

MUNDO OBRERO

Dos luchas entrelazadas 12

En la línea de piquete 12

Encampment to tell Congress: STOP FUNDING WAR Then on to the Pentagon March 17

By Dustin Langley

In the face of what they call “the most important vote since Congress voted to authorize the war,” activists with the Troops Out Now Coalition have issued a call for a national Encampment to Stop the War, beginning on March 12.

“During the week beginning March 12, Congress will begin voting on Bush’s request for \$100 billion more for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,” said Larry Holmes, a spokesperson for the Troops Out Now Coalition. “If Congress votes to cut off funds, they can end the war now and bring the troops home. If they approve Bush’s war funds, the killing and dying and occupation will go on. It’s as simple as that. This vote will be the most important war related vote since Congress voted to authorize Bush to invade and occupy Iraq in October of 2002. The antiwar movement must be there to let Congress know that we won’t let them get away with it this time.”

Activists have a permit to maintain a 24-hour presence at the encampment, which will be set up on Third Street between Constitution and Independence Avenues, directly across from the Capitol, within walking distance of congressional office buildings. Organizers are working with local organizers, churches and mosques, unions and community groups to prepare. Activists participating in the encampment are planning a variety of actions during the week, including a protest at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), actions focusing on U.S. threats to Iran, teach-ins and direct actions. On March 17 activists from the encampment will join the March on the Pentagon, organized by the ANSWER Coalition.

The encampment has already garnered thousands of endorsers. Grassroots organizations from across the U.S. have endorsed and are helping to mobilize, including the D.C. Antiwar Network, Florida Military Families Speak Out, AfterDowningStreet.org, Arlington South and many local chapters of Code Pink and Veterans for Peace. On Feb. 26 the San Francisco Labor Council passed a resolution endorsing the Encampment.

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Les Blough, editor of the online journal Axis of Logic (www.axisoflogic.com), endorsed the encampment, writing, “The government will not stop—unless we stop them. We are calling for you—the people—to take courage and join us in our demand that the slaughter end and the troops be brought home NOW. Enough with the government-corporate media obfuscation, deception and ‘concern’ about ‘sectarian violence’ and a ‘civil war’ in Iraq if the U.S. pulls out. Refuse to accept the Democrats ‘Nonbinding [Resolution.]’. Stand up with hundreds of thousands of your fellow citizens and take back your rightful decision-making power to end the war in Iraq NOW.”

Organizers say that momentum for the encampment is growing, with more than a dozen organizing centers across the U.S. “We’re getting e-mails and phone calls from as far away as Washington State and Hawaii,” said Sharon Black, an organizer with the encampment. “People are saying that now is the time to ‘up the ante’ in the struggle against the war. There’s a feeling

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WWW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO



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BLACK HISTORY FORUM ON: Importance of ‘National Question’



WWW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

The New York branch of Workers World Party held a special Black History Month forum on Feb. 23, titled “The National Question in theory and in practice—a critical assessment. It’s the key to working-class solidarity.”

Speakers, shown above, are—from left to right—Monica Moorehead; FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) leader LeiLani Dowell; Teresa Gutierrez; Larry Holmes; guest speaker, Fallou Gueye from the Union of African Workers-Senegalese and Richard Kossally of WWP. International Action Center activist Iman Henry is in front. Moorehead, Gutierrez and Holmes are on WWP’s Secretariat.

The program, including the lively discussion that followed, covered an array of historical and political examples about why it is so important for revolutionaries to understand the connection between the struggle against racism and national oppression to the class struggle against capitalism and imperialism worldwide. These examples included immigrant rights, Hurricane Katrina, Korea, Africa, the Iraq war and much more.

To hear the podcasts of the entire program, go to www.workers.org.

— John Catalinotto

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'The Last King of Scotland' is flawed

But Forest Whitaker gives an Oscar-winning performance

By David Hoskins

Forest Whitaker won the best actor Oscar at the 79th Annual Academy Awards Feb. 25 for his portrayal of Idi Amin in the film, "The Last King of Scotland."

"The Last King of Scotland" purports to depict Uganda's former leader by offering a condensed-time snapshot of Amin's leadership through the eyes of his fictional personal Scottish physician, Nicholas Garrigan, played by James McAvoy. The movie claims in its opening credits that it is inspired by real people and events. It is actually based on a novel by Giles Foden. At best Garrigan offers a synthesis of how those close to Amin could have viewed the former leader.

Whitaker's convincing performance takes viewers for an emotional ride as they watch a life-loving leader with an easy smile impose a dictatorship allegedly responsible for the torture, murder and disappearance of up to 300,000 Ugandans.

Some critics questioned Whitaker for the extent to which he "humanized" Amin. What these critics fail to recognize is that many people, including Ugandans, identify with Amin because of his individual role in the struggle against colonialism's legacy.

The film's major shortcoming is that it seeks to reduce Amin to a one-dimensional character that is portrayed as being foolhardy as well as brutal. Such an analysis takes Amin and the struggles of the Ugandan people in the 1970s out of the context of the country's emergence from British colonialism in 1962.

The real-life Idi Amin swept to power in Uganda in 1971 on the heels of a military coup that displaced President Milton Obote. Amin's ascension to power was initially endorsed by the British and Israelis.

Imperialist and Zionist leaders hoped that Amin would reverse the gains of the 1966 national-democratic revolution which abolished the institution of monarchy and eliminated the caste system prevalent in two of the kingdoms that made up Uganda.

50-day vigil held for Sean Bell

Some 75 people gathered at the Sean Bell family encampment across the street from the 103 Precinct in Jamaica, Queens, N.Y., for a speakout in support of the Bell family's vigil for justice on its 48th day. Two days later the family's 50-day vigil ended.

They had chosen 50 because, in the early morning of Nov. 25, only hours before 23-year-old Sean Bell was to be married, police, without any provocation, fired 50 shots into the automobile carrying Bell and two of his friends. Bell was killed, and his two friends, Trent Benefield and Joseph Guzman, were wounded after the three left a bachelor party for Bell.

A series of protests have been held throughout the city protesting the police killing of Bell, the largest being a march of 40,000 people down Fifth Avenue on Dec. 16 last year. Still, no charges have been brought against the police who killed Bell and severely injured his friends.

—New York WW bureau

When Amin refused to restore the kingdoms to their former power and befriended national liberation groups, such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization, he fell out of favor with the foreign powers who hoped to use him for rule by proxy.

The capitalist press, which cared very little for the Ugandan people to begin with, moved to discredit Amin by demonizing him as a wicked despot. The racist propaganda went so far as to imply that Amin consumed the bodies of political opponents in acts of ritualistic cannibalism. The premise of "The Last King of Scotland" that Amin imposed an authoritarian and genocidal dictatorship stems from the accusations made during the campaign to punish him for his justified contempt for the former British oppressors.

Director Kevin MacDonald claims he intended the film to send a message about British colonialism and the consequences of international interference in Uganda. MacDonald claims that "Amin was a Frankenstein's monster created by the British."

This statement still fails to recognize that Amin was impacted, like hundreds of millions of Africans, by the dehumanizing experience of growing up as a colonial subject. Amin's opportunity for a better life rested on his decision to join the colonial army and submit himself to regular humiliation and abuse at the hands of British officers.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that once he became president, Amin decided to return the favor when he required that the British officials bow down to him whenever they visited Uganda.

Despite MacDonald's intentions, the film fails to address the complexity of Idi Amin's rise to power as an African Muslim leader in an era tainted by colonialism and instead paints Africa as a continent filled with so-called bloodthirsty would-be dictators.

This long-time stereotypical depiction of Africa is as racist as Hollywood's criteria for which performances are worthy of Oscar-level recognition for Black and other actors of color.

Forest Whitaker is an accomplished actor with a career spanning two decades. While his performance in "The Last King of Scotland" is certainly worthy of an Academy Award, it is not his only role worthy of recognition. The Academy voters, who are still overwhelmingly white, reserved their highest award for this outstanding Black actor for his portrayal of an independent African leader as a murderous despot.

It is reminiscent of the Academy's decision to award the Oscar for best actor to Denzel Washington for his portrayal of a crooked cop in "Training Day" in 2002. Washington had been snubbed a decade earlier for his widely acclaimed portrayal of revolutionary Black Nationalist leader Malcolm X and more recently of boxer Rubin "Hurricane" Carter.

Racism coupled with a lack of class analysis in the film industry severely restricts the types of roles that actors of color receive recognition for. This same racism squandered the opportunity for "The Last King of Scotland" to authentically portray the extent of colonialism's barbaric policies on a nation's psyche and the struggle of the oppressed Ugandan people to overcome this centuries-old oppressive legacy. □

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TV coverage shows broadening GI protest

By John Catalinotto

CBS's news magazine "60 Minutes" coverage in late February of the GI "Appeal for Redress" reflected the widening of open opposition to the Iraq War within the U.S. military itself.

The "Appeal for Redress" is a statement directed at Congress that includes this important phrase: "It is time for U.S. troops to come home."

As of Feb. 22, more than 1,200 active-duty GIs had signed, with a few more adding their names every day. Then CBS posted podcasts on its website of interviews with the appeal's organizers, Navy Seaman Jonathan Hutto and former Marine Sgt. Liam Madden, as well as with another eight or so signers. The interviews were broadcast on "60 Minutes" on Sunday evening, Feb. 25.

The publicity had its impact. Hundreds more active-duty GIs signed. Workers World spoke a day later with Petty Officer Hutto, who said: "It was a new breakthrough for the 'Appeal for Redress.' It cemented the appeal, making it clear that it was a legal activity that every active duty member of the U.S. armed forces has the right to participate in. Even for those who don't agree, it made it clear that we had the right to do it."

"On Thursday [Feb. 22], we had 1,278 signatures reported on our site. Now,

on Monday night, Feb. 26, there are 170 more, or 1,448. It is clear that when GIs know about the 'Appeal' and they know it is legal, they sign."

By the next evening, the number had grown to 1,615, that is, over 150 in one day.

"As an activist," Hutto said, "I know that over the long term you can't depend on the corporate media to build the movement, but this experience shows that at times it can be a tool that activists can access."

Hutto said that Madden and the others who participated and have been active in building the "Appeal for Redress" were all enthusiastic about the "60 Minutes" broadcast and the boost it gave the movement.

Asked what was next on his agenda, Hutto said: "We will be building for the march on the Pentagon on March 17 and our signers will also be taking part in the Veterans for Peace caravan that will gather at Fayetteville, N.C., that day, and then go to the Gulf Coast to expose the failed domestic policies of the government. We also endorse the Encampment to Stop the War set starting March 12 at the Capitol."

Iraq war refusers

On the other front inside the military, the cases of three soldiers who refused to fight in Iraq are in the news.

Agustín Aguayo, an Army medic who



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Jonathan Hutto and Liam Madden at anti-war rally in Washington, D.C. on January 27.

has filed for conscientious-objector status, faces a court-martial on March 6 in Mannheim, Germany. Aguayo is charged with desertion and missing movement because of his refusal to go to Iraq. If convicted of all charges, he faces a maximum of seven years in prison. For an entire year while in Iraq Aguayo refused to load his weapon.

Army Specialist Mark Wilkerson, who pled guilty to the charges against him, was sentenced on Feb. 22 to seven months in prison for refusing to return to Iraq. He had written about his experience there: "In the year I was in Iraq, I saw kids waving American flags in the first months.

