

MUNDO OBRERO

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Don Imus: A creature of the bosses

As of April 11, MSNBC has fired Don Imus, which is a victory for the progressive movement. The sentiment demanding he be removed from the air waves continues to grow. The nauseating racist and sexist remarks that media talk show host Imus made on April 4 against the women's basketball team at Rutgers University do not bear repeating in this newspaper. They have been reprinted and repeated in all the printed and electronic media, mainstream and alternative.

Due to the firestorm of protest against these remarks, Imus was suspended from his "Imus in the

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Huge Iraq march says: U.S. out now!

By Deirdre Griswold

Four years ago, U.S. troops drove their armored personnel carriers and tanks into Baghdad, pulled down a statue of Saddam Hussein in a well-choreographed photo op, and announced they had "liberated" the city—which could barely function after U.S. planes and missiles had destroyed much of its infrastructure in "shock and awe."

Just four years later, this April 9, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis marched the six miles from Kufa to Najaf, south of Baghdad, demanding an end to the U.S. occupation of their country. The marchers then held a rally in Revolution Square, named after a 1920 uprising against British colonial rule.

A Reuters report described the scene:

"Hundreds of banners saying 'Down with Bush, Down with America' were carried by protesters as Iraqi police and soldiers guarded checkpoints in and around Najaf and Kufa.

"Many people, draped in Iraqi flags, set U.S. flags ablaze and some trampled on and struck U.S. and Israeli flags painted on the ground with their shoes, an act considered one of the worst insults in Arab culture.

"In four years of occupation, our sons have been killed and women made widows,' cried Ahmed al-Mayahie, 39, a Shia from the southern city of Basra.

"The occupier raised slogans saying Iraq is free, Iraq is liberated. What freedom? What liberation? There is nothing but

destruction. We do not want their liberation and their presence. We tell them to get out of our land.'

"Falah Hassan Shanshil, an MP from al-Sadr's parliamentary bloc, said: 'This crowd has come to reject the American occupation and demand its withdrawal.'"

The Bush White House has made no comment.

This remarkable demonstration was held in the midst of a brutal war that has already cost the lives of hundreds of thousands

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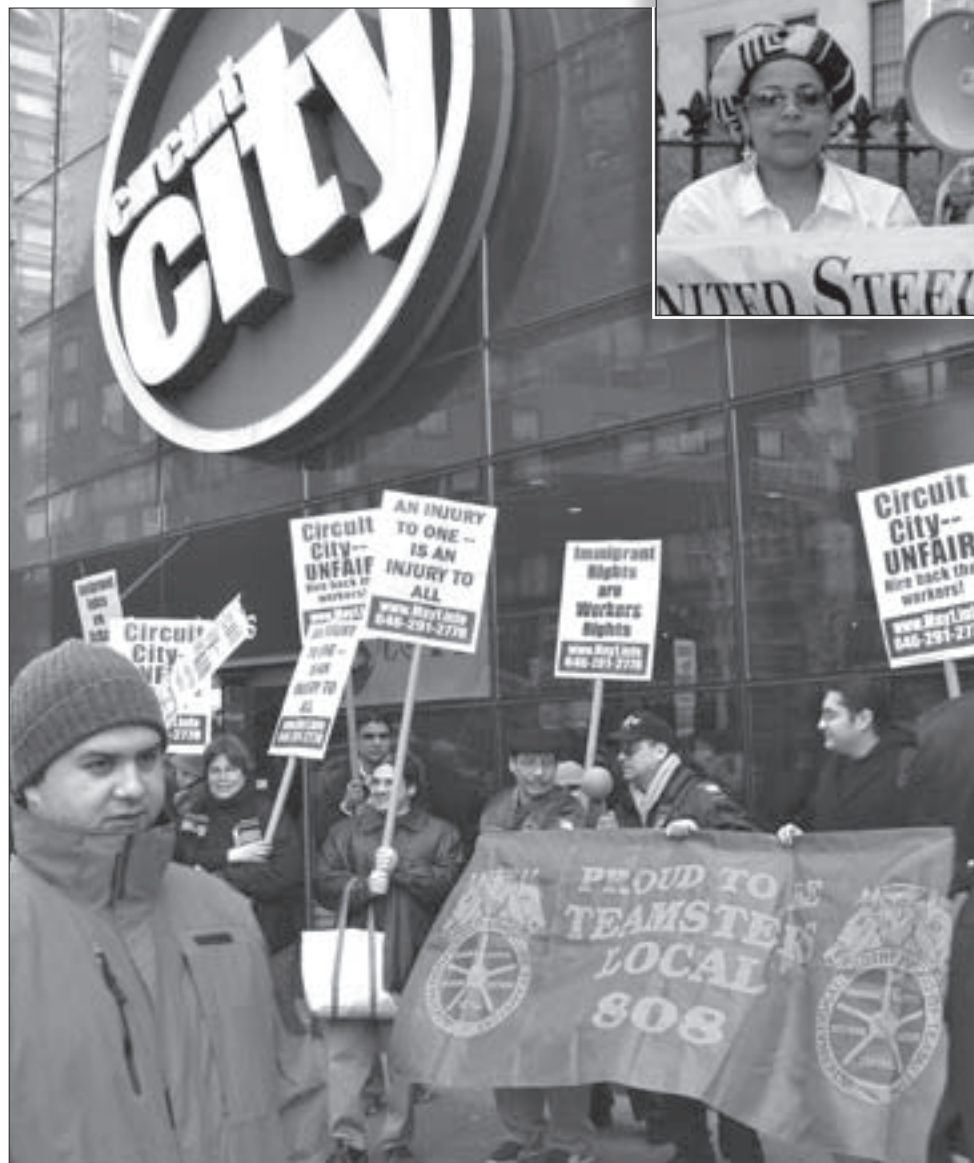
of Iraqis. Not only that, but it was held at the precise moment that the Pentagon was escalating the war in a "surge" that is supposed to prove it can be won and Iraq can be pacified.

In recent weeks, U.S. troops have been going house to house with Iraqi puppet forces in Baghdad, especially in the area known as Sadr City, terrorizing the population. They are supposedly searching for "insurgents," but the massive demonstration showed that opponents of the U.S. war and occupation are everywhere in Iraq.

The corporate sponsors of the war, especially the oil companies and the military-industrial complex, need to be reassured that "normal" life—that is, a functioning economy that turns out profits for the big corporations—can be restored and their

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A life fighting to build a socialist future



WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN
Rachel Nasca speaking at a May 1, 2006, rally for immigrant rights in Boston. See page 8.

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NYC to sink \$1 billion in school for cops

By G. Dunkel
New York

New York's billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg has earmarked \$1 billion to build a new police training center in Queens on the site of the current police auto pound. It will house "instruction space, support and administration buildings, a field house, indoor shooting ranges, a tactical village, a housing facility, driver training fields, K-9 environments, parking, a vehicle maintenance facility and a utility plant," according to the press release.

Currently, facilities for these kinds of training are scattered throughout the city.

Bloomberg's justification for spending a billion dollars failed to stir the souls here. "All the successes our city has achieved are built on a solid foundation of public safety. As we invest in our city's future, we must also strengthen this foundation," he said.

Many people in New York would feel that having a decent roof over their heads and floor under their bodies would function better to supply a "solid foundation" for their lives. The rents in New York have been rising to new heights every year since Bloomberg was elected to his first term in 2002 and the production of new affordable housing has come to a virtual stop.

Real estate speculators a few months ago were able to buy Stuyvesant Town/Peter Cooper Village, a community of 13,000 apartments built with city help to supply middle-income New Yorkers with apartments they could afford. Starrett City, a more working-class complex with 8,000 apartments, is now "in play," as the real estate interests put it.

Bloomberg approved both deals.

On March 31, 2003, during the first year of Bloomberg's term, there were 265,702 families on the waiting lists for subsidized housing in the city, according to the NYC Housing Authority. On June 30, 2006—the date of the latest report—there were 239,549 families waiting, about a 10-percent drop.

While the Bloomberg administration enthusiastically congratulates itself over the "drop" in the waiting list, having 900,000 people in substandard housing instead of over a million is no cause for celebration.

Given the huge increase in rents, which has forced many of those waiting for publicly subsidized housing to double up with other families or move in with friends, situations which disrupt family life and increase the pressures on working people in New York City, spending one billion dollars on affordable housing or using the site in Queens to serve the housing needs of working and poor people makes a great deal of sense.

New York City devotes far more money and resources to its police than many countries whose populations approximate New York's. The NYCPD is the largest in North America and one of the largest in the world, when you discount the countries where the cops are part of the army.

According to the city comptroller's report, it is planning to spend \$3.8 billion in fiscal year 2007 on the 37,038 officers it had on the payroll in January 2007, including the transit and housing police units.

Compare this with Austria, for example, which has about 7.9 million people. According to a report for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Austria has about 20,000 cops to cover the whole country, which covers a much larger area than New York City. It also has about 3,000 correction officers. According to the CIA Factbook, it spends about \$2.2 billion on its security forces—nearly \$1.5 billion less than New York.

Consider the figures for Haiti, Austria, Burundi, Benin and Switzerland, whose population estimates range from 8.3 to 7.7 million. These countries have far fewer people in their armies than New York City has in its police force. (See the CIA Factbook and www.nationmaster.com)

This comparison makes it clear that if the City of New York did not maintain such a large body of armed people, it would have far more resources to devote to the needs of its people. □



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'Race Against Death' in Mumia Abu-Jamal's case

By **Betsey Piette**

In the latest attempt by the state to deny his legal rights and derail political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal's appeal of his 1982 death penalty conviction, prosecutors have called on the entire Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to recuse itself from hearing Abu-Jamal's case in Philadelphia on May 17.

One of Abu-Jamal's pending appeals cites routine practices of Philadelphia prosecutors that are racially discriminatory. In his case, this is specifically racial discrimination during jury selection. At the time of the trial, Pennsylvania's Governor Ed Rendell was the elected district attorney in Philadelphia. Rendell's wife Marjorie Rendell currently serves as a judge on the Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Instead of simply asking that Marjorie Rendell recuse herself, a move that the defense might favor, prosecutors say "they want to avoid any possible grounds for future appeal" by removing the entire court. They show no concern that Ed Rendell, as Pennsylvania's governor, can reissue a death warrant should Abu-Jamal's appeals be denied.

From the moment that Mumia Abu-Jamal was arrested for the Dec. 9, 1981, shooting of a Philadelphia police officer, the bourgeois state—police, courts, prison and media—has used every means at its disposal in its drive to convict an innocent man.

"The history of the criminal case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, which is by now almost 25 years old, has been characterized by bias right from the start: against a Black man whom the court denied a jury of his peers, against a member of the economic underclass who did not have a real claim to a qualified defense, and against a radical, whose allegedly dangerous militancy obliged the state to eliminate him

from the ranks of society."

So writes German author Michael Schiffmann in his new book, "Race against Death—Mumia Abu-Jamal: a Black Revolutionary in White America," just released in Germany this past month.

Schiffmann's book builds upon evidence presented by two earlier books written about Abu-Jamal's case: Dan Williams' 2001 "Executing Justice" and Dave Lindorff's 2003 "Killing Time," and presents new evidence as well.

While researching his book last year, Schiffmann discovered two photographs on the Internet taken by Pedro Polakoff, the only press photographer present at the 1981 crime scene. Polakoff arrived 12 minutes after hearing about the shooting on the police radio and ten minutes before the arrival of the police unit responsible for forensics and photographs. No photographs had been taken by the police unit when Polakoff left 45 minutes later.

