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After casting their ballots Mexico's poor vote with their feet

Protest right-wing attempt to steal election

By Teresa Gutierrez

BULLETIN: As of 9 p.m. EDT on July 5, a recount of the ballots in the Mexican presidential election shows the leftist candidate, López Obrador, ahead of his opponent by 2 percentage points, with almost 90 percent of the votes counted. The following article was written earlier in the day, when the corporate media were claiming victory for Felipe Calderón.

As we go to press, the outcome of Mexico's July 2 presidential election is still unknown.

For now, it is a close tie between Felipe Calderón, candidate of the right-wing, pro-U.S. National Action Party (PAN)—and Andres Manuel López Obrador, candidate of the progressive Party of Democratic Revolution (PRD). Obrador is commonly referred to as AMLO in Mexico.

Preliminary results reportedly showed an edge for the PAN, with 36.38 percent of the vote to Calderón for López Obrador's 35.34 percent.

López Obrador has called for a recount, as there are indications of voter fraud. The PRD has compiled a list of election law violations and irregularities—including 3 million missing ballots. After he made the charge, election officials admitted that "up to 3 million votes had not been tallied in the preliminary results." (New York Times, July 5)

The Washington Post reports that a team of lawyers has been gathered, and that it may take months before the results are known. But one thing is known. And that is that Mexico is once again in the throes of making history.

Mexico is at a crossroads, and the presidential election merely reflects the tumultuous contradictions that are impacting the beleaguered Mexican masses.

The principal question is not so much who won the 2006 elections—as important as that is—but rather: Which way is Mexico going? How will the dire social conditions of the people of Mexico be resolved? What role will the left now play in helping to resolve these conditions?

Will Mexico's sovereignty continue to be undermined by the United States?

Can it stand with those leaders on the rise in Latin America who are also heads of state and whose policies and political persuasion toward the left of the political spectrum have rocked imperialism to its core? Or will Mexico continue to be held firmly under Washington's thumb, resulting in an oppressive, neocolonialist and imperialist domination in the 21st century?

And most important: What is the underlying sentiment of the Mexican masses? Which way will they go?

Will the millions of displaced peasants, brutalized workers,

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Anti-war activists begin 'Troops Home Fast'



Cindy Sheehan, Dick Gregory, Daniel Ellsberg, former Army Reserves Col. Ann Wright and members of Code Pink, Veterans for Peace and Iraq Veterans Against the War rallied in Washington, D.C., on July 3 to kick off the Troops Home Fast.

The fasters are demanding the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq, no permanent bases in that country, and a

commitment to fund a massive reconstruction effort with funds going to Iraqi, not U.S., contractors.

The fasters will stay in front of the White House every day until Aug. 14, when they move the hunger strike to Camp Casey in Crawford, Texas.

Organizers are asking activists across the country to join in the fast either by

coming to D.C. and Crawford or by organizing local actions in their own communities. The Troops Out Now Coalition is organizing fast activities in New York City and elsewhere. For details see troopshomefast.org and troopsoutnow.org.

—Story and photo Dustin Langley

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'Michigan is pro-choice—let's keep it that way!'

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

What do these groups have in common: African-American workers at reproductive services clinics, unionists and labor leaders, Green Party activists, and organizers against war and injustice?

In downtown Detroit on June 30, these and other pro-choice advocates came together for a rally in support of reproductive choices for all women. The demonstrators were mostly young people of many nationalities, with African-American, Latin@, Arab and Asian communities represented.

Many workers leaving downtown Detroit for the holiday weekend honked their car horns in solidarity as they saw the Detroit Action Network For Reproductive Rights (DANFORR) banner and the many signs and placards demanding reproductive freedom.

Planned Parenthood organizer Katey Aquilina, who spoke at the rally, passed out pink placards reading, "Stand up for women in South Dakota." The slogan refers to a new law in that state that would outlaw all abortions except to save a woman's life. South Dakota pro-choice forces recently succeeded in getting a referendum on the ballot in the Nov. 7 statewide elections on the validity of the law. Activists there are campaigning vigorously to defeat what is called "Referred Law 6."

DANFORR organizer Kris Hamel chaired the rally, declaring, "We are here to take a stand for choice. We are here in solidarity with the women of South Dakota. And we are here to say in no uncertain terms that Michigan is a pro-choice state and we are determined to keep it that way!"

Metro-Detroit Coalition of Labor Union Women President Millie Hall sent a statement to the rally saying, "At our CLUW founding conference our slogan was 'We are not here to swap recipes.' We are here to take a stand and we mean business. I want you to know that we are on the same path—and seeking the same mission. We stand by you in this endeavor as you bring awareness to a battle we have been waging a long time."

DANFORR leader Debbie Johnson, a long-time organizer against all types of injustice, captivated the listeners with her intensely personal yet highly political comments. "Our rights are being aggressively challenged by a war-mongering baby-killer of Iraqi babies and children, a president who wages war directly and indirectly around the world while he oversees an aggressive attack on women's right to choose. We will not let him succeed!"

"We must let our voices be heard in the cities and towns and states from sea to shining sea as a constant and vocal challenge to those who would deny women the right of choice. We must raise our voices even louder for those who are challenged by poverty and unemployment and could not be here today, whose needs must also be vigorously protected and defended."

Sylvia Innwood, co-chair of the Women's Caucus of Green Party USA and Detroit Greens leader, spoke at the rally, as did Kimberly Jackson, outreach director of the Summit Medical Center in Detroit. Summit is well-known



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Debbie Johnson, speaking on bullhorn, urges support for South Dakota women.

to area women as an excellent provider of a full range of reproductive services, including abortion. Jackson reiterated how important it is for pro-choice people to take a stand during these times.

Shalece Daniels, administrator of the Women's Advisory Center and Sharpe Clinic, fired up the crowd: "South Dakota is a wakeup call! It's time to organize, time to take action so this type of law doesn't go anywhere else. We are on the offensive here today, not the defensive. We are pro-active and we must encourage everyone we can to stand up for choice."

Katey Aquilina of Planned Parenthood got the audience chanting: "If it is to be, then it is up to me!"

Wendy Richardson, a clinic escort organizer, urged involvement at women's clinics: "Every day women are harassed and intimidated because they make a choice and try to access legal medical services. Clinics all over the country are subjected to this treatment, including the ones here in our backyard. When escorts are there, the anti-choice protesters are less aggressive and the women appreciate the support as they make their choices."

Marisol Ybarra, a leader of the Wayne State University chapter of Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, urged young people and students to continue to take a stand for choice.

Funds were collected to send to the South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families and 25 new members of DANFORR were signed up at the rally. The next general membership meeting of DANFORR is July 13 at 6:30 p.m., at 5920 Second Ave. in Detroit. Call 313-378-2369 or contact danforr@sbcglobal.net for more information. □

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55 West 17 Street
 New York, N.Y. 10011
 Phone: (212) 627-2994
 Fax: (212) 675-7869
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Editor: Deirdre Griswold
 Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
 Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie Feinberg, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
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 Contributing Editors: Greg Butterfield, G. Dunkel, Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Hales, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Milt Neidenberg, Bryan G. Pfeifer, Minnie Bruce Pratt
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 Internet: Janet Mayes
 Supporter Program: Sue Davis, coordinator

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 National Office
 55 W. 17 St.,
 New York, NY 10011
 (212) 627-2994;
 Fax (212) 675-7869
 wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
 P.O. Box 424,
 Atlanta, GA 30301
 (404) 627-0185
 atlanta@workers.org
 Baltimore
 426 E. 31 St.,
 Baltimore, MD 21218
 (410) 235-7040
 baltimore@workers.org
 Boston
 284 Armory St.,
 Boston, MA 02130
 (617) 983-3835
 Fax (617) 983-3836
 boston@workers.org
 Buffalo, N.Y.
 367 Delaware Ave.,
 Buffalo, NY 14202
 (716) 566-1115
 buffalo@workers.org

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

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

San Diego, Calif.
 3930 Oregon St.,
 Suite 230
 San Diego, CA 92104
 (619) 692-4496
 San Francisco
 2940 16th St., #207
 San Francisco,
 CA 94103
 (415) 561-9752
 sf@workers.org
 State College, Pa.
 100 Grandview Rd.,
 State College,
 PA 16801
 (814) 237-8695
 Washington, D.C.
 P.O. Box 57300,
 Washington, DC 20037,
 dc@workers.org



While Reps & Dems keep war going

High court rebukes Bush on tribunals

By Greg Butterfield

On June 29, in a five to three decision, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the Bush administration's use of military tribunals to decide the fate of detainees held as "enemy combatants" at the Guantanamo Bay naval base in Cuba.

Chief Justice John Roberts, a recent Bush appointee, abstained, since he had ruled for the government side in an earlier detainee case.

Many big-business media outlets hailed the "landmark" decision for restoring the rule of law, and opponents of war and repression were honestly heartened by the ruling. But its true impact remains to be seen.

The Supreme Court's decision in "Hamdan v. Rumsfeld" does not mean prisoners at Guantanamo or other U.S. torture camps will be freed. Nor does it guarantee them trials under the U.S. legal system. The decision doesn't directly address the status of "enemy combatants" who haven't been charged with crimes—as the vast majority have not.

Still, the decision was welcomed as an important step forward by lawyers and advocates for the detainees. Michael Ratner of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which represents nearly half the Guantanamo detainees, said, "There is no way for President Bush to continue hiding behind a purported lack of judicial guidance to avoid addressing the illegal and immoral prison in Guantanamo Bay."

Ratner called on Bush to "try our clients in lawful U.S. courts or release them."

What's really in the decision?

While there has been much speculation about the possible repercussions of the court's decision, the ruling boils down to just two points:

First, Bush can't unilaterally set up military tribunals. He must get congressional authorization first.

Second, the tribunals, or whatever form is finally decided on, must accord with the Geneva Conventions and some recognized body of law, like the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

This means, in effect, that detainees must be accorded the rights of prisoners of war when brought to trial.

Both points are setbacks for the Bush regime, which asserts that it has the right to act without any regard for international or U.S. law in its conduct of the "war on terror."

Bush has vehemently denied that the detainees, and specifically those accused of being supporters of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, are prisoners of war and asserted that they therefore have no rights.

Immediately after the Supreme Court ruling, congressional Republicans and Democrats started plotting ways to help Bush circumvent the court's decision. Plans are afoot to craft new laws to legally ratify the military tribunals.

Leading Republicans Sen. Mitch McConnell and Sen. Lindsey Graham attacked the court ruling for invoking Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, which prohibits "humiliating and degrading treatment" and bars violence, including murder, mutilation and torture.

Of course, this list reads like a menu of the offerings at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, and other U.S.-run facilities, which were recently condemned by the United Nations Commission on Torture.

So desperate are conditions at Guantanamo that three prisoners committed suicide in June. Hunger strikers are force-fed

and those who dare to speak up are ravaged by a "quick response force."

McConnell, speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press" July 2, warned that invoking Article 3 "means that American servicemen potentially could be accused of war crimes," while Graham, on "Fox News Sunday," said "Congress can rein [the court's decision] in, and I think we should."

The White House says all that's needed to comply with the court ruling is for Congress to pass a law rubber-stamping Bush's plan.

So-called moderate Republican senators like John McCain and Arlen Specter, along with leading Democrats, have called for adjustments that would give the tribunal process the cover of capitalist legality, while denying that detainees have the rights of prisoners of war.

