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In occupied Haiti Masses in street set election victory

By John Catalinotto

Residents of Cité Soleil and other poor neighborhoods of Haiti took to the streets last week to prevent the Haitian bourgeoisie and U.S. imperialists from stealing the presidential election of Feb. 7.

After a week of mass demonstrations, Haiti's election commission on Feb. 16 reversed an earlier decision and declared that René Préval had won the election in the first round by getting more than 50 percent of the vote.

Préval, a businessperson who used to run a bakery in Port-au-Prince, was trained as an agronomist in Belgium. He was President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's prime minister in his first government in 1990-1991, followed him into exile and then was president from 1996-2001 after Aristide's first term. Aristide was again elected by a landslide before being overthrown once more by a U.S.-orchestrated coup on Feb. 29, 2004.

Whatever Préval's intentions are or his ability to carry them out, he is perceived as an ally of Aristide, and many of the people who voted for him hope he will find a way to have Aristide return to Haiti.

According to the South African news agency SABC, on Feb. 21 Aristide said "he will return to his country once Rene Préval, the newly elected president, has made an assessment of the political situation there. The assessment will be done in consultation with the United Nations, South Africa, CariCom and the African Union."

Meanwhile, the head of Haiti's official election commission, Jacques Bernard, has left the country, claiming to fear for his life. Bernard had earlier announced that Préval got less than 49 percent of the vote before the commission was forced to reverse itself.

The entire election was stacked against Haiti's poor people, who are among the poorest in the Western Hemisphere. Voting booths were rare in the poor neighborhoods in both the cities and countryside. They were ample in the wealthier districts. But even with an election under occupation that required long walks and long waits to vote, Haitians came to the polls.

Election fraud revealed

Early returns had showed Préval with over 60 percent of the vote. His nearest rival had less than 12 percent. The population exploded when the commission then announced that Préval's total had dropped to 48.86 percent and that a second round would be necessary.

The announcement itself accidentally exposed the fraud: a graph illustrating vote percentages showed Préval with 52 percent at the same time that the speaker claimed Préval's total was less than 49 percent.

The suspicion of fraud grew to certainty

after it was discovered that some 147,000 ballots were discarded for allegedly being invalid and hundreds of thousands of apparently valid ballots were found buried in a lot. Another 85,000 ballots were blank: when these 85,000 were removed from the total vote, this placed Préval's percentage over 50 and it allowed the commission to declare him a winner without admitting vote fraud.

But this happened only after a week of massive demonstrations, one numbering 100,000 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, and clashes with the United Nations occupation troops known as MINUSTAH.

The object of the fraud was to throw the election into a second round. In that round, all the rightist and openly pro-U.S. candi-

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Protesters take over upscale Hotel Montana where U.S. imposed election officials were preparing to announce final results Feb. 13.



Port-au-Prince, Haiti Feb 11. Thousands marched from Cité Soleil.

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Black youth: repression and resistance

By LeiLani Dowell

Following are excerpts of a talk on "The State of Black Youth" by LeiLani Dowell at a Feb. 17 Workers World meeting in New York City.

According to a report by the Census Bureau entitled "The Black Population in the United States: March 2002" Blacks make up 13 percent of the "civilian noninstitutionalized population"—meaning people not in nursing homes or correctional institutions. That they use these figures is interesting to me, because we all know the deplorable numbers of Black men and women in prison today.

Of that 13 percent, 33 percent, according to the Bureau, were under 18. So, that's roughly a third of our population. I want us to remember when we talk about Black youth that we're talking about a third of the Black population.

Blacks accounted for about one quarter of the population in poverty in 2001, with the poverty rate for Black children at 30 percent, compared with 16 percent among all children and 10 percent for white children.

One in three Black men will serve time in prison. In 2000, nearly 30 percent of African Americans aged 18-24 had not completed high school. Black women account for 60 percent of women living with AIDS among women ages 13 to 24. Advocates for Youth says, "Urban minority female adolescents reported high levels of worry about AIDS, but they reported equal or greater concerns about having enough money to live on, general health, doing well in school, getting pregnant, and getting hurt in a street fight. For these women, HIV risk reduction could be secondary to basic needs, such as housing, food, transportation, and child care."

And we can't have this conversation without mentioning the added hardship Black lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) youth face, as we mark the one-year anniversary of the death of Rashawn Brazell, a 19-year old bisexual man who was brutally murdered here in New York City. The Working Group on Police and State Violence at the Audre Lorde Project has noted a marked increase in hate crimes against LGBT people of color.

So, here we have it. These statistics translate into real-life hardship for Black youth. And meanwhile, Black youth remain one of the most demonized groups of people in the United States. The blame is always placed on the shoulders of those youth—and their parents—for the plethora of problems that they face, as opposed to governmental policies and institutionalized racism that began during slavery and continue to this day.

Demonization starts early

When Hurricane Katrina struck, and the world saw every level of government doing nothing to help the mostly Black people in the region, who did the media use as a diversion first? Black youth, specifically young Black men, who were derided for "looting."

And the demonization starts as early as grammar school. In March of last year, two police officers entered an elementary school in St. Petersburg, Florida after school officials called them to deal with a 5-year-old Black girl who was being disruptive and punched a school official. Video footage shows her calm down before the officers approached, pinned her arms behind her back and put her in handcuffs. She was put in the back of a police car and had her feet restrained as well after, cops say, she tried to kick out the window. Police officials later said that



WW PHOTO: PAT CHIN

LeiLani Dowell, far left, marches with FIST contingent in anti-war protest.

the officers had committed an error of judgment but that they did not violate policy.

Two days after the incident in Florida, the assistant principal at P.S. 34 in Queens, N.Y., made her 13 Haitian students sit on the floor and eat their rice and beans with their hands. She screamed at them, in front of the rest of the students in the lunchroom, "In Haiti they treat you like animals and I will treat you the same way here." Later the principal pulled the students out of class, tried to convince them it never happened, and offered some of them ice cream if they changed their stories.

Most recently, in January officials in the Brockton Public School District in Massachusetts suspended a six-year-old Haitian boy from an elementary school for the outrageous charge of "sexual harassment." [See Feb. 28 issue of Workers World]

I know the last three examples are focused on children, and not technically youth. These are just the reported and most outrageous cases, who knows how much psychological trauma is inflicted on Black youth, considered a "lost cause" by many authorities in schools across the country. The psychological wounds from incidents like these will stick with a person throughout their youth, if not longer, especially when we consider the lack of healthcare, including counseling, for many Black children. This demonization continues throughout their lives, with "zero tolerance" policies, police brutality, attacks on affirmative action, discrimination, and so on.

Resistance

In spite of all the very real hardships that Black youth face, and the demonization on top of that, Black youth are still resistant. Let's state for the record, that just surviving in a system that has placed all the odds against you is resisting. Often even the most well-meaning will overlook the resistance that Black youth undertake every day.

An article by researcher Cathy Cohen points out, "young African Americans ... have been ... active and instrumental in ... movements and politics. Whether it is the Black Power movement, the anti-apartheid movement, or the organized mobilization against mass incarceration, African American youth have been and continue to be at the center of these efforts, providing leadership, analysis, and energy."

She continues, "Many African American young people find themselves at the center of many national political struggles and are, therefore, politicized at a much earlier age than more privileged youth. Increased access to information through the internet, television, and popular culture, as well as the constant presence of the state... means that the age of political engagement... is spiraling downward.... Many African American youth engage with the state on a regular basis through state-run health care

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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

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Workers World Party Forum:
Katrina: The struggle for justice

5 months later. Also, A tribute to
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Stokely, Million Worker March
Movement, NY Solidarity Katrina-
Rita Coalition; Larry Holmes,
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Imani Henry, playwright/per-
former, WWP; Gloria Verdieu,
International Action Center. 6:30
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PHILADELPHIA

'Somos trabajadores no terroristas' —We are workers not terrorists!

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

More than 1,500 courageous undocumented workers from Latin America, Africa and Asia risked arrest and deportation on Feb. 14 to participate in "A Day Without an Immigrant" actions to bring attention to the role immigrants play in the economy and to protest pending federal anti-immigrant legislation.

The historic gathering, which drew busloads of immigrants and supporters from across southern Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, took place across from the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall where the U.S. Constitution was written. While flags from Mexico, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic waved over the crowd, speakers included Mexican@s, Chinese, Ecuadoreans, Colombians, West Africans, Indonesians, Salvadorans, Argentineans, and Filipinos, many speaking in their native languages.

"We are united and we will fight for liberty," Angel Cordero, a community activist from Camden, NJ told the crowd. He carried a sign reading "Todos Somos Inmigrantes"—we are all immigrants.

Rally organizer Brad Baldia, a Filipino American, told Workers World, "We

wanted to be as inclusive as possible. The meetings for this event were held in the Mexican@ community, but we plan to meet in Asian and African communities for future events." Baldia mentioned that the actions also received coverage from media in Mexico, Korea, and India, as well as the national media in the U.S.

The rally specifically targeted the draconian anti-immigration legislation drafted by U.S. Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) and Peter King (R-N.Y.) and passed by the House in December that would treat undocumented workers as felons, subject not just to deportation, but to prison time. The Sensenbrenner-King Act (HR 4437) would increase fines against employers who hire undocumented workers and classify these employers as "alien smugglers." HR 4437 would also crack down on religious and community groups that provide assistance for undocumented workers and their families.

Following the Liberty Bell rally a delegation of 50 workers visited the Center City offices of Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), that overlook the rally site. Specter chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is considering a compromise immigration bill. Baldia told Workers World, "We saw Specter looking

down at the rally from his window."

Perhaps the most important component of "A Day Without an Immigrant" was a one-day strike by undocumented workers to demonstrate their key role in construction, maintenance and other service industries. The impact of the strike was timed to be felt in particular by Philadelphia's Center City restaurants on Valentine's Day, one of the industry's busiest days of the year.

The undocumented workers wanted to make themselves seen, heard and missed on Valentine's Day to demonstrate the economic contribution of undocumented "shadow workers" as a way of encouraging restaurant owners to work against passage of the HR 4437 bill.

The Valentine's Day action was inspired by the 2004 film "A Day Without a Mexican" about the possible impact on California if its Latin@ residents disappeared. While some restaurant owners reportedly threatened to fire workers who honored the strike, others admitted the difficulty in sustaining Philadelphia's current restaurant boom without undocumented workers to bus tables, wash dishes and prepare food—jobs that pay minimum wage to \$10 per hour.