Then they threw rocks. Then they planted IEDs. Then they blew themselves up in city squares full of people. ... Hundreds of billions of American dollars, thousands of American lives, and tens of thousands of Iraqi lives have all been wasted in this war. I feel as though many more soldiers want to say things like this, but are afraid of retribution, and who's really listening anyway."

Wilkerson has been active in antiwar demonstrations and participated in the Camp Casey gathering in Texas in the summer of 2005, and later turned himself in at Camp Casey.

The first court-martial of 1st Lt. Ehren Watada, perhaps the best known of the war resisters, ended on Feb. 7 in a mistrial. His attorney, Eric Seitz, argued at the time that by calling a mistrial the military had forfeited the trial, since to charge him again would be "double jeopardy," a constitutional provision that prevents the government from trying someone twice for the same charge.

Nevertheless, on Feb. 23, the Army filed new charges on Watada, so he again faces six years in prison. No new trial has yet been scheduled.

Watada has spoken out clearly about his opposition to the war and shown how his refusal to go to Iraq grew as he studied the political situation in Iraq while preparing for his assignment. □

Turner attacked after

City Council passes anti-war resolution

By Phebe Eckfeldt
Boston

The Boston City Council passed a resolution on Feb. 14 calling for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. The resolution also stated that the billions of dollars being spent on war have been taken from "programs that poor and working people desperately need—jobs, healthcare, housing and education." It called for a reallocation of these funds in order to meet the needs of poor and working people.

The resolution supported the March 17 Washington, D.C. demonstration and march on the Pentagon as an expression

of the desire of people in the U.S. for funding for human needs and not war and to see the troops brought home.

This historic resolution was written and introduced by African-American City Councilor Chuck Turner and co-sponsored by Felix D. Arroyo, Charles C. Yancey, Sam Yoon (who are all councilors of color and call themselves "Team Unity") and Michael Ross. It was passed 8-3.

The resolution makes a direct connection between the war abroad and the war at home against poor and working people and especially communities of color. Turner represents some of the most oppressed sectors of Boston, which are hardest hit by the budget cuts. Cuts in

local and federal funding for such things as repairs to schools, Section 8 vouchers, the Boston Housing Authority, affordable housing subsidies, youth workers and HIV/AIDS programs are all detailed in the resolution.

When news of the resolution's passing hit the newspapers and TV, it was hotly debated across the city for several days. Turner was attacked by forces who said that the Boston City Council had no right to debate U.S. foreign policy. The Boston Globe and Boston Herald accused Turner of "wasting his time on the Iraq resolution, as dozens die violently in his Hub City Council district."

But activists across the city hailed

Turner's courageous stand and call for action, as well as the statement making the critical connection between ailing human needs programs and the increasing Pentagon budget. The heart of the resolution was embodied in a quote in the last clause of the resolution which states, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in February 1967, "The security we profess to seek in foreign adventures we will lose in our decaying cities. The bombs in Viet Nam explode at home: they destroy the hopes and possibilities for a decent America. Poverty, urban problems and social progress generally are ignored when the guns of war become a national obsession." □

As 'Black Panther 8' arraigned

Supporters applaud political prisoners

By V. Edwards
San Francisco

Shackled and wearing orange jail jumpsuits, Ray Boudreaux, 64; Richard Brown, 65; Henry W. Jones, 70; and Richard O'Neal, 57, were brought into a San Francisco courtroom on Feb. 14 for their arraignment before Judge Little. These men are four of the eight Black Panther veterans (the San Francisco 8) who had been arrested on Jan. 23 on charges related to the 1971 killing of a San Francisco police officer. The charges had originally been tossed out in 1975 when it was revealed that police had used torture to extract confessions.

The 150 or so family members and supporters packed into the courtroom immediately began clapping. Tentative for the first couple of seconds, the outpouring of support and admiration quickly grew strong and loud, with some people even beginning to stand up. When ordered by

the sheriff to stop the applause, it became louder and more determined; only when threatened with being held in contempt if they did not vacate the courtroom did people slowly desist and leave the room. As the outside hall began to fill up, someone started the chant "No justice! No peace!" which soon filled the hall as fists were raised. After a few minutes we were allowed to re-enter the courtroom, but were scanned with a metal detector wand for a third time.

Defense attorneys opened with objections to their clients being shackled and to the unnecessary high level of security, which included about 10 sheriff's deputies and SWAT officers inside the courtroom, and objections to the supporters' bags being searched. They argued against the effect that being shackled has on the defendants and on potential jurors, who would also be prejudiced by the corporate media's portrayal of the defendants as dangerous.

Judge Little agreed with the defense attorneys that the defendants had appeared voluntarily at a 2005 grand jury hearing and had not been charged for the past several years, but said that the handcuffs would stay for now. The judge said that the security in the courtroom was due to the expected large number of supporters and that the attorneys and sheriff needed to discuss the issue, which, it was agreed, would be arranged. The judge lowered the \$5 million bail of Ray Boudreaux and Henry W. Jones to the \$3 million bail level of Richard Brown and Richard O'Neal, to which the defense and the attorney general both objected. The defense requested full disclosure of testimony from the grand jury trial, some of which was said to be inaccurate. The next hearing was set for March 13.

One of the attorneys, Stuart Hanlon, told the San Francisco Bay View newspaper: "The strong public support for the four men in court was a powerful reminder that

these men are part of their communities and are not criminals. ... This is the beginning of a skirmish of a legal war with high stakes—the freedom of these eight former Panthers and the rewriting of the political history by the government criminalizing the Black Panther Party and African American freedom fighters of the 60s and 70s. It is a war we will win and that we have to win. And it is a war where the support of the community, in and out of court, is crucial." (www.sfbayview.com, Feb. 14).

For more information about the San Francisco 8, including addresses where they can receive letters, go to the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights at www.cdhrsupport.org. The film "Legacy of Torture: The War against the Black Liberation Movement"—which includes interviews with Panthers who were tortured under Cointelpro—was produced by Freedom Archives. For copies, contact info@freedomarchives.org, Leftbooks.com or call 415-863-9977. □

LABOR HISTORY

70 years ago workers won Flint sit-down strike

By Martha Grevatt

In “The Threepenny Opera,” Bertolt Brecht asks the question, “What is the crime of robbing a bank compared to the crime of owning a bank?” A play about the Great Sit-Down Strike—Feb. 11 was the 70th anniversary of its triumphant conclusion—might ask the question, “What is the crime of seizing the plants compared to the crime of owning the plants?”

In 1936, 43 percent of the U.S. automobile industry belonged to General Motors. Its profits for that year totaled nearly \$284 million. Its assets—including 69 plants in 35 states—were valued at \$1.5 billion. The company had 37 percent of the worldwide car and truck market. GM President Alfred P. Sloan was the highest paid executive in the country.

GM would tout their claim that wages were high—\$1,500 a year. The United Auto Workers disputed those figures, citing the irregularity of the work. Laid off workers were forced to take out loans from the company, with payments deducted from their wages upon return to work. To avoid layoffs, you might get to work on the boss’s house or, if you were a part-time farmer, bring him some meat or produce.

The assembly line was a living hell. The ever-increasing pace of the line—the speedup—gave many workers the appearance of a 50-year-old before turning 30. A sit-down participant described “hands so swollen I couldn’t get my fingers between each other.” A sociologist of the time observed “occupational psychosis” from the monotony and overwork.

The pain was felt deeply in Flint, Mich., home of GM and a quintessential company town. Of the 146,000 residents, 44,000 worked for GM. There was no company store, but that was the only company thing you didn’t “owe your soul to.” Before GM’s



When the cops fired gas into a plant occupied by striking workers, womens’ support groups smashed the windows to allow the gas to escape.

arrival it was a town of 14,000 concentrated around carriage-building. Housing construction didn’t keep up with population growth; many autoworkers lived in tar paper shacks without indoor plumbing and others were forced to rent from GM.

No wonder then that the wave of sit-down strikes sweeping the U.S. in 1936 would culminate in a 44-day occupation in Flint.

The sit-down strike was not invented in 1936. It was reportedly used in 15th and 18th century France, early 19th century England and even in ancient Egypt by a group of stonemasons. The early part of the 20th century saw occasional sit-downs in the U.S., France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Spain, England, Wales and Poland.

In the 1930s, a decade defined by class warfare, 1936 was the pivotal year when the sit-down made the transition from a little-used tool to the key weapon. Akron, according to Jeremy Brecher in his book “Strike!” “was the crucible in which it was forged.” Rubber workers got the idea after two union baseball teams sat down on the field, demanding a non-union umpire be ejected and a union ump be brought in. On Jan. 29, 1936, workers sat down at Firestone. When the plant went silent, they screamed “We done it!” Two days later they sat down at Goodyear, days later at



WWW.UAW.ORG

Goodrich. Another sit-down at Goodyear, and then all of Goodyear was on strike. The strike ended in victory March 18. Sitting down became a more or less weekly affair in Akron. It then swept the nation, with 48 sit-downs recorded in 1936, most of them lasting more than 24 hours.

Sit-downs were also spreading through France like wildfire. The June 22, 1936, edition of Time magazine reported “8,000 Paris slaughterhouse employees walked out. Clerks of all Paris’ great department stores continued their ‘stay in strikes.’ The world-famed dressmaking houses had to close. Guests made their own beds in hostels as various as the ultra-conservative Grand Hôtel and the swanksters’ Hôtel Georges V. Outside Paris, for every strike settled when the week opened, another was declared.” Meanwhile 30,000 factory workers at Renault and an equal number at Citroën were returning to work, having won all their demands. That same year the French government reduced the standard workweek from 48 to 40 hours and made two weeks vacation mandatory.

Radicals in the labor movement—members of the Socialist, Communist, and other working class parties—saw the critical importance of organizing the hundreds of thousands working in the automobile industry. They knew that they had to crack the mighty General Motors and they had to hit key plants where it would hurt the most.

One such plant was the Fisher body plant in Cleveland, and on Dec. 28, 1936, a sit-down of 7,000 silenced the noisy presses. Two days later the strike moved outside, joining strikes already going on in Atlanta and Kansas City. Now it was time to take on Flint. A dress rehearsal had already taken place at the strategic Fisher Body One; a brief sit-down won the rehiring of three fired workers.

On Dec. 30 rumor spread that dies, the tools that stamp out body parts, were being shipped out. A lunchtime meeting on the evening shift drew a huge crowd. When the union organizer, Bob Travis, asked what ought to be done, cries rang out: “Shut her down.” Before the shift was over the plant was in the hands of the workers. The smaller Fisher Two was also taken that same night.

Thousands of workers created their own community. Perhaps some of their more class-conscious leaders had read about and were inspired by the Paris Commune. Decisions were made democratically at the nightly strike meeting. There were committees for everything from defense to entertainment and education. Many line workers had never felt so alive.

Their baptism by fire came on Jan.

11, 1937, when guards at Fisher Two refused to allow food in. Outside pickets brought food in by ladder to the second floor, but the guards then confiscated the ladder. Then the police began to surround the plant. Pickets swarmed to the gate. Twenty inside strikers, with homemade clubs, demanded the guards open the gate. When the guards refused, they forced the gate open. The police fired tear gas and vomit-inducing gas (of which GM had its own private stockpiles).

The union sound car called on pickets to hold their posts and those inside to grab the fire hoses. The cops were driven away by the force of the hoses and a rain of two-pound hinges. Before they left they shot and wounded 14, including a striking bus driver picketing with the autoworkers. This episode became known as the “Battle of Bulls’ Run,” because, as one striker recounted, “I never saw cops run so fast.”