Democratic Sen. Jack Reed told Fox News, "[The detainees] are entitled to a process that will establish their guilt, their culpability, their connections to Al Qaeda."

Tellingly, his "process" leaves out the part that might establish their innocence. And of course it doesn't allow any questioning of U.S. imperialism's right to decide the fate of people kidnapped halfway around the world.

Senate hearings on complying with the court ruling are expected to begin July 11.

Of paramount concern for each capitalist party is how to exploit the court's decision to its own advantage in November's elections.

Hamdan v. Rumsfeld

Salid Ahmed Hamdan, a Yemeni man captured in Afghanistan in 2001, is accused by the United States of being Osama Bin Laden's personal driver and a "war criminal." He is only the second detainee to have his case come before the high court since the "war on terror" was declared almost five years ago.

Hamdan's case challenged the Bush administration's authority to establish military tribunals without congressional authorization. It also challenged the proceedings of his case, which began in 2004, as violating the U.S. Constitution, U.S. military law, and the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war.

The tribunals favored by Bush are composed of a few military judges. They can block the accused and their civilian lawyers from ever learning of the evidence brought against them by labeling it "clas-

sified information." Those charged have no right to confront their accusers, or even to be present during much of their trials. (Associated Press, July 3)

"We conclude that the military commission convened to try Hamdan lacks power to proceed because its structure and procedures violate both the [Uniform Code of Military Justice] and the Geneva Conventions," said the court majority's opinion.

Bush had claimed the right to set up military tribunals under an emergency law passed by Congress shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. In ruling that this law doesn't give the president a blank check to do whatever he wishes, the court's decision also opens the door to legal challenges of other measures, such as domestic wiretapping and spying on financial transactions. (Los Angeles Times, June 30)

Congress had attempted to nullify Hamdan's case by passing the Detainee Treatment Act last Dec. 30. According to Marjorie Cohn, president-elect of the National Lawyers Guild, the DTA strips federal courts of jurisdiction to hear habeas corpus petitions filed by Guantanamo detainees. But the Supreme Court majority ruled that the DTA could not be applied retroactively to Hamdan or others whose cases were already pending.

Hamdan is one of only 10 of the 759 men and boys detained at Guantanamo since January 2002 who have actually been charged with a crime. U.S. officials now claim that between 40 and 80 Guantanamo detainees are considered eligible for war-crimes trials.

Currently about 460 prisoners are held at Guantanamo. The rest have been returned to their home countries or sent to third countries.

Struggle will decide

The Supreme Court's decision did not directly address the future of the Guantanamo detention facility. But in recent months, under growing international pressure to close the prison, Bush has hinged its future on the court's ruling in the Hamdan case.

Now the State Department is trying to quickly negotiate the repatriation of as many as 300 more of the remaining detainees to their home countries.

Belgian Sen. Anne-Marie Lizzi, who led an inspection team of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, reported July 1 that there are "only 30 to

40" real cases among the Guantanamo detainees. (French Press Agency)

There is much speculation that Bush will take this opportunity to shut down the widely known and despised Guantanamo operation, leaving new prisoners to get flushed through the network of secret CIA-operated torture camps spread across Eastern Europe and other parts of the world.

What the June 29 Supreme Court ruling shows above all is that powerful forces among the big U.S. capitalists feel the Bush gang has overstepped its legitimate boundaries as "executive committee of the ruling class," as Karl Marx and Frederick Engels so eloquently described it.

More and more, ruling-class pundits are saying that Bush's adventurism has weakened U.S. imperialism's global position and needs to be brought under control.

At the same time, however, there is no real opposition to the war in Iraq or the "war on terror" from the capitalist political machines. The real opposition comes from the grassroots. Bush still gets his way on the Pentagon budget (including a unanimous vote in the Senate), extension of the Patriot Act and his major appointments, including to the Supreme Court.

The Democrats are not appealing to the masses to change direction. Their leaders back the war drive, as their support of the \$517-billion military budget proves. Any disputes with Bush are over specific policies or represent their scrambling for political advantage.

In tandem with the Republicans' election-year push to resell the "war on terror" to the skeptical working class and other sectors, there is an effort to clean up the image of the war machine—for example, by prosecuting a handful of U.S. soldiers for rape and murder of Iraqis—while keeping the war and the war crimes it inevitably generates going full-steam.

How broadly or narrowly the Supreme Court's ruling is interpreted, what happens to the detainees at Guantanamo and elsewhere—all this ultimately rests on the ability of the worldwide anti-imperialist movement to mobilize popular discontent into powerful actions that challenge the dominance of the war profiteers and their political stooges.

The anti-war movement in the United States has a special obligation to redouble its efforts to bring the troops home now and free the victims of Pentagon repression everywhere. □

Military resisters get civilian support

By John Catalinotto

The first commissioned officer to refuse orders to take part in the occupation of Iraq was thanked by over a thousand people at 30 different sites around the United States on June 27. First Lt. Ehren Watada's June 22 refusal to deploy to Iraq has inspired a wave of support from anti-war forces, who are reaching out to dissident U.S. troops.

The demonstrations increased contact between the civilian anti-war movement and the troops. More groups are offering support to GI resisters. In polls, over 70 percent of U.S. troops in Iraq have said they want to get out. The question remains whether Watada's heroic example of individual refusal can help awaken an impulse toward mass resistance within the occupation army.

Watada had announced June 7 that he would refuse orders to go to Iraq because the war there violates international and domestic law. He is currently restricted to the large U.S. Army base in Fort Lewis, Wash.

"I feel that we have been lied to and betrayed by this administration," Watada told the media in a telephone interview from Fort Lewis. "It is the duty, the obligation of every soldier, and specifically the officers, to evaluate the legality, the truth behind every order—including the order to go to war."

Reuters reported June 29 that five GIs are now being investigated for the premeditated rape of an Iraqi woman, her murder and that of three other members of her family. Considering that every day there is news about U.S. troops suspected of war crimes like rape, murder and mas-



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Supporters of Lt. Ehren Watada march in New York on June 27.

sacres of Iraqi civilians, it is easy to understand the lieutenant's revulsion.

As of now, the Pentagon has only investigated blatant criminal actions by rank-and-file soldiers and marines. No one has

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ILWU convention denies voice to Black coalition

By Clarence Thomas

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) held its 33rd International Convention May 13-20, 2006, in Vancouver, Canada. The International Convention has the authority to adopt resolutions and statements of policy on political, economic and other issues, and amend the constitution. The highest governing body of the entire ILWU is the International Convention, made up of delegates elected by direct rank-and-file vote in each local or affiliate of the union.

During the convention, a very important resolution regarding the African American Longshore Coalition (AALC) was put forward by ILWU Local 10. The AALC, a rank-and-file organization, has been recognized by the international union for its contributions to remedy racism within the ILWU since March 1992. However, the resolution recognizing AALC was defeated at the Convention and the Longshore Caucus.

This paper is written to discuss how rejecting the resolution is absolutely ironic when reviewing the progressive history of the ILWU. It must also be noted that international unions such as the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the Service Employees International Union, United Auto Workers and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, to name a few, recognize the formation of Black Caucuses within their respective unions because they recog-

nize that discrimination does exist.

ILWU Local 10, the local of the legendary 20th-century labor leader Harry Bridges and William "Bill" Chester, the first African American to serve as an international officer, had submitted a resolution calling for the AALC to have a "voice but no vote" at the convention and Longshore Caucus. The resolution didn't make it out of the Constitution Committee at the convention and was rejected a week later at the Longshore Caucus. The intent of the resolution

was to provide the AALC with the same status as the ILWU Pensioners and Women Auxiliaries with "voice but no vote." Passing the resolution would not have cost the union any money at all.

The roots of segregation and white supremacy in the Longshore Division are very deep. It is in the Port of San Francisco where the world-renowned progressive and workers' solidarity history [of the union] was established, not in the Pacific Northwest, where problems regarding racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination are pervasive today.

"The ILWU Story: Six Decades of Militant Unions," a book that provides the history of the union from its origins to the present, describes in detail the internal contradictions of racism within the ILWU. "The ILWU Story" explains how, during the civil rights movement, "there were longshore locals that steadfastly refused to integrate their membership. As an indication of the paradoxes of prejudice, these locals—mainly in the Northwest,

but also early on in Southern California—agreed with the International policies supporting the civil rights movement and affirmative action programs, and contributed generously to early ILWU support for sit-in demonstrations and marches for equality in the Southern United States beginning in 1955. Yet an unofficial color line held fast in these locals, despite constant efforts by the International leadership and other longshore locals, notably Local 10 in San Francisco."

The rejection of Local 10's resolution to recognize the AALC to have a "voice but no vote" was a betrayal to African Americans and other progressive ILWU members, past and present, who have been in the forefront contributing to the progressive history of the union. If Harry Bridges, Bill Chester, Paul Robeson or Dr. King were alive today, this writer is certain that they would support the AALC having a voice in the ILWU. This doesn't take much conjecture based upon their commitment to the struggle to end racism and their fight for social justice. These warriors for peace and justice took an uncompromising position regarding democracy for all and not just for the privileged few.

Clarence Thomas is past secretary-treasurer of ILWU Local 10, national co-chair of the Million Worker March Movement, and a member of the African American Longshore Coalition and Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. E-mail comments in care of the writer to aalcdobby@aol.com. To read more about this development, go to workers.org.

GUEST Commentary

ON THE PICKETLINE

By Sue Davis

Nurses charge collusion holds down wages

Class-action lawsuits were filed June 20 against national hospital corporations in four cities—Chicago, Memphis, San Antonio and Albany, N.Y.—charging that they illegally colluded to hold down nurses' wages.

The Nurse Alliance of the Service Employees union, which has more than 84,000 members in 23 states, helped expose the wage issues that led to the lawsuits. Last March the Nurse Alliance, in connection with the Institute for Women's Policy Research, issued a white paper citing low pay, short staffing and mandatory overtime as conditions that have caused nurses to leave the bedside. In 2004, more than 500,000 nurses chose to work outside the profession, despite an anticipated need of more than 1 million nurses by 2014. The report showed how raising nurse salaries will help draw more nurses back to the profession.

Case in point: Some 660 registered nurses at a hospital in Englewood, N.J., went on strike June 30 after talks on pensions, staffing levels and safety measures broke down. Less than a month after a 72-hour lockout, the nurses set up picket lines when the hospital rescinded its offer of arbitration.

Childcare workers want a union

If the New York State Assembly fulfills its promise to call a special session and override the governor's veto, 52,000 home childcare providers, who care for the children of welfare recipients and other low-income parents, will win the right to organize and bargain collectively for pay and benefits. As of now, the "independent contractors," who are overwhelmingly poor women of color, have no health care, paid vacation, sick days, pensions or other benefits.

The workers' wages are currently paid out of state and federal funds. But those who support the childcare workers, including the United Federation of Teachers and various anti-poverty groups, say that if education is a priority, the workers must be paid more than the poverty-level wages of \$15,000 to \$19,000 a year they now earn.

Though New York Gov. George Pataki claimed unionizing the workers would jeopardize several hundred million dollars in federal grant money, officials in Illinois, where 49,000 such workers unionized earlier this year, say that's not so. (New York Times, June 28) Home childcare providers in Oregon and Washington state are also unionized.

The bottom line: Some of the poorest, most oppressed women workers in the United States are actually subsidizing the state and federal government. Instead, they should receive a living wage, a stipend for educational and other needed materials and the respect they deserve.

UM janitors get union—finally!