Roughly 11 million workers, 5 percent

of the U.S. workforce, are undocumented. An estimated 100,000-150,000 work in Pennsylvania, and 350,000 in New Jersey. The National Restaurant Association has made it a priority to stop the Sensenbrenner-King bill in Congress this year.

Ricardo Diaz, another rally organizer, reported that the primary goal of the Day Without an Immigrant was to raise public awareness. In the weeks leading up to the strike there were widespread rumors of an immigration authority crackdown and mass deportations in the Philadelphia area, possibly designed to diminish the turnout, but Diaz noted, "It actually made people more aware of their vulnerability and encouraged them to turn out."

This was reflected in comments by rally participant Jose Aguila, who said, "We are here to make a better life for our children, and we must stand up for ourselves and not hide in fear anymore."

The third thrust of the protest was to encourage immigrants to avoid purchasing anything on that day, and for immigrants who ran small shops to close their businesses for the day. More protests are planned for Trenton, N.J. and Washington, D.C. in March. Photos and video of the Feb. 14th actions are available at www.daywithoutanimmigrant.com. □

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Delphi delays trashing contracts again

Are they afraid to fight?

By Martha Grevatt

"Can't stop thinking about tomorrow," or so the song goes. This was surely true on Feb. 16 for 75 rank-and-file autoworkers picketing Delphi Flint East, known for decades as the home of AC Delco spark plugs. For the workers protesting the upcoming closing, "tomorrow" was awaited with anxiety and anticipation.

Feb. 17, after two postponements, was to be the final day of reckoning. It was when Delphi CEO Steve Miller would, in the absence of a "consensual agreement" with Delphi's unions, ask the bankruptcy court to throw out the union contracts. Miller had been stalling since declaring bankruptcy last October.

Wall Street bankruptcy court Judge Robert Drain outraged workers again on Feb. 10 by ruling in favor of paying Delphi's top executives another \$21 million in bonuses. Many workers predicted that their bosses, buoyed by this and other friendly rulings by the courts, would make good on their threats to take on the United

Auto Workers and five other unions that represent Delphi workers.

Even members of the rank-and-file UAW powerhouse, Soldiers of Solidarity, expressed surprise when Delphi again postponed its filing of 1113 and 1114 petitions, which ask the courts to void the contracts, until March 31.

SOS has sparked militant grassroots resistance inside the plants that continues to spread. In-plant organizers report that production is down and stockpiles are up.

GM, Delphi's former owner and main customer, is also stockpiling in anticipation of a Delphi strike. GM/Delphi workers are working overtime even as GM cries that it cannot sell cars at a profit. Sometimes workers don't realize the extent of their own power, but GM/Delphi has every reason to fear an organized in-plant resistance. Inside the plant, workers can't be replaced by scabs.

SOS is supplementing their "work to rule" strategy inside with public, in-your-face protests. The first brought 700 workers and allies out Jan. 8 to protest outside

the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, followed by a Jan. 23 picket of Delphi world headquarters in Troy, Mich. The Flint protest was originally called by UAW Local 651, which represents Delphi East workers and which tried to cancel it at the last minute after pressure from the UAW International. The picket went ahead with SOS support.

Todd Jordan, a young SOS organizer from Kokomo, Ind., explained, "The overall [rank and file] consensus remains—'you can't strip away someone's way of life through corporate terrorism and not expect a fight.'"

Meanwhile, the International Union of Electrical Workers—Communication Workers of America, which represents 6,000 of Delphi's 34,000 workers, has called a strike vote for March 12.

Delphi management is trying to appear undaunted. "That is definitely the deadline. This is the first time we're setting a hard deadline," stated Delphi spokeswoman Claudia Piccinin. Of course, Delphi had never bothered to tell anyone that its pre-



PHOTO: FUTUREOFTHEUNION.COM

Autoworker pickets Delphi Flint East on Feb. 16

vious deadlines were just soft deadlines.

Whether this latest round of threats turns out to be real remains to be seen. The deciding factor will not be the aggressive and destructive drive of Delphi management and their friends in black robes to break the unions. It will be the determined struggle of the workers.

To quote a chant taken up by SOS, "Not the bosses, not the state—workers will decide our fate!" □

You be the judge

Is Renco robbing steelworker pensions?

By Milt Neidenberg

The Renco Group, Inc., is threatening legal action against Workers World newspaper. Its owner is Ira C. Rennert, a billionaire speculator who deals in selling and buying companies, many in bankruptcy. Rennert is one of a growing breed of predators feeding off distressed companies.

They suck out the assets—pensions and other equities built up by the sweat and blood of the workers—and dump them when it is most profitable. Rennert has built an empire of massive holdings in real estate, mining and metal industries, including one in Peru.

One of his buyouts was WCI Steel, a plant of some 2,200 workers and retirees in Warren, Ohio, on the edge of the Rust Belt. Renco Group bought out bankrupt WCI in 1988. Following an unsuccessful attempt to break the steelworkers' union there in a bitter strike in 1995, Rennert agreed to create a new pension plan, the old plan having been wiped out in the previous bankruptcy.

It was a short-lived victory for the steelworkers. WCI again declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy in September 2003. According to the Ohio Beacon Journal of Feb. 7, "The pension fund of WCI Steel Inc. is about \$117 million short of its obligations."

Renco has retained Arnold & Porter LLP, a global powerhouse of 650 lawyers with legions of powerful Fortune 500 clients. A letter from the firm claims a Feb. 14 WW article about Renco was "false and defamatory." Headlined, "WCI steel bankruptcy robs workers' pensions," the WW article backs up the claim that "after robbing the pension fund, Renco now claims it can cover the fund's shortfall."

According to the letter from Arnold & Porter, Renco never robbed the pension fund and WW must "withdraw the current version of the article from its website and should not reprint it in any future issue of the print edition...." It demands that WW "apologize to the Renco Group and its officers, directors, employees and shareholders" or face legal action.

WW editor Deirdre Griswold says, "The paper is standing by the article uncondi-

tionally and refuses to accept Arnold & Porter's ultimatum. The article accurately described their client as robbing the pension funds."

Robbing pension funds comes in different forms and Renco is no exception.

According to the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corp. (PBGC), a government agency tasked with protecting workers' pensions, the Employment Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 guarantees that "companies that make pension promises are obligated to pay for those pension promises." The PBGC "filed a lawsuit to seize the pension plan of the bankrupt WCI Steel, saying that the plan was more than \$100 million short of the amount needed and that the government believed WCI's corporate parent, the Renco Group, should be held responsible for the money. ... The steelworkers could risk losing about \$23 million worth of benefits." (New York Times, Feb. 3) In plain words, the company had robbed the pension fund.

The facts are indisputable. Renco has now admitted to the bankruptcy court that WCI's corporate family had the means to make the pension plan whole. "The Renco Group, its attorneys acknowledged, has enough money to cover the pension obligations." (Ohio Beacon Journal, Feb. 7)

Capitalist vultures at war

Currently a bitter struggle is going on between Renco and a group of Wall Street financiers over ownership and who is responsible for the \$117 million underfunded pension liability. These secured creditors, who financed the company during the bankruptcy, have created a shell company. If they win ownership, they will demand that the \$100 million currently in the pension fund be transferred to their company.

These bankers could win the ownership and the pension fund, and Renco could lose the company. Billionaire speculator Rennert would be held liable for the \$117 million obligation and stand to lose a bundle.

The stakes are substantial. Is this why Workers World, which unraveled this tangled tale, is now being threatened?

Nevertheless, one fact stands out beyond dispute. The pension funds are the legal property of the steelworkers, who worked hard and long in a dangerous and difficult environment to secure a measure of security for their senior years.

Symptom of huge pension crisis

The giant wave of cutbacks, freezing and defaulting on pension contributions by U.S. corporations is a disaster of monumental proportions. Currently, the shortfall in pension plans is estimated to add up to around \$450 billion in the private sector and around \$300 billion in the public sector.

The Employee Benefit Research Institute, a nonprofit organization, says 42.4 percent of workers in the private sector over the age of 21 lack any retirement coverage. It calculates that over 48 million workers, or 45 percent of the workforce, have no pension benefit or retirement savings plan.

IBM announced last month that it plans to freeze its pension fund covering 125,000 workers in 2008. Alcoa, NCR, Verizon, Hewlett-Packard, Motorola and Sears have set up their own plans to deal with their underfunded pensions. Many are converting them to 401-k savings plans, which are speculative at best and a risky nest egg for workers reaching retirement age.

Bankruptcies are in vogue. The pension crisis accompanying the WCI bankruptcy is only the tip of the iceberg. About 150 corporations are in some stage of bankruptcy reorganization. United Airlines, Delta, Northwest and Bethlehem Steel have used the bankruptcy court to dump their pension obligations.

The surge in bankruptcies comes at a time when Wall Street and corporate America are boasting about capitalist expansion and growth. What will happen when the capitalist economy slows down? How many more companies will file for bankruptcy, lay off the workforce and end their legacy costs, such as pensions and health benefits?

The global auto parts giant Delphi is a special case. If the bankruptcy court allows

this company to terminate its pension liability, that would amount to a default worth between \$45 billion and \$50 billion, according to the PBGC. This government agency is now underfunded by \$23.3 billion because of previous bankruptcies and can provide only a dwindling percentage of the defined pension benefits that workers should be entitled to.

Bankruptcy and workers' control: an idea whose time has come

In bankruptcies, ownership is up for grabs. When a company files for bankruptcy, it is no longer the legal owner. It surrenders the title. The company becomes a debtor no longer in possession of the property. It is vulnerable to creditors, particularly the multinational rank-and-file organized workforce, who have equity—their pensions and other contractual benefits. This entitles them to be the principal creditors of the distressed companies. They create the value through their labor power that keeps the operations running. Just such a struggle is going on in Delphi.

The United Auto Workers must prepare for battle as representatives of the Delphi workers. Delphi has money—\$1.6 billion in cash—but Citigroup and JPMorgan Chase, as the "debtor in possession" lenders, will claim this money after the PBGC absorbs the pension default. Representing the Delphi workers, the union must assert its right to be the trustee to run the company and therefore the de facto owner on behalf of the workers. Taking possession of the plant and equipment has to be planned and organized to assure the contracts are honored and pensions, health care and jobs are secured.