A picture worth a thousand words...

Three of Polakoff's original shots were published in Philadelphia newspapers at the time. Polakoff also published five photos on the Internet to demonstrate three points:

1) "The cops manipulated evidence and supplied the trial court with stuff that was simply stage-managed. On Polakoff's photos, P.O. Faulkner's police hat at first is clearly on the roof of Billy Cook's VW, and only later on the sidewalk in front of 1234 Locust where it was photographed by the police photographer who arrived 10 minutes after Polakoff!

2) "In court, Police Officer James Forbes claimed that he had 'secured' the weapons of both Faulkner and Mumia without touching them on their metal parts in order to not destroy potential fingerprints. However, in the single photo reprinted in the book you can see that



Racism in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal has caused international outrage. Above is the cover of a new book by Michael Schiffmann, "Race against Death—Mumia Abu-Jamal: a Black Revolutionary in White America," released in Germany.

Forbes is touching the weapons on their metal parts, and quite a few of Polakoff's other photos make it clear that Forbes touched and smudged these weapons all over, destroying any potential fingerprint evidence that may have been on them.

3) "The second-most important prosecution witness, cab driver Robert Chobert, simply was not parked in the spot, allegedly right behind Officer Faulkner's police squad car, where he claimed to have been and from where he claimed to have observed Mumia fire the shot that killed the officer."

Schiffmann also writes that Polakoff heard all the officers present express their conviction that Abu-Jamal had been the passenger in Billy Cook's VW and had

Rediscovered photos show that the cops manipulated evidence and supplied the trial court with stage-managed proofs.

fired and killed Faulkner by a single shot fired from the passenger seat of the car—a very different story than what prosecutors presented at trial. However, the passenger in Cook's car was Kenneth Freeman, not Abu-Jamal.

According to Polakoff, police opinion was based on the testimony of three witnesses who were still present at the scene—a parking lot attendant, a drug-addicted woman and another woman—all of whom either disappeared or died within days of the shooting.

No mention of these witnesses appears in any report presented by the police or prosecution. Schiffmann writes that Polakoff told him that he was simply ignored when he repeatedly contacted the DA's office to give them his account—and his photos—of the crime scene.

"Race against Death" also presents explosive and entirely original ballistics analysis, arrived at after more than three years of research, that also clearly disputes the state's case.

Schiffmann's book is important, not just for his comprehensive research on Mumia's case, but for placing the case in the historical context of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements; Mumia's extraordinary yet typical history as a Black youth confronting racism; and the development of the U.S. into a virtual police state for many segments of the population. Schiffmann's book has been published in Germany. It is still awaiting a U.S. publisher. □

Rev. Pinkney's supporters mobilize for sentencing

By **Cheryl LaBash**
Detroit

The Rev. Edward Pinkney won't be alone in Benton Harbor, Mich., when he faces the racist power structure that is trying to silence him and his organization, BANCO (Black Autonomy Network of Community Organizations). On March 21, the Rev. Edward Pinkney was convicted by an all-white jury on charges that supporters explain were highly motivated by political struggles taking place in Berrien County, Mich.

Detroit supporters are already organizing bus transportation to fill the courtroom when he is sentenced on May 14.

Rev. Pinkney was accused of five counts of election improprieties during the successful 2005 recall election of Glen Yarbrough, Benton Harbor city commissioner and supporter of the Harbor Shores Development.

In the first trial, a jury with two African-American participants could not reach agreement. Charges included merely having another person's absentee ballot in his possession. Pinkney admitted giving stamps and labels to people who could not afford to buy stamps to send in their absentee ballots.

A well-known community leader, Rev. Pinkney relentlessly exposes the racist court and economic system oppressing the mostly African-American people of Benton Harbor. The details of his trial

and the jury selection prove once again what he has said all along about the unjust and racist treatment of the Benton Harbor people, especially the exclusion of Black jurors.

Wayne Bentley, a Kent County jury commissioner from Grand Rapids, reviewed three years of jury questionnaires from Berrien County where Rev. Pinkney's trial took place. He found five ways that poor people—who in this racist society are disproportionately people of color—are currently being systematically under-represented on juries in that county.

But what about that Harbor Shores Development?

Harbor Shores is planned to be an upscale housing, retail development, a Jack Nicklaus golf course and more, on land currently owned by the initiator of the \$500 million project—the transnational Whirlpool Corporation—and public land on the Lake Michigan shoreline owned by the city of Benton Harbor.

While the project, undoubtedly a big tax write off for Whirlpool, is portrayed as an "anti-poverty program" for the people of Benton Harbor, the city would only receive \$1 million for the land and the people of Benton Harbor would receive "training" while being used as the excuse to get tax moneys from the state of Michigan to clean up former industrial sites for the



Black Autonomy Network of Community Organizations (BANCO)

WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Rev. Pinkney told the truth and tried to stop the capitalist bonanza called Harbor Shores. Could

his truth about this racist enterprise have been his "crime"?

In much the same way that U.S. "foreign aid" never really helps people in oppressed countries, capitalist "developments" don't do much for poor communities here, especially Black and Latin@ communities.

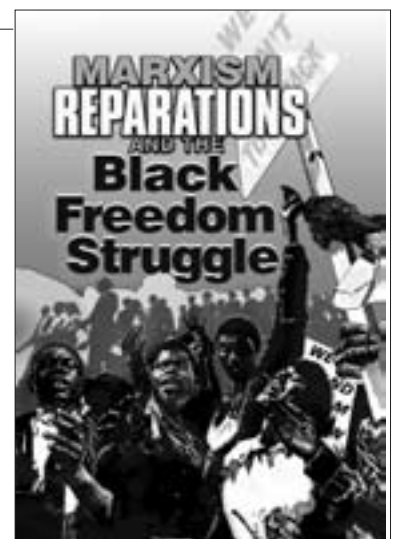
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Flint sit-down

The specter of workers' power

By Martha Grevatt

The specter of workers' power haunted Wall Street in 1937. On Feb. 7 of that year, the New York Times lamented that in Flint, Mich., workers "actually seized physical possession of three large factories belonging to General Motors. They occupied and held those plants by force of arms, repelling efforts to evict them and starve them out. They ejected and barred company representatives and police. And set up executive councils that ran the plants.

"Once a sit-down strike has become a state of occupation," the Times lamented, "there is little a company can do."

Labor historians are nearly unanimous in recognizing the advantages of the sit-down over the conventional strike.

"The fear that his job would be taken by a strikebreaker or that production would somehow be maintained without him ... was removed when the employee sat by his idle machine inside the plant," wrote Sidney Fine in the 1969 book "Sit Down."

"As a picket outside the plant, moreover, the striker might be attacked by the police or even arrested and sent to jail. The employer, however, would hesitate

to use force to dislodge strikers inside his plant because this cast him in the role of aggressor, because violence might damage his machinery, and because strikers were capable of putting up a more formidable defense inside the plant than on an exposed picket line. The strike on the inside thus offset the advantages which access to the forces of law and order normally gave the employer."

Concurring, Foster Rhea Dulles wrote in 1949 in "Labor in America" that "[i]t was not an act of violence but of passive resistance, doubly effective in that such a strike could only be broken by forcible removal of the workers from company premises."

Events in the tumultuous 1930s bear this out. During that period, scores of workers in the United States and other countries were killed on the picket line, including 18 massacred during the famous Little Steel strike in the same year as the Flint victory. Yet rarely were workers murdered during a sit-down, a notable exception being the killing of six and wounding of 22 strikers during the 1936 occupation of the Semperit rubber mill in Krakow, Poland.

LABOR HISTORY

Only in smaller enterprises did the bosses and the state attempt to evict strikers. After several brutal assaults in Detroit, the United Auto Workers held a March 23, 1937, rally of tens of thousands in Cadillac Square, threatening a general strike and a two for one: two sit-downs for every one attempt at evacuation. Sit-downers were left in peace after that.

The sit-down experience also had a profound and lasting impact on striker consciousness and morale.

In 1935 an Akron rubber worker wrote to the local newspaper about his dreary existence, concluding: "[W]e've nothing to look forward to. We're factory hands."

Covering the 1936 sit-downs, Louis Adamic described the transformation: "[S]itting by their machines, cauldrons, boilers and work

benches they talked. Some realized for the first time how important they were in the process of rubber production...the situation is dramatic, thrilling."

For example, when the rubber union president was beaten by company goons, "factory workers sat down in protest, forcing the company to close for a day. When work was resumed the next night a KKK fiery cross blazed up within view of the plant. This caused the workers to sit down again—and to dispatch a squad of 'huskies' to extinguish the cross." (Jeremy Brecher, "Strike")

Summing up in a 1995 interview, Genora Johnson—organizer of the Women's Emergency Brigade—stated: "[T]he auto worker became a different human being. The women that had participated became a different type of woman." (Sol Dollinger and Genora Johnson Dollinger, "Not Automatic.")

The change in consciousness comes inevitably with changes, even temporary changes, in the relations of production. Not only did the workers stop production, they seized the means of production. Inside the plants—and stores, hospitals, mines, restaurants and even an Illinois prison—they created their own communities, their own workers' democracies.

As Jim Pope writes in Law and History Review, "[I]n arenas ranging from the shop floor to the Supreme Court, worker activists seized every opportunity to pro-

mulgate rules, to interpret official law, and to enforce their rules and interpretations. They set production quotas, made rules governing the obligations of solidarity, and unilaterally established steward systems and grievance procedures. They formulated, justified, and implemented a putative legal right to stage sit-down strikes. They interpreted the Constitution to authorize the Wagner Labor Relations Act and enforced their interpretation through factory occupations." (www.historycooperative.org)

In every case, strikers returned to work with a new-found sense of power.

On rare occasions an occupation went a step further, resuming production under workers' control. In 1973, after the Lip watch factory in France announced it would close, workers held the plant for 68 days, producing watches without bosses and selling them at a 40 percent discount.

Almost 50 years after the Great Strike, Sam Marcy wrote in his book "High Tech, Low Pay" that an occupation "can change the form of the struggle, take it out of its narrow confines and impart to it a broader perspective. In truth, it brings to the surface a new working-class perspective on the struggle between the workers and the bosses. It says in so many words that we are not tied to a one-dimensional type of struggle with the bosses at a time when they have the levers of political authority in their hands."

Marcy was observing the impact of high technology on the working class, anticipating its ravaging effects and looking for methods of struggle that would give exploited labor its greatest advantage.

Marcy would be overjoyed to learn of the victory, after just two days, of the recent sit-down at the Collins and Aikman auto-parts plant in Ontario. The company had reneged on giving severance checks to workers who were losing their jobs. One hundred members of the Canadian Auto Workers took over the plant; in less than 48 hours they won back their negotiated pay.

They are relearning the lessons articulated by a gum miner after a successful sit down: "Now we know our labor is more important than the money of the stockholders, than the gambling in Wall Street, than the doings of the managers and foremen." ("Strike")

After sit-down In Canada

GM concedes as auto parts union threatens to shut plants

By Martha Grevatt

After a two-day sit-down strike at Collins and Aikman, the Canadian Auto Workers union won a huge victory on April 2. The bankrupt auto-parts company withdrew its earlier plan to close the plant prematurely and withhold severance payments. The sit-down ended after the union won a commitment from DaimlerChrysler to cover its share of severance pay owed to workers who are soon to be laid off.

