashed by the insults to Islam.

For example, drawing an equal sign between Islam-bashing and anti-Judaism leaves out the role of Israel as an imperialist cat's paw. Former President Bill Clinton, among many others, tried to make this equation. Clinton told those gathered at the economic conference in Doha, Qatar, on Jan. 30, "In Europe, most of the struggles we've had in the past 50 years have been to fight prejudices against Jews, to fight against anti-Semitism. Now what are we going to do? Replace the anti-Semitic prejudice with anti-Islamic prejudice?"

Arab people, of course, are also Semites. But what has fanned the flames of anger at Jews for the last half century? The settler state of Israel—established, bankrolled and armed to the teeth by the U.S. and British imperialism. The oppressor Zionist state, acting as a boot heel on historic Palestine, flies the star of David and claims to rule on behalf of all Jewish people.

Michael Muhammad Pfaff, of the German Muslim League, pointed out that anti-Islamic depictions were like anti-Jewish caricatures by imperialist German fascists before and during World War II.

Jyllands-Posen had refused to print cartoons about Jesus three years ago that the publication found "offensive." But today, Christianity is not an oppressed religion.

The publication France Soir tried to parallel what it termed Muslim "fanaticism" with centuries of iron-fisted rule by the Catholic Church in Europe. But the Catholic Church was the political party of feudalism, which brutally exploited the peasantry. Today it is the capitalists there who are the oppressors. Arab, South Asian and African immigrants are among the oppressed.

The unprecedented scope of this international firestorm is an expression of outrage against attacks on Islam. But what gives it such force and scope are the explosive underlying social, economic and political conditions of life of the hundreds of millions who practice that religion. And those conditions are super-exploitation and national oppression by imperialism.

War for imperial empire

This attack on Islam can only be understood within the context of the current imperialist war for empire to secure the rich resources of the Middle East and Central Asia.

U.S. imperialism has led invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, and is menacing Iran and Syria. Military interrogators at Guantanamo reportedly flushed Korans down the toilet in front of Muslim prisoners. Pentagon captors have used sexual and gender humiliation and torture at Abu Ghraib. In the U.S., Muslim and South Asian people have faced mass roundups and forced deportations.

Salvos of racist, anti-Islamic propaganda have been used to "justify" this blatant drive for global conquest.

Denmark is part of this war on Muslims—at home and abroad. It has some 540 troops deployed in Iraq, mainly stationed under British rule in the southern port city of Basra.

After 9/11, the Danish government declared war on the some 300,000 immigrants in the country, 70 percent of whom are Muslims. In the Netherlands, Dutch-born Muslims make up 1 million in a total

HAMAS VOWS:

'We will not sell our people or principles for foreign aid'

Following are excerpts from a Jan. 31 statement by Khalid Mish'al, head of the political bureau of Hamas, that appeared in Britain's Guardian newspaper.

It is widely recognized that the Palestinians are among the most politicized and educated peoples in the world. When they went to the polls last Wednesday they were well aware of what was on offer and those who voted for Hamas knew what it stood for. They chose Hamas because of its pledge never to give up the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and its promise to embark on a program of reform.

There were voices warning them, locally and internationally, not to vote for an organization branded by the U.S. and EU as

population of 16 million.

Right-wing and center-right parties have run viciously anti-Muslim campaigns. Among its acts of scapegoating, Denmark shut down its national borders, slashed immigrant welfare payments by 30 percent or more and barred marriage of Danes to "foreigners" before the age of 24.

Other governments and parties in Western Europe have also targeted the some 15 million Muslims on the continent, who face some of the highest rates of unemployment and face marginalization, racism and national oppression.

France, which has the largest Muslim community—an estimated 5 million people—banned the hajib, head scarves for Islamic women.

The German state of Baden-Wuerttemberg employs a "Muslim test" which grills citizenship applicants about their views on 9/11 and same-sex relationships. Some 3 million Muslims live in Germany.

Belgian councils outlawed Islamic garb for women. Italy shut down mosques.

So it was particularly ominous that on Jan. 10, the Norwegian evangelical newspaper *Magazinet* reprinted the anti-Islam depictions from Jyllands-Posen. And since then, newspapers have followed suit in Australia, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, Israel, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and Ukraine. The British BBC and Channel 4 did likewise. And so has the Philadelphia Inquirer, ABC and other news networks. The New York Times, the Washington Post and USA Today have so far declined to run the images.

Washington and London have responded with caution to the outpouring of Muslim outrage. At a time when resistance in Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan has not been broken by military overkill, Washington and London clearly fear the force of mass anger sweeping from Jakarta to Philadelphia. These are arsonists being burned by the fire they set.

In recent days, a State Department spokesperson termed the depictions "offensive to the beliefs of Muslims." And British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said Feb. 3 that the cartoons were "insulting ... insensitive ... disrespectful ... and wrong."

On Feb. 6, White House spokesperson Scott McClellan called on "all governments [to] take steps to lower tensions and prevent violence." The same day, Bush put pressure on the Saudi royal family to try to cool Muslim anger.

But even leaders of client states beholden to U.S. imperialism have had to pay lip service to the storm of popular anger, or risk the wrath of their own populations.

Fury in the streets

Hundreds of thousands of Muslims have

terrorist because such a democratically exercised right would cost them the financial aid provided by foreign donors.

The day Hamas won the Palestinian democratic elections, the world's leading democracies failed the test of democracy. Rather than recognize the legitimacy of Hamas as a freely elected representative of the Palestinian people, seize the opportunity created by the result to support the development of good governance in Palestine and search for a means of ending the bloodshed, the U.S. and EU threatened the Palestinian people with collective punishment for exercising their right to choose their parliamentary representatives.

To read more of the statement, go to www.workers.org/2006/world/hamas-0216

taken their rage to the streets in the first week of February as more capitalist newspapers reprinted the anti-Islamic images.

Even the occupation couldn't stop Iraqis from protesting. And insurgent groups renewed their vow to target Danish troops, all occupying armies and their collaborators.

In Afghanistan, protests took place in Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif and the capital of Kabul—where youths stoned the Danish, British and French embassies and United Nations headquarters. On Feb. 6, as many as five demonstrators were killed as thousands tried to march on the main Pentagon base in Bagram, north of the capital. Puppet Afghan police forces killed another demonstrator and injured more as protesters marched on the local police station in the city of Mihtarlam, in the eastern province of Laghman.

