

## MUNDO OBRERO

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### EDITORIAL

## Why Virginia Tech killings happened

Yet another rampage has occurred at a school, this time leaving 33 people dead at Virginia Tech—the worst such incident ever at a U.S. college campus.

The news media seem stunned and surprised, yet their coverage sounds so similar to the stories about Columbine eight years ago. They dwell on the personality of the young man the police say did the shooting, before killing himself. They talk about him being a “loner,” depressed, perhaps angry at women.

But aren't there lonely and depressed people all over the world? Many

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# From around the globe Women in struggle rally in Venezuela

By Liz Green  
Caracas, Venezuela

From April 9-14, the 14th Congress of the Women's International Democratic Federation convened in Caracas, Venezuela under the theme of "Women in Struggle." Approximately 1,600 women representing six continents attended the conference. In 2005, the WIDF had 126 national organizations affiliated from 99 countries. Today, they have 223 affiliates in 103 countries and 200 friends. Their goals are "Peace, Equality, Development and National Liberation."

At the opening plenum, leading WIDF members including María León, an outspoken communist and director of the state Women's Institute; the vice-president of Venezuela, Jorge Rodríguez Gómez; and WIDF current president, Marcia Campos spoke.

One of the highlights of this trip was when President Hugo Chávez spoke to thousands of Venezuelans

*Continued on page 6*



At the April 13 rally in Caracas, Venezuelan women soldiers chanted "Patria socialista o muerte!" (A socialist homeland or death!)



On April 13 millions of Venezuelans poured into the streets of Caracas to celebrate their defeat of the 2002 U.S. coup attempt against the Bolivarian Revolution. Assisted by women from the PCV (Communist Party of Venezuela), the Women's Fightback Network delegation carried a banner and hung it directly below the podium where President Hugo Chávez was speaking. Some delegation members were (r to l) Million Worker March leader Brenda Stokely, FIST leader Leilani Dowell, and Harlem Tenants Council organizer Nellie Bailey.

WW PHOTOS: LIZ GREEN

# Leonard Peltier nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

By Stephanie Hedgecock

Indigenous political prisoner Leonard Peltier has been nominated for the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, according to the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee.

Official confirmation on this nomination was received April 3 by the LPDC. In their announcement to supporters, they state, "We want to thank the people who nominated Leonard for this prestigious award. We ask that supporters NOT send letters of support or recommendation to the Nobel Peace Prize Committee as only selected individuals can nominate for the Nobel Peace Prize."

Peltier, a Lakota/Anishinabe veteran of the American Indian Movement, is recognized around the world as a political prisoner. He has been in prison for 32 years, since 1976, for a crime he did not commit. In violation of

its own statutes, the U.S. government has repeatedly refused him parole.

The U.S. suppressed hundreds of thousands of pages of documents, including ballistics evidence, which would indicate Peltier's innocence in a 1975 shootout at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Two FBI agents opened fire on the Jumping Bull compound there while children, elders and adults slept. In the resulting firefight, a Native man and the two agents died.

U.S. prosecutors have publicly admitted that they do not know who actually fired the shots that killed the agents.

This year 181 official candidates for the annual Nobel Peace Prize have been registered. The name of the Prize recipient for 2007 will be announced in mid-October. □



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# Memorial honors Henri Nereaux

The life of Henri Nereaux was celebrated at a memorial in New York City on April 14. The Solidarity Center hall was packed, as close to a hundred of his comrades in Workers World Party, friends in the International Action Center, former shipmates and union brothers from the Masters, Mates & Pilots, family members and neighbors came to pay a final tribute to this stalwart fighter for workers' rights.

For three and a half hours, they traded stories about his doggedness in the struggle, his cheerful willingness to do whatever task needed to be done, and his skill in dealing with adversaries.

IAC co-coordinator and chair of the memorial, Teresa Gutierrez, announced the setting up of an Henri Nereaux Memorial Fund that will help young people visit Cuba this summer—a place dear to his heart. He had visited the island many times, both before and after its socialist revolution.

His long-time companion and editor of Workers World, Deirdre Griswold, described highlights of his early life as a seafarer and union official. An article about his life appeared in the March 29 issue of Workers World.

—Workers World NYC bureau



## Tues • April 24 Celebrate Mumia's Birthday Philadelphia at AFSC On 15th and Cherry Streets

View "Framing an Execution: The Media & Mumia Abu-Jamal" Learn where Mumia's case is at and what we can all do to bring him home! Sponsored by International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, NY Free Mumia Coalition and others. Call 212-330-8029 for more info.

## San Diego, CA -7 pm at the International Action Center View "Legacy of Torture"

3930 Oregon St., Suite 230 (a few doors north of University Ave.) For more information, call 619-692-4422

## Sat • May 12 Writers for Mumia

Join writers, poets, journalists & activists who will read from their work and/or discuss the latest developments in Mumia's case, From 1 to 5 pm at the Community Church of NY, 40 East 35th St., between Madison & Park, For information call Writers for Mumia at 212-633-6646.

## Thurs • May 17 • 9:00 am

All Out for Philadelphia in front of U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, 6th & Market Streets

## Support the right for a new trial!

**Mumia has always fought for people's rights! A united, broad movement can save Mumia from a legal lynching!** Go to [www.Millions4Mumia.org](http://www.Millions4Mumia.org) for more background information on this significant case that epitomizes the struggle against racism, repression and injustice inside the U.S.

For bus information from New York City and Jersey City on May 17, call 212-633-6646.

### JOIN US.

Workers World Party (WWP) fights on all issues that face the working class and oppressed peoples—Black and white, Latin@, Asian, Arab and Native peoples, women and men, young and old, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, trans, disabled, working, unemployed and students.

If you would like to know more about WWP, or to join us in these struggles, contact the branch nearest you.

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## Duke rape case

# Blaming the victim, again

By Tyneisha Bowens and Laura Bickford  
Raleigh FIST

The infamous "Duke Lacrosse Rape Case" has once again taken the media forefront and divided the U.S. Last week's decision to drop the sexual assault charges against the three Duke University men has rattled communities and weakened the survivor's support system. Here in North Carolina the responses and effects regarding the decision are the most extreme.

Given this dynamic, the women of Raleigh FIST (Fight Imperialism-Stand Together) youth group have come together to reflect on the year-long case and last week's decision.

The majority of the attention given to this case has focused on only one question, that question being "Was she raped?" There is much debate over this question.

So much so in fact that it has overshadowed the underlying issues of the case. Race, sex and class are all parts of this case and of sexual violence in general. This country has had an extensive history of abuse and degradation of women of color and still does.

Since the enslavement of African people became an industry, women of color have been subjected to sexual and racial exploitation by white men in this country. It is evident that the justification of this

behavior is still present in our society.

This tradition of white male supremacy has created a culture of rape in which women and our bodies are regarded as property and therefore up for grabs by any man. And though this rape culture existed long before this specific case, the decision to drop the sexual assault charges has worsened the situation.

Since the dropping of charges last week the media has been engaged in what can only be called a modern day witch hunt, labeling the survivor a liar while raising the three previously accused white men to sainthood. Both local and national media are printing articles exposing the survivor's identity and exploiting her past. Irrelevant information about the survivor can be found on almost every media outlet.

This media backlash against the survivor is directly influenced by racism, sexism and class stratification. Evidence of this can be seen in evaluating the differences in how the survivor and the three men have been portrayed.

Very little attention was paid to the sordid pasts of the three men, even when they were facing rape and sexual assault charges. But now that the media can legally report the survivor's identity, her entire history is being divulged.

This dynamic shows that a survivor's

humanity can be used against her or him. It seems as though a survivor has to be perfect (in the standards of a white Western culture) in order to be taken seriously. It also shows that accused perpetrators are not really the ones on trial.

The slanderous media rant is not just a reflection of the current cultural climate for survivors; it is also an indicator of how the climate of white male supremacy in which survivors have to live is worsening for all oppressed people. The decision to drop the charges is not just about this case; it influences every survivor of sexual violence.

This Duke decision is meant to silence all women and it isolates survivors from any sense of community and support. By systematically isolating women in this manner, and using sexual violence to do so, the capitalist, patriarchal-dominated

society we live in is attempting to mute the oppressed in order to perpetuate white male privilege. The message being sent is that if you are a rich white male you can do anything to anyone and not be held accountable.

But there is hope and the women of Raleigh FIST want our message to be heard by all survivors. There are organizations and movements that are working to stop sexual violence and combat rape culture. In order to bring the truth about sexual violence to the attention of the world, a coalition of organizations in North Carolina is putting together a march entitled "Creating A World Without Sexual Violence, National Day of Truthtelling." This march is taking place on April 28 in Durham, N.C. For more information call 919-682-8089 or visit [truthtelling.communityserver.com](http://truthtelling.communityserver.com). □



## Keroack resigns

# A win for reproductive rights

By Sue Davis

Dr. Eric Keroack resigned abruptly only four months after President George Bush appointed the anti-birth control zealot to head the country's \$283 million family planning program.

Keroack is a non-board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist who operates six Christian anti-abortion "crisis pregnancy" centers in Massachusetts and who opposes contraception and comprehensive sex education.

Though reproductive rights organizations mounted a strong exposé of Keroack as outrageously unqualified for the job—a proverbial fox in a chicken coop—Keroack resigned on March 29 only after the office of Medicaid in Massachusetts leveled charges against him.

In fact, this past January, Keroack received "two formal warnings from the Massachusetts board of medicine ordering him to refrain from prescribing drugs to people who are not his patients and from providing mental health counseling without proper training." (Boston Globe)

Bush's appointment of Keroack was a blatantly misogynist, racist, anti-poor attack on the reproductive rights of more than 17 million women, disproportionately women of color, who rely on the federal Title X program for family planning and birth control services.