After a hard-fought nine-week strike for union representation, which included a hunger strike, janitors at the University of Miami joined the Service Workers union on June 15. The American Arbitration Association certified the card check process for employees of UM's cleaning contractor, the Unico Service Company, and Unico did not contest it.

"We are invisible no more," said Maritza Paz, a UM janitor and member of the bargaining committee. "It is an incredible feeling to finally have a voice and the strength to improve our lives. This is a victory for all Florida workers who want to stand up for a better life."

The Service Employees union is continuing its drive to unionize thousands of security guards, janitors, housekeepers, valets and front-desk workers who keep South Florida's universities, malls and condominiums clean, safe and running. For example, on June 15 janitors at Nova University announced that they have collected cards from about 70 percent of the work force, who earn as little as \$7 an hour with no health insurance.

Military resisters get civilian support

Continued from page 3

brought official charges against the high officers and politicians who systematically lied to justify the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Some of the June 27 demonstrations also expressed solidarity with Spc. Suzanne Swift, another Fort Lewis soldier. Swift, after spending a year in Iraq, went absent rather than deploy again on June 12. She said she had faced sexual harassment from sergeants commanding her unit in Iraq and was forced into a sexual relationship with a sergeant who could order her into battle.

Another military resister, Sgt. Kevin Benderman, is in the prison in Ft. Lewis serving a 15-month sentence for his refusal to deploy to Iraq last year. There are regular vigils outside the base in solidarity with Benderman.

From Ft. Lewis to New York City

Workers World spoke to participants in some of the 30-plus demonstrations. "Rallies and vigils were held in Seattle, Tacoma and Olympia, Wash., building up to the June 27 action, which brought 250 people to demonstrate and rally outside the gate of Ft. Lewis," said Jim McMahan. "People in many automobiles honked their horns in support for the demonstration on a freeway overpass on the six-lane highway and protesters spilled over right to the gates of the fort."

Speakers at the Ft. Lewis rally included Ehren Watada's mother,

Carolyn Ho; his father, Robert Watada; and his stepmother, Rosa Watada.

In Tacoma, the United Methodist Church has declared itself a sanctuary for soldiers not wanting to go to war. According to Gerry Condon, a Vietnam-era military resister who was visiting the Ft. Lewis area, the church "will provide counseling there, plus other resources that sound like it will be kind of a 'coffee house'"—the name for gathering places that peace activists set up for GIs in towns near military bases during the war against Vietnam.

In Charlotte, N.C., some 25 people got together that same day, reports David Dixon. Organizers had shown the film "Sir! No Sir!"—the suppressed story of the GI resistance movement opposing the Vietnam War—at the public library in downtown Charlotte. "Ahmad Daniels, a Black Vietnam-era military resister who is mentioned in the film, gave an introduction and facilitated a discussion afterwards. Daniels [known then as George Daniels—JC] spent two and half years in prison for refusing to deploy to Vietnam while in the Marines," said Dixon.

"There was a rally in San Francisco at Justin Herman Plaza," Joan Marquardt reported, "with about 100-200 people. The big banner read, 'Thank you Lt. Ehren Watada—Refuse illegal war.' Several of the speakers



Lt. Ehren Watada

were veterans, mostly from the Vietnam era."

In New York, college-age demonstrators argued with young soldiers outside the Army Recruiting Office on Chambers Street. U.S. strategists talk about a struggle for "hearts and minds" with regard to Iraqis. It is also going on within the U.S. Armed Forces.

The protests around the country appeared to be supported by a broad sector of the anti-war movement. Calls for the actions came from Not In Our Name and the Campus Antiwar Network and got a lot of support from anti-war veterans' groups like Vets for Peace. For more information on the protests, see www.thankyoult.org. □

Will Voting Rights Act be renewed?

Congress stalls as elections approach

By LeiLani Dowell

With the 2008 presidential election on the horizon and massive Black voter disenfranchisement in the 2000 and 2004 elections still echoing, the House of Representatives on June 21 tabled a vote to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act (VRA), considered one of the most successful pieces of civil rights legislation.

The VRA was adopted in 1965, following a string of violent and institutionally sanctioned attacks on Black people struggling for their right to vote and their supporters, including the 1964 murder of Freedom Riders James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner in Philadelphia, Miss. (See Workers World, Jan. 20, 2005.)

On March 7, 1965, a group marching from Selma, Ala., to the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery for the right to vote was brutally attacked by local and state police. The massive struggle of activists on the ground coupled with public outrage over these attacks forced Congress to pass the act.

The VRA eliminated what were then commonplace barriers to voting in many states, including literacy tests and poll taxes. It requires nine states with a history of discrimination to receive "pre-clearance" by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) before making substantial

changes to voting regulations, to ensure that they are not discriminatory. Further, it authorizes federal election observers to monitor elections. Later additions to the act require states that have a certain percentage of citizens with limited English proficiency to provide language assistance and ballots in languages other than English.

Unless they are renewed, the provisions on pre-clearance, language assistance, and federal monitors and poll watchers will expire next summer (BlackAmericaWeb.com).

The New York Times called the stalling of the bill a "rebellion," after House and Senate leaders of both parties had gathered earlier last month "in a rare bipartisan moment to celebrate its imminent approval." Southern Republicans, led by Rep. Lynn Westmoreland of Georgia, are complaining that the pre-clearance provision is discriminatory to the nine states it affects—Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia.

Yet a look at recent elections shows the need for more enforcement, not less.

In 2004, the DOJ found the need to monitor primary elections in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas (www.usdoj.gov). In Mississippi, more than 100 voting changes have been objected to by the DOJ since the last time the law was extended.

(BlackAmericaWeb.com).

In Georgia, a bill was initially approved in 2005 by the DOJ before being overturned by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. It would have required those without state-issued photo identification to purchase a special five-year identification card, for \$20, to vote. (washingtonpost.com)

Several organizations have also recently completed studies showing that discrimination—not just in the South, but throughout the U.S.—does indeed still exist. The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee and submitted their report, entitled "Asian Americans and the Voting Rights Act: The Case for Reauthorization" on June 13.

The report, "a comprehensive analysis of data from multilingual voter surveys and poll monitoring results that date back to 1988," describes how, as recently as 2004, poll workers at one site in Boston formed two separate lines—one for whites and one for people of color.

Almost 71 percent of the poll sites AALDEF monitored in New York did not have the required number of assigned Chinese and/or Korean interpreters; and large numbers of voters in New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts reported that they were improperly told by poll workers that they needed identification

to vote. (aaldef.org)

A press release on the report states, "In every election AALDEF has observed since 1988, Asian American voters have reported incidents of racist behavior."

It also notes, "The lingering effects of disparate access to education, jobs, health care, and other social services further marginalize Asian American communities from the political process."

In a move to further marginalize immigrant communities, a smaller group of representatives is grumbling that providing ballots in languages other than English is unnecessary. Clay Robinson of the Houston Chronicle remarks, "If only they were so concerned about improving the public education opportunities for the U.S.-born descendants of immigrants." The Waco Tribune-Herald calls English-only ballots "a literacy test of a different stripe." It should also be noted that disenfranchisement of undocumented immigrants—who work, participate and contribute to U.S. society—is still completely legal.

As disenfranchisement of people of color seems to increase with each election, the stalling of a vote on the Voting Rights Act is yet another slap to the face of people of color. A movement like the one that forced its passage in 1965 is needed to ensure the civil rights of all.

Email: ldowell@workers.org

At Liberty Bell

Protest says 'Free all U.S. political prisoners!'

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Raising the question, "How can there be freedom when there are U.S. political prisoners?" around 75 people rallied across from the Liberty Bell at Sixth and Market streets here on July 1.

As demonstrators distributed literature to the thousands of tourists who were in the area for the city's week-long Independence Day celebrations, speakers, signs and banners raised the cases of many imprisoned political activists, including Mumia Abu-Jamal, the MOVE 9, Leonard Peltier, the Cuban Five and Puerto Rican political prisoner Antonio Camacho Negrón, who was recently moved to a federal prison in Philadelphia.

A young man visiting from Greece stopped to get information and ended up joining the rally. Other people passing by stopped to ask for more information on cases they were hearing about for the first time.

July 1 is very significant to the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who has been imprisoned for nearly a quarter century, accused

of killing a Philadelphia police officer. In 1982 Judge Albert Sabo rushed through Abu-Jamal's trial proceedings and encouraged jurors to speed up their decisions so they could all "enjoy their Fourth of July weekend." The Black journalist has always maintained his innocence and is being held in a state prison, SCI Greene, in Waynesburg, Pa.

The Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals last year agreed to consider three counts raised in Abu-Jamal's appeal: allegations that there was racial bias in jury selection, that the prosecutor gave an improper summation and that a judge in a previous appeal was biased.

However, the recent naming of a street after Abu-Jamal in the Paris suburb of St. Denis has led the right-wing here to introduce a new round of legislation on the local, state and federal levels pushing for the reinstatement of his death sentence.

This June 26 also marked 31 years since the shoot-out on the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota that led to the railroading of American Indian Movement leader Leonard Peltier. Peltier is currently being held in Lewisburg Penitentiary in

Pennsylvania.

Several children of the MOVE 9 addressed the rally on the case of these innocent men and women who begin their 28th year of incarceration this August. Police carried out a massive assault on their headquarters in Philadelphia in 1978, arresting the nine. Seven years later, the police and FBI burned down a whole city block in the Black community after dropping a bomb on another MOVE house.

Russell Maroon Shoatz is another political prisoner now serving his 34th year in the control unit of SCI Greene. While a member of the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party, Shoatz was arrested and tried for the murder of a police officer. He received two life sentences after an unfair trial in which he lacked adequate legal representation.

Demonstrators marched to the nearby Federal Detention Center where Puerto Rican political prisoner Antonio Camacho Negrón is being held. Negrón, one of the Macheteros, who completed his sentence for the famous Wells Fargo bank robbery in Hartford in 1985, was recently re-incarcerated by the FBI, part of an

intensification of repression against the Puerto Rican independence movement that began last September with the FBI assassination of Filiberto Ojeda Rios at his home in Puerto Rico.

Speakers also talked about the struggle to free the Cuban Five, who are in U.S. prisons serving four life sentences and 75 years, collectively. Last year, a federal appeals court in Atlanta ordered a new trial for the five, who had been monitoring terrorist groups in Miami when they were arrested on conspiracy charges. They were convicted in 2001 by a U.S. federal court in Miami, a place where the appellate judges agree the five Cubans could not receive a fair trial.

Despite the ruling by the appeals court, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González remain in prison.

A highlight of the demonstration was the response of prisoners in the Federal Detention Center. They gathered two each in all the many tall, narrow windows in the facility facing the demonstrators. Many tapped on their windows and raised fists in solidarity. □



WW PHOTOS: LAL ROOJK

There were banners for Leonard Peltier, the Cuba 5 and Mumia Abu-Jamal in the march to the federal prison, in Philadelphia, where Antonio Camacho Negrón is held.

Interview with Boots Riley

of THE COUP

*"The stores make money off of very low wages
The next time you see two women running out the Gap
With arms full of clothes still strapped to the rack
Once they jump in the car, hit the gas and scat
If you have to say something, just stand and clap ...
"This goes to all them hard-working women
Who risk jail-time just to make them a living
We know there'd probably be no one in prison
If rights to food, clothes and shelter were given."*



These lyrics are from the song "I Love Boosters" on the rap group The Coup's latest release, "Pick a Bigger Weapon." Boosters are those who make a living by liberating clothes and other items and selling them at discounted prices, instead of at the hugely inflated prices charged by retail stores. The song is homage to people who live a tenuous life and their part in poor and oppressed communities.