At least three Afghans were killed and some 20 wounded on Feb. 7 when demonstrators laid siege to a base used by the NATO-led "International Security Assistance Force" (ISAF) in Maimana in the north. Protesters reportedly used petrol bombs, set fire to a guard box, and breached the wall protecting the installation. NATO sent reinforcements.

Some 20,000 Palestinians marched in Nablus, including Muslim, Christian and Samaritan religious leaders. Thousands demonstrated in Ramallah. Militant Palestinian demonstrations took place between Feb. 4 and 6. In Jerusalem, thousands chanted inside the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, "Condemnations are not enough, you have to reply with fire." The French cultural center in Gaza was fire-bombed; the German consulate office there was attacked. Armed Palestinians reportedly took over the European Union office in Gaza. The EU is threatening to withhold millions of dollars to the Palestinians if Hamas forms the next government there.

Furious demonstrators hurled gasoline bombs and stones at the Danish and Austrian embassies in Tehran on Feb. 6 and broke the windows of the embassy of Austria, which currently holds the EU presidency. Iran recalled its ambassador to Denmark. Iran is currently defending its right to develop nuclear power, despite U.S.-imperialist orchestrated attacks on that sovereign right.

In Damascus, Syria, demonstrators torched the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish embassies on Feb. 4. The same day, protesters burned down the Danish embassy in Beirut. Syria withdrew its chief diplomat from Denmark.

Libya closed its Danish embassy. Saudi Arabia pulled its ambassador out of Copenhagen.

Between Feb. 6 and 7, protesters took to the streets in Indonesia, Algeria, Kashmir, Yemen, India, Somalia, Thailand and New

Zealand. Thousands of students marched through the streets of Cairo. Rebellions continued in Pakistan on Feb. 7. Thousands marched in the Turkish cities of Diyarbakir, Konya and Istanbul. In Jakarta, hundreds forced their way into the high-rise that houses the Danish embassy. In Delhi, several thousand students battled with police who used water cannons to stop the march to the Danish Embassy.

In Somalia, a 14-year-old was shot to death during a demonstration. Protests also took place in Kano, northern Nigeria and in Bamako—Mali's capital. The High Court in Johannesburg barred two of the largest newspaper groups from publishing the caricatures.

Hundreds protested in the heart of London, outside the Danish embassy, and a smaller demonstration targeted the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Boycott!

Aided by the grassroots power of the Internet, a widening boycott of Danish, Scandinavian and other European products has sent sales into a nosedive, sounding the tocsin in boardrooms.

Muslims in Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen had joined the boycott of Danish goods as of Jan. 29. In Bahrain, Danish dairy goods were set on fire Feb. 3.

On Feb. 4, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called on the commerce ministry to review all economic contracts with European countries, beginning with Denmark. The re-publishing of the images by two newspapers may cost New Zealand its \$NZ100 million sheep trade with Iran.

Hundreds of Kuwaitis massed outside the Danish consulate in the capital on Feb. 4 demanding a boycott of Danish goods. Demonstrators in Abu Dhabi called for a boycott of all trade with the EU. Even Iraq's puppet transport ministry officials were forced to cancel all contractual agreements signed with the Danish government, particularly in maritime transport.

The Libyan Foreign Ministry announced Feb. 5 that it will take economic measures against Denmark. The Qatar Chamber of Commerce cut all trade missions from Denmark and Norway.

Danish exports to the Middle East and Northern Africa are big business for a small country. According to Demark's Statistik data bank, exports topped \$1.25 billion in the first 11 months last year.

The Danish dairy company Aria—the largest in Europe and the second-biggest international corporation in the Middle East—has already been forced to close its dairy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, after reporting losses of more than \$1.5 million a day in sales. The Saudi market makes up two-thirds of Aria's sales in the Middle East, totaling \$396 million yearly.

Other companies are also reeling, including those perceived to be Danish. The Saudi Dairy and Foodstuff Company and the Swiss food giant Nestlé have had to publicly disclaim rumors that their products are manufactured in Denmark.

On Feb. 4, as a result of this powerful and growing economic pressure and widening protests, Rasmussen met in Copenhagen with 76 diplomats representing large Muslim populations—which he had arrogantly refused to do in the autumn. But he would not apologize.

Three days later, Rasmussen begged Arab countries not to boycott Danish goods.

That same day, Jyllands-Postens Editor-in-Chief Carsten Juste issued a statement that fell far short of an apology, but made mention of the protests—and the economic impact of the boycotts—as part of the "costs" of his newspaper's actions. □

U.S. occupation brutal and corrupt

By John Catalinotto

President George Bush keeps trying to sell the occupation of Iraq as a noble humanitarian effort, implemented effectively, worth its cost in U.S. and Iraqi lives and the enormous wealth it swallows up. But the truth is that the occupation is brutal, corrupt and a horrible waste of human and material resources. It is almost certain to end up with a defeat for the most destructive military machine humanity has known.

A new vicious side to the U.S. occupation these last few months has been the Pentagon's air war against the Iraqi population. Little is seen or reported of this war. For one thing, the Pentagon doesn't invite even "embedded" reporters to join the flights. For another, the brass provides only minimal information to the media.

What the Pentagon does provide is this: Up until last August, there were about 25 air strikes per month. By November it had risen to 120. By January it was 150.

The air strikes on the far western corner of Iraq during Operation Steel Curtain hit the town of Husaybah hard. One week into this assault, Dr. Zahid Mohammed Rawi from that region said that medical workers recorded the deaths of 97 civilians along with 38 guerrilla fighters. (Wash-

ington Post, Dec. 24)

This gives an idea of what increased air strikes will bring. Many U.S. military analysts and even alleged war opponents like Rep. John Murtha are advocating pulling out U.S. ground troops and increasing the air war. This may not enable U.S. imperialism to conquer Iraq, but is certain to kill lots of Iraqis.

A cesspool of corruption

The Bush administration had planned to work the Iraqi oil wells effectively enough to pay the expenses of the occupation. It hasn't been able to go beyond the pre-war level of production. But it doesn't mean that no one is making money from the occupation.