Leaders of several groups supporting reproductive rights immediately called for Bush to appoint, in the words of Planned Parenthood head Cecile Richards, "a legitimate mainstream public health expert who supports family planning and access to birth control." She noted, "The nation's family planning program should be run by a champion for women's health and safety." (PP press release, March 29)

Because Title X funds have been cut back severely during Bush's administration, legislators who support reproductive

rights are pushing the Prevention First Act, which seeks to dramatically expand access to family planning services by increasing funding to \$385 million.

Coverage would include emergency contraception and comprehensive, medically accurate sex education. The stipulation of "medically accurate" sex education is critical. The federal government began funding \$50 million for an abstinence-only program after the Clinton administration destroyed the welfare safety net for poor women.

But now under Bush, that has mushroomed into a \$176 million program, and Bush wants to push it to \$191 million in the 2008 budget. Abstinence-only is the only type of sex education currently funded by the federal government. However, an April 15 New York Times article reported that results of a study mandated by Congress showed that "students who participated in sexual abstinence programs were just as likely to have sex as those who did not." That corroborated a 2006 General Accountability Office study that concluded such programs had not proven effective and often contained inaccurate information about such things as condoms and HIV/AIDS.

Already this year six states have opted out of the federal program. Ohio, Connecticut, Montana, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Wisconsin recently joined California in turning down thousands of dollars because they don't choose to comply with federal rules restricting discussion of contraceptives. (Los Angeles Times, April 8)

It's interesting to note that from 1995 to 2002, teen pregnancy rates dropped 24 percent, according to a study by Columbia University and the Guttmacher Institute. The report, published in the American Journal of Public Health in January, attributed 14 percent of the decline to teens waiting longer to have sex and the rest to contraception use. □

## Elaine Brown speaks on Lucasville Five case

By Sharon Danann  
Cleveland

On April 7, Elaine Brown, former Black Panther Party leader and long-time prisoner advocate, brought her message to Cleveland to raise awareness about the political prisoners in Ohio known as the Lucasville Five and to help build the campaign for their release.

The Five face death sentences based on trials that were mockeries of justice, following the prison uprising in Lucasville, Ohio, in 1993. The event was hosted by the Black Studies Program of Cleveland State University and the Cleveland Lucasville Five Defense Committee.

Nearly one hundred dedicated people braved a snowstorm to hear Brown trace the history of racism in this country, including the "black codes" after the Civil War, which "made it a crime to be Black and not have a job." The punishment was work on a chain gang. This became the transition from a "slave class to a criminal class" that is manifested in the current prison population, which is 50 percent Black.

"Crime is a political question," stated Brown. She gave as an example the 5,000 Panamanians slaughtered when Colin Powell led the military action to capture Manuel Noriega. "[Powell]'s not in the slammer," she pointed out.

Brown has been a powerful advocate for Michael Lewis, "Little B," who was only 13 when he was arrested. The media called him a "thug" and a "super-predator." In contrast, the media provided extenuating



PHOTO: ERICKA ABRAM

From left to right, Betty Springer, Elaine Brown, Saadiqah Hasan, Sharon Danann, Dwight Lamar, Kandy Cannon, Jackie Thomas, Susan Schnur and Martha Grevatt at Cleveland event.

circumstances, such as unhappiness in his home life, for Kip Kinkel of Oregon, who killed his parents and two of his classmates and wounded 26 others.

Kinkel is white. Lewis is Black and clearly was "criminalized" by the media.

Brown sees a "wonderful shift" in the resurgence of activism, particularly that of prisoners and their supporters. She sees it as part of the rejection of George Bush. Many people attending the event signed up to become active in the campaign to free the Lucasville Five.

Brown also spoke to a crowd of 300 at the University of Toledo on April 5. In both speeches she highlighted the case of Siddique Abdullah Hasan, who is the closest to exhausting his appeals and receiving an execution date.

Brown was persuaded to do the speaking tour by Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin (the former H. Rap Brown), who has been in correspondence with Hasan. The tour was organized by the Toledo chapter of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty.

"Lucasville" by Staughton Lynd available at [Leftbooks.com](http://Leftbooks.com)

**STOP**  
the **RAIDS**  
& **DEPORTATIONS!**

- Legalization for all immigrants now!
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- Protection of all workers' rights!
- Economic & social justice for Katrina survivors!
- Money for human needs, not war!
- Close inhumane detention centers!

March at the beginning of Olympic & Broadway, LA • 12 pm  
May Day Marches in San Francisco – New York – Many Cities

MAY 1 '07

## Ingalls workers' strike

# Lessons on labor resistance in U.S. Gulf

By Saladin Muhammad

On March 8, more than 7,000 workers at the Ingalls shipyard in Pascagoula, Miss., went on strike demanding a decent contract. The Ingalls workers are represented by 15 unions; 11 are affiliated with the AFL-CIO Pascagoula Metal Trades Council that represents 6,700 production workers including asbestos workers, boilermakers, machinists, operating engineers, painters and allied trades, plumbers and pipe fitters, sheet metal workers, and the unaffiliated carpenters, guards, laborers and teamsters.

Fourteen of the unions voted down the first two contract proposals presented by Northrop Grumman, the corporate owner of Ingalls. Grumman is one of the U.S. government's major military defense (offense) contractors.

After a nearly month-long strike and amid mounting pressure from the Katrina disaster's continuing impact on the workers and their families, union members voted on April 4 to accept a contract that had only 18 cents more than was offered in the first two Grumman proposals.

The vote count reveals a deep dissatisfaction among a majority of the workers with the contract, and with the government's complicity with Grumman's exploitation and disaster profiteering off its workers. The vote count was 1,370 in favor and 910 against, totaling only 2,300 of the nearly 5,000 members who had voted down the previous contract proposals and for the strike.

The nearly 3,000 union members who did not vote represent a silent majority who did not support the contract, but who felt that the Ingalls workers could not hold out on strike any longer. This figure also indicates a high degree of demoralization among the workers because of the lack of national support or promotion of the strike by the national trade union movement.

This lack of national trade union support for a strike against a major corporation by workers in the Gulf Coast disaster areas sends a very disheartening message to all workers in the region. It says that the trade unions have not made the fight for a Just Reconstruction for working people on the Gulf Coast a major part of their national agenda. This limits the power of the working class in this region when their struggles can't get national support. This has serious negative ramifications for workers throughout the region, and for the development of a powerful movement for a just reconstruction throughout.

### Resistance to corporate greed and disaster profiteering

The Ingalls workers' strike was the first direct challenge to a major corporation on the Gulf Coast related to the Katrina disaster of August 2005. The workers were/are demanding that Grumman share its corporate profits and the billions of dollars it received from the federal government for disaster recovery with the workers to help address the new economic realities they face in the Gulf Coast.

The strikers' demands for better wages and benefits are necessary to try and make up for the sharp post-Katrina increases in the price of everything from milk to gas to rent, which are bringing their families to a financial breaking point. The workers made major sacrifices to restore operations at the shipyard within two weeks after Katrina, enabling Grumman to meet huge multi-billion-dollar contract obligations. They feel that their efforts should



Ingalls strikers on the picketline in March.

be rewarded with a decent contract that includes not only a decent raise but also vision and dental insurance coverage, which they currently don't have.

Grumman estimated the Katrina damages to its Gulf Coast operations at around \$1 billion. However, the Navy gave Grumman \$2.7 billion as an increase on existing contracts to cover recovery costs, and FEMA gave \$386 million. Ingalls workers only got two weeks' pay out of this, and many had to replace their own tools and equipment of their trades, even though they were lost or damaged by the flood and should have been covered by monies received by Northrop Grumman.

The workers voting down Grumman's first two contract proposals and the nearly month-long strike reflect the deep anger among the Ingalls workers against Grumman's efforts to force them to bear the main burden of the Katrina disaster. Sixty percent of the approximately 11,000 non-management Ingalls work force are African Americans, and feel especially hard-hit because of the long history of racism. Black workers were a major force in voting down the contract proposals.

The Katrina disaster has helped to create conditions that forced Ingalls workers to see the necessity of unity in struggle against this giant corporation and the government alignment with corporate interests against the needs and interests of working people on the Gulf Coast. The workers "are fed up with what they see as abandonment and neglect of this region," said Ron Ault, president of the AFL-CIO Metal Trades. "Our members are the world's best shipbuilders, living in one of the nation's most devastated areas. Something has got to give."

However, this unity is still fragile, and many Black workers had concerns that it might not withstand the pressures of big capital and the government in conducting a long strike without widespread support from the national trade union movement. There were a small percentage of the workers who did not honor the strike vote, and continued to work.

### Government pressure on workers to end the strike

By midday on March 9, the second day of the strike, the Republican Mississippi Sen. Trent Lott issued a statement calling for a quick resolution of the strike and saying that it was in the interest of "America's national security to make sure our mili-

tary has the best tools to protect our nation." (Mississippi Sun Herald) Federal mediators pressured the unions to settle and end the strike. Some of the workers felt that President George W. Bush would invoke the Taft-Hartley Act to try and force them back to work and to negotiate under government pressure similar to the West Coast Longshore Workers in July 2002.

Despite the current control of the U.S. Congress by the Democratic Party and its claims to stand on the side of the workers, no Democratic representative or party leader spoke out in support of the Ingalls workers' strike or against Northrop Grumman's corporate greed and disaster profiteering. This failure by the Democrats to challenge the injustices of this major U.S. defense contractor reflects their similar stance on refusing to cut funding for the U.S. military budget while claiming to carry out an anti-war vote that gave them "control" of the Congress. Even more disheartening was the lack of support from the national trade union federations.

On March 13, close to 3,000 Ingalls workers conducted a six-mile march from the Ingalls shipyard to the city of Pascagoula and back. The march was called by rank-and-file worker activists as an effort to draw national attention to the strike, and to show the connection between their struggle for a good contract and the struggles facing the majority of the working people and communities throughout the Gulf Coast for a Just Reconstruction.

Some of the organizers and leaders of this march are discussing the formation of a Gulf Coast Workers Alliance as a rank-and-file organizing framework to involve other unions, to begin organizing the unorganized and dislocated workers throughout the Gulf Coast, and to push out local struggles to the wider trade union movement.