The union then insisted that Ford and General Motors, which Collins and Aikman also supplies, make a similar com-

mitment. Ford agreed. GM hesitated, and CAW Local 303 threatened to shut down GM plants in Oshawa and Ingersoll, Ont. Not wanting a strike and certainly not a sitdown in their own plants, and realizing that Local 303 meant business, GM agreed to match the contribution of Ford and DaimlerChrysler.

The planned shutdown of GM was called off. "I would say we're a little more relaxed now and a little more settled. We know the money is in a trust account with CAW," said Mustaq Mohammed, chairperson of Local 303. "It's a victory overall. Even though it's the minimum severance under the law, it's a victory for us." □

Huge Iraq march says: U.S. out now!

Continued from page 1

profits, which they call "American interests," will be protected. They already have doubts on that score, and the ruling elite in the U.S., knowing they are more hated every day around the world, are split over what to do.

This demonstration of determination to get the occupiers out will only deepen the split and confusion in the U.S. ruling class.

When the invasion took place four years ago, the world was told that the Iraqi people, especially those from the Shia branch of Islam, would welcome the U.S. as "liberators." Only some of the Sunnis, a minority in the country, had benefited under the old regime, it was said, and even they would not put up a fight.

This turned out to be the most colossal miscalculation of any U.S. imperialist administration in decades.

The resistance to the U.S. occupation

is firmly rooted in all the Sunni areas, despite the Pentagon's ruthless pounding of civilian concentrations like the cities of Falluja, Ramadi and Mosul, beginning in 2004. Now, it is indisputable that a huge part of the Shia population is also taking a stand and ready to fight to end the U.S. occupation.

The march from Kufa to Najaf was called by Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who went underground several months ago after his support base in Baghdad was targeted by the U.S. "surge." Prominent also in the demonstration were Sunni clerics, in a show of unity against the occupation.

Rather than admit that the Iraqi people as a whole are overwhelmingly against the occupation and that U.S. troops should be brought home, the Bush administration has taken to Iran-baiting al-Sadr and other Shia leaders. The rationale for the war has shifted again; it's no longer weapons of mass destruction or al-Qaeda, it's now Iran that is supposedly responsible for the resistance.

What is never admitted by the leaders of either capitalist party in the U.S., Democrat or Republican, is that it is the neocolonial project of U.S. big business in the Middle East and the brutality it has employed in an effort to break the Iraqi resistance that has turned virtually the whole population against the so-called "liberators."

Four years into the war and occupation, the Iraqi people are suffering under the most atrocious conditions of life—no reliable water supply or electricity, massive unemployment, the shortage of everything needed for daily living, and all this on top of the constant threat of death and destruction as the whole country has become a war zone.

Nor can they have any confidence that the election of the Democrats to leadership of Congress will bring them any respite—especially when leading Democrats like Hillary Clinton were arguing for years that the U.S. should send more troops to Iraq, a program that George W. Bush has

now claimed as his own. He has decided to send 13,000 National Guard troops for their second tour and to extend the time troops spend in Iraq from 12 to 15 months, putting unbearable pressure on the rank-and-file.

The jousting now going on in Washington over the war spending bill, which everyone knows will end in the Democrats funding the war even as Bush rejects any timetable for withdrawal, must only deepen the frustration of the Iraqi people.

The demonstration of hundreds of thousands in Najaf showed that they're not going to wait until 2008 and a promise that some troops will be withdrawn at some time. They are putting the U.S. and British occupiers on notice that their resistance will only grow.

Those who want to end the bloodshed and suffering on all sides and the criminal diversion of resources to this war must also find ways to unite and stop the war makers. □

Youths protest racist ban at Milwaukee mall

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Milwaukee, Wis.

For the second consecutive Saturday dozens of young people took to the streets in front of Mayfair Mall April 7 to protest a new mall policy targeting youths.

Between the previous protest March 31 and the April 7 action the youth-focused community organizations Campaign Against Violence, Running Rebels and Urban Underground had gathered 3,500 signatures for a petition demanding a public meeting with mall management. Thus far there has been no response from management.

The new mall policy was a unilateral change by mall managers with no community input. It came after sensationalist media coverage of minor incidents regarding Black youths at or near the mall.

Mayfair Mall implemented its Parental Guidance Required, or PGR, program the weekend of March 30. Similar policies are increasingly becoming policy nationwide.

According to a circular issued by mall management, "visitors" 17 and under are required to have a parent or supervising adult aged 21 or older with them after 2 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. At their discretion private security personnel stationed at every door are now asking people they deem to be 17 or under for identification.

If the person refuses to procure an ID card they are forced off mall property. If they show ID and they are 17 or under

without an "escort" they are forced off the property.

Those youths 17 and younger working at the mall, who number approximately 300, are required to have special work IDs. They will have to show them any time security asks.

Mayfair is the biggest mixed-use shopping center in the state. It consists of an 86-acre business complex that includes four office buildings with over 1,400 employees. The mall is located in Wauwatosa, a suburb of Milwaukee, and at Wisconsin's busiest highway interchange—the site of the two protests.

Mayfair is owned by Chicago-based publicly traded General Growth Properties, which owns, develops, operates and/or manages shopping malls in 44 states. Currently GGP has ownership interests in and/or management responsibility for more than 200 regional shopping malls totaling approximately 200 million square feet of retail space. GGP, which employs 4,700 workers nationwide, is also the biggest third-party manager for owners of regional malls (www.mayfairmall.com).

'Being young is not a crime'

Chanting, "Out of sight, out of mind: being young is not a crime," and carrying signs with the same message, the young people and their allies braved bitter cold winds for over an hour on both days.

"The young people of Milwaukee are angry about this discriminatory policy and we feel that it should be changed.



WW PHOTO: BRYAN PFEIFER

No room at the mall for these young women.

This is the purpose of the proposed public hearing: to come up with alternatives. We're fighting for all young people across all racial backgrounds. We're trying to unite the entire city and county around this issue," said Jayme Montgomery of Campaign Against Violence, a co-sponsor of the protests.

Adults also stood in unity and solidarity with the youth.

Brian Verdin, a long time progressive community activist and a member of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, said he is telling his family and friends not to shop at Mayfair because of its "racial profiling."

"The message is: The youth can work here but they can't shop here. The message to our youth is very clear: They're not welcome. The real issue here is that Mayfair Mall doesn't want and hasn't wanted Black children or young people in this mall for years."

One protester mentioned how he thought it was ironic that at age 17 a youth can join the military but couldn't enter Mayfair to shop or visit. Others said the anti-youth policy reminded them of Jim Crow and apartheid.

The youths and their allies continue fighting on many fronts to abolish this policy.

"I feel like this is a discriminatory issue with our youth so that if we just all believe in each other and just keep standing up we can make a difference. All our voices count. If we just believe in each other and everybody just have faith in each other we can make a change in the city and probably the world," said Lanisha Martin, a student at Milwaukee Area Technical College, speaking at the April 7 protest. □

Youths defy attacks, protest at recruiting station

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Milwaukee, Wis.

Dozens of anti-war protesters returned to an Army Recruiting Station two blocks from the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee April 4 to deliver this message: The anti-war movement won't be criminalized.

On March 19, during the course of a demonstration on the fourth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, a window had been broken at this same recruiting station. Cops then issued municipal citations for "disorderly conduct" to 21 young people. A sensationalist media frenzy ensued in an attempt to violence-bait the youths, criminalize the anti-war movement and intimidate anyone who might be thinking

of actively protesting U.S. actions.

The April 4 protest, sponsored by the Students for a Democratic Society at UW-Milwaukee and the Youth Action Coalition, took place for almost five hours beginning at 1 p.m., the same time the recruiting station shut its doors for the day. Unbeknownst to each organization they had each scheduled a protest on the same day. When they learned of each other's actions they immediately decided to unite and join together.

Despite some police and counter-protester harassment, the anti-war forces held their own throughout the entire very cold windy afternoon. Throughout the protest progressive community members brought coffee, moral support and signs including one reading, "End the occupation of Iraq:

Support our troops, bring them home!" Many at the action noted that this particular day was the 39th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.

Erika Wolf of SDS said the U.S. war on Iraq is "based on a lot of lies, manipulation and coercion. We think we belong here."

Wolf said a main focus of the protest was to confront the sensationalist media regarding one broken window. She said that one window can't be equated to over 700,000 Iraqis and 3,200 U.S. GIs who've died in Iraq and all the destruction wrought by the U.S. forces there. "One hundred windows are broken every day in Baghdad," and over 100 die violent deaths daily in Iraq due to the U.S. war, said Wolf.

Melody Hoffman, a graduate student

at UW-Milwaukee, a vice president of grievances for the Milwaukee Graduate Assistants Association and a member of SDS, said many of the corporations looting Iraq are the same ones exploiting workers in the United States. These corporations only care about "pure profit over people," said Hoffman.

Elena Pires of the Youth Action Coalition said: "I don't think it's fair we were lied to. We were misled. Recruiters do mislead people." Pires said some of her friends joining the military were idealistic when joining but are now dead, wounded or have post-traumatic stress disorder. She said her organization and others such as SDS will continue protesting the war and will be increasing the counter-recruitment activities. □

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Uniting labor and community

24th annual Black Workers For Justice banquet

By Monica Moorehead
Raleigh, N.C.

The Black Workers For Justice held its 24th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Support for Labor banquet April 7 at the North Carolina Association of Educators Hall in Raleigh.

Several hundred people, young and old, representing community organizations and political groups, attended the event in solidarity with the crucial work that BWFJ, along with its ally, UE Local 150, carries out to organize the Black, Latin@ and women workers in the public sector who face low wages and intolerable working conditions.

North Carolina adheres to right-to-work laws and ranks at the bottom as the least unionized state in the country. Right-to-work prohibits state and local governments from entering into collective bargaining agreements with workers. This is known as General Statute 95-98, which was signed into law during the 1950s during the height of racist segregation in the South. Virginia is the only other state with the same anti-worker, anti-union statute.

The banquet affords the opportunity for BWFJ to reinforce its goals and also to recognize the work that labor and com-



Raleigh city workers receive self-determination award from Nathanette Mayo April 7.

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

munity activists have carried out over the past 12 months to meet those goals. This year's event was no exception. Rukiya Dillahunt was the Directress of Ceremony during the banquet program.

BWFJ leader Ashanki Binta spoke on the International Justice Workers' Campaign to defeat General Statute 95-98. Keynote speaker Rev. Dr. William Barber, president of the North Carolina State NAACP, gave a fiery talk about the need for unity and solidarity in the struggle against war,

injustice and racism.

Nathanette Mayo from BWFJ presented the Abner Berry Self-Determination Awards. The purpose of these awards is to "recognize and honor people whose dedication and sacrifice to the struggle for workers' rights and to the self-determination of the African-American people has been significant."

Berry, who died in 1987, was a Black active member of the Communist Party USA from the mid-1930s until the late

1950s. He was the editor of the Harlem edition of the CPUSA's publication, *The Daily Worker*. He was also a founding member of the BWFJ in 1981.

Two of this year's Berry awards went to the United Food and Commercial Workers union for its efforts to organize 5,500 mainly immigrant workers at the Smithfield Packing Plant located in Tar Heel, N.C. These exploited workers walked off the job last fall in protest of anti-union tactics by the bosses.