Robert Stein, a contractor with a 1998 conviction for fraud, nevertheless worked for the Coalition Provisional Authority, the body headed by Paul Bremer who ran Iraq for about a year after the U.S.-led invasion. On Feb. 2, Stein pled guilty to counts of conspiracy, bribery, money laundering, unlawful possession of machine guns and being a felon in possession of a firearm.

In his role as government official, Stein "admitted to stealing over \$2 million in cash and taking enormous bribes from the businessman, Philip Bloom, in 2003 and 2004 in return for accepting rigged bids

on construction contracts that Bloom was guaranteed to win," according to the Feb. 2 New York Times.

An Associated Press story Jan. 30 made it clear that the corruption went far beyond the connivance between Stein and Bloom. A U.S. government audit showed that the CPA wasted tens of millions of dollars. Lots of the money just disappeared from the books. Some was stolen.

The U.S. had seized cash from the Iraqi government or got it from Iraqi oil revenues. The officials in the south-central region of Iraq—an area where the resistance has not been particularly strong—kept large amounts of cash, millions of dollars, in their foot lockers.

According to a report by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, "tens of millions of dollars in cash had gone in and out of the South-Central Region vault without any tracking of who deposited and withdrew the money, and why it was taken out."

Other items in the reports stated that: Of \$23 million earmarked for civilian and military project and contracting officers to pay contractors, only a quarter ever reached the contractors and the CPA paid one contractor \$14,000 for the same job four times.

The audit reports on the other regions

of Iraq have not been published yet. There is no reason to expect that these will show any less theft and overall corruption by the U.S. occupation force.

Infrastructure near collapse

There are many reasons the Iraqi infrastructure is in such poor shape. Twelve years of bombing and sanctions prevented real maintenance and repair under the Saddam Hussein regime. But it's also obvious that U.S. rule not only has brought no improvement and the infrastructure has further deteriorated.

For the first time in winter there have been severe water shortages in Baghdad's suburbs. Iraqis have running water only a few hours daily. Another item in short supply is cement, with 13 state-owned plants running at 25 percent capacity. The U.S. economic advisers suggest that the cement plants be privatized.

Any attempt to repair the oil infrastructure is hampered by the resistance, and now by a new kind of "corruption." According to an article in The New York Times Feb. 5, "a sitting member of the Iraqi National Assembly has been indicted in the theft of millions of dollars meant for protecting a critical oil pipeline against attacks and is suspected of funneling some of that money to the insurgency." □

Pentagon covers up widespread sexual abuse in Iraq

Fear of rape has led to deaths of women GIs

By Kathy Durkin

The Pentagon is hiding a shocking secret: the rampant sexual harassment and abuse of women soldiers within the ranks of the U.S. military in Iraq. This sexual violence has even led to deaths, the causes of which have been deliberately concealed.

Col. Janis Karpinski, former commander of Abu Ghraib prison, charged recently that Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, ex-senior U.S. military commander in Iraq, ordered cover-ups of some women soldiers' deaths from dehydration there. These women, Karpinski charged, were terrified of being sexually assaulted by male soldiers. As a result, they did not drink sufficient fluids in order to avoid using latrines late at night.

Karpinski told an anti-war audience in New York City in January that a military surgeon told of women "dying from dehydration in their sleep" in over 120-degree heat, without air-conditioning. Doctors were told not to reveal causes of death publicly nor that it was women soldiers who had died.

Sanchez issued orders to hide these causes of death, Karpinski revealed. She also stated that he callously blamed the women for their predicament and said that since they chose to be in the military, "they should take what comes with the territory."

The sexual attacks took place at Camp Victory, where the latrines were in isolated, unlit areas. In 2004, Karpinski said in an interview that "women were doubly easy targets in the dark of the night." She added that there were many such incidents in U.S. military units stationed in Iraq and Kuwait "because female soldiers didn't have a voice, individually or collectively."

Although assaults could be reported to an 800 number, many female GIs had no access to a phone. Calls were not answered; women were instructed to leave a recorded message. Even after 83 attacks were reported in Iraq and Kuwait, the 24-hour rape hot line was connected to an answering machine, Karpinski said.

Women soldiers who have reported

sexual assaults say that they've been denied proper medical care and counselling, criminal investigations have been stymied, and the attackers were supported or the incidents were covered up. Many who've reported attacks have said their officers refused to believe them and threatened the women with punishment. Other women added that they were harassed by fellow soldiers or commanders or met with other forms of retaliation after reporting incidents of sexual violence.

Sexual abuse of women is rife inside the ranks of the U.S. military. Two-thirds of women soldiers report having experienced unwanted, uninvited sexual behavior, reports Terry Spahr Nelson, in "For

Love of Country: Confronting Rape and Sexual Harassment in the U.S. Military."

The Denver Post has reported widespread and increasing sexual attacks on women in the military by male soldiers. And the Miles Foundation states that 30 percent of female veterans have reported rape or attempted rape while on active duty.

A Department of Defense report even found that women of color, and those who are younger, poorer, and lower in rank are more likely to be assaulted.

But the military brass and the Pentagon have never taken sexual violence seriously nor done anything substantial to stop it. In fact, they want to hush it up.

If the truth were revealed about assaults on women soldiers it would blow the cover off the lie that the U.S. war and occupation are for women's rights in Iraq and Afghanistan.

And the military brass surely doesn't want the real stories revealed in the U.S. when enlistment is at an all-time low and the armed forces are going all-out to recruit young people, including women.

But, the truth is that sexism, racism, and homophobia are inculcated into the ranks by Pentagon officials and permeates military culture. Attitudes of arrogance, superiority, and power over others are reinforced while soldiers are conditioned to engage in violent behavior. □

Activists here & worldwide demand

Free Leonard Peltier!

Events were held on Feb. 6 throughout the United States and in Canada, Germany, Portugal and Italy to mark the 30th anniversary of the unjust arrest and subsequent imprisonment of political activist Leonard Peltier.

Peltier, a citizen of the Anishinabe and Dakota/Lakota Nations and a participant in the American Indian Movement, was convicted of the murder of two FBI agents at a shootout in the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1975 and is serving a life sentence. However, Peltier's trial was conducted in a fraudulent manner, with key witnesses and evidence presented by the defense banned and ruled inadmissible, while the prosecution presented no witnesses against Peltier. Peltier maintains his innocence to this day and has been recognized across the world for his human rights achievements.