### Where were the AFL-CIO and Change to Win?

There was no call made by the national leadership of the AFL-CIO or Change to Win for national support for this strike. Several active leaders of national and local unions previously involved in major strikes requiring national support stated that their unions were not notified by their national unions or the federations about the Ingalls strike.

This lack of support by the U.S. national trade union movement for the Ingalls

strike is not unlike its absence in August 2005 at the time of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and its failure to mobilize the power of the trade unions to demand that the U.S. government carry out an immediate rescue of the thousands of working people who were dying in New Orleans and throughout the region.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney's June 2006 announcement of a seven-year \$1 billion housing and economic development initiative called the "AFL-CIO Gulf Coast Revitalization Program," (METALETTER, published by the Metal Trades Department, AFL-CIO, Nov. 3, 2006), while hopefully a positive step toward building affordable housing and creating jobs for those most impacted by Katrina, cannot shield Sweeney from criticism about the AFL-CIO's failure to build support for the Ingalls strike. The Change to Win federation must also take its share of the criticism, as the new federation claims to be the force committed to building a new labor fight-back.

"The Katrina catastrophe screams out for a serious alternative program for democratic reconstruction, with social justice." (Solidarity Editors) The Ingalls workers' strike, as a major example of the struggles to come facing workers throughout the Gulf Coast, begs for the development of a Gulf Coast Workers Alliance as a major rank-and-file democratic workers' organizing and fight-back component of the developing Reconstruction Movement.

Reconstruction of the region needs state and local government constitutional provisions that ensure basic rights for workers, women and historically oppressed communities in the region. After the defeat of apartheid in South Africa, the trade unions there conducted a massive "Workers Charter" campaign to fight for inclusion of basic worker democratic rights in the new South African Constitution. Workers throughout the Gulf Coast region must develop a similar campaign to organize and mobilize the power of workers to demand the inclusion of a Workers' Bill of Rights within the state and local government constitutions and charters.

The leadership of African-American workers can help to bring about a powerful unity of the demands for the Right of Return of displaced majority-Black Survivors, and for a Workers' Bill of Rights for all workers in the region impacted by Katrina and Rita.

Trade union leaders and activists throughout the country must raise criticisms throughout the labor movement about the lack of support for the Ingalls struggle, and hold discussions about the need to build support for the workers and masses of people on the Gulf Coast for a Just Reconstruction. Trade union support is needed to help build a Gulf Coast Workers Alliance and a labor solidarity network that builds national and international support for workers' struggles on the Gulf Coast.

Those in the trade union movement considering themselves as part of labor's left and progressive section have a special responsibility to help develop this support and raise the criticisms.

The Ingalls struggle and its lessons can serve as an important catalyst for building a united and more conscious labor movement to strengthen the Reconstruction Movement throughout the region.

*Saladin Muhammad is the chair of Black Workers for Justice based in Raleigh, N.C. and a member of the Black Workers League based in Rocky Mount, N.C.*

**ON THE PICKET LINE**

by Sue Davis

**Farm workers win at McDonald's**

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers concluded a landmark agreement with McDonald's on April 9. After a two-year campaign, the global giant finally agreed to pay more for Florida tomatoes so the mostly immigrant farm workers will receive higher wages and improved working conditions. Now CIW is determined to forge the same deal with Burger King. The CIW won its first precedent-setting agreement in 2005 with Yum Brands, which owns Taco Bell. The Student/Farmworker Alliance continues to provide valuable support for CIW's Campaign for Fair Food.

**UMWA strike victory**

More than 1,200 workers at two Foundation Coal Holdings mines in Pennsylvania and one in Illinois conducted an unfair labor practice strike from April 4 to 12. "Our members have worked incredibly hard to make Foundation one of the most profitable coal companies in the United States," said Cecil E. Roberts, UMWA international president, in an April 4 union press release. "Yet their employers do not see fit to take even modest steps to reward the miners for their efforts." Even though one of the mines will be closed, UMWA was able to negotiate a strong severance package and first-to-be-hired clause for the affected workers and good terms for the new contract. In an April 12 press release Roberts lauded the workers: "The strength and solidarity displayed by our members at all three mines over this past week have been simply outstanding. It was clear to all concerned that they were sticking together and were not going to back down. I commend them, their families and their communities for their tremendous unity and sense of common purpose."

**Casino dealers vote union**

The dealers at the Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City voted 3 to 1 on March 31 to join the United Auto Workers. The week before, the UAW was officially declared the union of the dealers at Caesars Atlantic City. The UAW is also working for certification at the Trump Marina Hotel Casino. But there's a hitch. On April 9 Trump Entertainment Resorts filed an objection with the National Labor Relations Board contesting the election. No one knows how long it will take for the NLRB to weigh in so the dealers will finally get their union. That's yet another case of why workers need the right to card check, which leads directly to union representation. That's the whole point of the Employee Free Choice Act, which was recently passed by the House of Representatives.

**FedEx settles racial discrimination suit**

On April 11, FedEx announced a \$53.5 million settlement of a racial discrimination suit filed in 2003. African-American and Latin@ workers charged they had been passed over for promotion, were paid less than white workers and were treated unfairly in evaluation and disciplinary proceedings. But the mediated settlement is not a done deal until it's approved by the Federal District Court for the northern district of California. Meanwhile, in an unrelated case, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission brought a class-action lawsuit against Walgreens, the largest drugstore chain in the country, on March 7. Thousands of Black employees, including managers and pharmacists, charge the chain with racial discrimination in job assignments and pay scales. This is the biggest action brought by the EEOC in many years. □

**GEORGIA****Protest exposes inhumane treatment of immigrants**

By Dianne Mathiowetz Lumpkin, Ga.

On April 14, the Prison and Jail Project, based in Americus, Ga., and Alterna, a faith-based community organization from LaGrange, Ga., held a march and rally at the entrance to the Stewart County Detention Center located in Lumpkin, Ga.

Starting from the courthouse square, some 40 people including small children and two people in wheelchairs held signs and banners denouncing the government's repressive policies towards immigrant workers and their families.

At the detention center gates, speakers declared their solidarity with those held inside. Columbus-based lawyer, Joseph Wiley Jr., who went into the detention center following the rally to meet with his clients, promised to make sure the detainees would know of the protest supporting their human rights.

Lumpkin, the county seat of Stewart County, was named for Wilson Lumpkin, a 19th century two-term governor of Georgia and U.S. congressman. Also a senator, Lumpkin was identified in history books as a leading advocate of "states rights" and "Indian removal."

Located some 30-plus miles south of Columbus, Ga., Lumpkin's population of 1,265 is over 70 percent African-American. According to the latest government figures, almost 27 percent of Lumpkin's residents live in poverty. Of those under the age of 18, close to 36 percent are poor.

In 1999, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), the country's largest owner and operator of private prisons, chose Lumpkin as the site for the construction of a 1,524-bed medium-secu-

rity facility. CCA operates 65 prisons in 20 states and the District of Columbia with a capacity of housing 72,500 inmates. Completion of the massive \$45 million Georgia project was held up for several years while CCA searched for a government agency to fill its beds at a profit.

In the fall of 2006, this detention center started operating as a regional Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility. As workplaces across the country began to be raided by armed ICE agents, many of those arrested for immigration violations ended up in the concertina-wire surrounded prison, sitting in the middle of a vast field, a mile or so from a rural Georgia town.

The only lawyer in the area is Lumpkin's mayor, "Ed" Cannington Jr., who was first elected in 1979. There is no local Latin@ or Asian population. The closest immigration lawyer is in Columbus. Most of the legal assistance comes from Atlanta, almost 3 hours away by car.

In late March 2007, El Salvador's consul general's office in Atlanta began receiving hundreds of calls from detainees about the deplorable conditions at Stewart.

The callers said that some 1,000 immigrants were holding a two-day hunger strike to protest the lack of medical care, inadequate food, non-existent or limited access to lawyers, excessive administrative punishments and restricted contact with families.

The March 22 edition of the Atlanta Latino newspaper broke the story and gave voice to the immigrants' struggle taking place so far from any major population center.

Staff members of Consul-General Asdrúbal Aguilar interviewed several

dozen detainees including 70-year-old Guillermo Antonio Carpio who is HIV-positive, has Parkinson's and is diabetic. He told of the lack of medical care and proper food. Days go by before ill detainees are seen by a doctor or given their medications. Since most were arrested at their jobs, they were not carrying a full supply of any medicines, much less copies of their medical histories.

Very few of the 311 employees at the prison speak Spanish and communication with the 100 or more detainees from countries in Asia is even more problematic.

José Saúl Hernández Argueta told investigators that he and his wife were arrested in Oct. 2006 in a raid on a Houston meat-packing plant. Their 8-year-old son was in school and left alone. Relatives took the boy in but were unaware of his medical needs. The child has since died from asthma. The distraught father said, "My wife is currently in an immigration jail in Texas and I don't even know if she knows about our son."

Among the more than 1,200 held in detention there as of this date, some are former workers at the Swift meat plant in Marshalltown, Iowa, who were arrested on Dec. 12, 2006, when ICE raids took place in 6 states and detained 1,300 people on immigration charges.

The prison also holds workers from the Smithfield hog-processing plant in Tar Heel, N.C., the focus of a determined union organizing drive.

Following the hunger strike, all the women detainees were removed to the Etowah County Detention Center in Gadsden, Ala.

*The writer spoke at the rally representing the International Action Center in Atlanta.*

**Auto workers****Sitting down & standing up**

By Martha Grevatt

There is no question that auto workers all over the world are under attack. This is particularly true in the parts industry. The auto companies demand cheaper and cheaper prices for parts and the parts company bosses take it from the workers—all too often with the help of bankruptcy courts.

No wonder, then, that parts workers from Canada to Australia to Spain are beginning to revolt.