It must be explained over and over that occupation is a legal right, but a right that will only be recognized through struggle. That's the way it was done in the 1930s, when General Motors workers took over the plants in the famed "sit-ins" and the UAW was born.

Pensions, health care and jobs are a property right. Only under workers' control can they be guaranteed. That's the lesson of the WCI/Renco struggle. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

NWA machinists rally, on strike 6 months

Machinists who went on strike Aug. 20, when Northwest Airlines offered them what they considered a bad contract, held a rally on Feb. 20 in the rotunda of the Minnesota state capitol. In addition to affirming their six-month strike, the Aircraft Mechanics (AMFA) demanded unemployment insurance and a job-retraining program for 43,000 members.

Though NWA asked the judge overseeing its bankruptcy proceedings to void all union contracts in January, the judge ordered NWA to continue to negotiate with flight attendants and pilots and recently extended that deadline to Feb. 24. NWA is demanding \$1.4 billion in concessions from these unions.

Both attendants' and pilots' unions have initiated strike votes. As Minneapolis television station WCCO reported, "Union leaders have said if the Northwest contract is forced on them, their jobs wouldn't be worth having." (www.wcco.com, Feb. 13) The pilots have recently held informational picket lines in the Twin Cities.

Meanwhile, NWA spent \$15 million on lawyers, security guards for executives and other consultants during the first 15 weeks of bankruptcy, reported the St. Paul Pioneer Press. (Feb. 14) NWA has to appear in court March 7 to face charges for nonpayment of these bills.

UC clerical workers ratify contract

University of California clerical workers, who staged a three-day strike with other UC workers last June, ratified a new contract on Feb. 16 that gives them their first pay increases since 2002.

Nearly 16,000 clerical employees will receive a 12 percent increase over the next three years contingent upon state funding, including a 3.5 percent increase retroactive to Oct. 1, when other UC employees received increases. All workers will continue to receive health benefits according to the university's salary-based approach—those who earn less pay less for the same coverage.

Organizer Mary Higgins told the Bay City News that union members aren't completely thrilled with the new contract, but decided "it's the best we can do for now because UC wouldn't give us any more."

Wireless workers join CWA

Former AT&T Wireless workers at Cingular in Hawaii, Virginia, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota and New Hampshire joined the Communications Workers (CWA) during the final days of January. A total of 1,767 of these workers joined CWA during that month.

Pursuing an intense organizing campaign since Cingular bought out AT&T, CWA has recruited 16,417 of these workers since 2005. Overall, more than 38,000 workers at Cingular—30 percent of all wireless workers in the country—now have CWA representation.

NYC Footco workers win union

About 100 workers at 10 Footco sneaker and apparel stores in New York City—mostly Spanish-speaking immigrants—were victims of widespread minimum wage violations and lacked health insurance and vacation days until they organized. Now, members of the store workers union (RWDSU), they will receive significant wage hikes, health care coverage, a prescription drug plan, paid vacation, sick days and union protection in the workplace.

A unique partnership between the RWDSU and Make the Road By Walking, an immigrant community group in Bushwick, N.Y., led to the successful Despierta Bushwick! (Awake Bushwick!) campaign. As part of that, more than 1,000 community members threatened to boycott Footco stores if the company interfered with union organizing.

In a separate development, hundreds of members of RWDSU Local 1-S, who work at Macy's flagship store on Herald Square, met on Feb. 16 to discuss contract negotiations. A strike is being considered. Stay tuned. □

Supporters of Cuban 5 redouble their efforts

By Cheryl LaBash
Atlanta

Cuban Five defense attorneys delivered a solid argument for justice and freedom on Feb. 14. The full 13-member 11th Circuit Court heard lawyers Leonard Weinglass and Richard Klugh defend the unanimous decision of a three-judge panel that overturned the unjust convictions of the Five.

In August 2005 that ruling found that a fair and impartial trial had been impossible in the center of the CIA-backed, anti-Cuba mercenaries: Miami, Fla.

The U.S. prosecutor, on the other hand, decided to prolong what a United Nations Commission has termed an "arbitrary detention." The prosecution has not abided by the August 2005 decision for a new trial in an impartial location. Nor has it repatriated the Five to their homes and loved ones in Cuba. Instead, the Five—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González—have been imprisoned since 1998 in the United States. They are unjustly behind bars for working in this country to prevent terrorist attacks against Cuba.

Following the hearing, the National Committee to Free the Five (NCF5) organized a media conference and a community meeting at Spelman College. The events highlighted supporters who had traveled to Atlanta to support the Cuban Five from across the United States and around the world.

A U.S. media blockade prevents most people in the United States from learning how Washington protects admitted anti-Cuban terrorists like Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch. Yet at the same time it persecutes these five men who merely monitored violent plans against their homeland Cuba.

However, international observers at the hearing demonstrated wide knowledge and support for freeing the Cuban Five.

Gloria La Riva, coordinator of the NCF5, introduced these distinguished observers. They included Kurt de Loor, a member of the Flemish Parliament in Belgium, who is responsible for a new declaration on the violation of human rights in the case of the Cuban 5. The declaration was signed by 32 Belgian MPs, the members of the Flemish Parliament, the Belgian parliament, the House of Representatives and the



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Leonard Weinglass,
lawyer for the Cuban 5

Senate, and one member of the European Parliament.

Additional international supporters included Eberhard Schultz, who is from the Berlin Bar Association, the International League of Human Rights in Berlin and the Republican Lawyers Guild; Edith Flamant, a Belgian attorney; Father Geoffrey Bottoms, leader of the British Campaign to Free the Cuban Five, who is touring the United States with the film "Mission Against Terror"; Bernie Dwyer, from Ireland, who is co-director of the documentary; Fabio Marcelli, an Italian attorney representing the International Association of Democratic Lawyers; Judge Claudia Morcom, a long-time civil rights activist from Detroit and judge of Wayne County Circuit Court from 1983 to 1998; and Carlos Zamorano, a well-known and distinguished attorney from Argentina.

Stop terrorism—made in USA!

Speaking at the media conference, Andres Gomez—director of the Antonio Maceo Brigade in Miami—demanded "the end of U.S. support for terrorist organizations of the Cuban right wing that, from U.S. soil, have planned and conducted terrorist attacks against the Cuban people on the island for the last 47 years, and have also been responsible for assassinations and other terrorist attacks against those that oppose your methods and political aims in the United States."

Gomez also directs Areito Digital magazine and is one of the leading activists of the Alianza Martiana, an alliance of Cuban organizations in Miami. He stated, "The Cubans and Cuban Americans in Miami are the first victims of terrorism conducted by extreme right-wing organizations. They are unable to pronounce them-

selves freely on subjects related to Cuba because of the threat of violence against them. This is not a supposition. Hundreds of terrorist acts have been committed by those organizations in the United States, specifically in Miami."

Free the Five committees—from Los Angeles, New York City, Louisville and Detroit—the National Network on Cuba and the International Action Center all participated in the Atlanta support actions. Family members of the Cuban Five expressed their deep gratitude for the solidarity and support.

Leonard Weinglass, attorney for Antonio Guerrero, concluded, "The last time we argued this case before a panel of this court, three judges in a unanimous 93-page decision found that the case would have to be reversed because the case represented a perfect storm of prejudice against the Five Cubans who were charged.

"I believe that this court will not convert that perfect storm of prejudice into a bright and sunny day of neutrality in Miami, because anyone examining the 119 volumes of transcript, in what was the longest trial in the United States at the time that it occurred, plus the 800 exhibits, over 20,000 pages, will reach the same conclusion.

"This case has been examined not only by three judges of the circuit who reached that conclusion, but by five judges of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Those five judges in May of this year [2005] also found that the Five did not receive a fair trial in Miami. In other words, this case has been reviewed by no fewer than eight judges, three in this circuit, five in the UN. All eight agreed unanimously that the Five did not receive a fair trial.

"So as we stand now before 13 judges, which includes two of the original judges, we feel hopeful and even optimistic, that finally, finally after seven years, there will be a recognition that the Five did not have a fair process, and that their convictions will be reversed."

Organizations are redoubling their efforts to mobilize support to free the five heroes in the months before the 11th Circuit Court decision. The Five Freedom Fund is raising \$250,000 for a New York Times ad and other publicity to break the media blockade.

For more information contact: www.freethefive.org, www.antiterroristas.cu, www.freethefiveny.org, www.cubasolidarity.com. □



Feb. 28 protests set

Katrina survivors face evictions in March

By Monica Moorehead

As the March 1 deadline approaches for the eviction of thousands of Katrina evacuees from their temporary housing in different parts of the country, activists from Los Angeles to New Orleans to New York are organizing emergency protests against FEMA and other local governmental agencies on Feb. 28.

This is not the first time that the U.S. government has attempted to throw Katrina survivors, who are Black and poor in hugely disproportionate numbers, out into the streets since the hurricane tore through the Gulf Coast region last August. Eviction notices were given out nationwide during November, December and January but grassroots outrage forced the government and hotel owners to retreat from their threats in many instances.

FEMA had promised to set up thousands of decent trailers for the survivors but many of these trailers proved to be uninhabitable for human beings. In addition, in some of Louisiana's mainly white parishes the racist establishment refused to allow temporary housing to be located on vacant lands, effectively barring Black people from living there.

In early February, over 4,000 Katrina survivors, mainly in New Orleans, were evicted. Many were arrested for either trying to find shelter in abandoned buildings or for being outright homeless. As many as 20,000 more evacuees are facing eviction on March 1 unless mass action is taken.

The mainstream media has paid next to little attention to this crisis compared to the major focus they have given to the annual Mardi Gras festivities in New

Orleans, which began during the middle of February and will cost millions of dollars. The last official day for Mardi Gras is Feb. 28.

In New York, the Katrina Solidarity Committee and its allies have called for a Feb. 28 demonstration at Federal Plaza from 4 p.m. until 7 p.m. The committee points out that FEMA and the Bush administration are mandated by the Stafford Act to provide housing for disaster victims for 18 months; that their attempt to cut off transitional housing and rental assistance is illegal and criminal; that Katrina/Rita evacuees should be granted an indefinite extension in federal, state and local housing assistance until such time as they obtain affordable and adequate housing; and that priority must be given to immediate funding and implementation of a national public works job program for

the residents of the Gulf Coast region, survivors and the unemployed nationwide.