The song and the entire full-length release by the rap group are in a line of radical/revolutionary music that The Coup has continued to release since 1993. That year they released their first CD: "Kill My Landlord."

Larry Hales of WW interviewed a very hoarse, but game, Boots Riley, lead rapper in the group. Though Boots had a concert the previous night in Atlanta, and was headed towards New Orleans where he

was slated to perform and meet up with activists from the Common Ground Collective, he was willing to talk and be interviewed. He and The Coup are now on the Pick a Bigger Weapon tour, in conjunction with notyoursoldier.org.

Boots Riley is a communist and was an activist before becoming a rapper. He hails from Oakland, Calif. In the song "5 Million Ways to Kill a CEO," he says of the city: "I'm from the land where the Panthers grew/ You know the city and the avenue/ If you the boss we'll be smabbin through, and we'll be grabbin you/ To say, 'Whassup with the ra-venue?'"

Boots became active with the Progressive Labor Party in Oakland at 15 years old. He remembers being red-baited by teachers in high school and being outspoken then.

40 years ago in Chicago

Puerto Ricans rebel against police violence

By Eric Struch
Chicago

June 12 marked the 40th anniversary of what is commonly referred to here as the "Division Street Riots." The "riots" were actually an uprising of the nationally oppressed Puerto Rican community in Humboldt Park/West Town.

People rose up in response to intolerable conditions in the barrio, particularly the brutal treatment of Puerto Rican youth at the hands of the notoriously racist Chicago Police Department (CPD).

The uprising showed the beginning of nationalist consciousness in the Puerto Rican community in Chicago, and in Humboldt Park/West Town in particular. Today, with the Puerto Rican community threatened with displacement from yet another neighborhood by wealthy white professionals and their \$500,000 condos, the remembrance of the 40th anniversary of the uprising could not be timelier.

The Puerto Rican Cultural Center, under the leadership of its executive director, Jose Lopez, and other community organizations have led a drive to stop gentrification in Humboldt Park and to keep the community Puerto Rican.

The Puerto Rican community in Chicago has a history that stretches back more than 70 years. The first Puerto Rican migration to Chicago was in the 1930s and it was not from the Caribbean island but from New York City. Only a small number of people joined this migration. The first large wave of migration to Chicago came in the late 1940s.

Starting in 1946, many were recruited by Castle Barton Associates to be low-wage, non-union foundry workers and domestic workers. As soon as the wage

earners were established in Chicago, many were joined by their spouses and families.

By the 1960s, the Puerto Rican community was centered in West Town and Humboldt Park on the Northwest Side and in Lincoln Park on the North Side. There were also many Puerto Ricans in Lawndale on the city's West Side. Gentrification in Lincoln Park in the late 1960s displaced that community, forcing people to move to the west.

The events of June 12 through 14, 1966, constituted the first major Puerto Rican urban rebellion. The uprising happened at precisely the point when the Chicago Police Department began taking "precautionary measures" to head off potential rebellions of the type that had already occurred in Harlem, Watts and Philadelphia by the Black masses.

The uprising began on June 12, the day after the very first Día de San Juan parade to be held downtown. A cop named Thomas Munyon chased 20-year-old Arcelis Cruz and a friend of his through an alley near Damen and Division streets. Munyon drew his weapon and fired, hitting Cruz in the leg. This was witnessed by a group of people at the corner, who attempted to come to Cruz's aid. When the rest of Munyon's squad showed up, they beat the crowd with their nightsticks and even let attack dogs loose on the people. This savage attack by the cops enraged the growing crowd, which began to fight back.

This uprising against police brutality lasted three days and three nights. White-owned businesses in the Puerto Rican community were targeted as symbols of racism and national oppression.

To read more about the rebellion, go to workers.org.

Larry Hales: Many people think of Oakland as synonymous with militancy because of its history. Would that be fair to say, and what's Oakland like now?

Boots Riley: There are many contradictions in Oakland, like other cities. It's not synonymous with militancy, people are struggling to get by, that's why there needs to be a new struggle for basic needs. We need to fight for reforms as part of the revolutionary struggle, but bring a class analysis. Right now, in Oakland, there are no militant organizations at the forefront, like the rest of the country. In the 1930s and 1940s the basic needs were part of the struggle and the Communist Party was one of the organizations out in front. The CP did change, though, especially in the 1950s and 1960s when red-baiting was at its height.

LH: What part do you believe culture plays in revolution?

BR: Culture is expression, how we communicate and get across ideas. It fills the soil and gets people ready.

LH: Before the rebellions in L.A. in 1992, hip hop was at a different point, and its tone and militancy seemed to mirror the righteous anger in the Black community, especially among youth, and especially in South Central Los Angeles, with songs like "Fuck the Police." Do you think if hip hop was at a different point, the response after the criminal neglect in the wake of

Hurricane Katrina would have been different from youth in the Black communities not in the area?

BR: If artists were really representing where they are from, then the response would have been different, perhaps. A lot of artists from the South do talk about the reality of life in the area. You have to if you come from there, because it's what you know. Artists have to be relevant, though. It's not necessarily about being more militant but about being observant and really reporting conditions. But it's really the record companies. Artists are just trying to make a living, but the record labels control the release of the material. Artists want to make a living and the industry controls by determining what's popular. A lot of people point to other areas where there was a movement that dictated culture, but there is a lack of a defined movement. When there is a strong movement, culture will follow and the struggle will be emboldened.

LH: I know you're tired, so I don't want to keep you long.

BR: Yeah, and I'm losing my voice.

LH: I have two final questions. Were you inspired by the recent immigrant rights demonstrations? And what artists do you think epitomize certain eras of the struggle?

BR: A lot of people were surprised by the immigrant rights demonstrations and inspired. I think Paul Robeson, Gil Scott-Heron, Public Enemy and Bob Dylan epitomize certain eras.

For more information about *The Coup*, go to thecoupmusic.net.

BOSTON

Communities win HIV emergency aid

By Workers World Boston bureau

It has taken a struggle to obtain every penny of resources to fight HIV/AIDS. As always, those most affected lead the way.

So it was that a grassroots struggle waged by Boston's Healing Our Land organization claimed a victory on June 29 when the Boston City Council allocated a new \$100,000 line item for HIV/AIDS in the city's budget to serve Boston's communities of color. This followed a declaration of a state of emergency over a year ago. (Workers World, March 30, 2005)

The campaign for this resolution was led by community activist Rev. Franklyn Hobbs of Healing Our Land, with support from many Black churches, especially the Greater Love Tabernacle Church. Additional support came from the Boston AIDS Consortium, Multicultural AIDS Coalition, Veterans' Benefit Clearinghouse, Project U-Turn and the International Action Center.

Boston joined Baltimore, New York, Houston, Alameda County in California and Alabama as one of the few areas to declare such a state of emergency.

"This is a rallying call for us to come together and to work together in a coalition to have greater collective impact,"

said Rev. Hobbs.

Mia Campbell of the Women's Fightback Network spoke for many at the press conference: "We are 25 years into this epidemic. Our people are dying day by day. We have yet to identify. I sat on the President's National Advisory Committee on AIDS and we know what needs to be done but politics stops it from being done. I want to see this go beyond declaring a state of emergency on paper. The NAACP a few years ago said the 'house is on fire.' What are you going to do, stay there and watch the house burn? Hopefully my daughter won't be coming up here 25 years from now and we are still declaring a state of emergency."

Gerry Scoppettuolo spoke for the International Action Center and the Stonewall Warriors/IAC: "The government is spending \$440 billion on the Iraq/Afghanistan wars and we don't have enough money in Massachusetts to buy \$18 HIV rapid-test kits. We could be finding dozens of new cases every day on Dudley Street. The disproportionate impact of HIV on people of color has been caused by the historic disproportionate targeting of resources." □

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Stonewall 1969: Fighting in the streets

By Leslie Feinberg

Stonewall participant Martin Boyce recalled, "All of a sudden the whole street now had had it, and windows started cracking and people attacked cars and moved cars back and forth, but let the straight people out, who were in terror, really, but nobody hurt them, ever. It's amazing how controlled the rage was, even though it was so hard."

The police trapped inside the Stonewall Inn couldn't call for backup. Top cop Seymour Pine, who led the raid on the Stonewall, later said: "Every time we tried to use the [police portable] radio to call for assistance, a message came back, 'Disregard that call.' Somebody else apparently had our frequency in the crowd, and so we couldn't get a message through. The phone lines apparently were cut, because we couldn't use the phone."

Bob Kohler saw people carefully pouring liquid, apparently gasoline, into empty soda pop bottles.

Pine later described how anxious he and the other cops were as these homemade firebombs started landing in the bar. "There were bottles that came in exploded with some kind of flame, and we were able to put those out with the fire hose that we had. We were very worried because we didn't know how long we could put these Molotov cocktails out, because they were gasoline and all we had was water. They didn't have the kind of fire extinguishers that would put out a fuel fire." (David Carter, "Stonewall")

The fire extinguisher quickly emptied. "Liberate the bar!" the crowd roared as youth battered open the barricaded door to the Stonewall Inn with an uprooted parking meter.

Edmund White wrote: "The door is broken down, and the kids, as though working to a prior plan, systematically dump refuse from waste cans onto the wall, squirt it with lighter fluid, and ignite it. Huge flashes of flame and billows of smoke."

Morty Manford witnessed: "People took a garbage can, one of those wire mesh cans, and set it on fire and threw the burning garbage into the premises. The area that was set afire is where the coat room

was. That night the closet was set on fire both symbolically and literally."

Cop Pine said: "We're inside and the fires are coming in and we're putting them out—all the time we're dodging the bricks that they were throwing in—and then they crashed with this parking meter." Pine actually said he debated shooting at people in the crowd, but wasn't sure it would stop them.

When a hand came through the splintered plywood that was covering one of the windows and sprayed lighter fluid and ignited it with a match, Pine later said, he aimed his gun and was ready to shoot.

At that moment, however, fire truck sirens screamed down Christopher Street. Police cars from more than one precinct began screeching up from all directions.

Crowd wouldn't disperse

Dave Van Ronk, who had been taken as a hostage-prisoner by police holed up in the Stonewall, explained that as cops took him outside in handcuffs, "From what I saw, that mob was not cowed. It would have taken something to get them to disperse. They were loaded for bear."

Pine said: "Fights erupted with the transvestites who wouldn't go into the patrol wagon. Some [transgenders] who hadn't even been in the Stonewall came over and started a fight with our guys."

Eyewitness Marle Becker concurred. "All I could see about who was fighting was that it was the transvestites and they were fighting furiously."

Two bus loads of Tactical Patrol Force riot squads, trained to brutally break up anti-Vietnam War protests, arrived on the scene.

Participant John O'Brien observed that "when they tried to clear the streets is when people resented it, 'cause it came down to: 'Whose streets are these? They are our streets.'" He described an additional layer of resistance: Many people—gay and nongay—pretended that they just couldn't move out of the way of police because it was too crowded. "A lot of them knew that they were interfering with the cops," he said.

Efforts to block the narrow, one-way street to impede police included overturning a car in front of the Stonewall.

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.