As previously reported, last month workers at the Collins and Aikman plant in Scarborough, Ontario, Canada, held a two-day sit-down strike, winning back negotiated severance payments that the company had reneged on. Now, halfway around the globe, 49 workers in Geelong, Australia, are occupying a Coghlan-Russell Engineering plant, again over denial of benefits. Represented by the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU), the workers supply Ford and the Australian car company, Holden.

AMWU spokesperson Steve Dargavel does not expect immediate resolution of the sit-down, which began April 13. "These are working class people that live from week to week. They get a weekly income. By the end of the next

week they are waiting on the next payment to buy basic commodities," he stated. Like the Collins and Aikman workers, the AMWU is holding the major car manufacturers accountable for the crisis facing parts workers.

Meanwhile Delphi, the spun-off GM parts division, is facing a massive upsurge following its announcement that it would close a plant in Cádiz, Spain. After engaging in a sit-down, the unions representing the 1,600

workers facing job loss held a march of 80,000 workers and their supporters on April 13. Their lead banner read "Por el Empleo, Delphi No Se Cierra, Huelga General 18 Abril 2007" (For Employment, Delphi Isn't Closing, General Strike April 18). They accused Delphi of "industrial terrorism."

These heroic strikers are setting a tremendous example for workers desperate to save their jobs, pensions and healthcare. □

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## Cracking a racist wall

# Jackie Robinson's historic impact

On April 15, 1947, Jackie Robinson broke the so-called color barrier by becoming the first African American to play in Major League Baseball. On April 15, 2007, the 60th anniversary of this significant event, over 200 MLB players and some managers of all nationalities wore Robinson's retired number 42 on their uniforms to honor him. The following are excerpts from an April 10, 1997, article written by Mike Gimbel on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Robinson joining the then Brooklyn Dodgers. Go to [www.workers.org/ww/robinson.html](http://www.workers.org/ww/robinson.html) to read the article in its entirety.

Robinson's entry into Major League Baseball had a momentous impact on the anti-racist struggle in the U.S. It even had an important effect on U.S. imperialism's political status on the world stage.

Jackie Robinson, perhaps the most exciting baseball player of his time, was more than a "mere" athlete who happened to be in the right place at the right time.

Robinson grew up in Pasadena, Calif., a town so racist that it took until 1997 to officially acknowledge his accomplishments.

Jackie Robinson went into the segregated U.S. Army, where he became an officer. But he was court-martialed for failing to sit in the back of the bus at a Texas army base. The case became a national political incident and the army was forced to dismiss the charges against him.

Just as Robinson was no accidental figure, neither were those who chose him to break the color barrier. Nor was it accidental that Major League baseball was the arena for this historical event.

In order to understand the event in its proper context, one has to understand the period in which it happened.

The USSR had defeated Nazi Germany in World War II, and in doing so had liberated much of Eastern Europe from

capitalist slavery. A huge liberation movement, led primarily by communist parties, was sweeping Asia. The Western powers, led by the U.S., were trying to break the workers' movements in France, Italy and Greece, where armed resistance to fascism had been led by the communists.

The imperialist powers would have loved to present this as a struggle between communism and "democracy," but they had a big problem: They were seen as racist oppressors on the world stage.

The Europeans still claimed most of the world as their colonies, and the U.S. was propping them up.

The U.S. had its own colonial holdings in Puerto Rico and the Pacific. In addition, the South was ruled by the Ku Klux Klan, an organization no better than Germany's Nazi Party. The South was solidly held by the Democratic Party, and no Democrat could get elected president without the support of racist "Dixiecrats."

In 1947, the civil rights movement had not yet begun. The U.S. military was still segregated and it would be seven more years before the "Brown vs. Board of Education" Supreme Court decision declared "separate but equal" schools to be unconstitutional.

But many Black soldiers were returning home after having risked their lives abroad. They came back to racism, in the North as well as the South.

Yet there was a completely different political current. The U.S. left and progressive movement was still very powerful. Communist Party membership hit its zenith in 1947. Mass May Day marches were held all over the country replete with red flags. The labor movement was involved in militant strikes and the left had a huge influence in it.

The U.S. ruling class could not credibly portray itself as "leader of the free world"

while being perceived as the open oppressor of a large portion of its own population. Something had to be done.

### Truman and the Dixiecrats

President Harry S. Truman, however, dared not act without support from the Dixiecrats. The U.S. ruling class seemed trapped by this quandary. The politicians couldn't find an answer to this problem, which was so vital to U.S. imperialism. Another way had to be found.

Baseball became the arena where this struggle took center stage. Major League baseball is a sport unlike any other.

For much of [the past] century baseball could almost be considered a national religion. It is no accident that "tradition" is so highly prized by the "Lords of Baseball." Nor that the singing of the national anthem has become such a prominent part of starting a game. Baseball is, after all, the "national pastime." U.S. presidents traditionally throw out the first ball.

Had Jackie Robinson integrated professional football or basketball, he'd be a forgotten figure today. But breaking the color barrier in baseball would present a new image of the U.S. to the world.

However, the more far-seeing leaders of U.S. imperialism found that most of their class was so racist they had no inclination to support integration at any level.

### Major League owners wouldn't budge

The owners of the 16 Major League franchises were no different. These owners were, if anything, more right-wing than most of their fellow businessmen. They treated their teams as private plantations where they amused themselves with their "toys." They got some notoriety by getting their names in the newspapers and/or used the teams to advertise their "real" businesses.

There was no way these reactionary owners, as a group, would voluntarily allow a Black player into the Major Leagues.

A few team owners might have been willing to integrate the Major Leagues, but the overwhelming majority were not for it.

The Brooklyn Dodgers were the origi-



nal "America's Team." The "Beloved Bums" were second only to the New York Yankees as the richest sports franchise in the world.

The team performed in New York City—the very capital of high finance and home to the United Nations. The Dodger's general manager was none other than Branch Rickey, the most renowned front-office baseball figure of the century.

He was considered the most far-sighted baseball leader. For the ruling class, he offered the added bonus of being very religious and anti-communist, as well as parsimonious when it came to paying the players.

The Dodgers were in the National League, considered a traditionally weaker league. It was only natural that a far-sighted, practical general manager would see the acquisition of Black players as a means of redressing this weakness and making the team more profitable.

Rickey, together with Baseball Commissioner A.B. "Happy" Chandler, planned the coup that got Jackie Robinson into the Major Leagues.

Rickey and Chandler used this power to get Robinson into the Major Leagues, over the objections of almost all the other owners. For this "treachery," Chandler was bounced out as commissioner at the end of his term. □

### Letter to the editor

## Major League Baseball today



Barry Bonds

Racism is still alive and well in baseball. Barry Bonds is this generation's "Babe Ruth." He's the greatest player in Major League Baseball since the "Bambino" and, in my opinion, is in the process of passing the "Bambino" as the greatest player in MLB history.

Instead of heralding Barry Bond's amazing career, the big business media have been on a witch hunt against Bonds in regards to his supposed use of steroids. WFAN radio, which featured the recently fired Don Imus for his racist and sexist remarks against the Rutgers women's basketball team, is a sports-talk radio station.

Another one of the WFAN program hosts, Steve Somers, shamelessly refers to Barry Bonds as "Baroid Bonds" every chance he gets. Imus isn't the only one at WFAN who needs to be fired!

Whereas MLB was the "national pastime" in 1947, it is now rapidly becoming an international game. A huge percentage of current MLB players are from the Caribbean and Central and South America and more and more players are arriving from Asia. The powerful New York Yankee MLB team, which was one of the last teams to integrate after 1947, today features several Latino stars and their two star hitters at the top of the Yankee lineup, Johnny Damon and Derek Jeter, who are both of mixed race heritage. Hugo Chávez only joined the Venezuelan military in order to get a chance to be on a military baseball team so as to get a chance to play MLB baseball, and Cuba is a powerhouse in baseball. What a wonderful change from 1947!

—Mike Gimbel

## Women rally in Venezuela

*Continued from page 1*  
along with the WIDF delegates on April 13, a national holiday in this country. On this day in 2002, President Chávez returned to Venezuela to a hero's welcome following his April 11 kidnapping by right wing forces friendly to the Bush administration. Tens of thousands of Venezuelans, especially the poor, rebelled in the streets, demanding his return.

During his speech, given at the Miraflores Plaza, Chávez mentioned that on May 28, the opposition is planning another destabilization effort and called for everyone to organize to prevent their success with these counter-revolutionary aims. The stage banner behind President Chávez read: "Todo 11, tiene su 13. El Pueblo sigue en la calle, ahora rumbo al socialismo!" (Every 11th has its 13th! The people continue on the streets, this time towards socialism!)

Another highlight of the trip was meeting two relatives of the U.S. political prisoners, the Cuban Five, who were unjustly sentenced to multiple life sentences in

1998 for trying to prevent terrorist attacks against their homeland by U.S.-backed right wing puppets in Miami.

Vinie Burrows, delegate and permanent representative for the WIDF with the Economic and Social Council of the U.N., renowned actor, educator and activist with The Granny Peace Brigade, spoke at a workshop report back session and expressed solidarity with all the women of the world who are struggling for peace and against racism and U.S. imperialism.

Women representing various organizations from the U.S. also attended the WIDF congress and raised the banner from the Women's Fightback Network, a national organization affiliated with the International Action Center, which demands that the U.S. stop the war against women from New Orleans and New Bedford, Mass. to Iraq and to end racism and immigrant bashing.

*The writer was a member of the Women's Fightback Network delegation. There will be more articles on this trip in future issues of WW.*

WW commentary

# Don't blame Hip Hop for Imus's Racism

By Larry Hales

Since MSNBC decided to cancel Don Imus's radio program and was followed by CBS firing the "shock jock," the capitalist media and the pundits that are its face have launched an assault against Black culture in the form of Hip Hop.

This is in the aftermath of the furor that arose over the racist and sexist remarks Don Imus made on his April 4 morning radio show regarding the Rutgers women's basketball team.