The criminal treatment of the Katrina survivors on the part of various arms of the U.S. government should be viewed as a human rights violation under international law. The March 18-19 worldwide protests marking the third anniversary of the U.S. war and occupation of Iraq have an obligation to raise as a major demand that the billions of dollars being spent for this criminal war go instead to help fulfill the right of return for the Katrina survivors.

Just recently, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced a \$75 million covert operation to try to destabilize Iran. Instead of using taxpayers' dollars to violate a country's sovereignty, shouldn't this money be spent to alleviate the mass suffering of poor and working people like the Katrina survivors? □

Civil rights leaders faced red-baiting, gay-baiting

By Leslie Feinberg

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans activists—Black and white—played an important role in the ranks and the leadership of the civil rights movement. However, the illegality of same-sex love and the “Lavender Menace” Cold War campaign made their sexuality a target for state repression.

Bayard Rustin, organizer of the 1963 March on Washington, may be the best-known gay Black civil rights leader. Rustin, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other Black leaders were the focus of intense surveillance and counter-intelligence—COINTELPRO—tactics of the FBI and other political police agencies.

Rustin was arrested in 1953 in a car with two white men in Pasadena, convicted and jailed for “sex perversion.” Author George Chauncey Jr. later asked Rustin if he believed the charges were politically motivated. Rustin answered, “I think so. Because way back as far as 1946, '47, I had organized all over the country, even in the Deep South, and I was in California at the time of the arrest, leading demonstrations against discrimination in theaters, hotels and restaurants.” (“Time on Two Crosses”)

Rustin, an ideological pacifist, organized in the South with Dr. King. In 1960,

labor leader A. Phillip Randolph had asked Rustin to work on civil rights demonstrations that targeted the national conventions of both the Republican and the Democratic parties. Rustin invited Dr. King to a news conference announcing the marches. King then left for Brazil.

Great pressure was brought to bear on Rustin. It focused on his sexuality, which was criminalized by the state. Rustin recalled, “Later [Dr. King] called me from Brazil very, very agitated indeed, and said that on second thought maybe we ought not to proceed with the marches.”

Rustin got back in touch with King to say that Randolph and others were going full-steam ahead on the demonstrations. “I called Martin back and told him this, whereupon he told me the whole story. A woman who was well known in the movement had called him and said that [New York Congress member Adam Clayton] Powell was going to call a press conference and implicate me and Dr. King in some sort of liaison if Dr. King did not call off the marches. Now, obviously this is a case where Powell had been promised something by the Democratic Party if he'd get rid of me.”

Rustin added in another interview, “There, of course, was no homosexual relationship with Dr. King. But Martin was

so uneasy about it that I decided I did not want Dr. King to have to dismiss me. I had come to the SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Council] to help. If I was going to be a burden I would leave—and I did. However, Dr. King was never happy about my leaving. He was deeply torn—although I had left the SCLC, he frequently called me in and asked me to help. While in 1960 he felt real pressure to fire me, in 1963 he agreed that I should organize the March on Washington, of which he was one of the leaders.” (1987 interview with the magazine Open Hands)

In 1963, Rustin was to be named director of the 1963 March on Washington. Roy Wilkins, then executive director of the NAACP, told Rustin he would object. “He made it quite clear that he had absolutely no prejudice toward me or toward homosexuality,” Rustin said. Wilkins told Rustin that he was concerned that the enemies of civil rights would exploit the fact that the director of the March on Washington was gay. Wilkins added that although Rustin was not a com-

munist, he was known to be a socialist and a “draft dodger.”

Rustin replied, “Roy, I just disagree with that, and I think that the time has come when we have to stand up and stop running from things. And I don't believe that if this is raised by the Southern Democrats, that it will do anything but spur people on. We can issue a statement which says they will use anything to try and stop us in our march to freedom, but no matter what they use we will win.”

Unswayed, Wilkins called a meeting of the Black march leaders. Randolph named himself director, as a compromise. But his first act, he said, would be to appoint Rustin as his deputy. King and CORE Director Jim Farmer voted for Rustin. Wilkins reportedly said, “Phil, you've got me over a barrel, I'll go along with you.”

In June 1963, on Capitol Hill, Sen. Strom Thurmond did attack the March on Washington, denouncing Rustin as a “sexual pervert.” Although Rustin had politically distanced himself from his early activist work with the Young Communist League, it did not spare him Thurmond's red-baiting. Thurmond also condemned Rustin for having refusing military induction as a conscientious objector.

Randolph met with the march leadership and quickly pulled together a statement by Black leaders of the civil rights movement and labor unions, as well as progressive religious figures, all of whom were organizing the march. The statement concluded that Rustin “will continue to organize the March with our full and undivided support.”

Gays and lesbians—Black and white—played a significant role in other civil rights battles, in the Deep South as well. There, in particular, the state honed sharp the weapon of anti-gay bigotry.

Next: Local and regional Black and white leaders in Southern civil rights movement face ferocious gay-baiting, red-baiting.



PART 54

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!

Activists demand new trial for Mumia

PHILADELPHIA

International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal takes protest against murderous policies of Philadelphia District Attorney Lynn Abraham to her new office in an ongoing campaign to raise public awareness of the new appeals process for political prisoner Abu-Jamal. Abraham has been campaigning for Mumia's execution since his first-degree murder conviction in 1982.

WW PHOTO: BETSEY PIETTE



Black history meeting connects today's struggles

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Boston

A broad range of working class and oppressed people from across New England celebrated Black history month in a public meeting sponsored by the Boston chapter of Workers World Party on Feb. 18.

Robert Traynham of the Steelworkers local 8751 bus drivers union, chaired and opened the meeting entitled, "Katrina, Imperialist War & the Struggle for Black Liberation," by leading the audience with a rendition of the African-American national anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

Traynham conveyed one of his many personal experiences of growing up under Jim Crow segregation in the South where, as a teenager, he and his Black friends and family members were bussed past three white high schools to attend an all-Black high school. After the Ku Klux Klan bombed the school, Traynham was forced to attend classes in ramshackle temporary structures for the duration of his high school years.

Clemencia Lee, co-director of the Cultural Café, an independent alternative cultural venue of art and politics and site of the meeting, welcomed participants who packed a gallery room adorned with African-Latin@ diaspora art.

Tony Van Der Meer, adjunct professor of Africana studies at UMass, co-chair of the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee and co-founder of the Cultural Café, framed his remarks within the context of Hurricane Katrina, the demand for reparations and the historical treatment of Black people in North America from slavery to the present day.

Denouncing FEMA's criminal actions of evicting 4,500 survivors from hotel rooms and other shelters nationwide in early February, Van Der Meer called for participants to support nationwide actions on Feb. 28 protesting this and another planned cutoff date on March 1, when 10,000 others could be tossed out on the street. Survivors are now dispersed in 48 states and over 400 cities, he said.

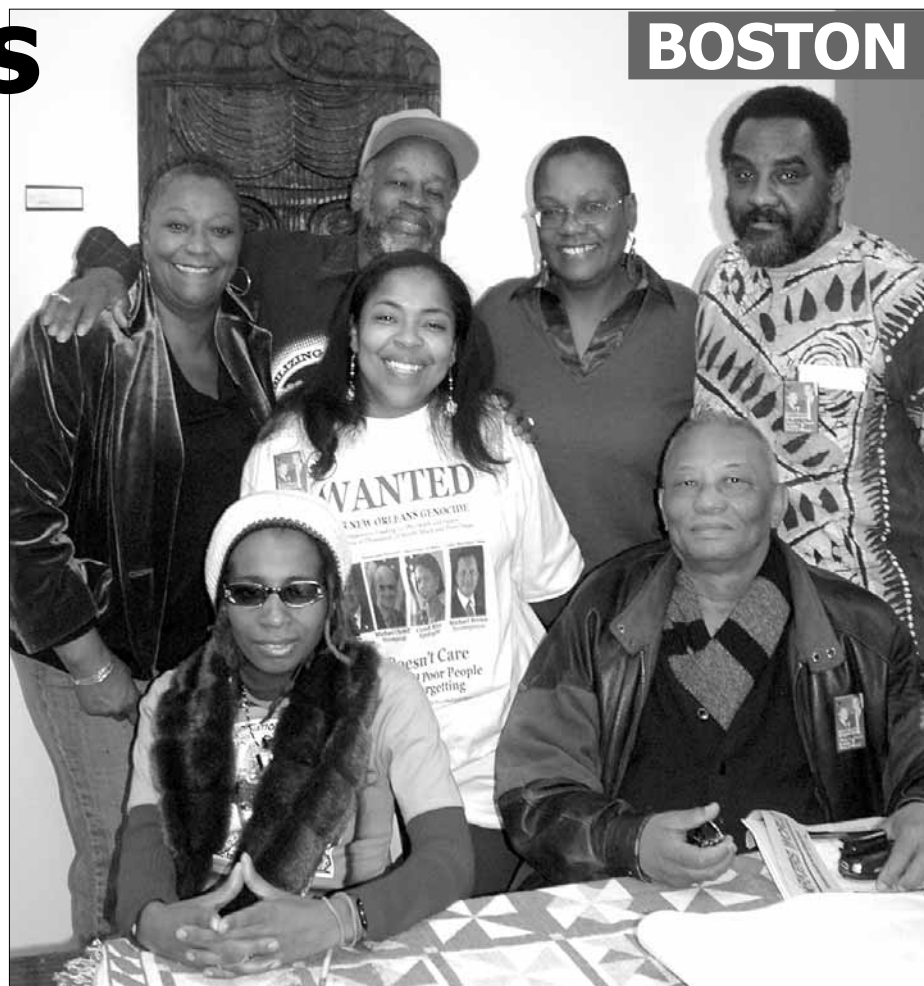
Van Der Meer then conveyed some proposals from his recent trip to Mississippi where independent social justice organizations and progressive individuals met to forge responses to U.S. government atrocities in the Gulf Coast states of Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi after Katrina.

Demands include the need to organize for the right to return, a guaranteed income, housing, education, healthcare and other social needs as well as access to funds and land, with the basis being the respect of the self-determination of Black and other nationally oppressed peoples in these affected areas.