Now GM was feigning a willingness to talk things out. By 3 a.m. on Jan. 15, Michigan Gov. Frank Murphy announced “a peace.” The union agreed to evacuate the plants, which by now included several in Detroit and Indiana, and the company agreed not to resume production. The plants outside of Flint were emptied of strikers and a big celebration was planned.

Before the celebration could take place, word of a double-cross was leaked to the union by a sympathetic reporter. GM’s Vice President Knudsen had agreed to meet with the union-busting “Flint Alliance” to discuss “collective bargaining”—thus removing the union as the sole bargaining agent. The city manager was deputizing Alliance members, creating a vigilante force to compel a back-to-work movement. The evacuation of Fisher One and Two was called off.

Now the union needed to gain some ground to break the stalemate. They wanted to take Chevrolet Four, a critical plant, but it was heavily guarded. In a gamble that would prove successful, they chose to occupy Chevrolet Nine, and to leak word of the occupation to draw the guards away from Chevy Four. After being told at a meeting they were needed at Chevy Nine, scores of pickets, half of them from the Women’s Auxiliary and the Women’s Emergency Brigade, converged on the plant. When the cops fired gas into the plant, attempting to smother its occupants, the women smashed the windows to allow the gas to escape. Combat with the police left many strikers bloodied and bruised, but the police retreated in the face of such determination.

Not long after, a call to the union hall announced that Chevy Four had been taken. Within hours, the Michigan National Guard descended upon Flint. The union held strong and responded to a court injunction to evacuate by declaring “Women’s Day.” Women came from all over Detroit, Toledo, other parts of Ohio and elsewhere, and their parade became the longest (end to end) picket line in Flint history.

On Feb. 10 GM finally signed an initial agreement to recognize the UAW as the sole bargaining agent, for a period of six months, at the most important plants. This initial victory would lay the foundation for the many gains that followed.

On Feb. 11, 1937, after 44 days, the strikers marched out, leading a two-mile parade that was joined by thousands and thousands. Relations between labor and capital would never be the same. □

CCNY student activist Igwe Williams arrested

On the night of Feb. 20, a police action rattled Harlem, N.Y. Civilians were arrested with no obvious motive. One key student in the struggle around the Morales/Shakur Center at CCNY, Igwe Williams, noticed this. Being a concerned member of the community, he then pulled out his camera phone and began to film the police. Police noticed and then approached him. Williams proceeded to tell police that he was a legal observer. That did not stop the officers from arresting him, leaving him in jail overnight, injuring his arms and confiscating his phone and keys for 24 hours.

There is a direct irony when a person fighting against police brutality, against gentrification and against police states, gets arrested on a campus where people have died for freedom. This is no coincidence, this is not abnormal. This is the U.S.’s apartheid process of dividing and conquering. Divide the movement, convict the movement and end the movement.

But we cannot let the movement die. Help us pack the courtroom on April 30 for Igwe Williams. These trumped-up charges could add up to a year in prison.



Igwe Williams

WW PHOTO: ARTURO J. PÉREZ SAAD

We will no longer stand for the imprisonment of our freedom fighters!

Stay posted on updates concerning Igwe Williams and the struggle at CCNY at www.FIST.cc or at www.myspace.com/fist_youth.

—Mia Cruz, FIST
fist@workers.org

SOUTH DAKOTA

Another pro-choice victory

By Kris Hamel

A South Dakota State Senate committee rejected sweeping legislation on Feb. 21 that would have banned most abortions and directly challenged Roe vs. Wade.

The proposed legislation, introduced on Jan. 31, only provided exceptions for rape and incest with DNA evidence. It would have imposed a 50-day limit for women to report rape to the police, and required a confirmation from a physician that the crime had occurred. Doctors would have also been required to take blood from aborted fetuses for police to use in DNA testing. The bill doubled the maximum penalty from last year's law to 10 years in prison for physicians performing abortions.

Last year, the South Dakota state leg-

islature passed an extreme ban on abortions, with no exceptions for cases of rape, incest or life endangerment. Gov. Mike Rounds signed the measure into law.

But a grassroots movement of pro-choice activists carried out a successful campaign to overturn the ban in the Nov. 7 general election.

The 8 to 1 vote rejecting the bill was a "surprise" to anti-choice advocates. State Sen. Julie Bartling—a Democrat and one of the main sponsors of the 2006 abortion ban—said, "It's far too soon to put our state through something of such a difficult nature again. The state needs to heal and I just don't feel that we need to take this up in this legislative session again. The people have spoken."

Indeed, last year's abortion ban was defeated at the polls by a margin of 56 to

44 percent, in large measure due to the hard work of pro-choice activists who organized non-stop around the state.

Despite last year's pro-choice electoral victory that defeated South Dakota's extreme ban on abortion—which reverberated around the country—legislatures in many states wasted no time in their new 2007 sessions to introduce repressive laws aimed at restricting reproductive rights and/or overturning Roe vs. Wade.

Texas, Oklahoma, Utah and Virginia are considering "trigger" laws banning abortion, which would go into effect if Roe vs. Wade is overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. South Dakota and Louisiana already have trigger laws on the books.

Arizona, Mississippi, North Dakota, Colorado, Georgia, Arkansas, Indiana, South Carolina and Wyoming are among

other states currently considering legislation to restrict or ban abortions.

A bill introduced in Tennessee would require death certificates for aborted fetuses, which would likely create public records identifying women who have abortions. Keri Adams, vice president of Planned Parenthood in Tennessee, called the legislation "an attempt to terrorize frightened and vulnerable women who are seeking abortion."

In state after state the right of women to reproductive choices and freedom is under attack. Pro-choice and all progressive activists must redouble their efforts to combat these rightwing, anti-woman measures and ensure that Roe vs. Wade stays intact. Only a mass struggle for women's reproductive rights will set back the agenda of anti-choice reactionaries. □

Shareef Aleem speaks of his court case

The multinational jury in the trial of Shareef Aleem came back with a not guilty verdict on Feb. 5. Aleem, his family and his supporters packing the courtroom celebrated the end of a torturous, two-year battle.

Aleem was being tried for second degree aggravated assault on a cop, stemming from an incident at the Colorado University Board of Regents on Feb. 3, 2005, where he was attacked by police after defending students' rights to free speech. He faced a minimum of four years in prison.

Workers World's Larry Hales was able to interview Aleem about the victory after a rally for Emily Rae Rice, called for by the young woman's family. Rice was a 24-year-old woman who was involved in a traffic accident but denied treatment at the hospital to which she was taken and instead transferred to the Denver City Jail. Rice had several severe injuries—a lacerated liver, ruptured spleen and several broken ribs—and pleaded for help as she lay in her jail cell. She was later found dead in the cell.

Rice's parents have filed an intent to sue the city and county of Denver for wrongful death and violating Rice's civil rights. The rally and vigil marked the one-year anniversary of Rice's death, which protesters blame on the actions of medical professionals, the Denver Police Department and sheriffs at the Denver City Jail.

Shareef Aleem was one of many vocal supporters of the family at the rally and vigil on Feb. 18.

Larry Hales: Did you have any expectations going into this trial, seeing that the last trial hung on only one juror for your side?

Shareef Aleem: I just wanted a fair jury, a real jury of my peers, and I was confident that if I had that I'd be found not guilty. The last trial the jurors were all white and only one woman held out. I heard that the rest of the jurors had made their decision in 15 minutes, but this one woman wouldn't be bullied and she held out and after four-and-a-half [hours] they came back.

LH: How long did the jury deliberate this time?

SA: They deliberated for five-and-a-half hours on Thursday [Feb. 1] and one-and-a-half hours on Monday morning [Feb. 5].

LH: Every trial is inherently political, but do you think this one seemed overtly political this time around? It seemed less so than the last trial.

SA: Man, this trial was political from the beginning. The jury questioning was biased. The prosecution tried to impeach witnesses for their political beliefs and went as far as to pull up articles and papers people had written. One of the witnesses had run for public office and the prosecution called into question their stance on the Iraq war and on 9/11. I had good attorneys though, and I thank Mark Burton and Tom Carberry.

The prosecution had no case against me. The only evidence they had was an edited tape from Channel 9 news and they used it to make me look bad, but there are other tapes of what happened at the Board of Regents meeting. I liked the football analogy that Mark Burton used,

that something may look different from one angle than another. The prosecution was using their tape because it was a bad angle, but I was sure the jury would see that I didn't attack anybody. I fell. The cop was talking about injuries from the fall, but they couldn't produce any evidence of an injury, not a doctor's excuse, nothing. He didn't even miss a day of work.

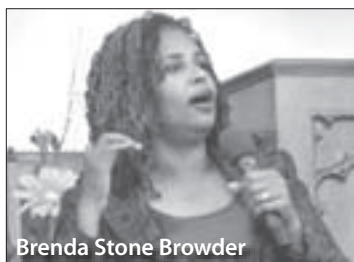
LH: Did you have a lot of support during the trial?

SA: A lot of people came out. My side of the courtroom was full every day.

LH: What are you going to do now that this burden has been lifted?

SA: I'm gonna keep fighting for freedom, justice and equality and an end to this white supremacist system. I'm gonna keep working with Communities United Against Police Brutality, Aurora and Denver CopWatch, and I'm gonna keep doing my radio show at KGNU, the Tuesday Metro show on 1390 AM in Denver at noon. That show is the only broadcast voice for oppressed people in the Metro area. I might go back to school too. I want to further my education. □

Community meeting confronts HIV, racism & war



Brenda Stone Browder



Greg Eugene



Brenda D. Larkin



Cambridge Mayor
Ken Reeves,



Rev.
Franklin Hobbs

WPHOTO: LIZ GREEN

By Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston

Over 90 mostly African-American community members came out to an urgent HIV State of Emergency Town Meeting on Feb 24 in Boston to help mobilize a grass-roots movement against the spread of HIV.

Inevitably, racism, war and class struggle were also on the program.

Faced with over 7,500 cases of HIV/AIDS in Boston, the HIV State of Emergency Committee, headed by Rev. Franklin Hobbs, organized the town meeting held at the New Life Restoration Temple in Dorchester. Community support was at an unprecedented level in Boston as many AIDS service organizations, elected officials, anti-war organizations and longtime leaders filled the pews of the church.

Rev. Hobbs opened the program by proclaiming the need for an independent,

community mobilization against HIV: "When they give you money, they say: 'Don't do this. Don't do that.' We need an independent movement that will fight to keep HIV incidence down, despite the racism, sexism, classism and phobias that are out there."

Referring to a recent newspaper article about homeless youth, Rev Hobbs pointed out: "There are homeless youth on the streets who are even trying to get infected in order to get desperately needed housing. But we say, whatever you are—gay, lesbian, transgender, straight—we love you and value you."

Rev. Hobbs had led a grassroots movement that convinced the Boston City Council to declare an HIV state of emergency in Boston's communities of color in March 2005.

City Councilor Charles Yancy took the microphone to declare: "Far too many people are dying of HIV and dying in

silence. There should be outrage at the loss of so many people to AIDS."

In addition to Rev. Hobbs, many other HIV-positive people of color and their supporters who had come to join the HIV State of Emergency Committee filled the church. Community leaders stood up one after the other in the church to give examples of the oppression the group is now confronting.

Malkia Hendricks, director of Women Connected Affecting Change, from Roxbury, told how their organization had "lost a house that was donated to us for homeless women because [mostly white] people in the community didn't want women with HIV and their male friends around."