It would seem, from the articles now circling in major newspapers and news outlets nationwide, that Imus and the like are victims of Hip Hop music. That all this country's ills are to be blamed on a culture that grew from conditions imposed on oppressed nationalities, specifically Blacks and Puerto Ricans. These conditions, which arose from a system that uses racism like a carpenter uses a hammer, are nothing more than an illustration of the racism endemic to capitalist society.

The opaqueness of the "blame Hip Hop" argument should be obvious; however, the ruling class in this country, for whom Don Imus is a mouthpiece, is extremely effective.

Surely, this incident was not an isolated incident, but more of the same from a man who built his radio career espousing racist, anti-women and homophobic sentiments.

While it is a victory that MSNBC and CBS had to bow to the will of the people and fire Imus, he is only one of many and his firing came after he had spewed his rancid speak for 15 years on radio. Many in the Black community and other oppressed communities stood up to call for Imus's firing and so did certain ranks within the media, especially Black women.

Imus's sidekick, Sid Rosenberg and producer Bernard McGuirk, who was hired by Imus to do "N-word jokes," have gotten away with catering to one of the founding doctrines of U.S. society—white supremacy.

Racism is a tool of the bosses used to create a privileged layer in society, to obfuscate and pit workers against other workers instead of fighting together against the owners and protectors of the capitalist mode of production.

For example, Lou Dobbs continues his racist, fascist-like assault on immigrant workers in order to whip up the white middle-class and white workers into a frenzy against people of color. This is nothing more than dangerous demagoguery that must be challenged.

Bill O'Reilly still figures prominently on right-wing Fox News, a channel that proudly trumpets its right-wing bent. Michael Savage, Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck are only a few more of the far-right pundits. A campaign should be waged to remove them all from the public eye. When the ruling class uses the First Amendment, it is wielded as a weapon. It is the workers that pay for their vile speech.

There is ample evidence to point to the rancid mind of Imus; remarks that belie his supporters, who claimed his firing constitutes a violation of free speech or that his comment was in jest. Some can be found at [mediamatters.org/issues\\_topics/shows/imusinthemorning](http://mediamatters.org/issues_topics/shows/imusinthemorning). Behind the

jest of a racist is the desire of the bosses.

## Using Hip Hop as a diversion

The desire of the bosses in this particular instance has taken the form of a continued assault against Black culture.

Some in the Black community and other working-class communities have unfortunately bought into the claim of the capitalist media, that ultimately Imus only reiterated what is prevalent in Hip Hop music.

Mainstream Hip Hop can at times be replete with misogynistic imagery and lyrics, as well as being homophobic and self-destructive as well. However, that this has become mainstream, though not representative of the majority of Hip Hop, is the doing of the corporate takeover and co-opting of hip hop culture.

M-1, one half of the rap group, dead prez, said of these attacks, "Hip Hop is taking the blame for what they turned it into. The Hip Hop they are talking about is not the majority. The Hip Hop that is political is highly censured," and "Media is hypocritical, and these attacks create the ground work for continued exploitation of our artists by relegating Hip Hop to being shallow."

Lil Wayne, a musician from New Orleans, has made his career appealing to the popular tendency in Hip Hop music. Recently, however, he recorded a scathing indictment against the Bush administration in the wake of the Hurricane Katrina tragedy and the callous disregard shown by the U.S. puppets of capital.

The song, called "Georgia Bush," starts with the rapper labeling his city, the "Lost City of New Orleans," and includes the lyrics "Hurricane Katrina / we shoulda called it hurricane, Georgia, Bush / Then they telling yall lies on the news / the white people smiling like everythings cool / but I know people that died in that pool / I know people that died in them schools / now what is a survivor to do / got no trailer / you gotta move ... they tell what they want / show you what they want you to see / but don't let you know what's really going on / make it look like a lot of stealing going on / all them cop killings in my home ..."

Culture is the product of a current reality, the work and thought of human beings and is the expression of a class or element of a particular class and is reflective of a certain period. It cannot exist above and beyond the human world, no matter how fantastic. Trotsky wrote in the "Social Roots and Social Function of Literature," "Marxism alone can explain why and how a given tendency in art has originated in a given period of history; in other words,

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Larry Hales

who it was who made a demand for such an artistic form and not for another, and why."

The point is, Hip Hop music, whether it started with Kool Herc, Afrika Bambaataa, the Watts Poets, Last Poets, Lee Scratch Perry, Gil Scott Heron, with the style of James Brown or Langston Hughes reading his poems to musical accompaniment courtesy of Charlie Mingus' band, or "Ali rap" from the period when Muhammad Ali was the greatest boxer, emanated from the Black experience in North America.

## Hip Hop reflects reality and resistance

Perhaps it would be more correct to say that Hip Hop began when the first captives from Africa were brought across the Atlantic and sold into bondage in North America.

This cultural/musical explosion came out of a period that began during the decline of powerful social movements. There was a recession which settled heavily upon the most oppressed and an outgrowth of that recession was desperation and coupled with that, the explosive social movements were ending, and though gains were made, the masses of the oppressed were still underfoot and suffering.

Hip Hop music reflected the conditions, though it was celebrative as well. To correctly highlight what happened to Hip Hop music, one need only look at a 7-year period, from 1987-1994.

In the late 1980s there was a lot of positive Hip Hop. Public Enemy released "It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold us Back" in 1988 and it resounded like a bomb. The album was hardcore and an indictment of racism and the system. That same year NWA made the anti-cop anthem "Fuck Tha Police."

One year before that, many East Coast rappers decided to release a rallying cry to end Black on Black violence. The song begins with a speech by Malcolm X and KRS One leads off and his lyrics include the call, "We got together so that you can unite and fight for what's right."

Following Public Enemy's release came Queen Latifah and her anthem for women, "Ladies First." Intelligent Hoodlum made his first collection of music in 1990, as well as did Poor Righteous Teachers, X-Clan and other positive Hip Hop music.

Tupac Shakur burst into the scene in 1991 with his first release that included many tales of the realities of life for Black people and songs calling for unity and calling attention to state repression in the form of police brutality. Ice Cube released "Death Certificate" the same year.

The music was a reflection of the conditions of the oppressed under capitalism, especially after Reaganomics and in the midst of the so-called War on Drugs, which was really a war on the poor and people of color.

When Chuck-D called rap music the "CNN of the ghetto," he was basically saying that it not only spoke of the conditions but was a barometer of the willingness of the people to openly struggle. On April 29, 1992, after the acquittal of the racist cops that beat Rodney King, the rebellion in Los Angeles started.

It wasn't just the brutal beating of Rodney King and the subsequent acquittal, but those things were merely added weight heaped upon the history of slavery, oppression and repression of Black people—after this Hip Hop began to change.

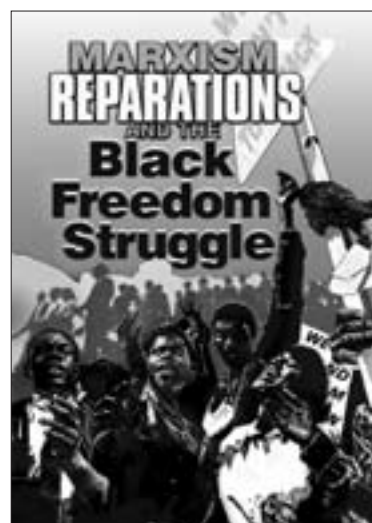
The music was co-opted; musicians were signed to contracts, drawn in by money and were set upon with debt as they were made to pay record labels back for producers, equipment, video production and the only way out is to make more records, incur more debt and hope to sell enough music to be set free.

It must be made clear that misogyny, homophobia, racism and the like are tools of the oppressing class, the ruling class, and that these tools permeate all of society and filter from the top down, so to heap the blame on Hip Hop music is an attack to silence a culture that is rooted in social commentary and the desire for freedom.

These attacks must be fought, and progressive, revolutionary underground Hip Hop supported.

Nas said in an interview with Jet Magazine of April 9, 2007, "No one who knows rap, protects rap and loves it has the power to help. We don't have direct control at radio or video channels. Those people who are in charge have always destroyed music. ... The whole industry needs to be destroyed. Shut down. Labels and everything. It needs to start from the ground up!"

There is no better way to protect culture than the destruction of the profit system. Then culture will be free to flourish, the human mind set free to create without the worry of trying to financially maintain in a system that seeks to exploit the majority for a small minority. □



## IRAQ

# U.S. escalation arouses greater popular resistance

By Bob Dobrow

In the Wizard of Oz, the Emerald City was a beautiful place of jewels and greenery, home to the wonderful Wizard.

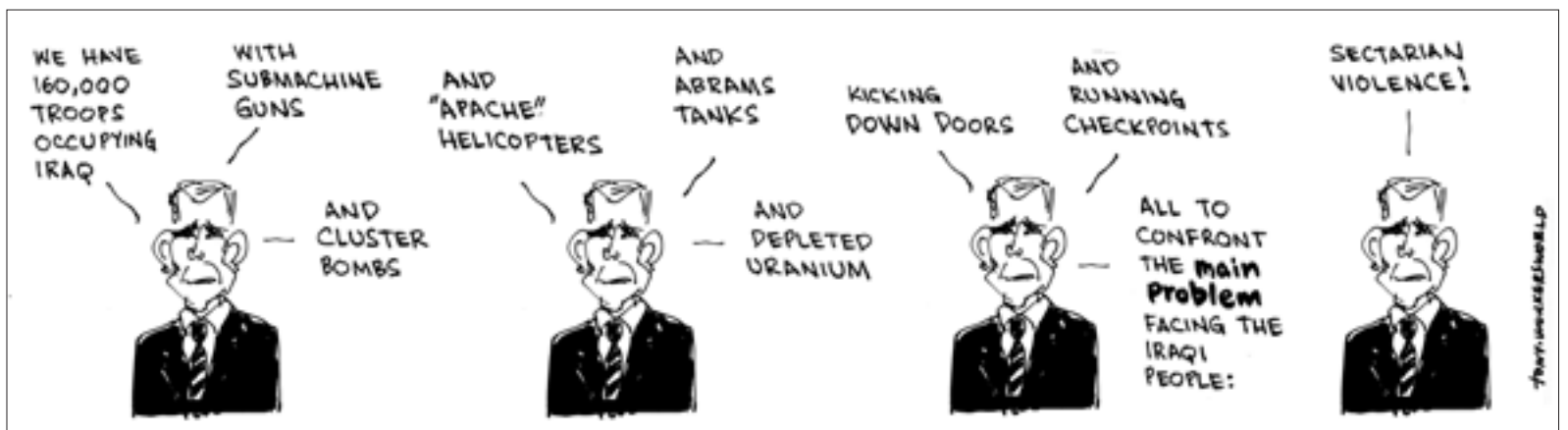
But when Toto pulled the curtain away, the Wizard was revealed as nothing but a common snake-oil salesman.