A "People's Reconstruction Plan" is currently under discussion, and an international tribunal to hold accountable all those responsible for the wholesale crimes against the mostly Black people in the Gulf Coast is planned for late August, close to the anniversary of the racist Aug. 28, 1955 lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till.

Monica Moorehead, WWP secretariat member, managing editor of WW newspaper and an editor of *Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle* pamphlet, gave an historical overview of the semi-slavery conditions of Black people that led to the founding of Black History Month and provided an analysis of U.S. imperialism's effects both within the U.S. and abroad. She hailed the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, the TWU strike in New York and other advances by the working class and oppressed worldwide and tied the strug-

Continued on page 10



WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Boston forum. Seated: Mia Campbell and Yves Alcindor. Wearing 'Wanted' t-shirt: Clemencia Lee. Back row: Dorotea Manuela, co-chair of Rosa Parks Day committee; Robert Traynham, Monica Moorehead and Tony Van Der Meer.

Black youth: repression and resistance

Continued from page 11

policies... through their own experiences or their children's experience in the public schools... and through encounters with the police. Thus, [we] are sorely mistaken if we proceed as if young people, who are often the targets of institutional and state campaigns, programs and policies, do not have strong opinions about and take action to better their position in society, their life chances, and the distribution of power in their communities and the country."

And doesn't this make perfect sense? It's absurd to think that Black youth aren't politically active. Many don't have a choice. They are propelled into activism by the attack of the state on their lives. I'm reminded of the Somerville 5 in Massachusetts as a case in point—five young Black men who have had to become activists around their own lives after they were brutally assaulted by police officers in an unprovoked attack, and then expelled from

school before their cases were even heard.

Music is also used by many Black youth as a form of resistance. It's a regular occurrence in my life that I'm approached by some young brother on the subway, selling their own political, conscious music, music they tell me they created to educate and inspire others to action.

But the activism among Black youth isn't isolated from a connection to the global struggle for justice. In the past two years, I've been on delegations to Cuba with the Venceremos Brigade, and Venezuela for the World Youth Festival. And each time I was pleasantly surprised by the number of Black youth that were on these delegations—not because I thought that youth of color wouldn't be in solidarity with Cuba and Venezuela, or revolutionary youth from around the world. I was surprised because we all know that it's not exactly cheap to travel to another part of the world. To do so takes real dedication, fundraising, taking time off jobs or school,

etc. With Cuba there's the added pressure that one can face huge fines or even jail time upon returning to the United States.

In Venezuela one of the most moving things to me was the reception of the United States delegation by the other youth delegations. We were told time and time again, "We do not consider you to be your country. You are under the gun yourselves, and you are resisting, and you are our sisters and brothers." And I just think about how energizing that was for me, and how energizing it must have been for some of these youth who have probably been demonized most of their lives.

So what's the state of Black youth? Well, it's not a pretty state—there's hardship, and brutality, and sorrow at every turn—from the most subtle to the most institutionalized racism, sexism, homophobia, and violence. But there's a light at the end of the tunnel, and that's those youth themselves, making change and taking their lives back. □

BLACK HISTORY MONTH MEETING

The struggle against racism—from Katrina to San Francisco

By Judy Greenspan
San Francisco

The Feb. 18 Black History Month Forum here, sponsored by the International Action Center, featured a dynamic line-up of anti-racist, anti-war and pro-labor activists. The evening was a loud protest against the killings, evictions and displacement of the Black residents of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. And the event was a celebration of revolutionary optimism unfolding all over the world, from Venezuela to Palestine.

Larry Holmes, national IAC co-chair, called upon everyone to unite for justice for the Katrina evacuees. Holmes stated

that reparations and the right to return are essential demands for the movement. "What's happening in New Orleans is gentrification, pure and simple," he said. He noted the bitter irony of the U.S. government evicting poor African American people during Black History Month.

Clarence Thomas, national co-chair of the Million Worker March Movement, talked about the involvement of rank-and-file labor leaders in the Millions More Movement. "We need to begin to forge new alliances and new coalitions," he said. Thomas, a member of International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Local 10, challenged the left in this country to be more active in these coalitions.

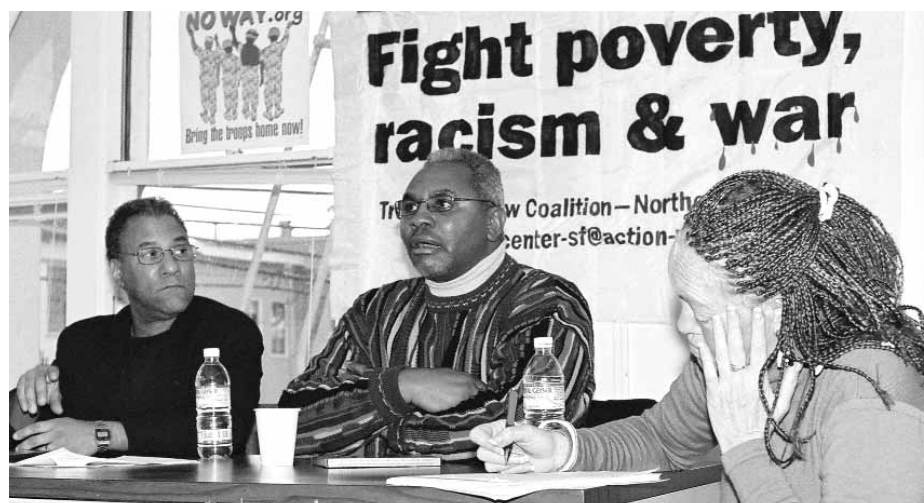


PHOTO: PATRICIA JACKSON

Speakers at San Francisco forum: Larry Holmes, Clarence Thomas and Mesha Monge-Irizarry.

Mesha Monge-Irizarry, the mother of Idriss Stelley—a young Black man who was shot and killed by San Francisco police four-and-a-half years ago—also spoke. Monge-Irizarry, who is active in many social justice campaigns in Bayview-

Hunters Point, invited everyone to attend the following week's human rights and civil rights festival, "Bang4Change."

"We are organizing this festival to reach out to youth. The young are the people most at risk," she said. □

Stop the war on Iran before it starts!

It is with grave concern that we observe the growing threat of a new U.S. war—this time against the people of Iran.

The media is filled with reports of an alleged nuclear threat posed by Iran and the assumed need for the U.S. to take military action. These reports recall the “Weapons of Mass Destruction” stories issued in the months leading up to the war on Iraq.

In the lead-up to the illegal invasion of Iraq, the Bush Administration asserted that Iraq possessed massive stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and that it was capable of launching an attack—nuclear, chemical and biological—on the U.S. within 45 minutes.

President Bush said that the U.S. had to attack immediately, and could not “wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.” We all know now that this propaganda campaign was a complete fabrication created to justify a war of aggression.

Now we see reports that are all too similar being made to justify military action against the people of Iran. Taking Iran to the UN Security Council is a prelude for unilateral action. Just as in the case of Iraq, none of the claims made by the U.S. government stands up to unbiased scrutiny. Iran has submitted to the most intrusive and humiliating inspections, above and beyond what is required by the Nuclear Weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). None of the inspections has found any evidence that Iran is developing a nuclear weapons program.

There is only one government that has used nuclear weapons against civilian populations, and that same nation has the largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction on the planet. Most dangerous and incredible, it is at this very moment developing a new generation of tactical nuclear weapons that it intends to use, not merely to threaten. That country is, of course, the United States. Shouldn't any real discussion of the dangers of nuclear weapons include the weapons stockpiled by the Pentagon and the history of U.S. aggression and interventions?

Iran has suffered greatly at the hands of the U.S. We recall the U.S. overthrew the democratically elected government of Dr. M. Mossadegh and returned the Shah to the Peacock Throne—the proudest achievement of the CIA. For 25 years the Shah ruled Iran with an iron fist for the benefit of U.S. oil corporations before the people of Iran, in the millions, overthrew his tyranny at a terrible cost in lives. For the past 27 years U.S. sanctions have impeded Iran's right to development and brought great suffering to the people.



It is essential that all voices opposed to the devastation of a new war in the Middle East speak out now. We urge an immediate end to Washington's campaign of sanctions, hostility, and falsehood against the people of Iran. We oppose any new U.S. aggression against Iran. We need funds for human needs, not endless war for empire.

Thousands sign Iran petition

With the U.S. bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan, and casualties continuing to rise among both occupying forces and civilians, it seems irrational that the U.S. government and the Pentagon could be contemplating taking military action against yet another country with a large Islamic population. But wounded empires do not act “rationally,” and it is wise to take U.S. threats against Iran quite seriously.

That is what thousands of people are doing. They are responding to an online campaign to “Stop the war on Iran before it starts!” The graphic above is the text of a statement that is gathering signers and financial support on the StopWarOnIran.org site. The initiators of this action hope to raise enough money to run the petition as an ad in major newspapers.

After just a week of its being online, 618 organizations had endorsed the statement, and over 3,000 individuals had also signed on. There is a place for the public to generate emails to political figures, too. By Feb. 20, over 100,000 emails had been sent to public officials telling them to oppose any war on Iran.

Initial signers of the petition included Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, founding president of Pax Christi; author Michael Parenti; former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark; author and historian Howard Zinn; British MPs George Galloway and Tony Benn; former UN Assistant Secretary-General Denis J. Halliday; Nobel Laureate Harold Pinter; Margarita Papandreou, former First Lady of Greece; Ardeshir Ommani, co-founder of American-Iranian Friendship Committee; Prof. Ervand Abrahamian; and Leslie Feinberg, Nat'l LGBT Caucus Co-chair, National Writers' Union/UAW.

To add your name or your organization's name to the ad, make a donation, see the full list of signers, or get more information, go to StopWarOnIran.org. □

PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE PARTY

Protests against the FBI attacks on activists and the press

By Tom Soto
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Some 500 protesters blocked the entrance to the U.S. Federal Courthouse here on Feb. 20 to denounce recent FBI raids against the homes and workplaces of "independentistas"—supporters of Puerto Rican independence—and the growing repression by the FBI against the independence movement in general.

For many blocks on Chardon St. (Calle Chardón) where the Federal Court is housed all that could be seen was a sea of green flags with a white cross—the flags of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), the initiators of today's demonstration.