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Based on eyewitness accounts that night, historian Martin Duberman summarized the TPF assault. "Wearing helmets with visors, carrying assorted weapons, including billy clubs and tear gas, its two dozen members all seemed massively proportioned. They were a formidable sight as, linked arm in arm, they came up Christopher Street in a wedge formation that resembled (by design) a Roman legion. In their path, the rioters slowly retreated, but—contrary to police expectations—did not break and run." ("Stonewall")

The crowd slowly backed up to avoid being clubbed, and then suddenly dissolved as individuals raced around the block, regrouped behind the TPF squad and threw debris at the troopers. Again and again the TPF broke up the crowd only to find people defiantly appearing behind them, taunting them and hurling bricks and bottles. The angry crowd set fire to trash cans and broke windows.

Bob Kohler recalled that the street youths "were constantly getting over on the TPF. The TPF would chase somebody this way, then the kids would start something behind them so that attention would be taken, and then the TPF would come [the other] way, and then more kids would start something behind them. So the TPF were constantly off guard. It was keeping them on the run constantly."

Others, who did not directly take part in the fighting, kept pace alongside the action. Tommy Lanigan-Schmidt explained: "I myself was more part of like a mob that was waving in and out like the ocean. I was part of a mob that had a kind of deep identity and was acting as one force."

The police took a terrible toll on anyone they could get their hands on—particularly those who were male-bodied and feminine. Many were badly bashed and bloodied. One person required 10 stitches in the knee after being clubbed. Another teen-

ager lost two fingers. Four cops reportedly beat up a young trans person until she bled from her ears, nose and mouth. Sylvia Rivera, though not injured, said she had so much of other people's blood splashed on her during the fray that she later went to the piers to change into fresh clothing.

Yet the crowd still resisted, any way they could, even faced with such organized police violence.

When the TPF grabbed and began severely beating up one youth, described as a feminine male, angry members of the crowd rushed forward and rescued the person.

Someone smashed a concrete block on a parked police car—with cops inside of it. Another person hit a member of the police brass sitting inside his vehicle with a bag of soggy garbage.

As two cops chased about 100 people down Waverly Place, the crowd suddenly realized they outnumbered the police 50 to one—and lit off after the two officers, who panicked and fled.

That night, police arrested and booked 13 people, seven of them workers from the Stonewall Inn. They faced charges ranging from harassment to resisting arrest to disorderly conduct.

Near dawn, the streets seemed quiet. Kohler remembered: "We were sitting across the street [from the Stonewall] at the park, and you would see smoldering [garbage] baskets and the street was broken glass. The Stonewall window was smashed, and there were cops all standing around like storm troopers. You'd look a block away and you could see trash cans still smoldering."

It wasn't just the trash cans that were still smoldering. The rebellion was not over. Not by a long shot.

Next: 'Liberate Christopher Street!'

Email: lfeinberg@workers.org

THE DIRT SHE ATE

Selected & New Poems by Minnie Bruce Pratt

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drag king dreams

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JAMES CONNOLLY:

Irish socialist and liberation fighter

This is the second part of a talk by Bryan G. Pfeifer, a contributing editor of Workers World, to the May 13-14 WWP conference on Preparing for the Rebirth of the Global Struggle for Socialism, held in New York. It has been edited for publication.

James Connolly was an ardent anti-imperialist and thoroughgoing internationalist. Connolly opposed the Boer War waged by the British in Southern Africa in the late 1890s and all imperialist wars, invasions and colonialism in any form.

In 1909 he wrote in *The Harp*, Connolly's Irish newspaper in the U.S., "The universe is about tired of this British Empire and I, for one, hope that the natives of India will, ere long, drive it from their shores into the sea."

From the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, Connolly, as acting general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union and of the Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP), led anti-conscription campaigns mobilizing poor workers, farmers and peasants in Ireland to fight against the British Empire on their own soil instead of joining the British imperialist army.

Connolly came to the same position as V.I. Lenin: turn the imperialist war into a civil war. Armed with this ideology, Connolly, his union and the ISRP mobilized Irish workers, farmers and peasants to take advantage of Britain's overreach and inter-imperialist rivalries during the war. He advocated that the working class and its allies should train their weapons—and use them if necessary—on their real enemy, the British colonialists, and any others including Irish capitalists intent on exploiting and crushing the Irish masses' quest for a workers' republic.

Connolly simultaneously advocated revolutionary defeatism for the workers in Britain and other oppressor nations such as the U.S., France and Germany. Connolly's position was that the British workers shouldn't kill fellow workers to further enrich their own ruling class. They should instead use every means available to defeat their own ruling class in solidarity with the anti-colonial struggles in the oppressed nations while respecting the self-determination of oppressed nationalities.

Here Connolly was reflecting and carrying on the long-standing tradition of the Irish masses' internationalism and their historic role as one of the largest oppressed people's diasporas, with a deep-rooted hatred for colonialism in any form.

Many examples of this abound, but notable were the émigrés in the 1800s from Ireland who were conscripted into the U.S. Army. Many joined the St. Patrick's Brigade, dropped their U.S. uniforms and joined Mexicans fighting against the U.S. These actions resonate today. Irish and Mexican immigrants could be seen hoisting each other's homeland flags in the glorious upsurge of the immigrant rights struggle.

In the current period, one of numerous examples is the U.S. accusing and arresting Irish revolutionaries for allegedly militarily supporting the FARC in Colombia.

1916: 'The Rising'

Connolly and his comrades steadfastly refused to allow the Rising to become a battle for political freedom alone. The Easter Proclamation from the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic—the Poblacht na hÉireann—to the people of Ireland clearly stated the fight was for both political and economic freedom: an Irish

Workers' Republic.

The Rising failed for three major reasons.

First, there was no Leninist-type party. Second, a large segment of British workers and their leaders failed to engage in revolutionary defeatism. In other words, they failed to grasp that the Rising was in their best interests and that their British capitalist, imperialist bosses were the same ones subjugating the Irish masses.

But, most importantly, the delay and equivocation on the part of Irish Volunteer leader and president Eoin MacNeill dealt a severe blow to the Rising. Because Connolly and other revolutionaries were aware of his anti-labor orientation, his opposition to staging the rising during the war, and his middle-class origins, MacNeill was not initially informed that the Rising was to take place on Easter Sunday.

Nonetheless, MacNeill learned of the original Rising date and published notices in newspapers and sent messengers throughout Ireland rescinding the order for Volunteers to participate in the Rising. This sowed much confusion between the mostly nationalist-oriented Volunteers and the Citizen Army. But since the Citizen Army's position was to not hold back under any circumstances, they set out on Monday to establish an Irish Workers' Republic. The precious day's delay allowed the British and Irish capitalists to learn of the Rising, regroup and defeat it.

Lessons of the Rising include mobilizing workers for armed liberation. The Citizen Army was formed for self-defense in response to the bosses and their goons' violence against workers and allies during the 1913 Transport and General Workers strike. The bosses eventually locked out the workers, almost starving them and their loved ones. Only a strategic retreat organized and led by Connolly and James

Larkin saved the union. During these battles the workers' learned many lessons for 1916 and beyond.

Connolly's tireless efforts to overcome sectarianism and other divisions created and encouraged by British and Irish capitalists to keep wages low and working conditions horrendous proved fruitful. By the time of the Rising, many workers and their allies had already realized their common working class interests. They regarded religion as a private matter, but one that had been used by their class enemies to divide them.

The participation of women in the Rising was most starkly represented in the Easter Proclamation declaring equal rights for all, men and women. Some historians of the Rising claim that of about 1,600 participating in the Rising, over 200 were women, many armed and holding key military posts.

Connolly throughout his life was well known for supporting feminism and for his stellar actions in regard to the woman question. In this he has been hailed by many Irish Republican women, including Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Mairead Farrell and Constance Markievicz, with whom he fought side by side in 1916. When some men involved in the Rising stated they wouldn't fight with women, Connolly replied that the struggle would go forward with the women, then.

In his pamphlet, "The Re-Conquest of Ireland," first published in 1915, Connolly wrote in the chapter, "Woman," "The worker is the slave of capitalist society. The woman worker is a slave of that slave."

Added Connolly, "In its march towards freedom, the working class of Ireland must cheer on the efforts of those women, who, feeling on their souls and bodies the fetters of the ages, have arisen to strike them off. Whosoever carries the outworks of the citadel of oppression, the working

class alone can raze it to the ground."

Connolly's legacy: The unfinished revolution(s)

Ireland today, like many countries, is still oppressed by imperialism, even though the latest form of the Republican armed struggle brought Britain to its knees. This imperialist country is now playing a junior partner role to U.S. imperialism in Ireland, although this is fluid.

U.S.-based corporations control the vast majority of finance capital in Ireland. These transnational corporations rely on a high-tech, highly educated and relatively low-cost work force. Furthermore, by being in Ireland, U.S. corporations—with the U.S. repressive state apparatus as a partner—can move commodities into the European Union more easily.

The Pentagon uses airbases in Ireland, particularly Shannon airport, for stopovers en route to Iraq and also, some claim, for extraordinary renditions. The U.S. fully pays for British troops and weapons in the occupied six counties under the guise of NATO. This is similar to the U.S. funding Israel to subjugate the Palestinians.

Alexander Haig, former U.S. secretary of state and ex officio commander of the NATO forces from 1974 to 1979, was careful to remind the imperialists periodically that if Ireland became socialist, it would be the Cuba of Europe, particularly because of its key nearby trade routes and geopolitical position.

As Connolly declared in his time, the main obstacle in the path of an Irish socialist republic is British and U.S. imperialism.

The Irish masses in Ireland and in other imperialist-controlled countries internationally are waiting for more upsurges like the anti-war movement, the multinational immigrant rights upsurge, the civil rights movement around Katrina/Rita, the LGBT movement and labor upsurges like UNITE HERE's Hotel Workers Rising struggle in the U.S.

The Irish masses, the Iraqis and all colonized peoples need a boost of unity and solidarity, particularly from the working class in the U.S.

Permanent socialist revolution internationally, particularly in the U.S., is still the goal of revolutionaries in the Connolly tradition today and must be won for the sake of all humanity, specifically the working class and oppressed.

As Connolly wrote in his pamphlet "Socialism and Nationalism," "Let us ... organize for a full, free and happy life for all or for none."

Ed Childs, Jan Cannavan and Catherine Donaghy contributed to this report.

Reference works for this series include: "Ireland and the Irish Question: A Collection of writings by Karl Marx & Frederick Engels"; "Irish Republican Women in America: Lecture Tours, 1916-1925" by Joanne Mooney Eichacker; "James Connolly: A Full Life" by Donal Nevin; "James Connolly and the United States: The Road to the 1916 Irish Rebellion" by Carl and Ann Barton Reeve; "James Larkin: Lion of the Fold," ed. Donal Nevin; "No Ordinary Women: Irish Female Activists in the Revolutionary Years 1900-1923" by Sinead McCool; "Portrait of a Rebel Father" by Nora Connolly O'Brien; "Prison Writings" by Bobby Sands; "Socialism Made Easy," "Socialism and Nationalism" and "Labor in Irish History" by James Connolly; "The Life and Times of James Connolly" by Desmond C. Greaves and www.marxists.org.

PART 2

Forum hails Irish freedom struggle



WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

A forum on Irish revolutionary history entitled "The 1916 Rebellion, James Connolly and the 1981 Hunger Strikers" drew a full house of multinational participants to the Boston Workers World Party office on June 24.