How fitting that Iraq's Green Zone is also nicknamed the Emerald City.

Here in this tiny super-fortified military bastion, the U.S. and its lackeys run the show in Iraq. The U.S. personnel inside the Green Zone live a fantasy life. They enjoy international cuisine, TV, and even telephones with U.S. area codes so that they have to place a long-distance, overseas call even to areas of the city a few blocks away.

To enter the Green Zone you must pass through dozens of checkpoints, metal detectors, sniffer dogs and heavily armed soldiers. It is considered by the occupiers to be the most secure area in Iraq.

Yet the curtain was pulled back on this delusion last week when a bomber struck the Iraqi parliament building inside the Green Zone. The explosion took place on the first floor of the parliament build-



ing, on the same floor as the 275-member National Assembly's main debating chamber. Shortly before the attack, another explosion destroyed a bridge over the Tigris River in central Baghdad.

The anti-U.S. resistance inside Iraq continues to mount. And while the media in this country spins the violence as "sectarian strife," as "age-old ethnic hatred" between Shiite and Sunni, the reality is that it is opposition to the U.S.-led occupation which is the overwhelming demand of the Iraqi people.

According to the Brookings Institute, 75 percent of all the recorded attacks in Iraq are directed at occupation forces, and a further 17 percent at Iraqi government forces. The attacks have more than doubled in the past year to about 185 a day.

## Demoralized generals refuse 'war czar' job

By John Catalinotto

According to popular myth and Pentagon propaganda, generals are the staunchest patriots, aching to serve their country and ambitious to take the leadership. They also don't mind making top government connections where they can influence big arms contracts.

All the more is it a telling sign that at least three retired generals have turned down such an opportunity. To be precise, they refused to be considered for the job the April 12 Washington Post called "war czar" for the Bush administration. The responsibility of the "war czar" is to coordinate civilian and military direction of the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The "war czar" would report directly to National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley. It has been said that Hadley would take the job himself but he is "too busy."

Had this job been offered four years ago, when the Iraqi government had just been smashed and Bush was preparing his victory speech, dozens of retired officers and an equal number of civilians would have lined up for the job.

It's not that these generals now feel guilty that the U.S. is an aggressor and the Pentagon's officers are war criminals. They just don't want to lose. Apparently the Iraq war is going to hell in a hand basket—from U.S. imperialism's viewpoint—and everyone connected to the Pentagon knows exactly how quickly.

Two of the generals held their tongues. But one, Marine Gen. John J. "Jack" Sheehan, was quite outspoken. Gen. Sheehan, a former NATO commander, now has a cushy job with Bechtel Corp., a company highly invested in the Middle East and in oil extraction. It is only under extraordinary circumstances that someone like Sheehan would turn down such a job, let alone criticize the administration.

"The very fundamental issue is, they don't know where the hell they're going," said Sheehan. "So rather than go over there, develop an ulcer and eventually leave, I said, 'No thanks.'" According to the Washington Post, "Sheehan said he believes Vice President Dick Cheney and his hawkish allies remain more powerful within the administration than pragmatists looking for a way out of Iraq."

One refusal could be due to an individual quirk; two, perhaps a coincidence. That three or maybe five top military leaders of U.S. imperialism turned down the job is a sign that the military brass sees the war in Iraq, and perhaps in Afghanistan too, as already lost. They don't want responsibility for a disaster that they know they can't turn around. And they don't even expect an opportunity to organize an orderly retreat.

If this is the attitude of the top officers, one can only imagine how this plays out among the rank and file who have just learned that their tours in Iraq are now 15 months instead of 12. Or of the National Guard from those smaller cities and rural areas in the U.S. who are being mobilized for the second time to go to the Iraq quagmire. When will their indoctrinated patriotism turn to class awareness and resistance?

It is fitting that much of the media chose to call the new post the "war czar." A czar is an autocratic ruler, an emperor, with the root of the word from the Roman "caesar," which then became the Germanic "kaiser" and Russian "czar." Caesar was assassinated by his senators two millennia ago. The Russian czar and the German kaiser were overthrown when war-weary Russians and Germans, after 3-4 years of the World War I bloodbath, rose up against them.

It looks like Gen. Sheehan and his colleagues want to avoid that fate.

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That's about eight attacks an hour, every hour night and day!

Last week, Workers World reported on mass demonstrations of hundreds of thousands in Najaf, Kut and other cities across southern Iraq. Protesters demanded an end to the U.S.-led occupation and chanted "Death to America!" Brig. Gen. Abdul Karim al-Mayahi, a police commander in Najaf, told reporters that "at least half a million people joined the demonstration there." This is all the more remarkable since the entire population of Najaf is about 580,000, barely over half a million.

A poll conducted last month for the BBC, ABC News, ARD German TV and USA Today, which got scant attention in the U.S. press, showed that the percentage of Iraqis who opposed the presence of U.S.-led forces in their country increased from 51 percent in 2005 to 65 percent in 2006 to 78 percent in 2007. Does anyone still believe that the Bush administration is in Iraq to protect "democracy"?

An article in the British Guardian (April 12) titled "The Iraqi resistance only exists to end the occupation," notes the increased role of women in the suicide bombings, something that was unheard of before the U.S. invasion.

"Iraqi women are driven to despair and self-destruction by grief," reports Haifa Zangana, an Iraqi exile who was imprisoned by the pre-invasion government, but who is a determined opponent of the U.S. occupation. "Their expectations are reduced to pleas for help to clear the bodies of the dead from the streets, according to a report by the International Committee of the Red Cross, released on April 11. ...

"During the first three years of occupation, women were mostly confined to their homes, protected by male relatives. But now that the savagery of their circumstances has propelled many of them to the head of their households, they are risking their lives outdoors. Black-cloaked

women are seen queuing at prisons, government offices or morgues, in search of disappeared, or detained, male relatives. It is women who bury the dead. Baghdad has become a city of bereaved women."

Women's resistance writes Zangana "is a response to arbitrary break-ins, humiliating searches, arrests, detention and torture." According to the Red Cross, "the number of people arrested or interned by the multinational forces has increased by 40 percent since early 2006. ... Many of the security detainees are women who have been subjected to abuse and rape and who are often arrested as a means to force male relatives to confess to crimes they have not committed."

It is the Iraqi people's mounting resistance that is why the Pentagon's so-called temporary "surge" rhetoric is now being discarded in favor of stronger language signaling an even greater escalation. The new Pentagon-speak is "plus-up."

Army Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno, the second-highest-ranking U.S. general in Iraq, was quoted in the Los Angeles Times (April 14) as saying that the "surge" might be soon called a "plus-up," signifying a more permanent escalation of troop levels. Odierno's comments came on the same day that Secretary of Defense Gates announced that all active-duty soldiers will begin serving 15-month tours instead of the standard 12-month rotations. And a day later it was reported that U.S. troop deaths in Baghdad were up 21 percent compared with the previous two months.

Iraq is burning. The occupiers are stealing the oil and natural resources of the region. The U.S. treasury is being looted to pay a handful of war profiteers. It is the Iraqi people who are rising up to stop it. And the poor and working people of the U.S. must realize that they have more in common with their class brothers and sisters in Iraq than with the imperialist occupiers and oppressors in Washington. □

## Motorists honk against war

### DETROIT

On April 13 after work, commuters honked car horns in support of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI) demonstration at Woodward and Jefferson in Detroit. They were demanding that Congress cut all funding for the wars in Iraq and



Afghanistan and provide money for schools and social programs, not war. At the same time, the Windsor Peace Coalition held a one-hour action on the Canadian side of the tunnel to ensure that the tunnel traffic saw the same message on both sides of the border.

—Report and photo by Cheryl LaBash



# The battle for Congo's resources goes on

By G. Dunkel

Hundreds of people lost their lives in two days of fighting in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, at the end of March. The fighting, which also destroyed a large swath of downtown Kinshasa, was between bodyguards of Jean-Pierre Bemba, the loser in last year's presidential election, and the government.

Two weeks later, Bemba, together with his family, took a private jet for "medical treatment in Portugal," while most of his bodyguards managed to cross the Congo River and ask for asylum in Congo-Brazzaville.

While Congo is one of the richest countries in Africa, its people are among the poorest. The World Bank estimated the average yearly income in 2005 at \$120, less than \$.40 a day.

From the time King Leopold II of Belgium claimed Congo as his personal property in 1885, its mineral riches were the source of wealth for Belgian and French capitalists until Mobutu Sese-Seko took power from the anti-imperialist Patrice Lumumba in 1960. During Mobutu's reign the U.S. got a big share of this wealth along with France.

Currently Western geologists estimate that Congo has over \$300 billion worth of mineral resources that could be exploited in the next 25 years, if a reasonable amount of political stability can be achieved. It also has the hydroelectric potential to light Africa from the Cape to Cairo and enough land and water to feed the whole continent.

But Congo's potential economic and human development cannot be achieved by a state whose sole purpose is satisfying the neocolonial demands of big European and U.S. companies who want the biggest profits at the lowest cost. Part of their costs is a smidgen of wealth dropped to their agents on the ground in Congo. Such states invest nothing in roads, education, health care, electricity, sanitation or any other service generally provided by governments elsewhere.