On Feb. 6, 21 activists in thirteen states completed their six-day fast, begun on Feb. 1, to call for Peltier's freedom. Participants included Rev. Lennox Yearwood of the Hip Hop Caucus, Theresa Laino of the New York Leonard Peltier Support Group,

Peltier supporters rally in New York.

WW PHOTO: DUSTIN LANGLEY

and Esperanza Martell of the ProLibertad Freedom Campaign.

In New York, supporters rallied at the site of a plaque commemorating Indigenous settlements in Manhattan. Speakers included Tiokasin Ghosthorse, host and producer of WBAI's First Voices Indigenous Radio; Larry Holmes of the Troops Out Now Coalition, Teresa Gutierrez of the New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five, and Toni Zeidan of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee. A special solidarity message from political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal was played.

In Tacoma, Wash., 400 people marched over 2 miles in driving rain from the Puyallup Nation to the downtown federal courthouse on Feb. 4. This year marked the 13th annual International Day in Solidarity with Leonard Peltier in Tacoma. Groups such as the Chief Seattle Center, Palestine Solidarity Committee, and MECHA were represented, and perform-



ances were held by the Northwest AIM Drum and the Aztec dancers. An indoor rally after the march was chaired by David Duenas, son of Roque Duenas who died trying to free Peltier in 1979. Addressing the government that has jailed Peltier for 30 years, Elder Alex Jackson said, "We have given you freedom in this country. Now give us (Native People) freedom in this our own country."

Monday's events also served to launch a series of upcoming actions to free Leonard Peltier. For more information, visit www.leonardpeltier.org.

—LeiLani Dowell

Letting Alito in

Anyone the least bit liberal would agree that the new Supreme Court justice, Samuel Alito, is thoroughly reactionary on just about every issue, from affirmative action to women's rights to workers' rights to civil liberties. If the Democratic Party is to keep its image as standing for anything different from the right-wing Republican agenda, it has to distance itself from Alito.

But appealing to the progressive sentiments of the masses in order to get elected and actually putting up a fight against the far right are two very different things. All the pro-Democratic Party groups that represent mass movements—the labor movement, the women's movement, the civil rights movement, and so on—wanted the party to try to block Bush's nomination of Alito. The Democrats didn't have a majority to do so in the actual confirmation vote itself. But there is a mechanism by which a minority party in the Senate can stop that body from taking an action: the filibuster.

It takes 60 votes in the Senate to end debate on an issue, called cloture. Unless members of the minority party, in this case the Democrats, cross over and vote

with the majority, the debate can continue indefinitely—a filibuster. This tactic was used by the Republicans in 1968 when they were in the minority. Their filibuster forced then-President Lyndon Johnson to withdraw his nomination of Abe Fortas to the Supreme Court.

On Jan. 30, the Bush administration was assured of the Alito nomination when a resolution to close debate passed the Senate by 72-25. Only 24 of the Senate's 44 Democrats voted against it, along with one independent. Had all 44 Democrats, or even just 40, voted against cloture, the debate would have continued and the nomination would have been stalled.

Just one day later the vote on Alito's confirmation was held. This time, 40 Democrats voted against him. But it was only a gesture. They all knew the nomination was a sure thing.

The Democrats who had earlier voted for cloture could now go to their constituents and say: "I tried to help you. I voted against Alito." But they and the wealthy rulers of this country who give money to both parties know that the party had caved in to right-wing pressure when it really counted. □

BUSH'S BUDGET PLAN

War at home & abroad

Continued from page 7

year. (Urban Institute-Brookings Institution on Tax Policy)

The budget is inherently racist. African-Americans, Latin@s and other nationalities are disproportionately poor, have lower wages, worse living conditions and are therefore in greater need of the social services being slashed by the Bush budget.

The Iraq War is a net loss to U.S. imperialism, which is spending the U.S. Treasury to get Iraqi oil and territory. But only the military contractors are making any money out of the war. The treasury is being drained to the tune of \$10 billion a month. The same can be said of the war in Afghanistan. U.S. finance capital has been stymied in its drive to recolonize the Middle East.

But it is carrying out a campaign of economic aggression against the population on the home front on behalf of the Wall Street and corporate big business. Bush's budget is a major offensive in that domestic war. It is a transfer of money from the mass of the people to the military-industrial complex and to the millionaires and billionaires of the ruling class. This is Bush's real base.

But the Democrats are not the answer.

The only road for the workers and the oppressed is to mount a determined counter-offensive. The Democratic Party has voted for every war appropriation. It has let the Bush administration have its way without much more than a whimpering and totally ineffective protest, put up for the benefit of their constituents. There has been not one ounce of genuine struggle because the Democrats serve the same

corporate masters that Bush and the Republicans do.

The labor unions, community organizations, anti-war groups, environmental groups, anti-racist groups and liberation organizations of all types must forge a broad, independent united front to beat back this offensive by Bush and the ruling class. □

To build support to free Cuban 5

'Mission against Terror' documentary goes on tour

By Frank Velgara

Following are excerpts.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Labor Center of 1199/SEIU of the National Health Care and Hospital Workers Union was the venue for a presentation by Bernie Dwyer, co-director of the documentary "Mission Against Terror" (an Irish/Cuban co-production) and Father Geoffrey Bottoms, executive member of the U.K. Cuba Solidarity Campaign and coordinator of the U.K. National Campaign to Free the Cuban 5 on Feb. 4 in New York City.

This acclaimed documentary regarding the case of Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando Gonzalez, and Rene Gonzalez, five Cubans unjustly imprisoned in the United States for working to prevent terrorist attacks against Cuba, will be shown in a number of East Coast cities.

The Cuban 5 have been illegally held in U.S. jails since 1998 and denied family visits and bail after nearly two years of

Baltimore's deplorable housing

Grandmother bitten by rat

By Sharon Black
Baltimore

Dorothy Steele, a soft-spoken 72-year-old grandmother whose smile could light up any room, was bitten by a rat recently as she tried to sleep on her couch in the living room of her public housing apartment. Steele lives in the McCulloh Homes housing project in Baltimore City.