Present at the activity was Elma Beatriz Rosado, widow of Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, assassinated by the FBI on Sept. 23. Ojeda Ríos was the leader of the Ejército Popular Boricua—Macheteros (Popular Puerto Rican Army—the Canecutters.)

Today's protests were stimulated by the FBI raids of Feb. 10, when hundreds of agents invaded the homes and offices of pro-independence activists, seizing property including computers and the mailing lists of pro-independence organizations. At the home of Liliana Laboy, the FBI attacked a crowd that gathered outside her

apartment, spraying everyone with pepper gas, including members of the media.

The Puerto Rican Independence Party, which is an electoral Party, mobilized its committees from all over the Island. PIP delegations from as far away as Mayaguez, Cabo Rojo, and Arecibo were present at the demonstration. Present at the activity were all the national leaders of the PIP, including its president, Rubén Berríos, Senator María de Lourdes Santiago and House of Representatives member Víctor García San Inocencio.

From many blocks away marchers could be heard chanting: "Dile No, Dile No—A la Colonia Dile No" (We Say No, We Say No—We Say No to Colonialism), "El Tribunal Federal—Lo Tenemos Que Sacar" (The Federal Court, Has to Be Kicked Out) and "FBI Fascistas—Verdaderos Terroristas (FBI Fascists—The Real Terrorists). The island nation of Puerto Rico has been a colony of the U.S.



FBI attacks a crowd with pepper gas, including the media, on Feb. 10.

sinos, Gobierno Colonial Complice" (FBI Assassins, the Colonial Government is an Accomplice), "No al FBI—No a la Colonia" (No to the FBI—No to Colonialism), and "Como en Vieques—Unidos Venceremos" (As In Vieques—United We Will Win). The last slogan refers to the successful struggle waged by the Puerto Rican people that ousted the U.S. Navy from the island of Vieques.

According to PIP leaders, today's demonstration marks the beginning of a campaign to get the FBI out of Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican Independence Party is planning another larger activity to take place during the World Classic of Baseball in San Juan on March 7.

Today's demonstration was supported by other organizations, which included Rompiendo El Perímetro (Breaking the Perimeters), Comité en Apoyo a Vieques (Committee in Support of Vieques), and El Frente Socialista (Socialist Front). □

since 1898, when it was seized as a territorial possession during the Spanish-American War.

Marchers carried many banners and placards, some of which read: "FBI Ase-

U.S.-led powers obstruct Milosevic defense

By John Catalinotto

The U.S.-led alliance of imperialist countries that attacked Yugoslavia has sunk to new depths in its attempts to cover up this crime. It is trying to manipulate the trial of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague, Netherlands.

During this trial, now over four years old, the prosecution has failed to present anything like a case against Milosevic. In addition, his vigorous defense has exposed the crimes of the imperialist powers, especially the U.S. and Germany, in conspiring to destroy the Yugoslav Socialist Federation through subversion and direct military assault.

The latest underhanded maneuvers against Milosevic include (1) using the European states to prevent his collecting even a minimal defense fund to aid in the preparation of and publicity for his case and (2) preventing him from receiving adequate medical care and rest for his serious illnesses, which include extremely high blood pressure.

The defense speaks for history and the future

Defense statement at The Hague by President of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milosevic

The U.S./NATO court trying Slobodan Milosevic was always totally illegitimate. It could never be taken seriously as a court of justice. Milosevic's defense is powerful, convincing, persuasive and impossible to dismiss.

—Harold Pinter, winner of Nobel Prize

In Iraq, the whole world now knows, the charge of weapons of mass destruction was a fraud and war propaganda. How many people know that the 78-day bombing of all of Yugoslavia, was also a fraud—to justify the U.S. military and corporate takeover of the entire region?

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The German section of the International Committee for the Defense of Slobodan Milosevic (ICDSM) has been the most successful in raising funds for one or two researchers and lawyers to help in the president's defense at The Hague. In mid-July 2005, however, German tax police broke into the private apartment of Peter Betscher, treasurer of the German section of ICDSM. His computer and documents were taken and the bank account with the donations frozen. The German authorities claimed the account had violated European Commission Regulation 2488/2000, which freezes Milosevic's personal funds.

A similar seizure 18 months earlier had been overturned by German courts. But this didn't stop the authorities from seizing the funds again and fining Betscher 11,465 euros (\$13,688). The defense group then moved the account to Vienna, but the Bank of Austria also froze the defense funds in early February. The ICDSM is challenging the seizure in the courts.

Last November a consortium of international doctors recommended extended rest for Milosevic and ample time to prepare his defense without endangering his health. The court granted only six weeks' rest, to coincide with the Christmas break.

In a statement made Nov. 29, 2005, exposing the duplicity of the court in this matter, Milosevic made it clear to British judge Ian Bonomy what he thought of the tribunal: "This entire court was envisaged as an instrument of war against my country. It was founded illegally on the basis of an illegal decision and carried through by the forces that waged war against my country. There is just one thing that is true here: It is true that there is a joint criminal enterprise, but not in Belgrade, not in Yugoslavia as its center, but those, who, in a war that was waged in Yugoslavia from 1991 onwards, destroyed Yugoslavia." □

50,000 protest new work rules at EU Parliament

By John Catalinotto

Some 50,000 trade unionists, mostly from Germany and France, demonstrated on Feb. 14 before the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, to protest plans to pass the "Bolkestein initiative." They believe this new directive would lead to exporting service jobs to the countries with the lowest wages, benefits and worker-protection laws and compromise vital services.

The initiative, also called the "directive on services in the internal market," is named after the neoliberal Dutch-origin former Commissioner Frits Bolkestein, who proposed it. The initiative of the European Commission is aimed at creating a single market for services within the European Union (EU), similar to the single market for goods already present. This would eliminate labor laws in individual countries regarding service workers.

In some Western European countries organized labor has won significant

Trade unionists protest "Bolkestein initiative" on Feb. 14

wages, protection and benefits for service workers, especially compared with the new EU members from Eastern Europe. These workers fear, with good reason, that the European capitalists will use the new initiative to tear down the existing laws protecting workers.

The directive can also be an attack on the services themselves, as such services include education, health care, and providing water, energy and transportation. Even those workers who demanded only amendments to the Bolkestein initiative wanted these categories omitted from the new rules.

Workers and union organizers said they were encouraged that twice as many



demonstrators demanding that the Bolkestein initiative be withdrawn appeared Feb. 14 as were expected (L'Humanite, Feb. 15). The European Parliament passed the initiative on Feb. 16 by a vote of 394-215, but with amendments that made it a less frontal attack on workers' gains.

The struggle is expected to continue in the individual countries. In the vote, communist and "green" representatives all voted against the directive, along with some socialists. □

Palestine will be free!

When the Academy Awards announced nominations for “best foreign film” this year, the academy included “Paradise Now” from Palestine. The film, which portrays a Palestinian view of suicide bombings, has received wide acclaim and several awards, including a Golden Globe. (See review in Workers World, Jan. 29)

The nomination has generated strong opposition by Zionist forces in Israel and their Washington backers who demand that the film be designated as “from the Palestinian Authority”—not from Palestine. They claim that “Palestine” has not been formally created.

Washington and Tel Aviv can play the name game all they want. The fact of the matter is that Palestine lives and breathes in the hearts and minds of the Palestinian people. The repression of Palestine will only lead to more determination by its people—determination that will in turn lead not to the “creation” of Palestine, but to the end of the occupation of the historic land of Palestine.

In response to the democratic victory of Hamas in Palestine, 68 members of the U.S. Congress have co-sponsored a bill insidiously called the “Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006.” Rather

than denouncing the ongoing terrorism of the state of Israel against the Palestinian people—or demanding a halt in U.S. funds that sustain this terrorism—the bill is an attack on the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination.

Among other things, the bill would designate Palestinian territory as a “terrorist sanctuary” and prohibit official Palestinian diplomacy or representation in the United States, denying visas and restricting movement of Palestinian diplomats at the United Nations. The bill would go so far as to defund UN bodies that advocate for Palestinian human rights and instruct the United States to vote against World Bank funding for Palestine.

The U.S. State Department also confirmed on Feb. 17 that it had ordered the return of \$50 million that was granted last year to assist with infrastructure projects in Gaza.

As Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal told the Associated Press, “You can be sure that our feeling is peace and hope, good for all people in the world, but not any side that occupies our land or makes aggression on our people. No peace without our legitimate rights. No stability with occupation. No peace with occupation. This is our right.” □

Charles D. Kelly —he took a stand

The editorial staff of Workers World newspaper sends our condolences to the family, friends and staff of Charles D. Kelly, founder and publisher of the Michigan Citizen newspaper. He died on Feb. 5 after a long illness. It was his leadership that shaped the Citizen to live up to the motto of its masthead: “America’s most progressive community newspaper.” The publication became the voice of the African-American communities in Benton Harbor, Highland Park and Detroit.

Whether embracing the brothers and sisters caught up in the prison-industrial complex, supporting the rights of the LGBT communities, taking a stand against the war on Iraq and on our cities, covering the news about Africa or holding public officials accountable every week—the contribution of Charles D. Kelly will live on in the pages of the Michigan Citizen. □



Charles Kelly

Boston Black history meeting connects today’s struggles

Continued from page 7

gle for Black liberation to the necessity to broaden internationalism.

Moorehead raised the need to prioritize the struggle against racism and national oppression, including supporting the most oppressed in leadership roles in the social justice movements, independent from the Republican and Democratic capitalist parties. Moorehead also explained that socialism is the only economic system that can guarantee human needs and workers’ power as opposed to capitalism’s endemic ills that include racism, war, greed, cutbacks and other forms of inequality.

Long time Puerto Rican independentista Alberto Barretto denounced the U.S.

government’s assassination of freedom fighter Filiberto Ojeda Rios last year and the recent FBI terrorist raids in his homeland against primarily pro-independence forces, while hailing revolutionary developments in Latin America and the Caribbean. Barretto received rousing applause with his closing remarks “Long live Puerto Rico free and socialist. Independence without socialism is nothing.”

Yves Alcindor, leader of the New England Human Rights Organization for Haiti who recently returned from Haiti, described to the audience his participation in a delegation of independent election observers that oversaw the Haitian masses’ successful presidential

Whose nukes? Setting the record straight

By Deirdre Griswold

How many times have you read or heard lately about plans by North Korea and Iran to build nuclear reactors? The Bush administration has made this a major international crisis. You would think that these two countries were doing something outrageous in pursuing nuclear energy.