Jean-Pierre Bemba began his political career, according to Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja's "The Congo from Leopold to Kabila," in 1998 as a leader in the Mouvement de libération du Congo after the fall of Mobutu. His father had been one of Mobutu's "barons" and was extremely wealthy. The MLC was sponsored by Uganda at that time as part of its strategy for controlling eastern Congo and thereby putting pressure on Laurent Kabila, the current president's father, who had gained control of Kinshasa in 1997.

Nzongola-Ntalaja points out, "The 'parochial interests' of the United States and other major powers include maintaining access to the strategic resources of the Congo, selling weapons of war, and, in the particular U.S. case, supporting allies such as Uganda and Rwanda, which may ensure this access ... ." (p. 233)

The MLC took an active role in the years of fighting in Congo from 1998 to 2002, which cost 4 million lives.

When the international and domestic pressure for stability grew, Bemba and the MLC did take part in the election process and were Joseph Kabila's main opponents

in the elections held in the fall of 2006.

They wanted a big role in the government and to maintain their "security" forces outside of government control. They had stockpiled 20 tons of arms in Gbadolite and Gemena, two major cities in Bemba's home province Equateur. (www.digitalcongo.net/article/42339). When their plan didn't succeed, they resorted to armed struggle.

The U.S. appeared to be well aware of what Bemba was doing. The spokesman for the State Department, Sean McCormack, in his daily briefing March 22 indicated that the U.S. was intent on defusing the tension, talking to the U.N. "peace" keepers and both sides "to keep the process moving forward."

Radio Okapi, according to the Kinshasa paper Le Potentiel, reported April 12—the day after Bemba left for Portugal—that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had

issued a long statement on Africa, which included significant support for the results of the elections in Congo.

The U.S. didn't want to disrupt the arrangements they were in the process of establishing in Congo with the new government, but they were not prepared to discard Bemba, an old, established asset.

Even though Bemba tried to overturn the results of an election widely recognized as democratic, killing hundreds of people and destroying wide swaths of downtown Kinshasa in the process, there was hardly a peep out of the press in the U.S.

But in Zimbabwe, where President Robert Mugabe's popular land reform is challenging the rule of Western interests, the death of one anti-government protester at the hands of the cops drew immediate and widespread condemnation as an "attack on democracy." □

## Growing crisis for Pakistan

The crisis for the Pakistan government continues to heat up as thousands of people took to the streets April 3 in various cities including Karachi to protest the dismissal of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Iftikhar Chaudhry by President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, who is a close ally of the White House. Chaudhry was ousted from his position on March 9.

Asma Jahangir, a founding member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, gave the following reason for the mass anger over this development: "The process that was adopted to remove [Chaudhry] was not only illegal but politi-

cally it was very repressive as well, so people have been shaken up," she says. "They feel that if the chief justice of Pakistan can be dragged through the streets in this manner—and humiliated and dismissed in that unceremonious way—[then] nobody is safe at the hands of the repression of this government." (hulicq.com)

Coupled with this judicial crisis, Musharraf's repressive policies, as well as his support for Bush's so-called war on terror, which includes South Asia, are vehemently opposed by a majority of the Pakistani people.

—Monica Moorehead

## U.S. Marines massacred Afghan civilians

The brutal U.S.-NATO occupation of Afghanistan continues to take its horrific toll on the Afghan people. On March 4 U.S. Marines carried out a massacre against unarmed civilians. According to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the Marines killed 12 people in several incidents in the same vicinity near Jalalabad. The victims included two children, a 1-year old and a 4-year old, along with three elders. About 40 more people were wounded. "All available evidence and reports suggest that the ... response at the very least employed excessive force against civilians as it was almost certainly disproportionate to any threat faced," according to the human rights group's report. The group also stated that, based on many eyewitness reports, other Marines did away with any evidence implicating the soldiers directly involved in the massacre, while denying access to the Afghan police who came to investigate the crime scene. This massacre is no isolated incident but almost a daily way of life that the Afghan people face under racist occupation, as do the people of Iraq. These crimes against humanity expose Bush's phony war on terror.

—Monica Moorehead



HARLEM MARCH SAYS:

April 14 Harlem march.  
WWW.PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

## 'Hands off Zimbabwe!'

"Mugabe is right!" and "Bush and Blair are wrong!" were two slogans chanted repeatedly during a march in Harlem, N.Y., on April 14 to commemorate the 27th anniversary of the liberation of the southern Africa country of Zimbabwe from British colonialism in 1980. The Brooklyn-based December 12th Movement and Friends of Zimbabwe initiated the march, which was supported by other groups.

The demonstration was more than just a celebration of independence. It also served as an occasion to defend Zimbabwe's sovereignty and its president, Robert Mugabe, from ongoing threats by U.S. and British imperialism.

The Zimbabwean government has been carrying out a radical land redistribution plan to take back the land for African people that was stolen by white landowners when the country

was first colonized in the late 1800s. Both Blair and Bush have been the main cheerleaders for imposing economic sanctions on Zimbabwe. These sanctions have strained the economy of this country.

March organizers also linked the land issue in Zimbabwe to the ongoing crisis of massive gentrification in Harlem caused by big real estate developers who want to turn what was once referred to as the "capital of Black America" into a haven for affluent whites.

On April 13, Workers World Party held a special forum at the Solidarity Center in Manhattan on Zimbabwe featuring Omowale Clay, a leader of the December 12th Movement. A podcast of Clay's remarks can be heard at www.workers.org.

—Monica Moorehead



Omowale Clay, April 13.

WWW.PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO



## Why Virginia Tech killings happened

*Continued from page 1*

countries have high suicide rates. Why is it that here some become mass murderers?

The U.S. is the world leader in seemingly random acts of violence by individuals. Why?

President George W. Bush rushed to Virginia to speak at a large convocation the day after the killings and tried to set the tone for what could be said about them. "It's impossible to make sense of such violence and suffering," he said.

Don't ask why, don't try to understand. It makes no sense. "Have faith" instead, was Bush's message.

But there ARE reasons these things happen here, and they are pretty clear to the rest of the world. It's just in the United States that no one is supposed to talk about the reasons.

What distinguishes this country from the rest of the world? It is neither the most affluent nor the poorest. It is neither the most secular nor the most religious. It is not the most culturally homogeneous nor is it the most diverse.

But in one area, it stands virtually alone. It has the biggest arsenal of high-tech weaponry in the world, way surpassing every other country. It has military bases spread all over; most countries have no troops outside their borders.

It is conducting two hot wars at the moment, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and has sent hundreds of thousands of troops abroad over the last few years. Every day, the public here is supposed to identify with soldiers who burst into homes in Baghdad, round up the people and take them away for "interrogation"—which everyone knows now can mean torture and indefinite detention.

It also sends heavily armed "special ops" on secret missions to countless other countries, like the ones who just facilitated the invasion and bombing of Somalia, or the ones who have been trying to stir up opposition in Iran. This is documented in the news media.

The immense brutality of these colonial wars, as well as earlier ones, is praised from the White House on down as the best, the ONLY way to achieve what the political leaders and their influential, rich backers decide is necessary to protect their world empire. Do lots of people get killed? "Stuff happens," said former war secretary Donald Rumsfeld. "Collateral damage," says the Pentagon.

At home, the U.S. has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. Over 2 million people are locked up in the prison system each year, most of them people of color. When commercial armed security guards are also taken into consideration, the U.S. has millions of employees who use guns and other coercive paraphernalia in their jobs.

In the final analysis, the military and the police—the "armed bodies of men," as Marxists used to define them before women were added to their ranks—exist to perpetuate and protect this present unjust system of capitalist inequality, where a few can claim personal ownership over a vast economy built by the sweat and blood of hundreds of millions of workers.

And the more divided, the more polarized the society becomes, the higher the level of coercion and violence. Assault weapons are now everywhere in this society, as are Tasers, handcuffs, clubs and tear gas. They most often start out in the hands of the police, the military and other agents of the state, and can then turn up anywhere.

Violence is a big money maker in the mass culture. Television, films, pulp novels, Internet sites, video games—all dwell on "sociopaths" while glorifying the state's use of violence, often supplemented by a lone vigilante. By the time children reach their teens, they have already seen thousands of murders and killings on television. And these days even more suspense is added in countless programs that involve stalking and terror against women—and increasingly children.

As the Duke rape case and so many "escort service" ads show, women of color are particularly subject to exploitation and have little recourse to any justice. And as the murders along the border show, immigrants of color are fair game for racist killers.

The social soil of capitalism can alienate and enrage an unstable and miserable person who should be getting help but can't find it. If, as reports are saying, the young man accused of these killings was on anti-depressant medication, it is all the more evidence that, at a time when hospitals are closing and health care is unavailable for tens of millions, treating mental health problems requires more from society than just prescribing dubious chemicals.

Many liberal commentators are taking this occasion to renew the demand for tougher gun laws. Yes, assault weapons are horrible, but so are bunker buster bombs, helicopters that fire thousands of rounds a minute, and the ultimate—nuclear weapons. Disarming the people is not the answer, especially when the capitalist state is armed to the teeth and uses brutality and coercion daily.

The best antidote to these tragedies is to build a movement for profound social change, for replacing capitalism with socialism, so that people's energies can be directed at solving the great problems depressing so much of humanity today, whether they be wars or global climate change or the loneliness of the dog-eat-dog society. □

## Homosexuality and Cuba

# 1970s: Decade of cultural

By Leslie Feinberg

Those who today are working to seize state power and defend and build a workers' state in their own countries may be sobered as well as heartened by the enormous cultural labor that the Cuban Revolution had to accomplish in the 1970s, particularly regarding liberation of women, sexuality and gendered social roles.

Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich concluded in their 1984 study of Cuba that three events "marked the gradual but continual improvement of life conditions of gay men and lesbians in Cuba during the seventies: the First National Congress on Education and Culture, the promulgation of the Family Code, and the creation of a national group on sexual education."