Greg Eugene, chairperson of Boston's Annual Bayard Rustin Day Breakfast, stood up and urged the congregation to get on the bus for the March 17 March on Washington: "We understand the war kill-

ing people in Iraq and the war on people in Roxbury!" Eugene is a volunteer with Boston's Troops Out Now Coalition, which was a sponsor of the Town Meeting.

The keynote speaker, Brenda Stone Browder, addressed the particular crisis of heterosexually acquired HIV facing African-American women, who are 20 times more likely to have HIV infection than white women.

Supporters at the Town Meeting included AIDS Action Committee, Fenway Community Health Center, Womens Fightback Network, Codman Square Health Center, John Snow Institute, Whittier Street Health Center, Troops Out Now Coalition, Mayor Ken Reeves of Cambridge, Mass., Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner, the Boston Living Center, Emmanuel Temple, Mount Olive Kingdom Builders, New Life Restoration Temple, the Community Church of Boston and many others. □

From death row Mumia Abu-Jamal on

Give 'war' a chance

From a Feb. 2, 2007, audio column. Go to www.prisonradio.org to hear more columns.

A lifetime ago, when the British rock band, the Beatles, were at the top of the charts, and before cable TV and the reign of computers, anti-war activists

sang a haunting chorus as they demonstrated by the tens of thousands at the Pentagon: "All we are saying, is give peace a chance."

Decades later, and there is still war (albeit in another place, and for another 'cause'), and demonstrations seem far less potent than in times past.

American imperialism, unshackled by the prospect of a true global rival, now fairly bellows in the face of its own unpopularity (in the voice of its acolytes, like George W. Bush): "Give war a chance."

The Iraq invasion and occupation has been an admitted disaster, and those who called for it the loudest are deserting that sinking ship like rats on a wharf.

The U.S. imperial president, flirting with disapproval numbers that rival Nixon's at the height of the Watergate scandal, is overwhelming only in his irrelevance, and perhaps his inability to convince anybody to believe his blather about the so-called "war on terror."

So, in light of the administration's latest maneuver to support the flagging war with "new ideas" about a "surge," the White House and its minions on the Hill are asking Americans to "give the president's plan a chance."

In the face of this catastrophe, what is the role of Congress?

It proposes to debate, and then, after debating, to issue a nonbinding resolution [that recently passed the House—WW] which condemns the current troop build-up and also critiques the president's present handling of the war.

In essence, Congress agrees to say, "We don't like what you're doing, but we won't stop it."

This, in a time of war, a war launched on lies and subterfuge.

Apparently, over 600,000 dead Iraqis, over 3,000 dead Americans, and over 400 billion dollars lost in this failing effort, isn't quite enough.

In fact, the Congress could stop the war today, by cutting the war budget. But it won't do this, for it might endanger a congressman's future political prospects.

Most of the millions of people who voted in the mid-term elections did so to send a strong anti-war message.

The majority party heading both houses of Congress has indeed changed, but little else has. It has resolved to issue words, while the president launches bombs.

And given his profoundly neoconservative bent, it is entirely possible that, before the remaining two years have passed through time's hourglass, the U.S. may have launched a strike against Iran.

Even now we hear the media stirrings, provocations meant to soften up the American populace for a new "preemptive war."

What did your votes really mean?

Do you really still believe that you live in a democracy?

What you voted for, and what you believe, is ultimately irrelevant.

The words of the legendary Black freedom fighter, Frederick Douglass, echo through the annals of time: "Power concedes nothing without demand. It never has, and never will."

Voting is never enough.

These ruinous wars didn't begin in a voting booth; nor will voting, standing alone, end them.

It will take much stronger stuff. □



Focus & tactics in the anti-v

By Sara Flounders

The Democratic Party now has a majority in both houses of Congress. This new majority had promised, if elected, to act against the war. Every politician is trying to posture as if they are listening to their constituency. They are consumed with how to "spin" the war.

In questions of war, the executive, the president, has the decision-making

power. But according to the Constitution only Congress may appropriate the funds for the war.

During the week of March 12 to 19, Congress is scheduled to cast the most critical vote since it voted in October 2002 to give President George Bush full authorization to invade and occupy Iraq. That vote took place when the Democrats were also in the majority in the Senate. From the very beginning this has been a bipartisan war.

For revolutionary forces and determined opponents of the war, the question now is how to intervene in the congressional debate in a way that exposes the criminal complicity of both the Democratic and Republican parties in the war.

Is it inevitable that any struggle involving Congress will be co-opted by the Democratic Party and derailed?

Can the demand that Congress cut the funds for the war become a popular cry? Congress has the constitutional authority to do so.

As the Pentagon aims its guns at Iran, a determined struggle by the anti-war movement could open up additional demands. Millions of people in the U.S. who oppose war would learn that Congress also has full legal authority to act against the immediate threat of a new wider war on Iran. It would become clear that Congress has the authority to open a struggle against the whole gargantuan Pentagon budget, but only if masses of people in the U.S. are mobilized to demand it.

The Pentagon budget is an ever-growing monstrosity sucking in more than \$1 million a minute. Every needed social program in the country—from education to health care, transportation to the environment—is being cut in order to fund a military budget that further enriches the largest corporations, especially the oil monopolies and the military-industrial complex.

If Democrats were really determined to end the war—even without a majority—a determined congressional minority could block the funding for the war. They could disrupt and filibuster. They could call on people from around the country to surround Congress. Any real resistance in Congress would inspire a

Encampment to tell Congress STOP FUNDING WAR Then on to the Pentagon March 17

Continued from page 1

that there is a real moment of opportunity if we act now."

"Congress is spending \$100,000 a second on this war," said Black. "Meanwhile, the percentage of people in the U.S. who are living in severe poverty has reached a 32-year high. Forty-seven million people are without healthcare, hospitals are closing due to lack of funds, and the Gulf Coast still hasn't been rebuilt after Katrina. We need money for human needs, not war. One of the things we are asking people to do is to bring their bills—utility bills, credit card bills, student loans, hospital bills—and demand that Congress pay for peoples' needs, not war."

Ben Carroll, an organizer with the Chapel Hill chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), said, "I think occupying Washington, D.C., and letting those in power know that we're not going away until our demands are heard, is something that has the potential to

make a real impact. We're bringing up 10 young people to join the Encampment. I'm excited to see what unfolds."

The global stock market plunge on Feb. 27 showed how shaky capitalism really is. Manufacturing as well as the housing market is in a recession. The percentage of the population living in severe poverty has reached a 32-year high. Many workers' wages are near the poverty line. Meanwhile, because Washington's pouring untold trillions into the war machine, the economy is being starved of essential funds. Congress should be concentrating on voting to fight the recession and poverty, not funding a war on Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Troops Out Now Coalition has launched a blog, located at encampmenttostopthewar.blogspot.com, which includes maps, weather forecasts, travel information, contact information for inexpensive housing in the area and daily updates. □

Encampment to Stop the War March 12-19+ OCCUPY WASHINGTON!

Cut Off All War Funding BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW

During the week beginning March 12, Congress will begin voting on Bush's request for \$100 billion more for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This vote will be the most important war-related vote since Congress voted to authorize Bush to invade and occupy Iraq in October of 2002. The antiwar movement must be there to let Congress know that we won't let them get away with it this time.

Called by the Troops Out Now Coalition

**For more information, see
encampmenttostopthewar.blogspot.com**

Or call 212-633-6646



war movement: Congress & the war

response from the population and from GIs who are now opposing the war in greater numbers.

If there is no strong political intervention from below, then a weak, non-binding resolution like the one the House passed Feb. 16 will look like the best that can be done. To abstain from this struggle is to leave the arena totally to the reformists who want to pull the movement behind the Democratic Party and leave it without independent power.

The Democrats are quite willing to grandstand against the war. It is easy for them to target George W. Bush, a Republican. He is justifiably hated around the world. He is a war criminal by every standard. His popular support is now the lowest of any presidency, with the exception of Richard Nixon just before his resignation on the eve of impeachment.

These powerful Democratic politicians and their major financial backers are interested in pulling the attention of the mass anti-war movement away from the Democratic Party's own support for the war, typified by Hillary Clinton's refusal to state that she should not have voted for the war in the 2002 vote. She is currently refusing to take a nuclear strike at Iran "off the table."

The Democrats are trying to focus the anger against the war exclusively on Bush. That is their entire 2008 election strategy.

It may not be popular or easy to open a struggle against all the forces—both Republican and Democratic—which support the war, as well as the interests of U.S. imperialism that they serve. Nevertheless, it is an essential struggle.

The capitalist ruling class always wants to divert the mass movement into safe channels—into lobbying and voting and

trusting in the bought and paid for politicians. The challenge is to develop clear demands that move the struggle into the streets.

From the earliest days of the organized working class struggle, the purpose of mass demonstrations has always been to confront the government with workers' demands.

Since the Pentagon invaded Iraq in March 2003, the anti-war movement has mobilized hundreds of thousands of people in Washington, D.C., and other major cities.

The war has continued because imperialism needs war, conquest and endless profits.

But each massive mobilization has presented new challenges and taught new lessons. Demonstrations are schools of struggle.

The protests before the Pentagon launched the invasion were actually far larger than more recent ones, although at that time a smaller proportion of the U.S. population was opposed to the war or even thinking about the war. Millions who participated then hoped that one large demonstration actually would stop the impending imperialist war, a wish that turned out to be an illusion.

In the November 2006 election, tens of millions of people hoped that casting a vote could end the war. They have been disappointed by the feeble role of the Democrats and want to see more action on the issue.

New tactics needed

To organize an encampment on the steps of the Capitol during the very week that Congress will begin voting on Bush's request for an additional \$100+ billion more for the wars in Afghanistan and

Iraq is a creative tactic. Such an action is reminiscent of the 1930s Veterans Bonus March and the 1960s Poor Peoples March, both of which galvanized the struggle.

A round-the-clock encampment right in front of the Capitol while Congress votes funding for the ongoing war is a new, more focused challenge to the entire war apparatus. This protest combines a clear demand to stop the Pentagon occupation with demands that Congress vote to stop bankrolling the war.

Larry Holmes, a spokesperson for the Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC), the organization that initiated the call for the Encampment, explained in press releases, "During the week beginning March 12, Congress will begin voting on Bush's request for \$100 billion more for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. If Congress votes to cut off funds, they can end the war now and bring the troops home. If they approve Bush's war funds, the killing and dying and occupation will go on. It's as simple as that. ... The anti-war movement must be there to let Congress know that we won't let them get away with it this time."

To focus attention on the endless funds for war while every desperately needed social program is facing a new round of cuts, TONC urges people to bring their unpaid utility bills, student loans, mortgages and credit card bills. The enormous hardship that endless war creates in the lives of poor and working people is a focus of the encampment.

Unity is essential— march on the Pentagon

The entire week of actions in March presents a serious political challenge to the war. If movement leaders can use this challenge to consciously forge unity, the struggle against the war will enter a new phase.

The encampment to demand that Congress cut off all war funding will help to focus the attention of thousands of activists on the struggle unfolding in the Capitol. It will also help to build the turnout and increase the interest in the mass march on the Pentagon, initiated by the ANSWER Coalition.

The Pentagon is an important target. The war machine carries out the deadly policies that are scarcely debated in Congress and ruthlessly authorized by the executive branch.

The Troops Out Now Coalition helped to formulate and circulate a letter signed by many important grassroots organizations and union, anti-war and community activists urging the United for Peace and Justice Coalition to support, endorse and work to build a united mobilization in Washington on March 17 in front of the Pentagon, rather than divide the movement by building a demonstration in New York City the following day.