Smithfield is the world's largest hog processing plant, where 32,000 hogs are slaughtered daily. This amounts to 2,000 an hour, 33 per minute or one hog every two seconds. These workers suffer high rates of injuries including cuts, maiming and repetitive-motion pain, and are denied workers' compensation. These workers, the majority of them Latin@ and Black, face systematic racism from white bosses.

Another Berry award went to the Raleigh City Workers of the N.C. Public Service Workers Union, UE 150.

Last September, 50 workers from the Raleigh sanitation department carried out a wildcat strike in protest of long working hours, low pay and other grievances against the city. Due to this action, over half of the city workers have joined the union and garnered much community support. Another important victory is that these workers have forced the mayor of Raleigh to "meet and confer" with them—a big step forward to breaking down the restrictive barriers to union organizing, particularly the General Statute 95-98 law.

Other speakers included Shafeah M'Bali, co-editor of *Justice Speaks*, the BWFJ publication; National Vice-Chair of BWFJ Angaza Laughinghouse; and Ajamu Dillahunt, a BWFJ steering committee member. The Fruit of Labor Ensemble provided cultural entertainment. □



WW PHOTO: G DUNKEL

Protest hits Circuit City firings

By Sharon Black
New York

Teamsters from Local 808 and supporters of immigrant rights from the May 1st Coalition picketed outside the Circuit City store near New York's Union Square on April 7. They were protesting the major electronics outlet's decision to summarily fire 3,400 experienced workers across the country, simply to facilitate the hiring of a less-experienced, lower-paid staff.

Workers with 20 and 30 years' experience had come to work and been told to pack their things and get out.

To rub salt into the wounds of those fired, Circuit City had publicly said it was eliminating the workers because their salaries were "too high"—and that the same workers could apply for their former jobs at lower pay after a 10-week delay.

In a leaflet distributed outside the store, the May 1st Coalition for Immigrant Rights wrote that it "feels strongly that what happens at Circuit City impacts the entire community and all workers. The trend by multi-billion dollar corporations to cut workers and wages and to eliminate

pensions and health care while profits soar must be fought by everyone. We want the workers at Circuit City to know that they are not alone, that we support them.

"It is why we are saying 'An injury to one is an injury to all' and why we are picketing outside of Circuit City to demand that the workers get their jobs and pay back."

'Who's illegal?' ask restaurant workers

By Anne Pruden
New York

"It's illegal, it's a crime. Pay your workers overtime." Some 100 New York restaurant workers and their supporters chanted as they rallied April 3, led by a rank and file workers' organization of immigrants and supporters in the food industries called the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC). The protest heard strong testimony from workers at six restaurants affiliated with the Fireman Hospitality Group management. These include Cafe Fiorello—where the protest was held—the

The picket line got media attention, including an article in the Spanish-language newspaper *El Diario*, and was seen by workers inside Circuit City and many passers-by on New York's busy 14th Street. The store's management quickly called the police, who harassed the picketers but couldn't stop their message. □

Redeye Grill, Trattoria DellArte, Brooklyn Diner, Shelly's and Bond 45.

Workers from these upscale restaurants, who are mostly immigrants, told how their bosses have failed to pay minimum and overtime wages and have misappropriated tips. The April 3 protest indicated that workers, especially those facing racist discrimination, will continue to fight back. One South African worker compared his experience at a Fireman restaurant to apartheid. An Asian worker held up a paper plate—provided by ROC—with a photo of civil rights leader Rosa Parks on it. They were joined by Mexican

workers, members of the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

Meanwhile, workers at Shelly's have filed a class-action lawsuit complaining about having to give management a percentage of the tips intended for waiters, bartenders and other workers. ROC also has a lawsuit on behalf of 55 mostly immigrant workers accusing the Redeye Grill of tip misappropriation, overtime and wage violations and sexual harassment.

Appealing to passers-by, the pickets sang a song popular in past organizing drives and strikes: "Which side are you on?" □

The STRIVE Act

Corporate-designed immigration reform

By Javier Rodriguez

The debate in the nation on immigration reform is definitely on this spring and the cards are once again stacked. The Gutierrez-Flake STRIVE Act of 2007 is a corporate monster most of the way. It doesn't come close to meeting the human rights standards set forth by the international community for the more than 200 million migrants on the planet who, by designs of corporate globalization and its rising capitalist transnational class, have been forced to leave their home countries in search of a new life.

On the contrary the new STRIVE Act, like last year's failed Sensenbrenner-HR4437 and Hegel-Martinez S2611, will criminalize immigrants and allow enforcement of immigration law by police agencies. It calls for more extreme border enforcement and calls for building 20 more detention centers for immigrants. It will erode human rights for future deportees and future immigrants, impose an employer verification program and delay legalization for the 13 million immigrants already here for many years. Not surprisingly, it does not set realistic standards to resolve the immigration issue—period.

Overall, if approved, the STRIVE Act will further set back the struggle for immigrant empowerment, make present and future immigrant workers more vulnerable to exploitation and drive them further underground.

The international criteria for immigrants set in 1987 say migrants, within three years of living in the host country, have earned their right to legalize their status. By then, they have established roots in their adopted communities, creating family, children, culture, education, business and religion. This is a sounder humane approach to a real earned right to legalization, to be united with their

families and to the stabilization of their lives.

In 1986, through the IRCA Immigration Reform Act, several million urban and farm workers, undocumented immigrants, regularized their status through a radically different set of standards: a one-year wait for their permanent residency and five more for citizenship and the right to vote without having to leave the country. The farm worker clause was even more humane, with a requirement of only three months of farm work in the previous two years to qualify. It set forth a fee of only \$150 per applicant. That's it. It was a family-oriented law, though far from perfect.

Now compare. By Rep. Luis Gutierrez's own words, under the STRIVE Act the legalization part will not be implemented for two years until Congress confirms that the security border enforcement measures of the new law are in place. Only then will the legalization process begin.

Then the first of two three-year permits for non-immigrant status will be issued, with the right to a social security card, a driver's license and to leave and return to the country. After the sixth year the immigrant will have the right to solicit permanent residency. But instead of an automatic green card into the hands of the 13 million immigrants, all applicants will be placed in the back of the line for another 5 to 10-year wait, until the applications of 3 million plus potential immigrants now in process, which the STRIVE Act does not address, are resolved.

The delay does not stop there. There will be an added five-year wait to qualify for citizenship and the right to vote, which means, approximately a total 18 to 21 years to exert full-earned constitutional rights which all U.S. citizens now enjoy under the Constitution. Is this a corporate panacea or not?

Solidarity with Latin American liberation



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Demonstrators in New York (shown here) and Los Angeles, following a call for national protests in solidarity with the independence and sovereignty of Latin America, raised the following slogans in street marches on April 7:

“End Washington's economic and political war against Cuba! Freedom for the Cuban Five!” “End threats and sanctions against Venezuela and Bolivia!” “End U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico! Free Puerto Rican political prisoners!”

In New York, hundreds gathered at Bryant Park and then marched past the New York Times building to a rally in Central Park at statues of Simón Bolívar, José Martí, and José de San Martín.

Groups calling the demonstrations included the National Network on Cuba, the Venezuela Solidarity Network, the Bolivarian Circles in different cities, the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange and Cuba Solidarity New York.

—WW New York bureau

The proposed House bill also establishes a quota for 450,000 yearly “conditional workers,” a euphemism for the old guest worker program. Conditional workers will have the right to two three-year working permits with the right to change jobs, to organize, bring their families and children with the right to school, to a driver's license, a social security card and lastly, with existing good moral conduct and no criminal background, the right to legalize their status.

Seductive, isn't it. But like their 13-million immigrant counterparts already in the U.S., who, hypothetically speaking, will be waiting in line for years for the coveted green card, this sector will be highly vulnerable to small and large corporate business misconduct. Admittedly though, on par, the future undocumented sector will be several notches more exploitable.

According to leaks emanating from the Capitol in the last two weeks, the Kennedy-McCain Senate proposal will use the same framework of S2611 which died last year. If so, for certain the conciliation process between the House and Senate will be a watering-down process for the Flake-Gutierrez bill.

For the immigrant rights movement and allies the central question is: What is to be done? Already at the gate in tacit support of this concept is a powerful conglomerate of the most active wing of labor, big business, the Latino establishment, Democrats and Republicans, the church hierarchy, the Mexican and

Central American governments and the moderate wing of the immigrant rights movement. And it is well-financed with a war chest of \$4 million.

The accomplishments of the 2006 mass immigrant struggle are historic. Most notable was energizing the electorate and along with the anti-war sentiment changing the correlation of forces in Congress against the extreme right. Without a doubt President George W. Bush and the Republicans are in a weaker position, although his shock troops have launched a near-fascist campaign against the country's undocumented population, creating havoc and terror.

At this point the correlation of forces is absolutely not favorable, except that the country's progressive forces and allies are moving from traditional lobbying towards mass mobilization in an attempt to gain the upper hand and influence the national debate for a more inclusive pro-worker immigration reform. The activists' response to the government's ICE raids and deportations campaign has been toe to toe and, it appears, has set the conditions for another round of mega mass mobilizations. We shall see if the people respond accordingly again on May 1, International Workers Day, in defense of their dignity and humanity. The challenge is as historic as in 2006.

Javier Rodriguez is the media and political strategist for the March 25 Coalition and a co-founder of the May 1st National Movement.

Mass march for immigrants' rights

By John Parker
Los Angeles

As raids and deportations against immigrant communities here have increased, so too have protests against this racist and terrorist repression. These protests not only reflect a fight-back mood against these policies but also frustration about the lack of progressive immigration reform.

Building on the March 25 demonstration organized in just a few days that practically surrounded Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) headquarters, on April 7 tens of thousands marched in downtown Los Angeles for immigrant rights. The march, organized by Latino Movement USA, Hermandad Mexicana Nacional and the ANSWER coalition, demanded general and unconditional amnesty; education for all; legalization for immigrants and an end to the raids.

The protest began at Olympic and Broadway and continued up Broadway right through the middle of the area where mainly Latin@ workers work in the highly exploitative clothing industry, which depends heavily on undocumented labor. And, although this is the community in Los Angeles that ICE frequently targets, the march was received with much enthusiasm. Many joined from work to participate in the march.

At a news conference held April 9 at the downtown Federal Building by the March 25th Coalition, almost 20 media cameras and about 10 print journalists attended and heard various organizations call for a May 1 boycott. Javier Rodríguez, coordinating committee member of the National May 1 Movement for Worker



A Los Angeles news conference on April 9 where Javier Rodríguez of the National May 1 Movement for Worker and Immigrant Rights, said the undocumented community will fight for just immigration reform and an end to the deportations and raids.

and Immigrant Rights, thanked the organizers of the April 7 demonstration for making it clear that the undocumented community and their allies have not lost their determination to gain comprehensive and just immigration reform and an end to the deportations and raids. He said that the momentum for May 1 has been clearly demonstrated at the march and urged everyone in Los Angeles to unite and join the May 1st Boycott beginning at 12 noon at Olympic and Broadway. □

RACHEL NASCA

A life fighting to build a socialist future

By Stevan Kirschbaum

Rachel Nasca, a leader of the Boston branch and member of the National Committee of Workers World Party, died March 22 at 59 years old.