A moving documentary video depicted the barbaric British military occupation in Ireland's occupied six northern counties and the mass resistance in many forms. The video also shows unity and solidarity actions between the Irish national liberation movement and others, particularly various Native tribes during the U.S. siege of Wounded Knee in the 1970s.

Speakers emphasized the Irish masses' resistance to English colonialism since the 12th century, James Connolly's legacy and role in history, Irish Republican women and the movement for socialism there. The relationships of Black people living in the United States to both Irish Americans and the Irish masses in the occupied six counties sparked a discussion about self-determination and the national question. There was also discussion about the ongoing immigrant rights struggle and the U.S. war on Iraq.

Featured speakers shown here are, seated, traditional Irish artist Padraig Dolan, Bryan G. Pfeifer of WWP, Clemencia Lee of the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee and Maureen Skehan of WWP; standing, Catherine Donaghy of the Western Mass International Action Center/Troops Out Now coalition, longtime Irish Republican Movement activist Jan Cannavan and Ed Childs of WWP.

—Workers World Boston bureau

'Democratic' Israel tries to wipe out elected Palestinians

By Deirdre Griswold

Every self-righteous excuse for the U.S. bankrolling of Israel's endless aggressions against the Arab and Muslim people was shredded this week—and not for the first time.

Think of the claim that Israel represents the only true "democracy" in the Middle East. Yet here were Israeli tanks and planes attacking the Palestinian Authority in Gaza, sending missiles into the office of the prime minister (fortunately, he wasn't there) and arresting most of the top government officials.

Yes, elected officials. The Palestinian people went to the polls in January and chose the party they wanted to represent them. Nobody disputed the results of the election, which Hamas won. Wasn't that a triumph for democracy? Especially since the people voted for the party that promised to fight hardest to defend their national identity and regain the lands that Israel took from them. That was a difficult thing to do, since they knew Israel, with the U.S. behind it, would find a way to strike back.

And it has. Its tanks swept into Gaza on June 28. Its fighter planes have been pounding away at power plants, the water supply and other essential elements of the infrastructure, leading to a major humanitarian crisis. Some 750,000 people in Gaza now have no electricity and no running water—during the hottest part of the year. It is a wonder that they survive.

One thing is sure. After such a horrendous experience, they will hate not only Israel but the U.S. for the rest of their lives.

Israel's commandos have gone after the very people the Palestinians elected to rep-

resent them. To be precise, they have kidnapped 64 Palestinian governmental ministers and politicians since Israel began its assault on Gaza. Israeli planes also bombed the home of Palestinian Prime Minister Ismael Haniyeh.

All this is supposed to be in retaliation for the capture of one Israeli soldier. But in the weeks before that happened, the Israeli military had killed more than 30 Palestinian civilians, including three children and a pregnant woman.

There is speculation that Israel was trying to provoke a response in order to derail an agreement just concluded between the two major Palestinian parties, Hamas and Fatah, that could move forward negotiations for a peace settlement with Israel. Certainly, the Israeli people want peace, too—but their government is doing everything it can to keep such a thing from happening.

Even inside Israel, the government's assault is being heavily criticized. Commentator Gideon Levy of the newspaper Ha'aretz wrote, "A state that takes such steps is no longer distinguishable from a terror organization."

Who really keeps this horrible war and occupation going? The answer is not just Tel Aviv but the U.S. government, which has built Israel into a military fortress to protect imperialist interests in the Middle East, especially the overweening lust of U.S. big business for the fabulous profits to be made from oil.

The U.S. government spends \$3 billion a year on this small country—which comes to more than \$8.5 million each day. Of course, that money comes from U.S. taxpayers. On the other hand, the profits from selling military equipment and oil prod-



New York protest June 30 hits Israel's assault on Gaza.

WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

ucts don't go to the U.S. people—they go to the big corporations that find ways to pay practically nothing in taxes. So war or peace, it's a win-win situation for the super-rich.

Instead of rescuing Jewish people from Nazi-occupied Europe during the Holocaust, Washington's Machiavellian policy was to instead wait until after the war and then throw them into Palestine, where they were told by the Zionist political movement that no one lived there anyway. The growth of this racist, settler state, which fought several wars with neighboring countries to expand its territory and treats the indigenous Palestinians as less than human, has only inflamed the whole area.

Throughout the Middle East, where for centuries Jews and Muslims lived amicably side by side, there is now the deepest

animosity because of Israel's aggressions.

What the U.S. government is doing to the Palestinians is not only cynical, vicious and reprehensible, but it is illegal, too. Under the U.S. Arms Export Control Act of 1976, military hardware sold by the United States can only be used for defensive purposes or to maintain internal security. Nevertheless, Israel has used U.S.-supplied F-16 fighter jets, "Apache" and Cobra attack helicopters, 15mm howitzers, M-16 automatic rifles, M50 machine guns and many other weapons and ammunition to attack Palestinian towns and cities.

There is growing sentiment inside the U.S., expressed especially in progressive youth culture, to support the Palestinian cause and stop the bankrolling of Israel. It's an issue that should be taken up in every union, every community organization, every school. □

EAST TIMOR

Forced resignation of premier sparks protest

By John Catalinotto

Some 2,000 Australian "peacekeeping" troops—who are looking more like occupation troops every day—made a tacit alliance with opponents of the majority Fretilin government in East Timor to force Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri to resign on June 26.

Alkatiri only agreed to resign when faced with the threatened resignation of President Xanana Gusmao, and to prevent further violence in East Timor. He described the events in East Timor during the last few months as "a coup."

After Alkatiri resigned, anti-Fretilin elements reopened violent attacks in the capital city, Dili. The right-wing Australian media, including the Murdoch newspapers and ABC-TV, made unsubstantiated charges that Alkatiri had armed paramilitary groups.

Although they had to get through lines of Australians and other troops, at least 4,000 Fretilin supporters courageously demonstrated support for the embattled leader and their party.

As a parliament member, Alkatiri is legally immune from prosecution. He has refused to appear to answer charges about arming groups, which he publicly denies.

Fretilin is the leading party in East Timor, and the only one with a mass popular base. It led the struggles for independence—first from Portuguese colonialism and then from Indonesia, which

invaded East Timor in 1975 with the approval of President Gerald Ford's administration in the United States.

During Indonesia's brutal occupation of the small country, which lasted until 1999, approximately one-third of the population—some 200,000 people—were killed.

Fretilin won 55 of the 88 seats in Parliament in the most recent election and became the leading party in the government.

Commenting on its leader's resignation, a June 26 Fretilin news release said, "We did not expect that the elected leader of a party with an overwhelming mandate could be forced to stand down in this way in a democracy."

Of the leading Timorese political figures, Gusmao is respected as an independence leader who was jailed during the Indonesian occupation, but he is not with Fretilin. Foreign Minister Jose Ramos-Horta is a former Fretilin member who today is the Timorese political figure closest to the United States. This Nobel Peace Prize winner even wrote an article defending the U.S. intervention in Iraq, saying that "Iraq is experiencing real freedom for the first time in its history." ("Sometimes, a War Saves People," Wall Street Journal, Oct. 13, 2004)

Alkatiri, who is a leader of Fretilin, is often called an "economic nationalist," meaning he represents those struggling for both political and economic sovereignty for the Timorese. His negotiations

improved the share the Timorese were to get from expected oil revenues, and he also negotiated arrangements with Cuba to send 600 Timorese to that island to be trained as doctors. For these actions he has become a target of vicious attacks in the Australian big-business media.

Instead of rounding up the rebellious soldiers and gangs who were burning homes in Dili and turning the Timorese into refugees in their own country, the Australian forces held meetings with the leader of the rebellion, a Maj. Alfredo Alves Reinado. This officer had received training in Canberra, Australia, just a few months earlier.

The government in Washington, D.C., also considers Alkatiri an enemy. Lora Horta reported in the Asian Times on May 27: "The United States' discontent with Alkatiri was clearly on display when the U.S. ambassador openly supported the Catholic Church against his government during street protests last year, with the senior U.S. official even briefly attending one of the protests in person. Political insiders now wonder about the United States' connections to rebel leader Reinado, whose wife works for the U.S. Embassy and helps to oversee the Peace Corps program."

Behind the conflict in East Timor is an attempt by the Australian government and ruling class to get the lion's share of an expected tens of billions of dollars worth of oil out of the off-shore area known as

the Timor Gap. Most of the oil is in Timorese waters between the small country and Australia. The Australian government, which is closely aligned with U.S. imperialism and has sent troops to Iraq and Afghanistan, has obviously targeted the more independent elements in the Timorese government, like Alkatiri.

After a violent outburst by elements expelled from the East Timor army in the spring, President Gusmao invited security forces from Australia, Portugal, Malaysia and New Zealand to enter East Timor. Australia was there within days, and there are now approximately 2,700 foreign military and police forces in East Timor, mostly under Australian command.

In the South Pacific region, Australia also has occupation troops in the Solomon Islands and in Papua New Guinea. They defend the interests of the big transnational monopolies, including those based in the United States, that extract raw materials. French and U.S. imperialism, both of which occupy islands in the region and exploit their natural resources, have given diplomatic support to the Australian intervention in East Timor.

The imperialist powers, with the United States as their center, are united in their attempt to eliminate the economic sovereignty of the rest of the world and to return these nations to a colonial status. The Fretilin forces in East Timor are attempting to resist this imperial rule.

Email: jcat@workers.org



Who is the aggressor?

What aggressive, militarist regime recently held war maneuvers in the Pacific and tested intercontinental missiles that could carry nuclear warheads for 4,800 miles?

The wrong answer to this question is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The right answer is the United States.

On June 14, the U.S. Air Force held what it called "a quality control test" for its fleet of 500 Minuteman III missiles. One missile traveled 4,800 miles towards the central Pacific, and three test warheads landed near the Marshall Islands. According to the Air Force, that was where they were supposed to land. The Pentagon is supposed to have almost 10,000 nuclear warheads available.

At the same time, three U.S. Navy carrier battle groups—including three aircraft carriers, 22,000 troops, dozens of fighter planes and several heavy bombers—were assembled in the western Pacific off Guam for the first time since the Vietnam War. They were supposedly engaged in long-planned exercises with ships of other nations, but their presence can only be seen as a threat to Asian countries. Right off the coast of North Korea are the USS Curtis Wilbur and the USS Fitzgerald, both guided-missile destroyers. That's destroyers, not love boats. The U.S. also sent spy planes on 170 missions over North Korea.

Remember that President George W. Bush named the DPRK, along with Iraq and Iran, as one of the "axis of evil." Remember too that since 1999 the U.S. has bombed and occupied Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq, invading the last two countries. North Korean troops haven't left home.

The DRPK government has many times tried to get the U.S. to end the state of war that still exists since the 1950 U.S. invasion and the 1950-53 Korean War and to sign a peace treaty that would normalize relations between the two countries. The U.S. always refuses.

Considering the U.S. missile test, the military maneuvers, recent U.S. history and the constant stream of threats against the DPRK from both the Republican administration and the Democratic Party leaders, it is quite clear that the Pyongyang government faces a serious threat from the most belligerent and heavily armed military in the world.

The DPRK's tests on July 4 and 5 of its rockets were completely within that country's rights as a sovereign state. It is perfectly understandable for the government in Pyongyang to take whatever measures it can to convince the rogue U.S. leaders that if it is attacked or invaded, then the aggressor too will face retaliation. This much maligned and attacked country deserves the support of anti-war forces around the world. □

An amazing feat

Engineers the world over agree that the new Tibet-China railroad that opened July 1, carrying 2,569 passengers in its first three days of operation, is the most impressive engineering feat of its kind in the world. It is the world's highest railway, as well as the longest plateau railroad.