The unity message to the UFPJ Coalition raised this important political principle: Unity is a vital step toward revitalizing the anti-war movement.

Along with mobilizing activists who are able to come to Washington, D.C. early for a determined struggle in front of the Congress, TONC is organizing buses for March 17 in New York, Boston, Western Mass., Detroit, Buffalo, Philadelphia, Raleigh and Atlanta.

Beyond Capitol Hill, the towers of high finance and the capitalist think tanks, there is a groundswell of opposition to the war. It's time to bring that opposition to surround Congress, to focus on the role of the Democratic Party as co-conspirators in the war, and to demand: Not another penny! Bring the troops home now! □

**MARCH
17**

MARCH ON THE PENTAGON

ON THE FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ILLEGAL INVASION OF IRAQ

TO DEMAND

TROOPS OUT NOW!

Defund the Pentagon!

Money for jobs, education, & health care, not war!

Join us for the national March on the Pentagon, organized by the ANSWER Coalition, the Troops Out Now Coalition, and many other national and local antiwar organizations. The Troops Out Now Coalition is organizing buses from 10 cities.

For more information, call 212-633-6646 or go to www.TroopsOutNow.org to see a list of local organizing centers.

PART III

ZIMBABWE: Land redistribution & Western sanctions

The following is the third and final installment from a talk entitled "A review of developments in Somalia, Sudan, Zimbabwe and the role of the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament/ Aspects of the politics of contemporary Africa in the era of continuing imperialism" delivered at a Detroit Workers World public meeting on Feb. 10 by Abayomi Azikiwe, editor of Pan-African News Wire.

Azikiwe is a co-founder of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI). He can be heard on radio weekly on WDTW, 1310 AM, on Sundays from 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. in Detroit. In Toronto, he can be heard on Thursdays on CKLN, 88.1 FM, from 9:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m. This broadcast can be heard online at www.ckln.fm

The talk was dedicated to the memory of the late Mama Adelaide Tambo, the African National Congress Women's League leader and widow of the late Oliver R. Tambo, longtime acting president of the ANC while Nelson Mandela was imprisoned in South Africa. Go to www.workers.org/2007/world/colonialism-0222/ and www.workers.org/2007/world/somalia-sudan-0301/ to read the parts one and two of this talk.

Britain was also the nation that colonized Zimbabwe during the last decade of the 19th century. Mutapa was an ancient kingdom in Zimbabwe which has been traced back to the 15th century. By the 19th century the kingdoms of Matebeleland and Mashonaland ruled most of what is known today as Zimbabwe.

There were strong efforts aimed at anti-colonial resistance led by Lobengula of Matebeleland and Nehanda and Kagubi of the Mashonas. However, the use of superior weapons by the British resulted in the consolidation of a vicious colonial system in what became known as Rhodesia (named after Cecil Rhodes).

Beginning in the mid-1960s, the people of Zimbabwe launched an armed struggle to overturn the settler-colonial system. The British settlers ostensibly broke with the mother country and proclaimed a Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965.

The act of defiance angered the Pan-Africanist and anti-imperialist government of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, which broke diplomatic relations with Britain over its refusal to put down the rebellion in Rhodesia. Nkrumah was overthrown in a Central Intelligence Agency



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Abayomi Azikiwe at a Jan 11 rally in Detroit.

backed coup in February of 1966 after he had taken such a strong position over the Rhodesia question.

Prior to the granting of national independence to Zimbabwe in 1980, both the United Kingdom and the United States had agreed to provide monetary assistance for a major land redistribution program in Zimbabwe. The debate over land reform would intensify in Zimbabwe during the 1990s after no assistance from the western nations was materializing. In 1998, when the government of the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriot Front (ZANU-PF) under President Robert Mugabe made it clear that there would be radical land redistribution sooner than later inside the country, a series of political attacks were launched against this southern African nation.

White land owners, who were citizens of Zimbabwe but at the same time held British passports, joined in with opponents of the Zimbabwe government to form the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). This organization saw the existence of the ZANU-PF government as the main problem in Zimbabwe.

With funding from the U.S. and Britain, the MDC embarked upon a disruption campaign aimed at derailing the land redistribution program. A series of strikes launched by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) and the MDC were designed to further weaken the country economically.

The U.S., Britain and the European Union have imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe. After the country withstood two major attempts during election campaigns in 2000 and 2002 to overturn the ZANU-PF government, these Western imperialist nations set out to isolate Zimbabwe.

They pressured the government of President Thabo Mbeki in South Africa to place a blockade on Zimbabwe. The South African government under the leadership of the African National Congress refused to establish a blockade of Zimbabwe and instead extended the country a loan that prevented a further deepening of its economic problems.

Despite the attempts by the West to cripple Zimbabwe and topple the government of President Mugabe, the nation has survived. They have developed a "Look East" policy aimed at increasing trade with nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The land redistribution program in Zimbabwe has sparked vigorous debate in both South Africa and Namibia, where similar situations exist with Europeans still controlling most of the arable and mineral-rich land years after national independence.

Role of the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament

The African Union (AU) was established in 2003 in an effort to implement the Nkrumaist vision of a unified African continent. The Organization of African Unity (OAU), which was formed in May of 1963, had agreed to dissolve in favor of a more effective continental organization that would move towards a continental assembly, a peacekeeping force, a single currency and transport and communications systems.

The AU has been involved in the conflicts in the Horn of Africa between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Darfur conflict in Sudan, the situations in Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The current chair of the AU, John Kufour, gained the seat because the controversy in Western circles surrounding the Darfur conflict prevented President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan from taking the seat for two years in a row. Consequently, the AU faces the same challenges as the former OAU with persistent interference by the U.S. in the internal affairs of African nations.

The Pan-African Parliament (PAP) based in Midrand, South Africa, was established by the AU in 2004. Its ultimate aim is to become a continental-wide legislative body that will be elected by popular vote. The president of the Pan-African Parliament is Gertrude Ibengwe-Mongella of Tanzania.

In order for both the AU and the PAP to become political forces in the international community, it will require an independent foreign policy on the part of sig-

nificant numbers of African governments. Alliances with U.S. imperialism have proven to be extremely detrimental to African states. The role of Ethiopia and Kenya in the U.S.-backed invasion and occupation of Somalia will have long term implications for these East African nations.

Africa—a greater focus for U.S. imperialism

An article released recently by the Guardian newspaper in London states that the Pentagon has established an African Command called "Africom." This is designed to intensify U.S. military operations on the continent. Africa's role as an oil supplier to the U.S. and other Western imperialist nations will create potential conflict within African states.

The formidable resistance in Iraq against the American occupation will be sparked in Africa at an even greater level if the Americans pursue their plans of re-colonizing the continent. Africa has a long tradition of waging successful popular and armed struggles against colonial forces including Portugal, France, Britain, the Boers in South Africa, Italy and the U.S. in Angola and Somalia.

The anti-war movement must be equipped politically to take on the challenges of U.S. foreign policy aims in Africa as well as other parts of the world including Latin America, North Korea, Iran, China and the Caribbean. A broader and deeper study of the ever increasing role of the U.S. in oil exploration and trade in Africa as well as the attempt to stifle independent political initiatives such as the Union of Islamic Courts movement in Somalia must be a main focus of attention.

The \$620 billion to \$716 billion estimated annual defense budget in the U.S., which is greater than all other nations combined, should be utilized to solve the problems of hunger, homelessness, health care, racism, education and senior services. When people in the U.S. begin to focus their attention on solving the national and international crises of poverty and inequality, then perhaps the declining image of the world's most powerful imperialist nation will change. It is up to the people of this country and the world to fight against all attempts to re-impose colonialism and reverse the course of history.

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Chicago tenants meeting opens struggle

By Eric Struch
Chicago

Chicago's Community Congress of Tenants held its first mass citywide meeting on Feb. 17 in Hyde Park on the South Side. There, as in many of the city's communities, residents are struggling against rent increases, slumlord neglect and the construction of luxury condos for the rich during a low-income housing shortage crisis.

According to the group's leaflet, the meeting itself grew out of the momentum created in September by "a march against condo conversion in Hyde Park" which "has turned into a movement of low-income tenants demanding our right to live in Chicago."

About 325 people packed the meeting at the United Church of Hyde Park, ready to organize for change. The lack of affordable housing in Chicago affects all communities. The convergence of forces at this meeting clearly showed that the crisis hits the African-American community hardest.

A recently released study by Developing Government Accountability to the People (DGAP) Chicago states, "Public housing is being eradicated, project-based Section 8 contracts in buildings that house thousands of people are set to expire, homelessness is on the rise, condo conversions have saturated the market, and private low income and affordable housing options have virtually disappeared."

Reflecting the demographic reality of

the crisis, a majority at the meeting were from the African-American community, with significant Latin@ participation. Native Americans, working class whites and students were also represented. Sponsoring organizations included the Hip Hop Congress, Centro Sin Fronteras, Coalition to Protect Public Housing, Metropolitan Tenants Organization, American Indian Center and many other community-based groups and tenants' organizations.

After hearing moving testimony about the housing crisis from Section 8 housing voucher recipients, public housing residents and activists, progressive African-American Alderwoman Toni Preckwinkle (4th Ward) and African-American mayoral candidate Bill "Dock" Walls committed

themselves to supporting a moratorium on condo development and the demolition of public housing. They also agreed to support the idea of a people's investigation into the misappropriation of city funds by slum lords.

Jack Markowski, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Housing, agreed to meet with activists and discuss their concerns.

The Community Congress of Tenants plans to follow up the struggle with another meeting on Thursday, March 1, at 6 p.m. at the Chicago Urban League, 4510 S. Michigan. For more information, contact the Metropolitan Tenants Organization, 1180 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL. 60622, (773) 292-4980, tenants-rights.org. □

COLOMBIA

Uribe's ties to death squads exposed

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

News from Colombia exposing President Álvaro Uribe's ties to the terrorist, cocaine trading paramilitaries, or death squads, have not, as usual, received adequate attention in the U.S. corporate media. Were they truly concerned about narcotics traffic, this news would be on the front pages of every major newspaper. Instead, it is covered in articles buried in the back pages if not completely ignored.

One wonders who makes the decision to suppress these potential newspaper-selling headline stories. Can it come directly from the White House? After all, in an attempt to stand by his most loyal ally at a time of great "need," President George W. Bush has scheduled a visit to Bogotá, Colombia, during his tour through Latin America March 8 to 14. This is the first time a U.S. president will visit Bogotá since John F. Kennedy went. Bush will also visit Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico and Uruguay.

What are Uribe's ties, now being exposed?

Since the discovery last year of the seized computer of paramilitary leader Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, alias "Jorge 40," a string of exposures, like a domino effect, have been occurring almost daily in that nation. Apparently a large number of government officials have worked in partnership with paramilitaries carrying out voter fraud, intimidating voters, grabbing land, and committing violence targeting political opponents, social activists and union leaders. The violence includes kidnapping and assassinations.

Eight congressmen have been arrested and are now in jail because of their collaboration with paramilitaries. All are from pro-Uribe political parties and organizations. According to a statement of the opposition party, Alternative Democratic

Sen. Gustavo Petro has accused President Alvaro Uribe of allowing paramilitary ties with the politicians to disrupt the country with massacres, selective assassinations and kidnappings.