It is painful to listen to her account of the attack. But it is also evident that Steele is a person ready to fight back. She explains with pride and anger that she has paid her rent every month and that this is an injustice.

The All Peoples Congress (APC)—a community group that has been active in fighting against police brutality and the war in Iraq—toured her home photographing numerous violations. These included exposed electrical wiring, gaping holes in the ceilings and throughout the apartment, rat and mice infestation and broken plumbing.

The APC and Steele's family called a press conference in her home on Feb. 2 to show the news media the conditions that she and her three adult grandchildren were forced to live in. She and her family were sick and tired of making appeals to the Housing Authority of Baltimore City.

For three years the family has made requests that their grandmother be moved to housing that was decent and accessible for the disabled. Because of a stroke, Steele is physically frail and must presently stay downstairs on a couch. The family has records of their requests. They have also complained constantly about the conditions of the housing and the problems with rats.

After interviewing Steele, television crews were given a tour of the home. There was no functioning electricity or lighting in the upstairs. Smoke detectors were not working. In the bathroom a dead mouse floated next to the broken toilet. The



Dorothy Steele

WW PHOTO: RENEE WASHINGTON

downstairs ceiling had a huge gaping hole. The news media could see where the family had desperately lined up boxes of clothes and personal items to barricade the edges of the downstairs rooms to try to keep the rats from getting in through the holes.

Renee Washington, an APC organizer, was also interviewed. She stated, "This is criminal. No one should be forced to live like this. We are demanding that the Housing Administration of Baltimore City immediately place this family in decent housing. We will organize the community and march."

Steele's grandson pointed out at the press conference that the city had managed to spend money to put cameras on all of the buildings to spy on residents but has done nothing to solve the problems of rats. The city can help fund a war in Iraq but can't help people here. He took notes during the meeting and offered to help organize residents to picket and march.

If you live in Baltimore and would like to help win justice for the Steele family, call (410) 235-7040 or email apcbaltimore@pipeline.com. □



FILM

being in solitary confinement.

A U.S.-based coalition of Cuba solidarity, civic, cultural, and religious organizations active in the international campaign to free the Cuban 5 are hosting the tour as part of renewed efforts to obtain justice and freedom for these imprisoned Cuban patriots.

Hundreds gathered at the labor center to join filmmaker Dwyer and Father Bottoms at a screening of the documentary. Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations Rodrigo Malmierca provided an update on the case and expressed appreciation for the growing solidarity movement. Information regarding the initiatives underway to secure the freedom of these 5 Cubans was shared with participants.

In Boston, "Mission against Terror" will be presented by Professor Noam Chomsky at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) on Feb. 8 and other venues including Washington, D.C., Rhode Island and Maine.

For more information about the case, the ongoing campaign to free the Cuban 5, and/or to purchase the DVD of "Mission Against Terror", contact:

- Leftbooks.com
- National Committee to Free the Five
2489 Mission St., #24,
San Francisco, CA 94110
www.freethethefive.org
freethethefive@freethethefive.org
(415) 821-6545
- NY Committee to Free the Cuban 5
39 West 14th St., Suite 206,
New York, NY 10011
(212) 633-6646
info@FreeTheFiveNY.org
- Popular Education Project
to Free the Cuban 5
2824 University Ave., Bronx, NY 10468
www.freethethecuban5.com
FreetheCubanFive@hotmail.com
(718) 601-4751

The writer is a member of the New York Organizing Committee for the tour.

As U.S. steps up attacks

Chávez presses ahead with social gains

By David Hoskins

The U.S. government has intensified its war of words against the Bolivarian government of Venezuela. Recently, the Bush administration made one of its more outlandish attacks on President Hugo Chávez when Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld likened Chávez to Hitler.

According to Rumsfeld, "He's a person who was elected legally just as Adolf Hitler was elected legally and then consolidated power and now is, of course, working with Fidel Castro and Mr. Morales and others." Evo Morales was elected in December as Bolivia's first Indigenous president with 54 percent of the vote.

Rumsfeld's slanderous attack on three of this hemisphere's most ardent anti-imperialist leaders came on the same day that Venezuela announced the expulsion of U.S. Navy Commander John Correa. The Venezuelan government says it has evidence Correa passed classified information from a renegade faction of the Venezuelan military to the Pentagon.

Chávez offered a firm rebuke to Washington's meddling by promising "the imperial government of the United States that if their military attaches in Venezuela continue to do what this commander has been doing, they will be detained, and the next

step would be to withdraw the whole so-called military mission of the United States."

The United States retaliated the following day by expelling Jeny Figueredo Frias, chief of staff to Venezuela's ambassador. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack admitted that the expulsion of Figueredo was simply "tit-for-tat." The State Department has not claimed or provided evidence to suggest she was involved in any unlawful activities.

The day after the United States launched its most recent verbal volley, the United Nations presented Chávez with its 2005 International Jose Marti prize. The prize is awarded for promoting Latin American and Caribbean unity. Chávez, a close ally of socialist Cuba's Fidel Castro, has laid out a vision for a Latin America independent of U.S. domination.

The prize was handed out in Cuba, where many Latin Americans are studying medicine for free. Hundreds of thousands of participants gathered in the Plaza of the Revolution denounced Rumsfeld's remarks as Chávez accepted the award. Chávez has promised to donate the award money to Bolivia's social programs.

The Venezuelan government has repeatedly offered assistance to workers and poor people living inside the United States. A number of U.S. cities and states

recently entered into agreements to receive low-cost heating oil from Venezuela. Despite these attempts at cooperation, the Bush administration and its allies have continued to work to overthrow the Chavez government.

Rightwing televangelist Pat Robertson repeated his call to assassinate Chávez on a recent edition of Fox's Hannity & Colmes. Robertson was forced to apologize for making similar comments in August on his Christian "news" show, The 700 Club. When asked by co-host Alan Colmes if his comments canceled his earlier apology, Robertson laughed and acknowledged that he was taking back his apology. Robertson is an extreme right-wing Christian and a strong supporter of the Bush administration, who recently blamed Israeli leader Ariel Sharon's stroke on his orders to withdraw from Gaza.