One of its stations, at 16,640 feet above sea level, sits higher than the peak of Western Europe's tallest mountain, Mont Blanc. In addition, the People's Daily reports, "About 550 kilometers [342 miles] of the tracks run on frozen earth, the longest in any of the world's plateau railroads."

The Chinese government had to overcome all kinds of engineering difficulties to ensure the safety of the railroad. Train cars had to be pressurized and equipped with artificial oxygen, as is done on planes, so that passengers could breathe comfortably at the high altitudes. "Engineers designed bridges to span the most treacherous area of permafrost and sank naturally cooled piping into the ground to keep the track bed frozen year-round, reducing instability." (New York Times, July 2)

The government set aside \$240 million on the project for environmental protection. The train cars emit zero waste—a first in China. To compensate for land lost to bridges and to a station in the Gulu Wetlands—a preserve for black-necked cranes and yellow ducks—it created 20 acres of new wetlands around the perimeter of the original preserve. (New York Times, Sept. 9, 2005)

Described in this Times article written last September as a "prominent environmentalist," Yang Xin of Qinghai Province lauded the care taken by the government: "We proposed detailed measures on pro-

tecting migrating Tibetan antelopes in the morning, and to our surprise we got the government's answer back that very afternoon, less than three hours later. This reflects the government's attitude toward this issue."

China also celebrated, this spring, the formal completion of the Three Gorges Dam—the largest hydroelectric dam in the world.

These engineering feats show the tremendous development of China in just half a century—from a country of mass famines to one with a modern scientific-technological establishment. None of it would have been possible without the communist-led revolution that overthrew the rule of feudal landlords and capitalist collaborators with imperialism.

Millions used to die in China every year from famines and floods. Now China is forging ahead, and the building of this railroad is just one of the more spectacular elements in its efforts to develop the western part of the country, which has lagged behind the coastal areas in terms of development.

The reactions of the imperialist media to this stunning achievement for a developing country of 1.3 billion people range from grudging respect to saying virtually nothing to attacking the whole project as meant to suppress and colonize the people of Tibet, although they offer no evidence of that whatsoever.

The same media that constantly regale us with tales of how the U.S. blossomed after new railroads opened the West are taking a dim view of China's careful and well-planned steps to build up the infrastructure of its underdeveloped areas. Fortunately, the imperialists don't call the shots in China any more. □

'An Inconvenient Truth'

Educates but doesn't challenge system

By G. Dunkel

Even though the air conditioner was broken on an early summer night in New York City, no one left the packed movie theater showing Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth." A number of customers thought the heat was deliberate, since the movie examines the climate crisis caused by global warming—and the way the United States uses energy is a major factor in producing global warming.

The movie has been a sleeper. None of the critics or Hollywood moguls thought a documentary presenting scientific evidence on a subject where there is some popular controversy would draw an audience. But "An Inconvenient Truth" has had the best per-screen draw of any current release. Now it is spreading beyond the art house, independent film market to a much broader distribution.

Gore and his director, Davis Guggenheim, do a good job presenting the facts in a visually compelling way and getting in data that just appeared in 2005. Guggenheim even manages to present Gore as a human being with feeling and a long interest in climate change, which is surprising given Gore's long history as a political wonk.

Most of the scientists interviewed in the media about the film have said it presents the evidence carefully and clearly, even if some of Gore's projections of future events are a bit stretched and some

of his conclusions about ice cores a bit overdrawn. Some of the business-oriented press like the Houston Chronicle and Wall Street Journal have tried attacking Gore's conclusions, but most of the press that reviewed the film accepted his conclusions.

Gore makes one telling point. In a review of some 900 articles on climate change appearing in peer-reviewed, scientific journals, not one denied that global warming is happening. But in a survey of 600 or so articles in the corporate-owned mass media on climate change, 53 percent challenged global warming.

Where Gore and the movie fall down is in presenting the struggle to reverse global warming as a moral one, a struggle to change personal and national moral choices. The role of the oil, coal, energy and transportation industries, and of the big capitalists who control and profit so grossly from them, passes unmentioned. Could the Gore family history with Occidental Petroleum have something to do with it?

Making all the green moral choices you can afford, and even agitating for more greenness in the larger society, at best is only going to moderate global warming—not reverse it.

"An Inconvenient Truth" is worth seeing, but its political conclusions are weak and obscure the need to struggle against this profit-driven, unplanned system.

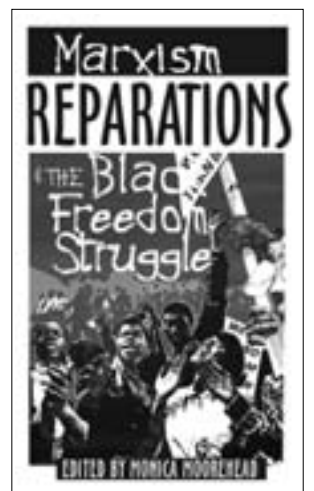
Email: gdunkel@workers.org

FILM REVIEW

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE

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- ◆ Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery *Sam Marcy*
- ◆ Reparations & Black Liberation *Monica Moorehead*
- ◆ Harriet Tubman: woman warrior *Mumia Abu-Jamal (Guest Commentary)*
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Mexico's poor vote with their feet

Continued from page 1

homeless poor, persecuted Indigenous, unemployed youth, and mothers with hungry children unite into one militant force that can break the chains of oppression once and for all? Who will lead them?

Only time will tell the answers to these questions.

But for now, the 2006 presidential election should be a reminder to the people of the United States that everything that happens in Mexico is inextricably tied to this country.

Not a single economic, political or social development occurs in Mexico without Washington not only paying close attention to it but also interfering in every way it can so that each outcome is to imperialism's benefit.

Over the years, U.S. economic and political institutions have made their way deep into Mexico. The U.S. sneezes and Mexico catches the cold.

Someone should remind CNN "journalist" Lou Dobbs of this. His demagogic, racist rhetoric on the immigration question—an issue intimately tied to U.S./Mexican relations—can be answered with one sole demand: U.S. imperialism should get the hell out of Mexico so that workers will not be forced to leave.

Mexican election, U.S. imperialism

Fundamental change is not won through elections. Struggle—where the masses are in motion and have heightened class consciousness—is what brings real change. The intervention of the workers and oppressed fighting on behalf of their own interests is decisive in making history. They are the real agents of change, as Marxists have always pointed out.

In the modern context, any phenomenon that takes place in the context of a relationship between an oppressed and oppressor nation is also all about that relationship, as Lenin explained so carefully when he updated Marx after the rise of imperialism and finance capital.

Mexican history is rife with U.S. intervention. Elections in Mexico take place under the heavy cloud of imperialist domination. So in Mexico, even this basic bourgeois parliamentary act is tainted by the smell of rotting imperialism and the threat of military intervention.

The 2006 elections are no different.

Revolutionaries around the world watched this election very closely. It was hoped that López Obrador would be a contender to be another representative of the anti-imperialist mood sweeping the Americas. In fact, his campaign theme was "Everything for the poor."

What a step forward for the revolutionary camp it would be to have right at the United States' front door an anti-imperialist leader, a president concerned about the welfare of the masses and not the welfare of the International Monetary Fund.

So of course the capitalist bourgeoisie also watched this election very closely.

From day one, the capitalist media in both Mexico and the United States went out of their way to demonize López Obrador. News account after news account referred to López Obrador as a dangerous "populist." They compared him to President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, and threatened that if he were elected it would bring further instability and even violence to Mexico.

Somehow the media forgot that in the elections of 1988, over 500 PRD members were killed—and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), at that time the ruling group, benefited from it.

One U.S. professor, a so-called expert on U.S.-Mexico relations, called López



Supporters of López Obrador at the Zocalo, Mexico City's main square, July 2.

Obrador not so much "fascistic" as "messianic." The U.S. ruling class was truly fearful, as López Obrador had already shown that he was concerned about the impoverished in his country.

As mayor of Mexico City—a significant position held by his left-wing party—López Obrador had carried out unprecedented social reforms.

Mayor López Obrador had launched a comprehensive health-care program based "on social rights and redistribution of resources," according to the American Journal of Public Health of December 2003. The journal further reported that a "universal pension for senior citizens and free medical services are financed by grants, eliminating routine government corruption and waste."

López Obrador promised he would push for more of the same if elected president. This is no small thing coming from a presidential candidate in a country that shares a 2,000-mile border with the imperial colossus of the North.

In addition, López Obrador is reportedly against the NAFTA trade agreement with the U.S. and Canada—which has forced so many Mexican workers and farmers to emigrate in recent years—and would want to renegotiate its terms if elected president. It would take political strength and will to accomplish that goal. Can he do that without engaging the masses in a big way?

For sure, the U.S. imperialists would find it impossible to reconcile themselves with another Chávez at their very front door.

Mexican electoral history

The 2006 presidential election must also be viewed in the context of Mexico's political history.

The U.S. media touted this year's election as a reflection of progress in Mexico's fledgling "democratic system." They were referring to the fact that elections in Mexico have historically been less than democratic, even within the context of capitalist democracy.

For over 70 years, until 2000, the PRI had attained and held the presidency through underhanded means. Selection of the next president was commonly understood to take place not via the ballot box but via the "dedazo" (heavy finger), with the outgoing PRI president pointing to the next PRI president.

For over 70 years, Mexico was governed by one-party pro-capitalist rule.

In 1988, however, that began to change. Mexico was rocked by a mass movement that supported the progressive candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas for president.

Cárdenas was popular for several reasons. For one, he was a leader of a faction that broke from the PRI in a historic defection, a major upset that led to the formation of the PRD.

Second, he was the son of Lázaro Cárdenas, a president during the 1930s who is well respected and loved in Mexico. Lázaro Cárdenas's policies included defending the poor as well as Mexico's sovereignty, and he expropriated Mexico's oil from foreign domination. The Mexican masses hoped that Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas would carry out similar policies.

On election day, news accounts reported huge numbers of Indigenous people voting for the very first time. Many walked hours and even days to reach a voting place.

But another Cárdenas presidency was not to be. Despite overwhelming evidence that he won the election, the vote was manipulated on behalf of the PRI.

The 1988 election is often referred to as the Great Election Fraud. The presidency was handed over to Carlos Salinas. Without a doubt, Washington played a role in throwing cold water on the mass sentiment for sweeping change.

In the next presidential election, in 1994, the PRI maintained its increasingly shaky hold on power. Then, in 2000, it was conveniently replaced by the more right-wing pro-business party, the PAN.

This upset is often mischaracterized as an example of democratization in Mexico. For example, in its reporting on the current election, the Los Angeles Times wrote on July 4 that "popular outrage over the [Cárdenas] vote, widely perceived as rigged, helped spur a peaceful movement that eventually toppled the ... PRI, in 2000, after decades of autocratic rule."

The toppling of the PRI was no real victory for the masses. In reality, the end of PRI dominance only meant that a more entrenched capitalist party would carry out the bidding of both Mexican and U.S. capitalists. A PAN victory was a mere bone thrown to the people who had poured out for Cárdenas earlier.

Capitalist relations and the exploitation of Mexican workers and the oppressed still stood firm.

Lessons of 1988

Without a doubt, the people of Mexico need change. Unemployment and underemployment are at high double digits. In some neighborhoods, for some communities, unemployment is over 50 percent.