Pole (PDA), sent by e-mail on Feb. 23, "There are close to 100 pro-Uribe political leaders either in jail, fugitive or mentioned because of their ties to powerful illegal armed organizations."

On Feb.19, María Consuelo Araujo, the young foreign minister whom Uribe had fervently defended from opposition criticism, was forced to resign. This followed the arrest of her brother, Álvaro Araujo, a former governor and a pro-Uribe senator, along with four others. The Supreme Court ordered the arrest on the basis of Álvaro Araujo's ties to Jorge 40 and his role in the kidnapping of a politician who interfered with Araujo's election. The foreign minister's father, Álvaro Araujo Noguera, is also under investigation for similar charges.

Three days later, on Feb. 22, Jorge Noguera, a close ally of and 2002 electoral campaign manager for Uribe, who was also director of the Department of Administrative Security (DAS), or secret police, was arrested. Noguera was charged with having given a "hit list" of trade unionists, human rights advocates and other social activists to the paramilitaries. Several people named in the list were eventually killed.

Noguera's arrest has been the single worst nightmare for Uribe. According to an investigation by the prosecution's office, Noguera had met at least nine times with Álvaro Pupo Castro, spokesperson for the paramilitary chiefs and cousin of Jorge 40, in his office at the DAS.

According to Rafael García, former head of data processing for the DAS, Pupo Castro took the secret DAS information to Jorge

40 and the list of 15 trade union leaders who were then killed in Barranquilla (El Tiempo, Feb 22, 2007). García himself was detained in 2005 and charged with erasing the files of drug traffickers and paramilitaries from the DAS database.

Since then, he has collaborated with the prosecution as a key witness against Noguera. As a result of García's detention, Noguera resigned from his DAS post. Uribe named him to the consulate in Milan, Italy, from which he resigned last year surrounded by scandal.

Uribe's response

Uribe has given no convincing explanation. Instead, following Bush's dictum of "if you are not with me, you are against me" and the old saying of "a good offense is the best defense," Uribe has embarked on a vicious and deadly campaign of accusations against the opposition. Even before the current exposés, there was ample proof that the paramilitaries in Colombia are loyal followers of Uribe and his word is their supreme command.

Several leaders of the PDA, among them Sen. Gustavo Petro, have exposed pro-Uribe elements. Petro has asked for a congressional debate to inquire about the ties of politicians, businessmen and other sectors with paramilitarism in Antioquia. A former member of the M-19 guerrilla movement, Petro has consistently accused Uribe of allowing paramilitary ties with the politicians to end in the terrible violence disrupting the country with massacres, selective assassinations, kidnappings, etc. Uribe, in turn, has accused Petro and others of being "terrorists

dressed in business suits."

Two days after Uribe's statement, a new paramilitary grouping, the Black Eagles, sent a death threat to dozens of social, labor, student and alternative media organizations. Petro's brother was also threatened. Two members of the PDA were killed under suspicious circumstances.

Uribe has also lashed out against other opposition figures. He has called the director of the weekly magazine VOZ of the Colombian Communist Party (CCP), Carlos Lozano, a "FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] accomplice". This has the same effect as writing Lozano's name on the hit list of the death squads.

A CCP statement says, "The irresponsible declarations of Alvaro Uribe are a conscious provocation by the chief of state meant to continue the witch-hunt with which he attempts to defend himself from the charges that the prosecution and the Supreme Court have brought against his spokespeople in the parliament."

Paramilitaries demobilize?

A great deal of publicity has been given to the supposed demobilization of the Colombian Self Defense Units (AUC) or paramilitaries. Salvatore Mancuso, a well-known head of the Catatumbo Bloc of the AUC and responsible for the deaths of at least 5,200 people, is currently in jail. He took advantage of Uribe's "Justice and Peace" law, which allows paramilitaries to confess their crimes in exchange for a lighter sentence, and has said that "the rearmament of the self-defense forces is a crude reality that we cannot avoid or minimize..." (taken from a statement from FENSUAGRO, the national campesino union).

Next: More violence against Colombian organizations: Who are the Black Eagles? What is the U.S. role? And the visit of Gustavo Petro to Washington.

Immigrants protest slave wages

By Anne Pruden
Queens, N.Y.

In spite of subfreezing temperatures on streets lined with snow and ice, a multinational protest of several hundred people, mostly youth, put a Queens, N.Y.'s industrial district on notice Feb. 19. Rallying in support of immigrant workers on strike since December 2006 and recently fired from Handyfat Trading and Sunrise Plus, protesters marched outside these sweatshops demanding that bosses rehire the workers and settle a contract with their union, the Industrial Workers of the World.

The predominantly Latin@ workers led the rally and then carried the protest for blocks, passing factories and sweatshops, many of whose workers had to be there in spite of the holiday. Chants raised by the noisy marchers, some using plastic buckets turned over for drumming, insisted that no worker is illegal.

Protesters included a large number of IWW supporters, a contingent of the Million Worker March and local immigrant rights organizations such as Make the Road by Walking and the Despierta Bushwick Campaign.

The protest also targeted an Associated Supermarket, which has ignored minimum wage and overtime laws for its workers for years. Workers there have neither health benefits nor vacation pay. This



working class neighborhood came alive with cries of "Boycott Associated, Stop Slave Wages!" Chants of "Shut It Down!" were heard for blocks.

Labor united has won over \$600,000 in illegally withheld wages for workers on Knickerbocker Avenue, where the protests were held. □

Immigrant workers demand fair wages
Feb. 19 in Queens, N.Y.

CREDIT: MILLION WORKER MARCH



Stop campus racism

The more than 300 students and activists who confronted vicious anti-immigrant organizing by the New York University (NYU) College Republicans deserve a cheer for their act of solidarity. They turned out to protest a white supremacist “contest” offensively named “Catch the Illegal Immigrant.”

These right-wing events are being organized on campuses across the country. One person is secretly tagged as an “immigrant.” Students are encouraged to hunt and capture the person for a cash prize. Reactionaries like the Young Americans for Freedom and Young Republicans have organized this “game.”

Billed as “sport,” this event acts out the actual fascist vigilantism of the so-called Minutemen on the U.S.-Mexico border. It is historically reminiscent of racist lynch mobs and bounty hunters chasing African peoples under the

“Fugitive Slave Act.”

This “game” has been organized at a time when political pundits like Lou Dobbs have been given endless airtime to deliver classical fascist rants and harangues that undocumented workers are an “enemy within.”

Anti-racists turned out in much greater numbers than the reactionaries at NYU, as they have at other campuses in the U.S., including Michigan State, the University of Michigan and Penn State. These youth and their allies have demonstrated that it is the immigrant-bashers that are the “enemy within.”

This anti-racist protest in solidarity with undocumented workers revived the truth that many marched in support of in the 1960s: “There are no borders in the workers’ struggle.” This solidarity—in word and in deed—is a model for how to shut down these white supremacists trying to whip up vigilante mentality. □

There are many people that refuse to listen to the message of Socialism because they claim it is an extremist message. They put those who defend the Soviet Union and other past socialist nations, those who are calling for revolution, and those who desperately want to see change in the category of extremists with Timothy McVeigh and such. In fact, in 2001 the director of the FBI, Louis Freeh, labeled the Workers World Party a “threat” in a speech, provoking much outcry.

But my answer is thus: Is it extreme to want people to have jobs?

That’s what we’re after. We’re not after a welfare state, we’re after a society in which everyone is employed and paid a decent wage.

Is it extreme to want people to have decent quality healthcare?

Is it extreme to want democracy in the workplace?

Is it extreme to want an end to war?

Is it extreme to want equality for women and gay people?

These are not extreme demands.

What makes us extremists in their eyes is that we dare to look at history. History has shown that there have been nations that have achieved these demands. What makes us extremists is that we can look at Cuba, at North Korea, at China, at the USSR with our own eyes, not the lenses the oppressors put on us.

We can see a society with full employment. We can see free health care clinics. We can see a country with more hospital beds per capita than any nation on earth. We can see streets without poor people begging for spare change. We can see workplaces in which people are not being exploited, but rather cooperatively working for the good of the country. We can see ethnic groups sitting down together after years of feuding. We can see lesbian, gay, bi and trans people and women standing up, in a society that is no longer

holding them down and repressing their inner instincts.

We dare to see this, so we are extremists.

People associate the word “extremism” with Timothy McVeigh and neo-Nazis, people who commit acts of terrorism.

If this is the criteria then I can think of no group greater deserving of the title than the leaders of the capitalist world, in particular the imperialist U.S. government. They are the ones who bombed and sanctioned Iraq for a decade to force it into obedience. They are the ones who funded death squads in South America to put down the emerging forces of social reform. They are the ones who trained and now harbor Luis Posada Carriles, the man who blew up a Cuban airplane and killed scores of innocent people.

They are the ones who rule the world, and in doing so, allow 30,000 children to die every day from starvation. They are the ones who ravaged and underdeveloped the strong societies that once existed in Latin America and in Africa, only to replace them with chattel slavery and centuries of bondage.

They are the ones that are preparing for war with Iran, and they are the ones that let Hitler run rampant until it was clear that the Soviet Union was going to run him into the ground.

These are the extremists. The extremists are the bosses, the ones who own the banks, factories and large farms. These are the violent extremists and their ideology is profit, and they are so devoted to this ideology that they are willing to sacrifice the lives of millions to reach its end.

If we want to see an end to these horrors, we need to overturn their system, and we need to build a new world. Marxism-Leninism offers us a path to do so.

Extremism is truly what you make of it.

Long live the Revolution!
Caleb T. Maupin

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Homosexuality & transgender in Cuba

1965 UMAP brigades:

By Leslie Feinberg

One of the worst slanders against the Cuban Revolution is that the workers’ state was a “penal colony,” interning gay men in “concentration camps” in 1965. That charge, which refers to the 1965 mobilization of Units to Aid Military Production (UMAP), still circulates today as good coin.

Therefore the formation and ending of the UMAP work brigades in the history of the Cuban workers’ state is vitally important for today’s activists to study very carefully and thoroughly. Those who are working the hardest to make a revolution in the heartland of imperialism will pay the most careful attention, and bring the most genuine solidarity and humility—teachability—to this important analysis.

For those worldwide who struggle against oppression based on sexuality, gender and sex, the sharpening of this sexual/gender/sex contradiction in Cuba in 1965 offers this critical lesson: The way sexuality and the sexes are socially organized, and gender is socially assigned and allowed to be expressed, always has a history.

Since the overturning of matrilineal, cooperative societies, strict organization based on race, sex, gender expression and sexuality has served the dictates of ruling-class economic organization, and has been under the knuckles of state regulation and repression.

Pre-revolutionary Cuba was no exception.

Spain exports Inquisition

Without understanding Cuba’s historical process, it’s impossible to understand its revolutionary process.

Researcher Ian Lumsden noted in his study on Cuba and homosexuality, “There is much speculation about the incidence of homosexual activity between Cuba’s [I]ndigenous people, as there is with respect to other parts of the New World. Whatever its true extent, it was used as a pretext for Spain to enslave [N]atives on the grounds that they were not fully human.”

He explained that, “Condemnation of sodomy and subsequently of homosexuality, along with repressive mystification of women’s sexuality, have long been at the core of Spanish Catholic dogmas regarding sexuality.” Only crimes against the king and heresy ranked higher as crimes than “sodomy” in the Middle Ages.

Lumsden added, “There was competition between the Inquisition and the secular courts about who should have authority to exorcise it from the body politic.”

Sentences ranged from castration to being burned alive.