But the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) and Iran are but two of many countries either seeking to build or expand nuclear energy programs. According to the International Atomic Energy Agency, there are at this time 443 operating nuclear power plants in the world. Another 25 are under construction.

The United States has by far the largest number of power plants in operation (104), followed by France (59) and Japan (56). This does not count the reactors in the large U.S. fleet of nuclear-powered submarines and aircraft carriers.

Thirty countries currently generate nuclear power: Argentina, Armenia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Japan, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the United States.

Fourteen of the above are also planning to build new reactors or reopen older ones. Others considering or in the process of building new reactors are Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Turkey and Vietnam—in addition to Iran and the DPRK. (Wikipedia)

The DPRK is surrounded by nuclear powers. Two—the U.S. and Japan—are imperialist countries that invaded Korea and imposed their political and economic domination on the people. South Korea, which was split away from the north by U.S. military occupation after World War II, has 20 nuclear power plants to fuel its economy. The DPRK has a more severe climate and has suffered an acute energy crisis ever since the collapse of the USSR, once a major economic partner.

Agreements betrayed by U.S.

The U.S. for over a decade has aggressively tried to keep the DPRK from advancing its plans to build nuclear power plants. In 1994 an agreement was reached between the DPRK and the Clinton administration that the DPRK would abandon its plans to build graphite reactors and the U.S. would help it build light-water reactors instead—the difference being that LWRs could not produce plutonium, a byproduct of the fission process that can be used in triggering nuclear weapons.

But the U.S. never honored its side of the agreement. The LWRs were never built and agreed shipments of oil to tide the country over its energy crisis arrived only after its worst winter weather.

So the DPRK withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and resumed work on its original reactors.

election of Rene Preval.

Mia Campbell of the Women’s Fight-back Network and Politician’ With the Sisters, raised the role of women and youth in the revolutionary struggle, and then read a few poems including one that paid tribute to former gang leader Stanley Tookie Williams who was executed on Dec. 13 at San Quentin prison. □

Under constant threat from the nuclear-armed Pentagon, which continues to occupy South Korea with over 30,000 troops, the DPRK announced a year ago that it had developed nuclear weapons. It declared that what it wanted was a comprehensive agreement that would ban nuclear weapons from the entire Korean peninsula, north and south, and end the U.S. threat of war that has been hanging over the heads of the Korean people for more than half a century. This threat was made even more ominous when President George W. Bush, in a speech preparing the U.S. population for a war against Iraq, also included the DPRK as part of an “axis of evil” to be destroyed.

Last September, it appeared that some progress had been made in the direction of easing the crisis when an agreement on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula was signed at the end of six-party talks in Beijing involving North and South Korea, China, Russia, the U.S. and Japan. The DPRK Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Sept. 20 that “we will return to the NPT and sign the Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA and comply with it immediately upon the U.S. provision of LWRs, a basis of confidence-building, to us. As already clarified more than once, we will feel no need to keep even a single nuclear weapon if the DPRK-U.S. relations are normalized, bilateral confidence is built and we are not exposed to the U.S. nuclear threat any longer.”

But Washington continues to demand that the DPRK abandon its current nuclear program and allow in inspectors before the U.S. takes any steps toward facilitating the LWRs that North Korea needs to produce energy.

At the same time, Washington and its old foe-turned-ally Japan are trying to further damage the economy of the DPRK, which has been improving in recent years, by imposing sanctions. Claiming this has nothing to do with the nuclear issue, they have put forward a wild story accusing the DPRK of forging currency and dealing in drugs—and have moved to freeze its accounts in foreign banks.

Why is the U.S. capitalist government so hostile to the DPRK? The bottom line is that while North Korea has never done anything to the U.S., it became a prime target of Washington’s expansionist drive into Asia after World War II.

The north has tried hard to build a socialist economy ever since its revolution, led by Korea’s greatest hero, Kim Il Sung. That struggle overthrew the bankers, landlords and merchants in the north—many of whom had been collaborators with Japan during its harsh colonial rule over the Korean people—and eventually established a socialist republic in 1948.

When the revolution looked like it would spread to the south in 1950, the U.S. staged a massive invasion and waged a terrible three-year war that killed millions of Korean people. But it did not succeed in overturning the socialist government in the north—the first defeat for U.S. imperialism in what became known as the Cold War.

Today, the government of the DPRK, led by Kim Jong Il, continues to represent the struggle of the Korean people to maintain a strong defense against imperialist aggression in order to develop their economy and not give in to the dictates of monopoly capitalism, whether from the U.S. or Japan. □

Deforestation and global warming

Philippine tragedy another symptom of reckless exploitation

By Deirdre Griswold

The terrible disaster that hit the Philippines island of Leyte on Feb. 17, when a mudslide triggered by weeks of torrential rains buried the remote farming village of Guinsaigon, could have been prevented.

All over the world, similar disasters are waiting to happen as the plunder of nature for profit goes on despite repeated warnings from scientists and environmentalists that reckless exploitation is compromising the stability of the environment, perhaps beyond repair.

In the Philippines, despite frantic rescue efforts, few survivors have been found since a wall of mud, 25 feet high in places, swept down a mountainside and buried Guinsaigon. Nearly a week later, some 100 bodies have been recovered but at least 1,000 people are still reported missing. Over 2,000 evacuees from the town and nearby communities are packed into area schools and churches under abysmal conditions.

Like many tropical areas of the world once rich in forest hardwoods, the hills of Leyte have been the scene of merciless logging that has rendered the earth unstable. Compounding the problem, the area experiences frequent earthquakes and heavy seasonal rains. As global warming—caused by the burning of fossil fuels—increases, so does the intensity and duration of these storms.

The people of the Philippines have little to show for all this economic activity that is changing the world around them. They live in extreme poverty even as wealthy corporations, most based in the imperialist countries, make big profits carting off their natural resources.

Workers World spoke to Lydia Bayoneta, a long-time Filipina activist living in the United States, about the political background of this latest disaster.

“Deforestation is a rampant ecological problem in the Philippines,” said Bayoneta. “Studies have shown that deforestation contributes to the emission of greenhouse gases and eventually to global warming. It also contributes greatly to flooding and mudslides, such as the one in Leyte Province.

“Some 500 years ago, more than 90 percent of the Philippines was covered with tropical rain forest. During the war for independence from Spain in 1898, 70 percent was still forested.”

The U.S. took advantage of Spain’s weakness, declared war and grabbed its

rich colonies in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, where U.S. troops ruthlessly suppressed the independence movement.

“Today, after 100 years of U.S. domination,” said Bayoneta, “less than 20 percent is still forested, much less than the 54 percent forest cover that the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources says is needed to maintain a stable ecosystem in this mountainous country. The book ‘Plundering Paradise: The Struggle for the Environment in the Philippines’ [by Robin Broad and John Cavanagh] is a good source of information on this.

“The greatest cause of deforestation,” continued Bayoneta, “is indiscriminate logging by giant companies, some of which are foreign-owned. Virtually all the logging by these companies is for export. They are also responsible for the large amount of illegal logging that goes on.

“Illegal logging practices include clear-cutting and the cutting of undersized trees. Although reforestation is required by law, often this amounts to planting a few rows of softwood trees visible from the road, leaving the rest completely bare. The laws go unenforced because the large companies use their economic power to corrupt both local and national politicians who are members of the puppet Philippine government.”

She pointed out that “demands from international lending agencies like the International Monetary Fund force the government to maximize their earnings from logging.”

Where trees are coming back

With similar scenarios being acted out around the world, what can people and governments do?

Deforestation is not inevitable. It is the result of human activity and it can be reversed.

Two countries that are outstanding in their commitment to rebuild their forests are Cuba and China. Both had socialist revolutions that took the land and natural resources out of the hands of private exploiters, allowing the government to plan their rational use.

Cuba, just 90 miles from the Florida keys, was once just as much under the thumb of U.S. corporations as the Philippines are today. But since its 1959 revolution, it has transformed its economy to one that puts a priority on health, education and sustainable development. It has had enormous success in these areas, despite the economic blockade imposed by

Washington.

At the time of the Cuban Revolution, only 14 percent of the island was forested. Its precious hardwoods had been largely eliminated, beginning with the colonial period when Cuba was the source of fine furniture made of teak and ebony that graced the homes of the European elites. Today, over 24 percent of Cuba is again covered with trees, thanks to a long-term reforestation program. It is the only country in Latin America to be adding forests instead of losing them. It has also planted bamboo in many low areas to improve the water basins.

China has a long history of devastating floods in the Yangtze River basin, such as the one in 1931 that killed 320,000 people. After its 1949 revolution, the Chinese Communist government made flood control a priority, concentrating on building dams and reforestation.

In recent decades, China has allowed market forces to operate as a stimulus to economic development. But that opened the door to big ecological problems. Severe flooding of the Yangtze River basin in 1998, blamed partly on denuded hillsides after over-grazing and logging, killed 3,400 people and drove 14 million more from their homes. In response, the Chinese government has banned ALL logging in the watershed area.

In 2002, it announced the largest refor-

Merciless logging rendered the earth unstable. 'Today, after 100 years of U.S. domination,' says Filipina activist Lydia Bayoneta, 'less than 20 percent of the Philippines is still forested.'

estation project ever undertaken in the world, which will add over 293,000 square miles of woodlands to the country.

In countries like the Philippines, the mass movements see socialism as the only answer to rampaging capitalism. Bayoneta recalled the prophetic words of Frederick Engels, Karl Marx’s closest collaborator: “He said over a century ago that even when humans achieve full equality, the biggest contradiction facing humanity will be how to balance nature and its powerful forces with the needs of humanity.” □

Their spin or ours?

An article in the Feb. 13 Adweek reports, “The Bush administration spent \$1.4 billion in taxpayer dollars on 137 contracts with advertising agencies over the past two-and-a-half years.”

The article cites a Government Accountability Office report that shows contracts include work related to “marriage-related initiatives,” “present[ing] the Army’s strategic perspective in the global war on terrorism,” and warning about the “consequences and potential dangers of buying prescription drugs from non-U.S. sources.”