Poverty is horrendous. Hunger and desperation are the order of the day.

Corruption and violence are rampant—though it's not that the people of Latin America are more corrupt or violent than their U.S. counterparts, but only that the situation is publicized more. Desperation is high, however, and many are forced to take part in the underground economy that is often violent, such as the lucrative drug trade the United States orchestrates.

López Obrador may be a candidate whose feet are in the camp of the poor.

Should he prevail and be the victor in this election, it could be good news for Cuba, which has experienced strained and dangerous relations as a result of current Mexican President Vicente Fox, formerly Coca-Cola's top executive there.

Last year, the Mexican establishment attempted to prevent López Obrador from running for president by trying to send him off to jail on ridiculous, trumped-up charges. The masses intervened. Over one and a half million Mexicans gathered at the famous Zocalo square in López Obrador's defense. The right wing was forced to back off and let him run.

But the institution controlling the election, the IFE (Federal Electoral Institute), is reported to be allied with the PRI, which came in a distant third, and could easily throw the election to the PAN.

Journalist and author John Ross wrote on June 3 that the president of the IFE, Luis Carlos Ugalde, is a figure of "ruling party interests." In other words, he's tied to the PAN. Ross reported that when Antonio Villaraigosa, the first Mexican mayor of Los Angeles since 1842, invited López Obrador to commemorate Sept. 16—Mexican Independence Day—in California, Ugalde barred López Obrador from traveling, claiming it would violate campaign laws.

On the other hand, Ugalde gave the PAN presidential campaign the go-ahead to canvas California for PAN votes.

What will happen if there is another fraud and the election is thrown to the PAN? What will López Obrador, the PRD and the left do? Will the mistakes of 1988 be repeated?

Can the Mexican masses be rallied to take the struggle out of the ballot box and into the streets in a mighty show of force throughout the country? Will López Obrador or others on the left call for the people to defend their democratic right to fair elections and take the struggle further—raising the dire social issues and denouncing U.S. imperialism, the root of all of Mexico's misery?

Or will they wait six more years for yet another election?

What role will the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) play in this coming period?

It should be noted that the EZLN, during the run-up to the election, carried out what they called "the other campaign." EZLN leaders traveled throughout the country engaging directly with the masses and speaking of the need for fundamental change. EZLN spokesperson Subcommander Marcos has made eloquent comments against capitalism and the need for the most oppressed and the workers to take part in the struggle.

In addition, the EZLN has clearly spoken in solidarity with revolutionary struggles sweeping Venezuela and Bolivia and has come out against the blockade of Cuba.

Whatever the outcome in Mexico at this juncture, the role of the movement in the United States is to show unconditional solidarity with the people of Mexico. It should extend solidarity to Mexican immigrants in the United States and demand full rights for all immigrants.

When imperialism stole one-half of Mexico and made California, Texas and other Southwestern states part of the United States, the history of the people of the United States was forever linked with that of the people of Mexico.

It is time to turn that robbery around into a full-blown anti-imperialist movement in complete solidarity with Mexico. It is time to open the borders so that the workers of both countries can declare: "It is profit-hungry corporations and imperialism that are illegal, not the workers." □

Volviéndose rico con la 'Seguridad de la Patria' (‘Homeland Security’)

Por Deirdre Griswold

No les tomó mucho tiempo. Muchos de los de la ganga que rápidamente tomaron puestos en la nueva agencia de “seguridad de la patria”, cuando la administración de Bush andaba tramando la invasión contra Irak, ahora se están volviendo ricos como ejecutivos y consultores para compañías que venden su pericia y dispositivos “antiterroristas” al gobierno.

“Por lo menos 90 oficiales del Departamento de Seguridad de la Patria (Department of Homeland Security, DHS) o del Despacho de la Casa Blanca para la Seguridad de la Patria –incluyendo al ex secretario del departamento, Tom Ridge; al ex subsecretario, el almirante James M. Loy; y al ex subsecretario, Asa Hutchinson– ahora son ejecutivos, consultores o cabilderos para compañías que colectivamente hacen miles de millones de dólares en contratos de seguridad nacional”, escribió Eric Lipton en una serie de dos partes intitulado “Seguridad de la Patria, SA” publicada en el New York Times a partir del 18 de junio.

“Más de dos terceras partes de los ejecutivos en los rangos más altos del departamento durante sus primeros años han pasado por la puerta giratoria”, dijo el primer artículo.

Y están recibiendo una generosa recompensa de las compañías que quieren su pericia y sus contactos. Carol A. DiBattiste incrementó su sueldo por un 600 por ciento cuando en apenas un mes, salió de su puesto como administradora asistente de la Administración de Seguridad del Transporte y tomó un puesto en la empresa Choice-Point, una compañía contratada por el Departamento de Seguridad de la Patria.

Ridge, el ex gobernador de Pennsylvania que firmó la orden de ejecución de Mumia Abu-Jamal fue elegido por Bush para ser el primer secretario del DHS. El año pasado, tres meses después de haber renunciado a ese puesto, Ridge se unió a la junta directiva de la empresa Savi Technology, “fabricante de equipos para la identificación por frecuencias radiales que el departamento promocionó mientras él era secretario”. Ahora Lockheed Martin, un enorme contratista militar,

está en el proceso de comprar a Savi Technology. Se espera que Ridge gane enormes sumas por la venta de las opciones de acciones que adquirió antes de la venta de la empresa, dice el Times.

Hutchinson comenzó a trabajar en Venable LLP, “una firma de abogados y cabilderos basada en Washington que representa a importantes contratistas de seguridad nacional como Lockheed Martin”, un día después de haber dejado su posición como subsecretario para asuntos fronterizos y del transporte. Ahora tiene sus manos en compañías que producen o venden: software para la extracción de datos, tecnología para la identificación de huellas digitales y drogas contra la radiación.

Los artículos proporcionan muchos ejemplos más de ex oficiales que han saltado de sus puestos en la “seguridad nacional” hacia puestos lucrativos en industrias que les habían cabildeado.

¿Por qué no están encarcelados estos ex oficiales? La ley federal prohíbe a ex oficiales de la rama ejecutiva el negociar puestos futuros con compañías que ellos supervisan. También prohíbe que cabil-

deen a ex colegas o subordinados en el gobierno por lo menos durante un año después de salir del puesto gubernamental. Pero, dice el artículo, “por medio de lagunas en la ley, incluso una escrita por ejecutivos en el departamento para facilitar su entrada en el mundo empresarial, frecuentemente es muy fácil para los ex oficiales hacen precisamente eso”.

La puerta giratoria entre oficiales de Washington y ejecutivos de corporaciones o cabilderos no es nada nuevo. Así es como funcionan todos los gobiernos capitalistas. Pero el descaro de aquellos que llevaron la cubierta de “seguridad nacional” tiene pocos paralelos en la historia moderna, dice el Times.

Para aquell@s que se preocupen porque espías del gobierno puedan estar inspeccionando su cuenta bancaria, interceptando sus líneas telefónicas, o leyendo su correspondencia electrónica, deben acordarse de esto: la represión del estado está guiada no sólo por el temor de “terroristas” sino por el motivo más poderoso entre todos en el sistema capitalista – la codicia corporativa. □

DETROIT

Embajador venezolano explica la 'ofensiva contra la pobreza'

Por Cheryl LaBash
Detroit

Una entusiasta ovación recibió al embajador venezolano Bernardo Álvarez a la recepción ofrecida por la comunidad de Detroit el 14 de junio. El evento llamado “Para Conocer y Saludar” fue organizado por la Organización para los Derechos de los Recipientes de Bienestar Público de Michigan (Michigan Welfare Rights Organization) y apoyado por el Intercambio de Sindicalistas Estados Unidos/Cuba, la Coalición para la Justicia para Cuba, Latinos Unidos, el Centro de Acción Internacional, Call ‘em Out, y otros grupos.

El recibimiento de la comunidad ocurrió al final de una visita a Michigan del embajador y de representantes del Consulado Venezolano en Chicago que fue facilitada por el Representante Estatal de Michigan, LaMar Lemmons III.

El Embajador Álvarez explicó cómo el programa de calefacción de la vivienda que ayudó a 200.000 personas en nueve estados de los Estados Unidos el invierno pasado fue el resultado de las necesidades evidentes después del desastre del huracán Katrina. Venezuela Bolivariana inmediatamente organizó ayudas, incluyendo la apertura de la refinería de petróleo de CITGO en Lake Charles para ser usada como refugio de emergencia, fondos para

pagar viviendas para refugiad@s en Houston y hasta trajo autobuses desde Miami para trasladar a las víctimas del huracán a lugares seguros. Pero el Presidente Venezolano Hugo Chávez predijo que la subida del precio del petróleo después del huracán y también la invasión en Irak crearía aún más dificultades en las comunidades pobres de los Estados Unidos.

“Entonces empezamos a pensar que los sectores más vulnerables y más débiles de la sociedad eran las familias de pocos ingresos que usan el aceite para la calefacción en sus casas,” dijo Álvarez.

El público, que incluía a much@s activistas sociales que han luchado por el derecho a precios asequibles de agua potable, aplaudió fuertemente cuando Álvarez citó al Presidente Chávez diciendo: “Ustedes saben que siempre hablamos sobre el Norte y el Sur. Él dijo que lo que es clave aquí para mí es que el Sur existe en el Norte. Todas estas luchas

que hemos librado contra el neoliberalismo y esta noción de una forma inhumana del capitalismo no solo nos afecta a nosotros, sino que afecta al pueblo en los Estados Unidos.”

Además de la marginación social de las comunidades afro-americanas expuesta por Katrina, Álvarez observó personalmente a través de las entregas del aceite de calefacción en Vermont y en otros estados del noreste, que hay mucha gente blanca que también es muy pobre. Álvarez describió la condición de una recipiente de aceite de escasos ingresos cuyo marido está desempleado y padece de diabetes severa: “Para ella es simplemente o tener calefacción o comprar medicina. ¡Es tan sencilla la cuestión! ¡Es increíble!”

Álvarez comentó que quizás las sociedades más avanzadas estén en África y entre los pueblos indígenas en Latinoamérica porque aunque hay pobreza nadie se queda atrás.

Como much@s en Detroit temen las

redadas de deportación contra l@s inmigrantes, una mención especial conmovió al público. Álvarez describió cómo el gobierno bolivariano encontró a tres millones de personas en Venezuela a quienes les faltaban documentos oficiales de identificación. Casi un millón de ell@s eran inmigrantes de Haití, Colombia, Ecuador y otros países. Tod@s han recibido la ciudadanía venezolana y el derecho a mantener doble ciudadanía.

Álvarez anunció un nuevo programa para extender el programa de cirugía gratis de los ojos empezado por Cuba a los estados centrales de los Estados Unidos. También dijo que hay planes para transformar el valor del descuento del petróleo en fondos para el desarrollo social.

Álvarez resumió su mensaje diciendo: “La única manera para luchar contra la pobreza es darle poder a los pobres. Sean parte de esta ofensiva contra la pobreza y la exclusión.

Otra vez, no vamos a solucionar todos los problemas. Pero juntos podemos mostrar que otro mundo es posible, con algunos recursos y mucha solidaridad.”

Mientras estaban en Michigan, el Embajador Álvarez y la delegación del Consulado en Chicago se reunieron en Lansing con el Comité Afro-Americano de la Legislatura de Michigan, y en Detroit con el alcalde y miembros del concejo municipal. □

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