The domestic Spanish crusade against “sodomy,” he explained, was driven by the ruling class’ “desire to expunge Moorish cultural influence from Spain, which they associated, among other things, with homosexual and cross-dressing behavior.”

Pivotal impact of slavery

Lumsden paraphrased, “As Julio Le Riverend, Cuba’s leading economic historian, reminds us, the development of Cuba, particularly since the 18th century, cannot be understood without recognizing the pivotal impact of slavery as a mode of production on all social relations, including domestic ones. Homosexuality among slaves occurred in a context—that is, a

country whose dominant culture was both racist and homophobic.”

The system of plantation slavery—both chattel and latifundia—created rural enslavement in which the masters on the island, and the masters across the Florida Straits, claimed to own the bodies and lives and labor of enslaved workers.

The patriarchal slave-masters, landowners and their overseers dictated the clothing enslaved workers could wear; where they could live and in what arrangements; when the sexes could meet; where, when and how they could have sex; if they could marry and, if so, who they could marry.

Of the more than 40,000 Asian laborers counted in the 1871 Cuban census, for example, only 66 were women and the law forbade Chinese males from marrying African-Cubans.

Enslaved African males outnumbered females by a ratio of almost two to one. Males were often housed together in isolated regions in single-sex *barracones*—plantation barracks—in which no women were allowed.

In his oral narrative, former enslaved African laborer Esteban Montejo told Miguel Barnet about men coupling with other men in everyday life in the *barracones*. And he offered a glimpse at how they were gendered in relation to each other. Montejo only refers to the partner who looks after a *marido* (husband) as what the Spanish would term “sodomite.”

Montejo said it was only “after slavery that that word *afeminado* appeared.”

Centralization and commodification

Capitalism and imperialism did not invent homosexuality or gender variance in Cuba; these market forces centralized, commodified and commercialized them.

Rural poverty made capitalist relations—the often empty promise of jobs—a magnet that drew hundreds of thousands of campesin@s from the impoverished countryside to the cities, in particular the capital Havana, in search of wage work.

“During this period of severe sexual repression in advanced capitalist nations,” researchers Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich explained, “homosexual desire was often channeled into illegal and lucrative offshore markets like the Havana underworld.” (“Hidden From History”)

The crime syndicates and wealthy Cubans with ties to the Batista dictatorship gave “preferential hiring” to Cuban homosexuals, many of them feminine and/or cross-dressing males, to serve the demand of the dollar, and those whose wallets were filled with them.

“Other buyers of homosexual desire,” Arguelles and Rich elaborated, “were the fathers and sons of the Cuban bourgeoisie, who felt free to partake of homoerotic practices without being considered homosexual as long as they did not take the passive, so-called female role in sexual relations. Yet another common practice for Cuban heterosexual men was the procurement of a lesbian prostitute’s favors for a night.”

Poverty drew many heterosexual Cuban men “into this underworld or alternatively into a homosexual underground dominated by the Cuban homosexual bourgeoisie,” the two researchers added. The bourgeois Cuban male homosexual of this

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What they were, what they were not

era sought out masculine men from the laboring class.

“Thus,” Arguelles and Rich observed, “in many ways, pre-revolutionary homosexual liaisons in themselves fostered sexual colonialism and exploitation.”

Overall, the pre-revolutionary state regulated this sex-for-profit industry, rather than repress it.

Fidel: ‘We were forced to mobilize’

Shutting down the exploitative, unproductive economic industries in Havana after seizure of state power was just one task. Building a planned, productive economy that could meet the needs of 9 million urban and rural workers was a whole other job—and a difficult one, at that.

“Let me tell you about the problems we had,” Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro recalled. “In those first years we were forced to mobilize the whole nation because of the risks we were facing, which included that of an attack by the United States: the dirty war, the Bay of Pigs invasion, the Missile Crisis.”

Fidel Castro—referred to as “Fidel” by supporters of the Revolution and “Castro” by enemies—talked extensively about the UMAP in two interviews. The first was in a published conversation with Tomás Borge, published in “Face to Face with Fidel Castro” (Ocean Press: 1992). The second was in conversations between 2003 and 2005 with Ignacio Ramonet, published by the Cuban Council of State in April 2006.

Recalling the period of 1965, Fidel outlined three obstacles in organizing this island-wide emergency mobilization to defend the Revolution and to build the economy.

The first two: The CIA was beaming messages to entice skilled workers and technicians to emigrate. And members of Catholic, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventist religious organizations would not take up arms in defense of the island.

“[A]t the triumph of the Revolution,” Fidel explained, “the stage we are speaking of, the *machista* element was very much present, together with widespread opposition to having homosexuals in military units.”

Fidel said that as a result, “Homosexuals were not drafted at first, but then all that became a sort of irritation factor, an argument some people used to lash out at homosexuals even more.

“Taking those three categories into account we founded the so-called Military Units to Support Production (UMAP) where we sent people from the said three categories: those whose educational level was insufficient; those who refused to serve

out of religious convictions; or homosexuals who were physically fit. Those were the facts; that’s what happened.

“Those units were set up all throughout the country for purposes of work, mainly to assist agriculture. That is, homosexuals were not the only ones affected, though many of them certainly were, not all of them, just those who were called to do mandatory service in the ranks, since it was an obligation and everyone was participating.”

Sexual, gender contradictions sharpened

Revolutionary re-organization in Cuba in 1965, staring down the barrel of imperialism’s cannons, had to reintegrate a numerically large homosexual/transgender population from the cities back into the rural agricultural production.

This returning workforce from the capitalist urban center had to go back to the rural agricultural production that many had left earlier in their lives.

When large numbers of feminine homosexuals returned to the countryside from Havana, it was not just a conflict of differently socialized sexual expression, but a collision between historically differently gendered workforces.

Capitalist relations had consolidated and commercialized the industry which had given mass expression to this sexuality and gender expression in males, and shaped these as commodities on the auction block of the market.

The urban homosexuality/transgender culture, dress, mores and social semaphores seemed to many Cubans—even men who had sex with men and women who had sex with women—to have washed up on the island’s shores on the waves of oppressive and exploitative capitalist and imperialist cultures.

Arguelles and Rich stressed that at the time of the revolution, “Erotic loyalty (and, in the case of women, subservience) to the opposite sex was assumed as normal even by homosexuals. Hence, for many Cubans of this era, homosexuality was a mere addendum to customary marital roles. Among others, it was just a profitable commodification of sexual fantasy. For the vast majority, homosexuality



‘I am absolutely opposed to any form of repression, contempt, scorn or discrimination with regard to homosexuals. It is a natural tendency and human that must simply be respected.’

—Fidel Castro, 1992

units but in work units.”

Fidel cut cane; children worked in the fields. Renowned Cubans such as musician and poet Pablo Milanés and Baptist pastor and MP Raúl Suárez worked in the UMAP.

The whole island was at hard at work building an independent existence, in economic soil deeply furrowed by the combines of colonialism and imperialism.

Fidel shut down the UMAP

Fidel Castro stated categorically about the UMAP, “I can tell you for sure that there was prejudice against homosexuals.”

On the island, the Cuban National Union of Artists and Writers (UNEAC) reportedly protested treatment of homosexuals working in UMAP, prompting Fidel to check it out for himself.

A Cuban who worked in a UMAP, interviewed by Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal in 1970-1971, related that Fidel slipped into a UMAP brigade one night and lay down in one of the hammocks. The interviewee said the UMAP guards would sometimes cut the hammock cords with their sabers. “When one guard raised his saber he found himself staring at Fidel; he almost dropped dead. Fidel is the man of the unexpected visits.” (“In Cuba”)

A youth described as a “young Marxist revolutionary” told Cardenal that 100 young males from the Communist Youth were sent to the UMAP to report back about how they were treated. “It was a highly secret operation. Not even their families knew of this plan. Afterward the boys told what had happened. And they put an end to the UMAP.”

Closing the UMAP required further large-scale reorganization of agricultural work, the lifeblood of the economy.

One youth concluded to Cardenal, “[W]e who were in the UMAP discovered that the

made life a shameful and guilt-ridden experience.”

Fidel stresses that the UMAP “were not internment units, nor were they punishment units; on the contrary, it was about morale, to give them a chance to work and help the country in those difficult circumstances. Besides, there were many who for religious reasons had the chance to help their homeland in another way by serving not in combat

Revolution and the UMAP were separable. And we said to ourselves: We won’t leave Cuba, we’ll stay and make what is bad not bad.” (Jon Hillson, blythe.org)

Fidel: ‘Overcoming legacy of chauvinism’

Fidel explained that during this period of early revolutionary history, “Concerning women, there was a strong prejudice, as strong as in the case of homosexuals. I’m not going to come up with excuses now, for I assume my share of the responsibility. I truly had other concepts regarding that issue.

“I am not going to deny that, at one point, male chauvinism also influenced our attitude toward homosexuality,” he said.

“We inherited male chauvinism and many other bad habits from the conquistadors. I would say that it corresponded to a given stage and is largely associated with that legacy of chauvinism.”

Fidel stressed, “Homosexuals were certainly discriminated against—more so in other countries—but it happened here too, and fortunately our people, who are far more cultured and learned now, have gradually left that prejudice behind.

“We have made a real advance—we can see it, especially in the young people, but we can’t say that sexual discrimination has been completely wiped out and we mustn’t lower our guard.”

Fidel said, “I must also tell you that there were—and there are—extremely outstanding personalities in the fields of culture and literature, famous names this country takes pride in, who were and still are homosexual.

“Today the people have acquired a general, rounded culture. I’m not going to say there is no machismo, but now it’s not anywhere near the way it was back then, when that culture was so strong. With the passage of years and the growth of consciousness about all of this, we have gradually overcome problems and such prejudices have declined. But believe me, it was not easy.”

Fidel Castro concluded in 1992: “I am absolutely opposed to any form of repression, contempt, scorn or discrimination with regard to homosexuals. It is a natural tendency and human that must simply be respected.”

Next: Charge of “concentration camps” fascist-baited Cuban workers’ state.

Lavender & Red parts 1-91 can be read at workers.org. Look for the lavender and red logo. Parts 86-91 also explore sexuality, gender and sex in Cuba before and after the 1959 Revolution.

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MUNDO OBRERO

EN LA LÍNEA DE PIQUETE

Por Sue Davis

Continúa de página 12

Bazaar en la Avenida Manhattan en Williamsburg, Brooklyn montaron una línea de piquete para dar publicidad a su litigio que demanda un sueldo fijo por hora. Y el grupo comunitario de Bushwick, en Brooklyn “Make the Road by Walking” (Se Hace Camino al Andar) está demandando más de \$1 millón en sueldos no pagados a empacadores en el Associated en la Avenida Knickerbocker. (New York Times, 11 de febrero)

Aunque dos empresas grandes, Gristedes y Food Emporium, llegaron a un acuerdo hace algunos años

de pagar \$3 millones, después de estar acusadas de pagar a repartidores \$75 por una semana de 60 horas, el progreso para estos trabajadores de bajo sueldo, es lamentablemente lento. Los litigios a menudo son combatidos tienda por tienda a través de la agencia laboral de la fiscalía.

Ahora que el sueldo mínimo del estado llegó a \$7,15 el primero de enero, y con la participación de organizador@s de los sindicatos en el caso, hay un rayo de esperanza para est@s trabajador@s que reciben un sueldo bajo el nivel de pobreza.