Chávez has asked his country's permission to procure more arms in light of the constant threats emanating from Washington. Speaking at a rally in Caracas, Chávez warned that Venezuela needs a million well-equipped men and women to protect the country against what he termed "the imperialist, genocidal, fascist attitude of the U.S. president [which] has no limits".

On Feb. 6, Chávez officially inaugurated his campaign for reelection to a second

six-year term. The campaign will focus on strengthening the revolutionary and Bolivarian process in Venezuela. Over the past week the government has announced new social programs aimed at improving the condition of Venezuela's poor and oppressed.

Life improved for poor Venezuelans

Chávez recently announced a 15-percent increase in the minimum wage and the introduction of a \$200 a month stipend to poor homemakers. The stipend is a huge advance for women's rights as it recognizes that household work, which women were traditionally confined to prior to the Bolivarian government, is an economic activity that generates wealth.

Chávez also announced on his weekly television program, "Alo Presidente," that \$449 million will be spent revamping the National Public Healthcare system under the guidance of Cuban doctors and advisors.

The example set by Chávez and the revolutionary Bolivarian process is a threat to the legitimacy of the United States' corporate neoliberal model. While this example fuels the belligerence of the Bush administration and its allies, it is also the impetus for Chávez's reelection campaign and holds great promise for the future of Venezuelans and all Latin Americans. □

AFRICAN & INDIAN WORKERS IN STRUGGLE

By G. Dunkel

CHAD

Government workers went on strike Jan. 9. They took the action because pensions had not been paid for three years, raises due at the beginning of 2005 had been withheld and other smaller demands had not been met.

The strike was militant. According to Gabon's news service, strikers occupied the east entrance of the presidential palace for 10 days until anti-riot police took it back. The union involved and the retirees held a number of demonstrations in N'Djamena, Chad's capital.

Michel Barka, president of Chad's largest labor union, UST—United Unions of Chad—said, "We made it clear that these aged people are very fragile and not to pay their pensions would be a serious misstep on the part of the government."

Jean-Baptiste Laokole, a retired civil servant and head of a group representing retired government workers, widows and orphans, said, "What we regret is that aged people have to come out into the streets and holler and protest in order for the government to pay them."

While Chad is a very poor, landlocked country, with an unsettled border with the Darfur region of the Sudan, it recently has been getting substantial revenue from its oil. But this revenue has been severely restricted by the World Bank.

On Jan. 31 the Chadian government came up with some of the pension payments and raises, without specifying how.

The UST suspended the strike until Feb. 28. If the other issues and complete payments haven't been settled by then, workers will begin a series of three-day strikes.

BENIN

The six major union confederations in Benin called a 48-hour strike Jan. 24 to demand that the government fully fund the presidential elections set for March 5. Government officials were upset that

the unions struck over political demands. The strike issued a warning that "the presidential elections be organized effectively, with openness and security."

The strike immobilized the government, the private sector, garbage collection and the schools.

NIGERIA

The Nigerian government has decided to privatize its ports. According to the Vanguard, a Nigerian newspaper, the port workers in all the Nigerian ports have totally rejected the government's proposals for severance packages. They have voted to shut down the ports for three days as a warning before embarking on an indefinite strike to drive home their demands. They want their pensions guaranteed and their severance packages honored.

Leaders of both Nigerian Port Authority Senior Staff Association and Maritime Works Union of Nigeria met on Feb. 1 to receive feedback from chapter executive committees and to strategize on how to mobilize dock workers to shut down the ports.

SOUTH AFRICA

The United Transport and Allied Trade Union (UTATU) and other unions just held a three-day strike against Transnet. The company, which is wholly state-owned and has a corporate structure, is being reorganized and partially privatized. It controls most of the transportation upon which South Africa's economy relies—ports, railroads, airlines and a number of related businesses. This is the first strike against Transnet since it was founded more than 80 years ago.

Five thousand workers marched in Durban to mark the end of the strike. UTATU publicly said that Transnet's attitude towards its workers was "insulting."

While Transnet claimed that the strike was unsuccessful and caused no disruption, journalists counted an unusual

number of ships waiting to unload in Durban harbor.

UTATU's Chris de Vos said the prospects of further work stoppages in the Northern Cape on Feb. 5, Eastern Cape on Feb. 13, Western Cape on Feb. 15 and in other provinces seemed more likely. A national transport strike is set for March 6.

How long the strikes will last is up to Transnet. "We had hoped that our KwaZulu-Natal stayaways would have been enough to make our point and end the need for further industrial action," de Vos explained. He said instead of Transnet addressing workers' concerns, management came to the bargaining table with an array of "token" concessions.

The South African Communist Party issued a statement Feb. 2, which began: "The SACP wishes to express its full support and solidarity with the Transnet workers in challenging the manner in which the restructuring of Transnet is being handled."

The statement continued, "The SACP

supports this action fully aware of the impact that workers' actions will have on major Transnet operations, which are vital to our economy."

INDIA

Airport workers, who handle baggage and do the cleaning and trash removal, went back to work Feb. 5. They had gone out on strike for four days, until the government assured them and their unions that their jobs will be preserved.

The government is going to privatize the management of the airports in Delhi and Mumbai (Bombay), which handle about 65 percent of India's air traffic—nearly 19 million people a year.

Communist parties strongly backed the strike.

After the airports became increasingly filthy and malodorous, more and more baggage was lost, and confrontations between the striking workers and the cops were growing sharper, the government promised that no jobs would be lost. □

FIST organizes anti-imperialist youth workshop

FIST activists from Raleigh, N.C., and Washington, D.C., participated in the annual National Conference on Organized Resistance (NCOR) held at American University in Washington, D.C.

Yolanda Carrington, Dante Strobino and this writer led a workshop on "Marxist Perspectives: Resisting Imperialism from Iraq to Venezuela." Workshop leaders and participants discussed Lenin's definition of imperialism.

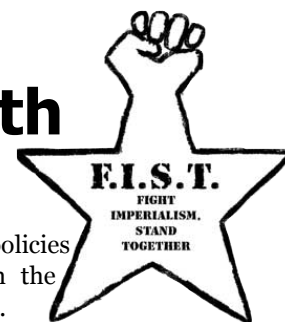
A Marxist understanding of the anti-imperialist struggles in Iraq and Venezuela as part of international class conflict was brought to light and a lively conversation developed about the effects of

imperialist policies on people in the United States.