On a much, much smaller budget, Workers World newspaper brings you its own spin—that is, the truth behind the lies. We defend the right of marriage for all genders and sexualities. We expose the “war on terror” as a war of imperialist conquest, and we show that the real terrorists sit in the boardrooms of corporations and banks, inside the Oval Office and on Capitol Hill. And we point out that free health care is not only possible, it already exists in countries like socialist Cuba and Bolivarian Venezuela.

We always have the interests of the working and oppressed as our top priority. Won’t you help us continue telling it like it is?

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Mass protests block Haiti election fraud

Continued from page 1

dates were to join behind Leslie Manigat, who had come in a distant second. Another election fraud would then be carried out.

The Bush administration tried to prevent a Préval victory. Former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for the Western

Hemisphere Roger Noriega, a key player behind the 2004 coup, wrote in the Miami Herald Feb. 16 that “violent mobs” of Préval supporters were “trying to convince those tallying the ballots that 49 percent is ‘good enough.’” Noriega set up Haitian



death-squad leaders in 2004 to murder their way through-out Haiti and drive Aristide from office—with the help of U.S. Marines.

The Haitian experience showed that even in an occupied country in a rigged election it is possible for the masses to vote someone they want into office—but only if they are ready to come out into the streets to back up the electoral victory. □

L@s pobres de Haití dicen que Préval, aliado de Aristide ganó

Por G. Dunkel

El 13 de febrero el pueblo pobre de los vecindarios en Puerto Príncipe y sus alrededores estaba quemando neumáticos y erigiendo barricadas en protesta de lo que veían como una manipulación del conteo de votos en los comicios presidenciales. Testigos dijeron que las fuerzas de ocupación MINUSTAH mataron a un manifestante en el barrio de Tabarre.

La gente pobre y trabajadora tenía su candidato René Préval, para las elecciones presidenciales del 7 de febrero y no iban a dejar que una ocupación militar extranjera, o las amenazas de ahogar la votación en sangre, algo que ha pasado más de una vez en Haití, ni los engaños sucios de un gobierno brutal impuesto por las fuerzas de los EEUU, Francia y Canadá previnieran que votaran.

Reportes del 10 de febrero desde Haití informaron que Préval tenía una ventaja sobre los demás candidatos de más de un 50 por ciento entre los 32 candidatos. Parecía que él iba a ganar sin la necesidad de una segunda ronda, pero al anochecer del día 11 de febrero, la comisión electoral anunció que el total de votos para Préval había caído por debajo de un 49 por ciento. Pocos creyeron en el reporte, especialmente después de que un diagrama

había sido publicado mostrando Préval con un 52 por ciento de los votos. Ninguno de los otros candidatos sacó más de un 12 por ciento del voto total.

Préval mismo dijo en una conferencia de prensa en Puerto Príncipe el 14 de febrero, “Estamos convencidos de que un fraude masivo ha manchado el proceso electoral”.

Préval ganó un 90 por ciento de los votos en Cité Soleil, uno de los barrios más pobres en Haití, y un 70 por ciento del voto en Petionville, vecindario donde mucha gente adinerada vive al lado de l@s trabajador@s que les sirven.

Mucho antes de las 6 de la madrugada, hora en que abrieron las urnas, decenas de miles de personas habían pasado por las puertas de las murallas que rodean a Cité Soleil rumbo a los lugares de votación. El gobierno ilegal que actualmente tiene el poder conjuntamente con las fuerzas militares de la ONU que ocupan Haití decidió que era demasiado peligroso establecer lugares de votación en Cité Soleil. Si los lugares de votación estaban cerrados, las masas las abrían. Donde ya estaban abiertos, la gente esperaba en largas filas por su turno para votar.

Adonde la población la era impedida votar, se manifestaban, protestaban, y ponían presión intensa en los oficiales

electorales para que encontraran alguna manera de abrir los lugares de votación. Un haitiano pobre le dijo a Reuters, “Tengo 46 años y nunca he tenido trabajo. ¡Pero por lo menos debería poder votar!”

La intensa presión ejercida sobre los oficiales electorales les obligó a dejar abiertos los lugares de votación cuatro horas después de la hora que iban a cerrarse, y a adoptar la regla de que ningún lugar de votación cerraría mientras quedara alguna persona en la fila. Más del 50 por ciento de haitian@s votaron.

En Gros Morne, un pueblo pequeño y muy pobre en el noroeste de Haití, un policía mató a balazos a una persona que esperaba para votar. Las otras personas que estaban esperando y vieron el suceso, sacaron sus machetes — herramienta común usada por los trabajadores del campo en Haití — y mataron al policía. La votación continuó.

Préval dijo en su plataforma electoral que permitirá el regreso del Presidente Jean-Bertrand Aristide. También promete establecer un programa de alfabetización del pueblo, y tomar pasos inmediatos para mejorar la agricultura de Haití, donde trabajan dos-terceras parte de la población haitiana. La alfabetización es una cuestión de gran importancia porque mucho más de la mitad de tod@s l@s haitian@s

adult@s no pueden ni leer ni escribir.

No es probable que el partido de Préval, Lespwa, vaya a ganar una mayoría en el parlamento, hecho que lo coloca aún más en una posición defensiva respecto a sus oponentes políticos, la mayoría de los cuáles son burgueses ricos que apoyaron los golpes contra Aristide.

Préval, un hombre de negocios que manejaba una panadería en Port-au-Prince, estudió agronomía en Bélgica y trabajó en Wall Street en Nueva York como mensajero y portero antes de regresar a Haití. Fue el primer ministro en el primer gobierno de Aristide, lo siguió al exilio, y luego fue presidente entre el primer y el segundo término de Aristide. Algunos sectores del Partido Lavalas de Aristide han apoyado a Préval. Fr. Gérard Jean-Juste, por ejemplo, recientemente respaldó a Préval.

Si Préval es elegido en la primera ronda, no se espera que traiga cambios significativos de la vida cotidiana en Haití. Pero es obvio que ni los Estados Unidos ni las fuerzas derechistas en Haití que derrocaron al gobierno de Aristide, lo quieren en la presidencia. Pero ya es evidente que la mayoría de la población pobre está lista para luchar por el derecho de Préval a asumir la presidencia. □

EPA y Christie Whitman mintieron sobre calidad del aire

Por Mary Owen
Nueva York

Un juez federal amonestó a la Agencia para la Protección Ambiental (EPA por sus siglas en inglés) y a su ex directora, Christie Whitman el pasado 4 de febrero por haber publicado repetidamente que la calidad del aire en el bajo Manhattan era buena y apropiada para respirar en los días inmediatos que siguieron al ataque del 11 de septiembre.

Activistas que luchan por la seguridad y la salud han estado señalando que los riesgos a la salud y al ambiente después del 11 de septiembre no fueron totalmente reportados. El derrumbe de edificios ocasionó la eliminación al aire de 2000 toneladas de asbestos, de plomo de 50.000 computadores, de 424.000 toneladas de concreto pulverizado, del químico PCB y de otros tóxicos.

La jueza de Distrito, Deborah A. Batts dictaminó que la EPA y Whitman no estaban protegidos contra una demanda puesta por los trabajadores y residentes al igual que estudiantes del bajo Manhattan que retornaron a sus lugares de trabajo contaminados luego de las confirmaciones falsas de la EPA. Las áreas afectadas también incluyen a Chinatown, el Lower East Side y Brooklyn.

“Ningún ser en su sano juicio habría pensado que decir a millares de personas que era seguro volver al bajo Manhattan, sabiendo que tal retorno podría plantear

riesgos de salud a largo plazo y otras consecuencias nefastas, y creer que esta era una conducta sancionada por nuestras leyes” dijo la jueza. La jueza Batts determinó que las acciones de Whitman como cabecilla de la EPA, eran desconcertantes porque ella bien sabía que el colapso de las torres gemelas había generado toneladas de materiales tóxicos en el aire.

La decisión de la jueza da paso a una demanda que buscaría un fondo monetario para el monitoreo y tratamiento de los efectos sobre la salud de trabajador@s, residentes y estudiantes que estuvieron expuest@s al aire tóxico y a la basura tóxica que cubrieron el área después del 11 de septiembre; para los daños causados por la exposición a materiales peligrosos y para una remuneración por los costos de limpieza.

Actualmente solo los trabajadores de rescate son elegibles para el monitoreo y tratamiento médico. Quince mil de ellos están actualmente siendo monitoreados.

Pero aún este grupo, elogiado por autoridades locales y nacionales, tuvo que luchar arduamente en el 2005 para evitar que la administración de Bush recortara \$125 millones de su programa cuando ya algunos comenzaban a morir de enfermedades relacionadas al colapso de las torres.

La Casa Blanca y Wall Street también son culpables

Algo ha de aclararse conforme la demanda camina. Pero la administración de Bush y Wall Street no deben dejarse libres de culpa.

La Casa Blanca manipuló las declaraciones de la EPA sobre la calidad del aire en esos días, según el reporte por el Inspector General de la EPA en agosto del 2003. Los doctores aliados de Bush borrarán información sobre la precaución y agregaron garantías de que la EPA no tenía ningún dato para respaldar estas precauciones.

La administradora de la EPA, Marianne Horinko, admitió que la administración de Bush utilizó al Consejo de Seguridad Nacional y no a los expertos en el ambiente y la salud pública para filtrar los datos sobre la calidad del aire y del agua en el área, “porque el razonamiento era que estos eran los expertos en armas de destrucción masiva.” La Casa Blanca después coordinó las comunicaciones públicas del Consejo y otras agencias federales. (Newsday, del 23 de agosto 2003.)

“Las agencias le dieron prioridad a que volvieran a funcionar las bolsas de valores y el mercado financiero del bajo Manhattan a cualquier costo. Al hacerlo, han permitido que miles de personas estén expuestas a sustancias que ni siquiera han sido identificadas, y mucho menos cuantificadas”, dijo Joel Suffro, Director Ejecutivo del Comité de Nueva York de Salud y Seguridad Ocupacional, que representa a más de 250 sindicatos. (Del periódico St. Louis Post Dispatch, del 12 de enero de 2002).

La desinformación fabricada condujo a que la gente volviera antes de que fuera seguro a las áreas contaminadas a riesgo de su salud. En Wall Street, el corazón financiero del capitalismo de los Estados Unidos, la Bolsa de Valores y las grandes corporaciones prometieron a l@s trabajador@s almuerzo gratis y golosinas—mientras que los incendios tóxicos ardían en las Torres Gemelas. □

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