Mandato para licencia pagada por enfermedad

El 5 de febrero San Francisco se convirtió en la primera ciudad estadounidense en requerir que los empresarios paguen a l@s trabajador@s licencia por enfermedad. L@s trabajador@s también podrán faltar a su trabajo para ayudar a un/a miembr@ de la familia o a su pareja que esté enferm@. L@s trabajador@s acumularán una hora de licencia pagada por cada 30 horas de trabajo.

La nueva política, aprobada por un voto en noviembre, fue promovida por una coalición de trabajador@s de restaurantes, casi tod@s jóvenes, que forman parte de los más de 100.000 trabajador@s sin licencia por enfermedad. La ciudad también debe ser aplaudida por tener el sueldo mínimo local más alto en el país: \$9,14 por hora. □

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

La lucha por los derechos de l@s inmigrantes y de la mujer: Dos luchas entrelazadas

Por Minnie Bruce Pratt

Dos luchas históricas se entrelazan en el mes de marzo: la lucha por los derechos de l@s inmigrantes y por los derechos de las mujeres internacionalmente.

El 8 de marzo es el Día Internacional de la Mujer (DIM). Comenzó como un día para incluir en la lucha de clases a las mujeres obreras, pobres y de nacionalidades oprimidas. Y a la vez proporcionó un día para que las mujeres afirmaran su liberación al igual que la de sus compañeros, y otros miembros de la comunidad.

La simiente para una celebración formal del DIM comenzó en 1907 durante la Conferencia Internacional de Mujeres Socialistas. Esta fue organizada por la socialista alemana, Clara Zetkin. Entre las participantes estuvo la camarada bolchevique, Alexandra Kollontai. El llamado al día internacional para las mujeres surgió de Zetkin en 1910 durante la Segunda Conferencia de Mujeres Socialistas en Copenhague y l@s socialistas europe@s comenzaron a celebrar el DIM en 1911. (www.marxists.org)

En 1917, en el Día Internacional de la Mujer, miles de mujeres trabajadoras de la costura salieron de sus trabajos en Petrogrado, y se unieron a los obreros, aumentando la cifra de manifestantes a decenas de miles proveyendo así la chispa que encendió la Revolución Rusa. (www.cwluherstory.com)

En los Estados Unidos, una huelga militante de mujeres inmigrantes en la industria de textiles en la Ciudad de Nueva York el 8 de marzo de 1857 pudo haber inspirado a las mujeres comunistas para tomar ese día como la fecha oficial del DIM.

‘Pan y rosas’

Ese día en el 1857, los soldados le dispararon a las trabajadoras textiles mientras ellas estaban manifestándose demandando una semana de trabajo más corta en la Ciudad de Nueva York.

El 8 de marzo de 1908, decenas de miles de mujeres de la industria textil llenaron las calles de Nueva York “para protestar contra el trabajo infantil, las malas condiciones en los talleres y exigir el derecho al voto de la mujer.” (www.holtlaborlibrary.org)

Estas mujeres obreras eran de muchos países. En 1911 en la huelga “Pan y Rosas” en Lowell, Massachusetts, las obreras habían venido de 24 naciones diferentes y hablaban en más de 40 idiomas.

El 75 por ciento de todas las obreras de fábrica en 1920 eran recientes inmigrantes o de la primera generación inmigrante. (“American Women in the Progressive Era”: 1993)

Los peligros que ellas enfrentaron eran gigantescos.

En 1911 cuando un fuego comenzó en el taller Triangle Shirtwaist en Manhattan, 146 mujeres jóvenes perecieron. La mayoría de las víctimas tenía entre 13 y 25 años de edad y eran también inmigrantes recientes.



Elvira Arellano

Mujeres líderes en la lucha de inmigrantes

Hoy, mujeres y hombres inmigrantes indocumentados enfrentan trabajos extremadamente peligrosos, largas horas y salarios de explotación además de la falta de beneficios de salud y cuidado infantil.

Las trabajadoras indocumentadas también enfrentan amenazas de violación sexual o violencia doméstica y hasta la deportación si reportaran los abusos.

Tal como las obreras en la Ciudad de Nueva York que se resistieron en las famosas acciones del “Levantamiento de 20.000” en 1910, las mujeres de hoy están proveyendo un liderazgo en el desarrollo de la lucha por los derechos de l@s inmigrantes que recobró vida el año pasado en los Estados Unidos.

Estas mujeres traen consigo las tradiciones de resistencia y lucha de sus países, dando a la lucha de clases aquí una nueva vitalidad y experiencia al igual que nuevas tácticas y estrategias.

El 28 de marzo del año pasado otro “levantamiento de 20.000” tomó lugar cuando ese mismo número de estudiantes salió de sus aulas en por lo menos 70 escuelas de enseñanza superior en el Sur de California para protestar contra las leyes contra-inmigrante propuestas por el Senado de los Estados Unidos.

Una de ellas fue Rosalina García, una estudiante de escuela secundaria de Santa Ana, California, que enfrentó a la policía que tenía pistolas, armas Taser y máscaras. La policía, dijo ella, era particularmente hostil frente a las mujeres. Sin embargo, dijo, “nunca me daré por vencida”. (www.uprisingradio.org)

El torrente de millones de inmigrantes y trabajador@s indocumentad@s producido por la organización de la Coalición del 25 de Marzo siguió manifestándose en las calles por meses a través de los EEUU, y las mujeres proporcionaron un liderazgo clave.

El pasado mes de mayo Evelina Molina ayudó a convocar 40.000 personas a las calles de Santa Rosa en el norte de California, usando sus habilidades como radiodifusora y productora de la estación de radio pública de habla hispana, KBBF y su conocimiento de la historia de la sindicalización de los trabajadores de la agricultura.

Y en noviembre pasado, en Carolina del Norte, dos trabajadoras latinas lideraron a más de mil compañer@s de trabajo latin@s y african@american@s en un paro en la planta más grande del mundo de procesamiento de carne de cerdo. Estaban protestando la campaña represiva contra l@s trabajador@s documentad@s e indocumentad@s por el Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas de

Estados Unidos (ICE por las siglas en inglés), acciones que tenían la intención de intimidar a l@s organizador@s sindicales. (www.fistyouth.blogspot.com)

Elvira Arellano, de 31 años de edad, fundadora de La Familia Unida Latina, sigue con su lucha de más de seis meses en contra de su deportación desde su lugar de santuario en una iglesia en Chicago. Siendo madre de un hijo nacido en los EEUU, ella ha destacado la opresión especial y la resistencia de las mujeres trabajadoras inmigrantes, diciendo, “Lucho para que la gente indocumentada sea respetada”.

‘El lugar de la mujer está en la lucha’

Teresa Cervas, coordinadora en el Sur de California de la organización progresista filipina BAYAN-USA, comenta, “L@s filipin@s son la exportación número uno de nuestro país, forzad@s a salir de nuestra patria y mudarnos a otros países para trabajar y lograr estabilidad económica”. Las Filipinas envían más enfermer@s a los EEUU que cualquier otro país. De los miles que salen cada año, la mayoría abrumadora son mujeres.

Afiliado a BAYAN, el grupo “Babae” (Mujer) organiza para lograr “los derechos y el bienestar de las mujeres filipinas de diferentes generaciones en los Estados Unidos” Su lema es: “¡Somos personas, no somos ilegales! ¡El lugar de la mujer está en la lucha!”

En el Sur de los Estados Unidos, l@s organizador@s están estableciendo la conexión entre el derecho de l@s inmigrantes a quedarse en este país y el derecho del@s sobrevivientes del huracán Katrina, principalmente african@american@s, a volver a sus casas. (Asociación de Derechos Inmigrantes de Mississippi)

Tanto l@s que nacieron en la región de la Costa del Golfo y l@s que inmigraron allí se refieren a los principios de la ONU sobre el desplazamiento doméstico para condenar a los EEUU por rehusar proporcionar cosas básicas como alimentos, agua potable y refugio durante y después de los huracanes Katrina y Rita. Se están denominando Personas Internamente Desplazadas. (www.peopleshurricane.org)

Se ha estimado que hasta un 80 por ciento de l@s sobrevivientes de Katrina son mujeres de color. (Chicago Tribune del 14 de septiembre del 2006)

En el centro de la lucha contra la catástrofe hecha por el gobierno luego de los huracanes, están las mujeres africanamericanas de la Costa del Golfo, como Dyan French Cole, también conocida como Mama D, una líder por mucho tiempo en su comunidad.

Desde su casa en el Séptimo Distrito (Seventh Ward), ella y la “Patrulla del Alma” proporcionan comida gratis a sus vecin@s, ayudan a limpiar sus casas, luchan para prevenir que las viviendas sean demolidas y luchan por el derecho de los seres humanos a tener una casa de la cual no serán sacados por las fuerzas del dinero y del poder. (www.aas.duke.edu/katrina) □

EN LA LÍNEA DE PIQUETE

Por Sue Davis

Mujeres entablan demanda de clase contra Wal-Mart

Una corte federal de apelación en San Francisco decidió 2 a 1 el 6 de febrero que el litigio por discriminación sexual más grande en la historia de este país podría proceder como juicio de demanda de clase. El abogado principal de las demandantes estimó que la clase — mujeres que han trabajado en Wal-Mart desde el 21 de diciembre de 1998 — incluye a más de 2 millones de mujeres. “Una matemática simple, dada la cantidad de miembros de esta clase y la especie de diferencias que hemos mostrado, indica que las pérdidas para estas mujeres están en los miles de millones,” dijo Seligman al New York Times. (7 de febrero.)

Después de revisar una extensa evidencia, la mayoría compuesta de dos jueces encontró “prueba significativa de una política corporativa de discriminación”. También concluyeron que “las empleadas alrededor del país estuvieron sometidas a un patrón común de discriminación”. Con tanto riesgo, Wal-Mart anunció que pediría a un panel de 15 jueces de la corte de apelación a que considere este caso.

En otro caso que fue resuelto el 25 de enero, Wal-Mart llegó a un acuerdo para saldar cuentas en un litigio federal y pagar \$33,5 millones en sueldos, más los intereses, a 86.680 trabajador@s. Sin embargo, más de 40 procesos estatales, que acusan al minorista más grande y rico del mundo de no pagar por tiempo extra y hacer que l@s trabajador@s laboraran sin tiempo contado, todavía están pendientes.

Inmigrantes: labor cautiva

¿Cómo fue que 12 guatemaltecos a quienes les dieron visas por seis meses para trabajar legalmente sembrando pinos en Carolina de Norte, terminaron como empleados cautivos en Connecticut? Luego de que sus pasaportes fueran confiscados, los inmigrantes fueron forzados a trabajar 80 horas a la semana por \$3,75 la hora, y les fue negado cuidado médico de emergencia y amenazados con cárcel y deportación si se quejaban.

Una corte federal en Hartford escuchará el caso que los hombres tienen contra Imperial Nurseries, un mayorista de plantas. Estudiantes de leyes en la Clínica para la Promoción de los Derechos de Trabajador@s e Inmigrantes auspiciada por la universidad de Yale, ayudaron a los guatemaltecos a entablar el juicio. (New York Times, 8 de febrero)

Empacadores de supermercados luchan por sueldo

Organizador@s que representan el sindicato “Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union” están recorriendo los supermercados de los cinco condados de Nueva York en busca de empacadores sin paga que no estén en uniones, para incorporarles. Est@s trabajador@s tienen que sustentarse únicamente con las propinas obtenidas, que pueden ser de \$4 a \$30 a la hora.

El 10 de febrero, trabajadores en el Food

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