The devastation caused by the government's response to Hurricane Katrina and the recent death of 16 coal miners in a spate of mine disasters across West Virginia was used to illustrate how capitalist policies are detrimental to the working class and oppressed living inside the imperialist countries.

NCOR is an annual national conference that attracts thousands of participants for discussion about tendencies, strategies and tactics in the progressive movement.

—David Hoskins



Las mujeres y la Revolución Bolivariana

Por Minnie Bruce Pratt

En una conmovedora e histórica noche, un distinguido panel de mujeres líderes venezolanas trajeron las realidades visionarias de su Revolución Bolivariana a la Ciudad de Nueva York el 24 de enero. El Círculo Bolivariano Alberto Lovera fue el anfitrión del evento que se llevó a cabo en la Iglesia Comunitaria de Nueva York.

Las oradoras incluyeron a mujeres que participaron en la lucha revolucionaria en Venezuela por más de 40 años, veteranas de luchas armadas, luchas estudiantiles y de la lucha por la igualdad de la mujer.

Entre la oradoras estuvieron, María León, presidenta del Instituto Nacional de la Mujer (INAMUJER); Nora Castañeda, presidenta del Banco de Desarrollo de la Mujer; Ana Elisa Osorio, miembro de la junta directiva de INAMUJER; María del Mar Álvarez Lovera, Defensora Nacional de los Derechos de la Mujer; Reina Arratia, miembro de la Comisión Presidencial para Prevenir y Eliminar la Discriminación Racial; y Doris Acevedo, secretaria general de INAMUJER.

Sus presentaciones demostraron claramente los avances en derechos económicos, legales, reproductivos y educativos para la mujer y las realidades que Venezuela adelanta bajo el liderazgo del Presidente Hugo Chávez. Ellas fueron presentadas por activistas del movimiento progresista de los Estados Unidos.

En su saludo de bienvenida al panel y a la audiencia, Leonor C. Osorio Granado, la Cónsul General de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela en Nueva York, enfatizó con mucho orgullo que la actual constitución venezolana es la primera en América Latina en usar un lenguaje no sexista para así poder reconocer las necesidades de tanto mujeres como hombres, y de niñas y niños. La constitución brinda a la mujer una ciudadanía completa, total igualdad de empleo entre hombres y mujeres, y condena la discriminación, el hostigamiento sexual y la violencia doméstica contra las mujeres.

El Artículo 88 de la constitución también “reconoce el trabajo casero como una actividad económicamente productiva, otorgándole así a las amas de casa los beneficios de seguridad social.” El Artículo 75 declara que “las relaciones familiares están basadas en la igualdad de derechos y responsabilidades, en la solidaridad y la comprensión mutua y el respeto recíproco,” en un intento de aliviar el largo día laboral de la mayoría de las mujeres. (www.venezuelanalysis.com)

La presidenta de INAMUJER, María León, enfatizó que la naturaleza pacífica de la Revolución Bolivariana significa que las mujeres pudieron poner de frente sus necesidades en vez de hacerlas secundarias mientras socorrían a heridos y desplazados de un conflicto violento. Sin embargo, ella anotó que l@svenezolan@s son un “pueblo revolucionario pacífico, pero no desarmado,” y que las fuerzas militares en el país estaban en unidad con las necesidades civiles bajo el Presidente Chávez.

Dijo que antes de la revolución, pequeños grupos de mujeres luchaban por

sus derechos, pero el progreso era muy lento. Los millones de mujeres y hombres en las calles durante la revolución también ayudaron a crear la gloriosa posibilidad de una revolución en los Estados Unidos y en todo el mundo.

León fue presentada a la audiencia por Leslie Cagan, coordinadora de una coalición de grupos contra la guerra, Unidos por la Paz y la Justicia, (United for Peace and Justice,) quien habló de la urgente necesidad de detener la guerra contra Irak y hacer que las tropas regresen a casa ya. Monica Somocurcio, representante de la coalición ANSWER, otra importante coalición de grupos contra la guerra, alabó a las panelistas por haber llevado a cabo “una heroica lucha, no sólo para las mujeres, sino para la humanidad,” y prosiguió a la presentación de Nora Castañeda, presidenta del Banco de Desarrollo para la Mujer (BANMUJER).

Castañeda, una economista, destacó que las mujeres son las más pobres entre los pobres del mundo, siendo femenina quizás un 70 por ciento de la humanidad empobrecida. Entonces, apuntó, que para poder bajar el nivel de pobreza alrededor del mundo, hay que dirigirse a las necesidades de las mujeres, incluyendo la salud en general, la reproductiva y sexual, además de las necesidades económicas y la alfabetización.

El banco administra programas financieros y sociales bajo el principio de “para todo a los todos”, que significa una economía popular que beneficia a todo el mundo. El banco conduce talleres sobre los derechos reproductivos y sexuales con el Ministerio de Salud y Barrio Adentro, clínicas manejadas por doctores cubanos. El banco también otorga micro créditos a grupos de mujeres para proyectos que puedan subir su nivel de vida, el de sus familias, y el de la comunidad en general.

La tercera panelista, Ana Alisa Osorio, ex ministra del Ambiente y Recursos, y miembro de INAMUJER, fue presentada por Teresa Gutiérrez, codirectora del Centro de Acción Internacional y miembro de la Coalición Tropas Fuera Ya (TONC por las siglas en inglés), otra importante coalición antiguerra de los Estados Unidos.

Gutiérrez dio la bienvenida a las delegadas y aplaudió el espectro amplio de organizaciones políticas de los EEUU y los puntos de vista representados en la audiencia y en la tarima. Expresó con entusiasmo que esto puede reforzar la unidad en los EEUU además de incrementar la solidaridad con el derecho de Venezuela a construir la sociedad que desea. Ella también observó que, “Cuando defendemos a Venezuela, a la misma vez defendemos nuestra querida Revolución Cubana, y a los Cinco Héroes Cubanos, todavía encarcelados en los Estados Unidos. Estamos luchando por Venezuela, por Cuba, y por toda Latinoamérica”.