Her grandparents had migrated from Sicilian mountain villages to Rachel Nasca's Buffalo, N.Y., Italian neighborhood. On a visit to Montemaggiore and Cherda, Sicily, in 1978, the family showed her a monument to anti-fascist partisans. Later, her small cousins sang the communist, anti-fascist song, "Bella Ciao."

On her last visit in 2004, she shared with her cousins and friends anti-imperialist, internationalist views and together they sang "Hasta Siempre," "Ballad for Che" and "The International." She was particularly proud of this shared family heritage.

In 1968 she moved from Buffalo to Boston and worked in an electronics factory. She was ever-present at demonstrations against war and racism and for women's rights, always from her working class perspective.

Militant community organizer

In 1972 Rachel moved into a 42-unit tenement owned by a notorious Boston slumlord. She organized low-income and elderly tenants into the Lorraine Terrace Tenant Union. When the slumlord sought a rent increase she organized the tenants to take over the hearing at the Rent Control Board. Armed with jars of trapped cockroaches, canisters of leaked rusty water and fallen plaster, tenants "presented" their evidence by releasing roaches, water and plaster before horrified hearing examiners.

While she was the LTTU president, the group organized 19 other buildings owned by the slumlord, stopped several rent increases, and won an historic rent decrease. At this period she met and joined Workers World Party. Over the next 30 years she was an organizer and leader of the Boston branch and a member of the party's National Committee.

Throughout her life she organized in her community, whether in Mission Hill to reclaim a vacant lot and force the city to build a playground, or building community solidarity with the many labor struggles of the day.

In 1996 her Archdale Roslindale neighborhood—labeled by the media "Boston's Love Canal"—was inundated by a toxic sewage overflow. A 12-block area was covered with a river of waste and fuels, cresting at 8 feet and causing millions of dollars in damages to this working class community. She organized, founded and led the Archdale Roslindale Coalition, representing 209 families in this multinational neighborhood in a nine-year battle. The result was over \$4 million in infrastructure improvements to the neighborhood and \$6 million in restitution to the families, as well as "seed" monies to establish ARC as a permanent community group.

Staunch defender of union/worker rights

In July 1973 she got a job as a clerical worker in the major Boston law firm of Foley, Hoag and Elliot (FHE). She organized the secretaries, file-room clerks and messengers into a union drive, although there was a virtual legal ban on unions for law-firm workers. The Massachusetts division of the National Labor Relations Board refused jurisdiction for election certification and unfair labor practices. Rachel and Barry Wilson, a young law



Nasca organized this Memorial Justice Rally for Hector Rivas. Rivas was a union school bus mechanic who died on the job of carbon monoxide poisoning.

WW PHOTOS: LIZ GREEN

librarian who would later become a well-known people's attorney, were elected to negotiate with management. The two were fired but the organizing continued. In an historic 1979 decision the board overturned the ban, ruling that the FHE workers had full rights to unionize.

In 1977 Rachel got a job at Harvard University as an administrative clerk to progressive scientist Richard Levins and renowned geneticist Richard C. Lewontin, where she worked until her death. She was a founding member of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, now AFSCME 3650. She walked countless picket lines and coordinated solidarity for Harvard kitchen workers and janitors.

Though not formally a member of Boston School Bus Drivers Union USW Local 8751, her contributions were extraordinary and unique. She played a decisive role in the union's founding and throughout its over 30-year history. She organized Community/Labor Solidarity Committees during every strike, planned and built Safety Summits of parents and the community and meticulously chronicled USW Local 8751's history in photos, media articles, releases, leaflets, bulletins, buttons, placards and more from day one.

During the 1978 strike the union negotiating committee was jailed for defying a School Committee-initiated court injunction outlawing the strike. Rachel organized the partners of the jailed, the children, families and supporters for a much-publicized takeover of School Committee offices. They demanded the release of the negotiators. They offered to take the negotiators' place in jail, stating that if the School Committee was not equally committed to getting the children back to school, its members should resign. During every strike she took a leave from her job to work full time for the strikers.

For over 30 years she gave support, solidarity, advice and comfort to USW Local 8751 leaders and members. On March 9, just days prior to the brain hemorrhage that took her life, she helped lead a Memorial Justice Rally for Hector Rivas at the Freeport Bus Yard. Rivas was a union school bus mechanic who died on the job of carbon dioxide poisoning; the union charges the bus company and the city with willful negligence in his death.

'Say no to racism!'

In the early 1970s, African-American parents sued Boston public schools for systematic racism resulting in a 1974 fed-



Nasca with daughter Hannah Marshall Kirschbaum-Nasca on Mother's Day 1993.



Leon Swain, left from AFSCME L. 1072 at 2004 Million Worker March in D.C., with Hannah Kirschbaum-Nasca, Stevan Kirschbaum and Rachel Nasca.

eral court order to desegregate.

A vile racist mobilization with the backing of national bigoted groups gripped Boston. Rachel organized and participated in the many local anti-racist protests and marches to defend self-determination for Boston's African American community. Rachel and her comrades initiated the Emergency Committee for a National Mobilization Against Racism, which brought out 25,000 marchers to Say No to Racism, the largest march of its kind since the 1963 March on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Rachel marched in countless local and national protests against racism. She was a leading organizer of the march of 10,000 that drove the Klan out of City Hall Plaza. She also fought against racist government frame-ups and for freedom for political prisoners from Mumia Abu-Jamal to Leonard Peltier to the Puerto Rican liberation fighters. Since 1981, Rachel had organized for every National Day of Mourning in Plymouth, Mass., where each year Native American activists tell the real story of the invasion of their land by the Pilgrims.

Women's liberation and the struggle against sexism

From her arrival in Boston in 1968, she fought for women's liberation, organizing "consciousness-raising" groups, demonstrating for women's reproductive rights, defending abortion clinics, fighting for equal pay for comparable work. She protested against the government's forced sterilization campaign against the women of Puerto Rico and built solidarity with her sisters behind prison walls. She was a leader of the Boston Defense Committee for JoAnn Little, who was falsely charged with murder in the death of a racist prison guard attempting to rape her.

On Dec. 30, 1994, when clinic workers were murdered at Planned Parenthood and Preterm women's clinics, within the hour she joined defenders at the scene to denounce the national right-wing terrorist campaign against abortion clinics and doctors. With her party comrades she made every International Women's Day a day of struggle and education. In March 2006 she initiated the IWD women and girls' contingent in the March 18 March and Rally to Stop Poverty, Racism, Sexism and War on the third anniversary of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq.

She believed in and practiced building bridges of solidarity, uniting struggles against the common enemy. She was therefore most proud of the formation of the Women's Fightback Network, born on the streets in September 2001 with a People's Speakout in downtown Boston against the war frenzy, racism and sexism. As its mission states, "WFN is committed to uniting with our sisters and brothers at home and abroad in the struggle to end war, poverty, racism, sexism, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered oppres-

sion." This militant, fighting women's organization has now become a national network.

Anti-war activist and internationalist

Rachel was committed in principle and practice to world revolution. She stood with the Palestinian people in their fight to free their land and defended Arab activists from racist frame-ups. This past summer she helped to organize a Boston demonstration protesting the U.S./Israeli invasion of Lebanon. From Puerto Rico to Colombia to Iraq, Afghanistan and India, she felt the workers' struggle knows no borders.

In fall of 2005 the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee was founded to win Dec. 1 as a national holiday in honor of this civil rights pioneer. On Dec. 1 of that year, some 2,000 people, nearly three-quarters youth of color, took to the streets under the banner of the committee in what was also an anti-war protest. Rachel proudly served on the steering committee.

Working class chronicler, teacher, historian

Rachel was a chronicler of the struggles she participated in. She devoted her formidable research and presentation talents to developing the revolutionary skills and learning of her comrades and sisters and brothers in the struggle. She loved preparing educational reports for Party branch meetings, conferences, workshops and study groups. She most enjoyed working with her sisters in the movement and particularly with the younger revolutionaries, gaining strength and insight from their creativity and zeal and sharing her years of struggle experience.

Those who knew and worked with Rachel knew her as a meticulously organized woman who carried out tasks with rock-solid discipline. She waged the struggle with intense passion and formidable skills and talents, all given 100 percent to the struggle of the workers and oppressed. She lived her beliefs. She had a deep burning love and caring for her comrades, friends and family.

That fire will indeed be missed. She was always consumed with the need to finish a task once started. It now falls to us to struggle to finish her most cherished task, that of building a workers' world. We can draw strength from the fact that Rachel's life gave us a glimpse of the future socialist woman.

Rachel Nasca is survived by her daughter, Hannah Marshall Kirschbaum-Nasca, and lifelong partner Stevan Kirschbaum. There will be a memorial for Rachel Nasca at 4 p.m. on April 21 at the Painters Union hall at 25 Colgate Rd., Roslindale, Mass.

Iran's secret weapon?

Popular rejection of imperialist lies

By Deirdre Griswold

Whatever plans the Pentagon and the Bush administration have for a devastating air attack on Iran—and details have been leaked to the press for months now—they have run into across-the-board resistance. This comes not only from Iran itself and across the Middle East but from the people in Britain, whose rulers, like the Bush administration in Washington, have made it abundantly clear that they want to wipe the Iranian Revolution of 1978 off the map and return to the days of neocolonial puppet regimes, like that of the hated and bloody shah.

Iran continues to stand up under the heaviest of intimidation and threats. Even as an armada of U.S. warships remains massed along its coast in the Persian Gulf in the name of war “games,” the Iranian government has remained cool but firm in responding to provocation.

On April 4, Iran released 15 British sailors and marines who had been detained in the Shatt al-Arab waterway between Iran and Iraq. They had publicly confessed that they were in Iranian waters when captured. The British ruling class and its tabloid press screamed that they had been forced to confess, and tried especially to conjure up lurid fears concerning the one woman among the 15.

This was hard to do, since Iranian television had already shown footage of Faye Turney shaking hands with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and saying, “The treatment has been great. Thank you for letting us go. We apologize for our actions.” (New York Times, April 5)

Ronan Bennett, writing on March 30 in *The Guardian*, a commercial paper but one that has been anti-war, ridiculed the tabloid media campaign.

The British sailors captured by Iran, wrote Bennett, “have not been shackled, blindfolded, forced into excruciating physical contortions for long periods, or denied liquids and food. As far as we know they have not had the Bible spat on, torn up or urinated on in front of their faces. They have not had electrodes attached to their genitals or been set on by attack dogs.

“They have not been hung from a forklift truck and photographed for the amusement of their captors. They have not been pictured naked and smeared in their own excrement. They have not been bundled into a CIA-chartered plane and secretly ‘rendered’ to a basement prison in a country where torturers are experienced and free to do their worst.”

In other words, the British were treated humanely and according to international law, not brutally and criminally as both the U.S. and Britain have done to those they have kidnapped in the “war on terror.”

Nevertheless, British tabloids offered huge sums of money for stories by the crew on how they were “mistreated” by the Iranians. Two interviews then appeared by sailors alleging they had falsely confessed under psychological pressure.

Some right-wing commentators began to complain of the crew’s behavior. They had been too “compliant” toward the Iranians. Where was the famous “stiff upper lip” that the high command could rely on in the days of the British Empire?

On the other hand, parents of British

soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan complained that, while the sailors were being paid six-figure amounts for their stories, the parents had been barred from saying anything publicly when their children died.