Osorio destacó que un problema central de Venezuela es que heredó una “deuda social” por los siglos de explotación de su pueblo. Enfatizó que la meta era “una sociedad construida sobre una ética revolucionaria” y sobre el principio de la

“igualdad en la diversidad”, en vez de sobre “un modelo del Primer Mundo”. La Constitución de Venezuela otorga todos los derechos, incluso el derecho al pueblo indígena de volver a sus tierras, y una campaña de masas, la Misión Guaicaipuro, que fue establecida para enfocar en sus necesidades.

Las necesidades y los conocimientos de los pueblos indígenas están incorporados en otras campañas masivas. Por ejemplo, la Misión Robinson, que virtualmente eliminó el analfabetismo en el año 2005, incluyendo a las mujeres que constituían un 65 por ciento de los que no podían leer ni escribir, usó materias docentes bilingües, en español y en los idiomas indígenas. Las iniciativas de salud en el interior del país, incorporan conocimientos medicinales indígenas; equipos de enfermeras son reclutadas quienes mezclan las prácticas médicas modernas con las tradicionales desarrolladas a través de miles de años.

Hye-Jung Park de la Red Coreana para la Unificación y el Congreso para la Unificación de Corea habló apasionadamente sobre la esperanza que ha despertado la Revolución Bolivariana entre las mujeres alrededor del mundo que luchan en contra de la guerra, el desplazamiento, la pobreza, el hambre y contra el SIDA. “Las mujeres unidas –madres, lesbianas, amas de casa y trabajadoras – alimentan esta esperanza. Luchemos juntas por la solidaridad, no dejemos que nuestras manos se desunen.”, dijo.

Ella introdujo a María del Mar Álvarez Lovera, Defensora Nacional de los Derechos de la Mujer, quien habló con tristeza de tantas venezolanas muertas, torturadas y desaparecidas durante los 40 años de “la llamada democracia” apoyada por los EEUU que precedió la Revolución actual. Ella dijo que el trabajo de INAMUJER es el de exponer esta historia secreta a la generación más joven, como parte de la lucha en contra de la violencia doméstica. En adición, el instituto de la mujer conduce clases en todas las comunidades para educar al pueblo de que la violencia doméstica no es culpa de la mujer, y para prestar ayuda legal en el sistema judicial a las mujeres que han sido asaltadas.

Nieves Ayres de La Peña del Bronx y Mujeres Trabajadoras por la Paz reconoció a las innumerables mujeres no reconocidas que habían sido torturadas o asesinadas al resistir, desde Puerto Rico hasta Palestina y Chile. Ella habló de la necesidad de una revolución que empiece en “nuestras propias casas”.

Ella presentó a Reina Arratia, miembro de la Comisión Presidencial para Prevenir y Eliminar la Discriminación Racial, quien dijo con gran sentimiento que “a las mujeres negras, a las mujeres indígenas, a todas las mujeres nos ha dado esperanza la Revolución Bolivariana,” tanto que durante las horas del golpe intentado contra Chávez en 2002, dirigido por los Estados Unidos, ella sintió como “si se me hubiera acabado mi vida”. Pero, al volver Chávez a su puesto presidencial, la esperanza fue restaurada a mujeres como ella, de descendencia africana, una cantidad grande de quienes viven en la pobreza

pero que ahora están participando en el proceso transformativo de la lucha política. Ella relató que en los años anteriores al Presidente Chávez ninguna mujer de descendencia africana jamás había participado en una delegación internacional venezolana, como ahora ella lo hacía.

La oradora final, Doris Acevedo, secretaria general de INAMUJER, organización que se enfoca en investigaciones sobre la salud y el trabajo, fue presentada por la Dra. Andrea-Nicola McLaughlin, fundadora del Instituto de Mujeres Negras y la Dra. Betty Shabazz, con Cátedra en Justicia Social en el Colegio de Medgar Evans. La Dra. McLaughlin señaló el contraste entre el gobierno de Venezuela y el de Estados Unidos en cuanto a las necesidades de sus pueblos. Dijo que la ciudad de Nueva York está experimentando la tasa más alta de desamparo desde la Gran Depresión, y habló del “racismo y clasismo” prevalente después del Huracán Katrina. Habló de la necesidad de terminar la guerra estadounidense contra Irak y dijo que: “Para tener paz, necesitamos la verdadera libertad. Para tener libertad, necesitamos justicia social. Y para tener justicia, necesitamos revolución.”

Acevedo dijo que una de las campañas claves de INAMUJER es que las mujeres logren el 50 por ciento de los puestos en la Comisión Electoral Nacional, la Asamblea Nacional, gobernaciones, y otros puestos elegidos por el voto popular. Actualmente solo 12 por ciento de los diputad@s en la Asamblea Nacional son mujeres.

Sin embargo, desde la ejecución de la nueva constitución, las mujeres “han desempeñado papeles claves, tanto en el gobierno como en las ONG’s, al formular, avanzar y reformar una amplia gama de leyes en diversos campos, incluyendo pero no limitada a la salud, educación, medio ambiente, reformas agrarias, derechos de l@s indígenas, y derechos reproductivos. La participación de las mujeres en la sociedad civil ha sido decisiva para llevar a cabo campañas públicas para aumentar la conciencia pública sobre las cuestiones que toca a la mujer y para crear programas para ellas.”

Acevedo entonces solicitó a la audiencia, “Nosotras necesitamos su ayuda, su solidaridad. Ésta es una lucha de las Américas —del norte, del centro, del sur— de todas las Américas—con las mujeres en la vanguardia en las calles.” Terminó diciendo, “Una revolución no es una revolución de discursos. Es una revolución de acción. Somos trabajadoras permanentemente en lucha y queremos su solidaridad. De ustedes a nosotras, y de nosotras a ustedes!”

Justo antes de la recepción con la música del conjunto de mujeres percusionistas, Las Yaya, acaeció la emocionante culminación de la noche.

William Camacaro del Círculo Bolivariano Alberto Lovera, le presentó una placa a María del Mar Álvarez Lovera, viuda del guerrillero martirizado cuyo nombre lleva el grupo. Ella leyó la inscripción en voz alta, terminando con las palabras, “Alberto Lovera. ¡Con nosotr@s todavía presente!” □