The Associated Press on April 10 quoted Reg Keys, whose son Thomas Keys was killed in Iraq four years ago. Keys “said he believes the government is using the freed crew to pursue a propaganda battle with Iran. ‘When my son died, his colleagues were not allowed to speak to their families about it, let alone the press,’ he said.”

The whole thing was turning into a propaganda fiasco, so on April 9 the British government reversed itself and banned the crew from giving further interviews.

All this pointed up just how unpopular the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are in Britain. There is only scant support for any escalation against Iran.

People’s Assembly in London calls for resistance

On March 20, as U.S. warships were gathering in the Gulf, the Stop the War Coalition had hosted a People’s Assembly in London. Some 900 delegates attended, representing 175 organizations from all over Britain. Speakers included representatives of the Iraqi people, including Kurds, plus a dozen members of Britain’s Parliament. The goals were simple: get British troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan and stop any war against Iran.

Coalition organizer Chris Nineham laid out a plan of massive civil disobedience in the event of an attack on Iran. (www.stopwar.org.uk, click on links for YouTube

podcasts of the People’s Assembly)

Indicative of the deep split the war has produced in government circles, Craig Murray, a former British ambassador to Uzbekistan, received tremendous applause when he said: “Two million of us marched when they invaded Iraq and it was not enough. Despite us, hundreds of thousands died. Before they can attack Iran, before hundreds of thousands more die, we will actively intervene in the biggest campaign of civil disobedience that this country has ever seen. We will blockade their military airfields, we will sit on the runways, we will disrupt the supplies of weapons.”

This militant sentiment was echoed later by George Galloway, an MP who was expelled from the Labor Party over his opposition to the war and was again elected on the Respect Party ticket: “As the People’s Assembly in London agreed last week, if there is an attack on Iran, we will need civil disobedience in every community, walkouts in every school, protests and strikes in every workplace. If George Bush bombs Iran, we should bring this country to a standstill.”

In the United States, groups like the Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC) and others have been calling for moving from protest to resistance. However, illusions about the Democratic Party have held back the anti-war movement as a whole from uniting around such a program. But in Britain, a Labor Party government has been the Bush administration’s closest ally in carrying out the war. Any illusions are gone. It is clear that these imperialist outrages can only be stopped by the mass actions of the people. □

Black activists speak on Zimbabwe crisis

By Monica Moorehead
Harlem, N.Y.

The Brooklyn-based December 12 International Secretariat held an emergency community forum in Harlem on April 5 on the current and ongoing crisis that the Robert Mugabe-led government in Zimbabwe faces from U.S.-British imperialist threats.

The majority Black, well-attended meeting included well-known activists such as Elombe Brath of the Patrice Lumumba Coalition and New York City Councilperson Charles Barron. Barron had publicly welcomed President Mugabe to New York’s City Hall in 2005 when he came to the city for the opening of the United Nations General Assembly, but the majority of the City Council boycotted the event.

The April 5 meeting was held at Mount Olivet Church, the same venue where President Mugabe spoke to thousands of people in 2005.

Omowale Clay from D12, who chaired the forum, spoke about a March 11 prayer rally held in Zimbabwe and organized by the Movement for Democratic Change, an anti-Mugabe opposition group that has the full backing of British Prime Minister Tony Blair and U.S. President George W. Bush. A struggle ensued which reportedly resulted in one MDC member dying and 30 Zimbabwean police being injured.

Following this incident, a debate took place at a session in late March of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, between a representative of Britain and a representative from

Zimbabwe. A portion of this debate was shown at the Harlem meeting. The British representative raised the March 11 incident and called for imposing more economic sanctions on Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwean representative defended his country’s right to sovereignty and stated that sanctions are being used to strangle the already fragile Zimbabwean economy and to isolate the country from the rest of the African continent.

Following this film clip, the rest of the Harlem meeting was devoted to opening up the floor to hear questions and comments from the audience. D12 leaders Viola Plummer, Coltrane Chimurenga and Roger Wareham, along with Clay, fielded the questions. All four of these leaders have traveled to Zimbabwe on a number of occasions, including before the last election when Mugabe won another term in office.

A number of important issues raised by these leaders point to the real reasons why the U.S. and British governments want a “regime change” in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe is the only country in Africa where the land, stolen by white colonialists beginning in the late 1880s, has been returned to the Indigenous population in a systematic way.

During the height of anti-colonial



WW PHOTO: JOHN PARKER

Left to right, Monica Moorehead, D12 members Colette Pean, Omowale Clay, Roger Wareham, Viola Plummer & Coltrane Chimurenga April 5.

struggle in Southern Africa decades ago, Zimbabwe was the first country to hold a caucus of the national liberation movements on the continent. Both China and North Korea have friendly relations with Zimbabwe in the areas of trade and economic development. President Hugo Chávez from Venezuela has pledged to President Mugabe to provide oil to Zimbabwe.

D12 explained that one consequence of the Western-imposed economic sanctions is that Zimbabwe is denied technologically advanced equipment to develop its land to grow enough food for the population, especially during long periods of drought that chronically plague regions in Africa. These sanctions have helped to

deepen hunger in Zimbabwe.

As a follow-up to the meeting, D12 Movement and Patrice Lumumba Coalition called for a march and rally in Harlem beginning at 1 p.m. on April 14 to commemorate the 27th anniversary of the liberation of Zimbabwe. The main theme of this protest will be “Mugabe is right! Zimbabwe will never be a colony again!”

The march will begin at the Harlem State Office Building at 125th St. and Adam Clayton Powell Blvd. Endorsers of this activity include Africans Helping Africans, the All African Peoples’ Socialist Party, Black Men’s Movement, Nation of Islam, African Liberation Support Committee, CEMOTAP and International Action Center. □

Don Imus: A creature of the bosses

Continued from page 1

Morning” show for two weeks beginning on Monday, April 16, conveniently ending in time for the sweeps. The “May sweeps” measure ratings; the higher these ratings of people tuning in to certain TV and radio programs, the more revenue the stations get from advertisers.

The Rutgers women’s basketball team held a press conference on April 10 where their coach, C. Vivian Stringer, who is African American, characterized Imus’s comments as “racist ... sexist ... deplorable, despicable and unconscionable.”

The team, which is comprised of eight Black and two white women, announced plans to hold a private meeting with Imus in the near future. Understandably, the women expressed both their anger and sadness at being made the direct target of this rabid bigot. Of course, these racist slurs were not personal because of anything particular to the Rutgers team. They could have been issued against almost any women’s basketball team, since the players in women’s basketball are predominantly African American.

The National Association of Black Journalists immediately called for the firing of Imus, as did Rev. Al Sharpton and other Black community and religious leaders. To his credit, recently selected Baseball Hall of Famer Cal Ripken Jr. stated that he refused to be interviewed by Imus due to the April 4 outbreak.

This is not the first time that Imus has exposed his outright racist, sexist and anti-gay views. Besides Black people, he is known to have spewed his KKK-like views over the years against Indigenous people, Jewish people, the disabled as well as muscular women athletes such as tennis player Amelie Mauresmo and now the Scarlet Knights at Rutgers.

Furthermore, Imus is the leader of a nest of racists whom he has gathered on his show, all of whom should be banned from the airwaves forever. His sidekick Sid Rosenberg was temporarily fired in 2001 for an outrageous, Klan-like insult against the African American tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams. Rosenberg was reinstated and recently issued a racist attack on Palestinians. Imus’s producer, Bernard McGuirk, who also joined in with his own racist characterization of the Rutgers team, was hired by Imus to do “n-word” jokes, as he admitted on the “60 Minutes” show of Aug. 19, 1998, according to Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting.

Why does a monster like Imus feel he can get away with saying such offensive statements? Because the bosses who have hired him have given him free rein. He has been protected for years because this is what they pay him for. In the generally racist, sexist, homophobic political environment fostered by the right wing in this country, political reaction makes for ratings and money. MSNBC was forced to express its “displeasure” with Imus in May 2005 when a woman news reader on the show, Contessa Brewer, quit after enduring disgusting sexist slurs from Imus and company day after day. MSNBC also added at the time, however, that his “humor” was “often brilliant and provocative.” (New York Post, May 1, 2005)

Not only is Imus’s show aired on WFAN, which is owned by CBS, but his show is syndicated nationally by Westwood One, also owned by CBS. His show is simulcast daily on MSNBC, a cable news channel in which the General Electric subsidiary, NBC Universal, holds a controlling interest.

GE is not only one of the top Fortune 500 corporations but is also an integral part of the military-industrial complex. GE designed, manufactured or supplied parts or maintenance for nearly every major weapon system used by the U.S. during the first Gulf War—including the Patriot and “Tomahawk” Cruise missiles, the Stealth bomber, the B-52 bomber, the AWACS plane, and the NAVSTAR spy satellite system. In 2004, GE ranked eighth with \$2.8 billion in Pentagon contracts among the top military contractors. (Defense Daily International, Feb. 13, 2004) Racism, sexism and militarism all blend together at “Imus in the Morning.”

Imus has interviewed media personalities such as Tim Russert, Howard Fineman, Frank Rich and Maureen Dowd and a host of presidential hopefuls and capitalist politicians over the years. Sen. Christopher Dodd of Connecticut recently announced his presidential candidacy on the Imus show. They all joined the Imus parade in full knowledge of his sordid, racist history, which goes back over 15 years.

If the files were opened up at MSNBC and CBS and all the e-mails, letters and phone records of protest against Imus that have come from individuals and organizations were revealed, it would show the corporate cover-up that has been going on. It is only because Imus is so obtuse in his racism that he stepped over the line and brought down a massive response upon his head from the Black community, the women’s movement and numerous progressive forces. And now his corporate sponsors and other politicians who have basked in his spotlight, fearing boycotts and other protests, are running for cover and hoping to ride it out as they express official “outrage” at Klan-like practices that they have either tolerated or supported in the past.

The fact that Imus was given only a two-week suspension is a slap on the wrist for his crime. He and others of his ilk, of which there are too many, should be fired and censured forever.

But Imus is just the tip of the iceberg and a diversion from the bigger issue of the reality that the ruling class strategically benefits from the white supremacist ideology they promote to keep them in power and to keep the working class divided and powerless. □

Peter Handke, center, accepts Alternate Heine prize in Berlin.

PHOTO: GABRIELE SENFT



Palestinian Gay

By Leslie Feinberg
Abu Nuwas, Haifa
Occupied Palestine

March 28—The restaurant tables are piled high this evening with more food than we, a group of 40 people, can eat. The feast is a gift from this gay-friendly Palestinian-owned restaurant to Aswat for having held its first public conference earlier today. Aswat translates from Arabic to English as “voices”—the voices of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersexual Palestinians.

Aswat’s all-day conference, titled “Home and Exile in Queer Experience,” met in a large cinema not far from this restaurant.

This conference honored what Aswat describes as its “five fruitful years of engaging in social change and raising awareness in the Palestinian community.”

It also celebrated Aswat’s publication of an anthology about same-sex love translated into Arabic. Aswat explains, “The book was produced in order to raise awareness in Arab society both with respect to freedom of choice concerning sexual preference and the existence of lesbians in Palestinian Arab society.”

The conference took place in this coastal city built along the curve of the Mediterranean, within the “green line” borders of the establishment of the 1948 colonial state of Israel in ancient Palestine.

In the weeks and days leading up to the conference, concerns gathered like clouds after two Muslim members of the Knesset (parliament), criticized the conference and Aswat—statements widely circulated in the mass media.

Aswat seeks to open up a wider dialogue among Palestinians with this conference and the publication of the Arabic-language anthology. So when 20 Palestinian Muslim women stood quietly outside the cinema before the conference began this morning, holding signs expressing religious opposition to the event, Aswat was clear and strong in its leadership. Aswat asked its supporters not to demonstrate against or

argue with the Palestinian Muslim women. Instead, Aswat asked all supporters to come inside and take part in the conference.

Inside, the conference was a brave success and made more history than can be easily digested in a day.

Sweet taste of solidarity

Controversy about Aswat generated widespread public debate and discussion, which in turn led to expressions and acts of support and wider solidarity.

Raja Zaatry, journalist and editor at the Al Ittihad Arabic-language daily published in Haifa, editorialized against religious condemnation of the conference about same-sex love. And two popular gay-friendly Palestinian restaurants in Abu Nuwas offered concrete support to Aswat.

Conference attendance exceeded expectations: 260 people pre-registered and an additional 90 registered at the event, which was largely by invitation-only.

So many people of all sexualities, genders and sexes showed up for the all-day conference that before the program could even begin, a hasty call had to be made to another city to bring many more translation devices. The entire day’s program was simultaneously translated into Arabic, Hebrew and English. The gathering was predominantly Arab, overwhelmingly women and other oppressed sexes, and with a showing from Ashkenazi Israeli Jewish activists.

Palestinian women came from cities, towns and villages, including from Gaza, Ramallah and other West Bank towns under Israeli military and settler occupation.

The Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice sent Aswat a message of solidarity signed by scores of individuals and 100 organizations worldwide, gathered in only four days time. While the list of signers is long, it represents an important and timely political coalition.

Signers include:

The Al-Fatiha Foundation (USA); Aireana, Grupo por los derechos de las les-

Embattled playwright aids Serb enclave

By John Catalinotto

Austrian playwright and poet Peter Handke has turned over his entire Alternate Heinrich Heine prize of over 50,000 Euros (\$65,000) to the embattled enclave of Serbian people living in rightist-ruled and NATO-occupied Kosovo.

Anyone who has paid attention to Handke’s career path in the past year might wonder how he was in a position to do this. The outspoken Handke had opposed NATO’s war on Yugoslavia and German imperialism’s excuses for subverting and destroying that multinational country in the Balkans.

In March 2006, at a time when he was about to receive the official Heinrich Heine Prize from the Dusseldorf City Council, Handke was in Belgrade speaking at the memorial service for the late Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. The Yugoslav leader had died in prison in The Hague, where he was fighting charges of alleged war crimes but had not been convicted.

When they heard that Handke was speaking in Belgrade, Dusseldorf City Council members tried to stop the prize. Handke withdrew before the council could take action.

Next, a Handke play was going to be performed in Paris. The French ruling class put pressure on the theater company, forcing the play’s cancellation.

The German anti-war movement and especially theater people active in it came to the rescue. They created an Alternate Heinrich Heine Prize, funded by donations, many coming from progressives in the arts. They collected the funds that Handke, was pleased to turn over to the Serbian enclave, which many describe as a “ghetto.” Rightist Albanian organizations that have been running Kosovo since the NATO invasion have persecuted the Serb community and driven many people out of the province. □

Women holds historic conference

bianas (Paraguay); ALLGO (USA); Alqaws: The Palestinian LGBTQ Community Project (Israel); Anti-Homophobic Africaine (Kenya); Asociación de Lucha por la Identidad Travesti Transexual/ALITT (Argentina); Assal East Coast (USA); Audre Lorde Project/ALP (USA); Behind the Mask (South Africa); Centre for the Development of People (Malawi); Centro para la Educación y Prevención del Sida/CEPRESI (Nicaragua); Common Language (China); Coalición Nacional de Grupos de Gay de Nicaragua (Nicaragua); Collectif Arc en Ciel (Mauritius); Desalambrando (Argentina); Desdenosotras, La Casa del Encuentro (Argentina); DIVAS - Instituto em Defesa da Diversidade Afetivo-Sexual (Brazil); El Closet de Sor Juana (Mexico); Engender (South Africa).

FIERCE! (USA); Gender Dynamix (South Africa); Gender/Sexuality Rights Association of Taiwan, G/SRAT (Taiwan); GRIOT Circle (USA); Grupo de Mujeres Safo (Nicaragua); INCREASE! (Nigeria); Ishtar MSM (Kenya); Les Voz (Mexico); Mulabi - Espacio Latinoamericano de Sexualidades y Derechos (Argentina); Mujeres al Borde (Colombia); Mujeres y Cultura Subterránea (Mexico); Nodutdol for Korean Community Development (USA); Organización Ecuatoriana de Mujeres Lesbianas/OEML (Ecuador); Organización de Transexuales por la Dignidad de la Diversidad (Chile).

Organization Parma Support Group for lesbians, transgender, bisexuals, hijras/murats (India); Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project/QWOCMAP (USA); Red Lésbica Cattrachas de Honduras (Honduras); Sangini (India) Trust (India); Sindicato de Trabajadoras Lesbianas Gays y Bisexuales (Chile); Sylvia Rivera Law Project (USA); Taller Lésbico Creativo (Puerto Rico); Tanzania Lesbian Association/TALESA (Tanzania); Vikalp Women's Group (India) and Wits ACTIVATE (South Africa).

Astraea sent its board chair, Brenda Funches—an African-American lesbian community activist—who saluted the conference in Arabic and English. Naima el Moussati and Hanneke Kamphuis traveled from the Netherlands to represent “Mama Cash,” a global fund for women.

A Druse and Moroccan speaker addressed the conference and so did several U.S. and Israeli Jewish activists.

Both the newspapers of the Communist Party of Israel and of the Arab nationalist party Balad—the Arabic acronym for National Democratic Assembly—are writing news articles about this conference for their presses.

Harvesting fruit

Aswat Board Coordinator Samira, and

Shahira Shalabi from the Shatil Center, welcomed participants in Arabic as the conference opened. All the Palestinian speakers addressed the conference in Arabic.

The conference honored Rauda Morcos, general coordinator of Aswat, for her years of tireless work and her leadership.

During the morning panel on “Homosexuality and Lesbianism in the Arab Community,” Morcos recalled that Aswat grew out of the seed of an e-mail list compiled in 2002 that created a virtual forum for Palestinian gay women to meet and talk to each other.

A year later, the group met for the first time in the home of Rauda Morcos and her Palestinian activist partner. Today, some 14 members meet twice a month. Palestinians from the occupied territories have to endure Israeli military checkpoints to get to the meetings. The mailing list is much larger now.

Over the last half decade, Aswat has also worked to develop relations of solidarity with Palestinian women's organizations.

This morning's conference opened with a welcome from Rula Deeb, director of the Palestinian feminist organization Kayan—in which Aswat has its organizational home. At least eight Palestinian feminist organizations were represented at the conference here today.

Yousef Abu-Wardy, a renowned playwright and one of the most famous and well-loved Palestinian actors, spoke to the conference on the morning panel. He likened conditions for an Arab actor inside Israel to another kind of closet. He said that the chain of every society is only as strong as each individual link. Abu-Wardy called on the Arab world to help strengthen the link of Aswat.

Aida Touma-Solaiman also addressed the morning session. She is general director of the Arab organization Women Against Violence in Nazareth and a central committee member of the Communist Party of Israel—which is more than 90 percent Palestinian.

Touma-Solaiman said that even as she was leaving to come to this conference, she got calls from people urging her not to attend. Some said this love wasn't natural. Touma-Solaiman replied eloquently and succinctly that this love has existed since the dawn of time. If all the repression and oppression since hasn't eradicated it, then it is clear that this love is natural.

'Writing history'

Aswat's conference also celebrated the launching of its first book in Arabic, so that as Palestinians they can reach out to their own population in their own language about their own culture and history.

The title of this anthology of articles by Arab and non-Arab writers translates from Arabic into English as “Home and Exile in Queer Experience: A Collection of Articles about Lesbian and Homosexual Identity.”

Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian—an Arab professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem—was part of the afternoon panel that analyzed the significance of this new Arabic-language anthology and the articles within it.

In the last year alone, Aswat has also published five newsletters in Arabic and a glossary in Arabic of terms regarding sexuality. Aswat uses the Arabic words *mithlyat* (lesbian woman) and *mithlyun* (homosexual male).

Aswat also plans to organize a virtual forum on its website—www.aswatgroup.org—in which Arab people around the world can take part.

Nabila Espanioli, a distinguished feminist activist and the director of Al-Tufula Center for Preschool Education, said, “What is happening here is that Aswat is writing history as we go and history is writing Aswat.”

'Weaving new social fabric'

Palestinians at today's conference and this evening's celebratory feast are articulating—in Arabic—the connections between their struggle for sexual liberation and their lives as Arab people living under occupation.

Raafat Hattab, a young *mithly*, described growing up as a Palestinian male attracted to other males. But after he moved to Tel Aviv, he said, he was treated as “the enemy” in the Israeli “capital of freedom,” expected to give up his national identity, his Palestinian identity.

Hattab described the work of Alqaws—The Palestinian LGBTQ Community Project, which is the organization that he is part of today. Alqaws is based in Tel Aviv and organizes among Palestinians, in Arabic.

Aswat issued a statement about their conference that concluded, “ASWAT has been acting for five years within Palestinian Arab society in order to raise awareness of the issue of homosexuality and the freedom to realize it, and has invested great efforts in uniting the national, gender and homosexual identities. We belong to a people facing occupation and racism, and we are fighting for its political, human and cultural freedom. Together we shall oppose all forms of imperialist domination. ASWAT is acting to create a space within our Arab society where we can struggle on both the political and the social levels.”

Tonight, this Palestinian restaurant is

servicing up a feast for 40 participants of the day's event in order to honor the importance of Aswat's conference.

Daylight is waning and the night is releasing the scent of jasmine in the cool air. Something big has happened today, and you can hear it as the young Palestinians around the table, from different cities, towns and villages, begin to thump the tables rhythmically, transforming the thick wooden table tops into Middle Eastern drums.

Their voices rise together, singing popular Palestinian and Lebanese resistance songs in Arabic.

A stone's throw from this restaurant are buildings left in shambles by Lebanese missiles, fired after Israel invaded—backed by Washington, Wall Street and the Pentagon. Several Palestinians tell me that even as they feared they might die under the bombs, they cheered the Lebanese resistance struggle against the mightily-armed Israeli military.

One young *mithlya* adds that the bombs fell on military, police and governmental buildings in Haifa with far greater accuracy than Tel Aviv or Washington claimed.

Palestinians make up 20 percent of the total population living within the 1948 borders of the Israeli garrison state. The same young Palestinian raises her arm to indicate this Arab neighborhood in Haifa where we are being warmly hosted. “This street is our city,” she says. “We are trying to weave a new social fabric.”

The singing is growing more robust by the time the sweets and coffee arrive at the tables. Arms are raised in fists and V-signs. One young woman explains, “The song is from the first war of Israel against Lebanon. The song says that the only thing Lebanon will give her attacker is its own suicide.”

The fine-pitched voice of a proud Palestinian intersexual—a beautiful and handsome person—rises above the rest. Glasses and cups are held high as they sing: “I kiss the earth that our liberation fighters' boots have walked on!”

They sing in Arabic: “Jerusalem is ours!”

These are Palestinian Aswat, and they are rising.

To learn more about Aswat, write to: ipcoordinator@aswatgroup.org; call: +972-4-866-2357; fax +972-4-864-1072; or visit www.aswatgroup.org.

Leslie Feinberg, a managing editor of *Workers World newspaper*, spoke at the March 28 conference at Aswat's invitation. Feinberg's solidarity message to the Aswat conference is online at workers.org.



Leslie Feinberg to Aswat: 'I am at your side'

Following are excerpts from the solidarity statement that Leslie Feinberg, a lesbian transgender and Jewish communist, delivered at the first public conference of Aswat (Voices)—Palestinian Gay Women—in Haifa, occupied Palestine—on March 28.

I have long stated publicly that I would only travel here if the Israeli state had already been dismantled, or if I were invited by Palestinians to support your struggle. What an honor to be able to be side-by-side with you today at your invitation.

From the Crusades to the 1948 Zionist occupation of Palestine, colonialism and imperialism have brutally imposed economic, military and cultural domination. The British Mandate brought anti-sodomy laws to Palestine, a legacy the Israeli occu-

pation kept. The French Mandate brought anti-sodomy laws to Lebanon.

Now, today, here, with its first publication, this important anthology, Aswat is opening up a dialogue with your own people in your own language about your own culture within your own history.

The discussion may not be an easy one—profound and lasting transformation rarely is—but those of us who defend your right to self-determination, your sovereignty, will defend the right of the Palestinian people to carry out their internal dialogue without Israeli or U.S. interference or political manipulation.

Today there are some who will try to separate Aswat from the Palestinian struggle and only relate to you on the basis of a universal sexual identity. But those who

support your self-determination will not forget that you are linguistically translating your culture, your lives and your self-identities and your struggle to make it easier for those of us who are not fluent in Arabic to understand. But that does not mean that identities like lesbian, gay, bi, transgender, transsexual, intersexual have one universal meaning in all places, for all peoples, for all cultures, or in all historical periods.

I send my solidarity to [the Lebanese LGBT group] Helem and to the Lebanese people. I salute the victory of your people over the Israeli military, armed and backed by the Pentagon.

I raise my voice here in solidarity with the Iraqi and Iranian people of all sexualities and genders who are fiercely resist-

ing imperialism. We are working hard to defend you.

The anti-war movement worldwide, particularly in the imperialist countries, needs to hear your Aswat. So my work here is to help to amplify the Palestinian Aswat, the Arab Aswat. I will listen carefully, closely and respectfully.

The entire speech can be read at www.workers.org.

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Reflexiones del Presidente Fidel Castro

Condenados a muerte prematura por hambre y sed más de 3 mil millones de personas en el mundo

No se trata de una cifra exagerada; es más bien cautelosa. En eso he meditado bastante después de la reunión del presidente Bush con los fabricantes norteamericanos de automóviles.

La idea siniestra de convertir los alimentos en combustible quedó definitivamente establecida como línea económica de la política exterior de Estados Unidos el pasado lunes 26 de marzo.

Un cable de la AP, agencia de información norteamericana que llega a todos los rincones del mundo, dice textualmente:

“Washington, 26 de marzo (AP). El presidente George W. Bush elogió el lunes los beneficios de los automóviles que funcionan con etanol y biodiesel, durante una reunión con fabricantes de vehículos, en la que buscó dar impulso a sus planes de combustibles alternativos.

“Bush dijo que un compromiso de los líderes de la industria automotriz nacional para duplicar su producción de vehículos a combustible alternativo ayudaría a que los automovilistas abandonen los motores que funcionan con gasolina y reduzcan la dependencia del país respecto del petróleo de importación.

“Este es un gran avance tecnológico para el país”, dijo Bush tras inspeccionar tres vehículos a combustible alternativo. Si la nación quiere reducir el consumo de gasolina, el consumidor debe estar en posibilidad de tomar una decisión racional.

“El Presidente instó al Congreso a avanzar rápido en una legislación que el gobierno propuso recientemente para ordenar el uso de 132 000 millones de litros (35 000 millones de galones) de combustibles alternativos para el 2017 y para imponer estándares más exigentes de ahorro de combustible en los automóviles.

“Bush se reunió con el presidente de consejo y director general de General Motors Corp, Rich Wagoner; el director general de Ford Motor Co., Alan Mulally y el director general del grupo Chrysler de Daimler Chrysler AG, Tom LaSorda.

“Los participantes en el encuentro discutieron medidas para apoyar la producción de vehículos a combustible alternativo, intentos para desarrollar el etanol a partir de fuentes como el césped o el serín, y una propuesta para reducir en un 20% el consumo de gasolina en 10 años.

“Las discusiones se realizaron en un momento en que han subido los precios de la gasolina. El estudio más reciente de la organización Lundberg Survey señaló que el precio promedio nacional de la gasolina ha subido 6 centavos por galón (3,78 litros) en las últimas dos semanas, a 2,61 dólares.”

Pienso que reducir y además reciclar todos los motores que consumen electricidad y combustible es una necesidad elemental y urgente de toda la humanidad. La tragedia no consiste en reducir esos gastos de energía, sino en la idea de convertir los alimentos en combustible.

Hoy se conoce con toda precisión que una tonelada de maíz sólo puede producir

413 litros de etanol como promedio, de acuerdo con densidades, lo que equivale a 109 galones.

El precio promedio del maíz en los puertos de Estados Unidos se eleva a 167 dólares la tonelada. Se requieren por tanto 320 millones de toneladas de maíz para producir 35 000 millones de galones de etanol.

Según datos de la FAO, la cosecha de maíz de Estados Unidos en el año 2005 se elevó a 280,2 millones de toneladas.

Aunque el Presidente hable de producir combustible a partir de césped o virutas de madera, cualquiera comprende que son frases carentes en absoluto de realismo. Entiéndase bien: ¡35 000 millones de galones significan un 35 seguido de nueve ceros!

Vendrán después bellos ejemplos de lo que en la productividad por hombre y por hectárea alcanzan los experimentados y bien organizados agricultores de Estados Unidos: el maíz convertido en etanol; los residuos de ese maíz convertidos en alimento animal con 26% de proteína; el excremento del ganado utilizado como materia prima para la producción de gas. Desde luego, esto es después de cuantiosas inversiones al alcance sólo de las empresas más poderosas, en las que todo se tiene que mover sobre la base de consumo de electricidad y combustible. Aplíquese esta receta a los países del Tercer Mundo y verán cuántas personas dejarán de consumir maíz entre las masas hambrientas de nuestro planeta. O algo peor: présteseles financiamiento a los países pobres para producir etanol del maíz o de cualquier otro tipo de alimento y no quedará un árbol para defender la humanidad del cambio climático.

Otros países del mundo rico tienen programado usar no sólo maíz, sino también trigo, semillas de girasol, de colza y otros alimentos para dedicarlos a la producción de combustible. Para los europeos, por ejemplo, sería negocio importar toda la soya del mundo a fin de reducir el gasto en combustible de sus automóviles y alimentar a sus animales con los residuos de esa leguminosa, especialmente rica en todos los tipos de aminoácidos esenciales.

En Cuba, los alcoholes se producían como subproducto de la industria azucarera, después de hacerle tres extracciones de azúcar al jugo de caña. El cambio de clima está afectando ya nuestra producción azucarera. Grandes sequías se vienen alternando con lluvias récord, que apenas permiten producir azúcar durante cien días con rendimientos adecuados en los meses de nuestro muy moderado invierno de modo que falta azúcar por tonelada de caña o falta caña por hectárea debido a las prolongadas sequías en los meses de siembra y cultivo.

En Venezuela, tengo entendido que usarían el alcohol no para exportar, sino para mejorar la calidad medioambiental de su propio combustible. Por ello, independientemente de la excelente tecnología brasileña para producir alcohol, en Cuba el empleo de tal tecnología para la producción directa de alcohol a partir del jugo de caña no constituye más que un sueño o un desvarío de los que se ilusionan con esa idea. En nuestro país, las tierras dedicadas a la producción directa de alcohol pueden ser mucho más útiles en la producción de alimentos para el pueblo y en la protección del medio ambiente.

Todos los países del mundo, ricos y pobres, sin excepción alguna, podrían

ahorrarse millones de millones de dólares en inversión y combustible simplemente cambiando todos los bombillos incandescentes por bombillos fluorescentes, algo que Cuba ha llevado a cabo en todos los hogares del país. Eso significaría un respiro para resistir el cambio climático sin matar de hambre a las masas pobres del mundo.

Como puede observarse, no uso adjetivos para calificar al sistema y a los dueños del mundo. Esa tarea la saben hacer excelentemente bien los expertos en información y los hombres de ciencias socioeconómicas y políticas honestos que en el mundo abundan y que constantemente hurgan en el presente y el porvenir de nuestra especie. Basta una computadora y el creciente número de redes de Internet.

Hoy conocemos por primera vez una economía realmente globalizada y

una potencia dominante en el terreno económico, político y militar, que en nada se parece a la Roma de los emperadores.

Algunos se preguntarán por qué hablo de hambre y sed. Respondo: no se trata de la otra cara de una moneda, sino de varias caras de otra pieza, como pueden ser un dado con seis caras, o un poliedro con muchas más caras.

Acudo en este caso a una agencia oficial de noticias, fundada en 1945 y generalmente bien informada sobre los problemas económicos y sociales del mundo: la TELAM. Textualmente, dijo:

“Cerca de 2 mil millones de personas habitarán dentro de apenas 18 años en países y regiones donde el agua sea un recuerdo lejano. Dos tercios de la población mundial podrían vivir en lugares donde esa escasez produzca tensiones sociales y económicas de tal magnitud que podrían llevar a los pueblos a guerras por el preciado ‘oro azul’.

“Durante los últimos 100 años, el uso del agua ha aumentado a un ritmo más de dos veces superior a la tasa de crecimiento de la población.

“Según las estadísticas del Consejo Mundial del Agua (WWC, por sus siglas en inglés), se estima que para el 2015 el número de habitantes afectados por esta grave situación se eleve a 3 500 millones de personas.

“La Organización de Naciones Unidas celebró el 23 de marzo el Día Mundial del Agua, llamando a enfrentar desde ese mismo día la escasez mundial del agua bajo la coordinación de la Organización de Naciones Unidas para la Agricultura y la Alimentación (FAO), con el objetivo de destacar la creciente importancia de la falta de agua a nivel mundial y la necesidad de una mayor integración y cooperación que permitan garantizar una gestión sostenida y eficiente de los recursos hídricos.

“Muchas regiones del planeta sufren una escasez severa de agua, viviendo con menos de 500 metros cúbicos por persona por año. Cada vez son más las regiones que padecen la falta crónica del vital elemento.

“Principales consecuencias de la escasez de agua son la insuficiente cantidad de ese precioso líquido para la producción de alimentos, la imposibilidad de desarrollo industrial, urbano y turístico y problemas de salud.”

Hasta aquí el cable de TELAM.

Dejo de mencionar en este caso otros importantes hechos, como los hielos que se derriten en Groenlandia y en la Antártica, los daños en la capa de ozono y la creciente cantidad de mercurio en muchas especies de peces de consumo habitual.

Hay otros temas que pueden abordarse, pero simplemente pretendo con estas líneas hacer un comentario sobre la reunión del presidente Bush con los ejecutivos principales de compañías automotrices norteamericanas.

28 de marzo del 2007
Fidel Castro