Arguelles and Rich explain that at the 1971 congress on education and culture, "On the one hand, homosexuality was not referred to as a product of decadence and homosexuality was no longer seen by the revolutionary leadership as a fundamental problem in Cuban society, but, rather, viewed as a form of sexual behavior requiring study.

"On the other hand, declarations from the same congress called for the removal of homosexuals from the field of education, thus continuing the view of homosexuality as a contamination of the body politic."

The 1971 congress declaration demoralized some activists worldwide who had hoped that the seizure of state power in Cuba would usher in an immediate and thorough-going theoretical, social and economic transformation.

Some activists succumbed to fear that prejudice is a hard-wired human trait that can't ever be eradicated from any human society, even a socialist one.

Anti-communists have also tried to use the 1971 congress document in attempts to discredit the revolutionary process altogether.

Both are ample reason to look more closely.

### Roots of prejudice

Studying Cuba's specific historical economic and social conditions opens up greater understanding about what generates prejudice against same-sex love and gender variance, and of racism, and opens up clarity about what kind of material changes are necessary to eventually uproot all forms of bigotry.

Prejudice—ideology that pits groups within the vast laboring and oppressed class worldwide against each other—is not the same as superstition. Superstitions are explanations concerning the material world that the scientific process later proves are untrue. Attempts to supplant that new, scientific understanding with old superstitions are consciously reactionary.

Prejudices, however, are rooted in the historical development of class-divided societies. They are a conscious ideological campaign to frustrate mass unity among the laboring masses of millennia. These lies, minted like gold, only profited emperors and kings, landowners and barons.

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas," observed Karl Marx, "i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force."

Colonialism and imperialism didn't just bring reactionary ideas. The patriarchal ruling-class ideologies they enforced served to buttress their structures of enslavement of Cuba, as elsewhere.

Spanish colonialism brought Inquisition terror to its edicts against same-sex love in Cuba, and its church imbued this sexuality with shame and guilt.

Imperialism swiftly centralized and shaped what became a numerically huge new urban homosexual/transgender subculture, mostly male, within the larger culture(s) in Cuba for the sole purpose of sexual exploitation for profit. Tens of thousands of Cuban women and girls, including many enslaved in "domestic" jobs, were ruthlessly sexually exploited, as well.

So it is not difficult to understand why homosexuality, coupled with gender variance, would

seem to be a product of "bourgeois decadence" in Cuba. And it's not hard to understand why many Cubans believed that homosexuality and gender variance would go away with the shutting down of these non-productive, exploitative industries.

But the 1971 Cultural Congress marked the moving away from that assumption.

### Changing ideas

Revolution is not a single act, it's a process. The revolution created the basis for social and economic transformation that has been profound and is ongoing, a particularly remarkable achievement carried out under almost half a century of imperialist siege.

The first tasks of the revolution in Cuba were to organize to provide jobs, food, shelter, health care and education for the entire population and to defend the new revolutionary state against imperialist attack.

At the same time, the 1959 Cuban Revolution faced the odious task of cleaning out the Augean stables filled with 450 years of rotting, stinking oppressor culture excreted by Spanish colonialism and U.S. imperialism. And the U.S. tried to take away every shovel that the Cubans needed to do that work.

While deep divisions based on bigotry help facilitate and maintain colonial and imperialist economic rule, every form of ideological prejudice—white supremacy, male supremacy and anti-homosexual bigotry—break up the unity required to collectively build a socialist economy.

The 1971 congress declaration pointed out that, "For the bourgeoisie, the elimination of the cultural elements of its class and system represents the elimination of culture as such.

"For the working class and people in general, the culture born of the revolutionary struggle is the conquest and development of the most valuable of humanity's cultural heritage which the exploiters kept from them for centuries."

The 1971 congress declaration stressed that "[T]he changes in the field of sexual relations stem from society itself as it progresses in the social, cultural and economic fields and continues to acquire an ideology that is more consistently revolutionary."

### Fidel: 'tangible and practical successes'

Looking back from the vantage point of 1992, Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro told Tomás Borge, a priest and founder of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, "We inherited male chauvinism and many other bad habits from the conquistadors. That was an historical inheritance. In some countries more than in others, but in none was there more struggle than in ours and I believe that in none have there been more tangible and practical successes." ("A Grain of Corn," Ocean Press)

Fidel Castro recalled, in a series of interviews between 2003 and 2005, "[W]e had to work very hard to do away with racial prejudice here. Concerning women, there was strong prejudice, as strong as in the case of homosexuals. ("One Hundred Hours with Fidel," by Ignacio Ramonet)

Castro had told Borge, "There was, for example, one standard for judging the personal conduct of a man and another for a woman. We had this situation for years in the party and I led fights and argued a lot about this. If there was infidelity in a marriage on behalf of the man, there was no problem, no worry, on the other hand it was a subject of discussion in the party units when there was infidelity on the part of the woman. There was one way of judging sexual relations of men and another of women. I had to fight hard, against deeply rooted tendencies that were not the product of any sermon or doctrine, or education, but the male chauvinist concepts and prejudices that exist in the heart of our society."

Castro added, "I am not going to deny that, at one point, male chauvinism also influenced our



## progress

attitudes towards homosexuality.”

He explained to Ramonet, “There was less prejudice against homosexuals in the most cultured and educated sectors, but that prejudice was very strong in sectors of low educational level—the illiteracy rate was around 30 percent those years—and among the nearly-illiterate, and even among many professionals. That was a real fact in our society.” (“One Hundred Hours with Fidel”)

One of the first actions of the revolution in 1960—the Year of Education—was to organize volunteers to teach 700,000 adults to read. Cuba rapidly reached the highest literacy rate in Latin America.

Fidel Castro, who is an atheist, metaphorically answered the idealist concept of change with a scientific materialist view in an interview with a Galician television station in Spain in 1988. He talked about how the cultural mass process of the Revolution deepened understanding about same-sex love.

“God needed seven days to make the world,” he said, “you must understand that to remake this world, to destroy a world like that which we had here and to make a new one, there wasn’t much light, and at first there was a lot of darkness, and a lot of confusion about a series of problems. Our society, our party, our government now have ideas that are clearer, wiser and more intelligent about many of these problems. Given that we can make mistakes, we obsessively follow the idea that what is just, right and best for the people, and what is the most humane for our people and our society. However, the task is not easy. I think that each time we get closer to the right criteria for making the world we want.”

### Revolution: ‘school of unfettered thought’

Fidel Castro said in a now-famous 1962 talk that the “Revolution must be a school of unfettered thought.”

The intellectual and cultural dynamism of the Cuban Revolution, which combined communist leadership with mass participation, is evident in the trajectory of progress in the 1970s made concerning women and same-sex love.

The Cuban leaders continued to organize mass forums for discussion and debate that empowered changes concerning sexuality, sex and gendered social roles.

Two years after the 1971 congress declaration that no homosexual should officially represent the country, it was overruled by a Cuban court. (Leonardo Hechavarría and Marcel Hatch)

In 1975, the limits on employment of homosexuals in the arts and education were overturned by the Cuban Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of gay artists who were petitioning for compensation and reinstatement in their workplace. (cuba-solidarity.org.uk)

That same year, a revolutionary Family Code was adopted that called for equal participation by men in child-raising and household work.

Also in 1975, a new Ministry of Culture was established, as well as a commission to study homosexuality.

That commission helped pave the road for the formal decriminalization of same-sex love.

But U.S. imperialism, which had economically exploited the homosexual/transgender population of Cuba before the revolution, continued to exploit them politically.

Next: *Imperialism, homosexuals and the 1979 Mariel boatlift.*

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# U.S. gov’t refuses to charge Posada with mass murder

By Cheryl LaBash

The U.S. government has in its custody Luis Posada Carriles, who organized the mid-air bombing of a civilian passenger plane killing 73 people in 1976 and directed the bombing of tourist hotels in 1997. The U.S. plan is to let him get away, again.

The legal options are clear cut: extradite him or put him on trial. Venezuela, the country where he plotted the killings and escaped from prison in 1985, requested extradition in 2005.

The Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civilian Aviation, ratified in 1971, requires him to be extradited or tried in the country where he is living—no exceptions. But Posada, a CIA-trained killer, inconveniently exposes the U.S. reign of terror around the globe, especially against socialist Cuba and movements for national self-determination in South and Central American countries.

So Posada is detained solely on immigration and fraud charges pending trial on May 11. On April 12 he was a signature away from being freed on bond. Only a last-minute appeal to the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court postponed his release until April 17. The only way to continue to hold Posada is to charge him with terrorism and murder.

But, as Cuban President Fidel Castro wrote on April 10, for President Bush “[t]o accuse Posada Carriles was tantamount to accusing himself.

“George W. Bush is undoubtedly the most genuine representative of a system of terror forced on the world by the technological, economic and political superiority of the most powerful country known to this planet. ... The instructions for the verdict issued by Judge Kathleen Cardone, of the El Paso Federal Court last Friday, granting Luis Posada Carriles freedom on bail, could only have come from the White House.

“It was President Bush himself who ignored at all times the criminal and terrorist nature of the defendant who was protected with a simple accusation of immigration violation leveled at him. The reply is brutal. The government of the United States and its most representative institutions had already decided to release the monster.

“The backgrounds are well-known and reach far back. The people who trained him and ordered him to destroy a Cuban passenger plane in midair, with 73 athletes, students and other Cuban and foreign travelers on board, together with its dedicated crew; those who bought his freedom while the terrorist was held in prison in Venezuela, so that he could supply and practically conduct a dirty war

against the people of Nicaragua, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives and the devastation of a country for decades to come; those who empowered him to smuggle with drugs and weapons making a mockery of the laws of Congress; those who collaborated with him to create the terrible Operation Condor and to internationalize terror; the same who brought torture, death and often the physical disappearance of hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans, could not possibly act any different.”

The kid gloves treatment of the bloody killer Posada is in stark contrast to the cruel conditions of René González, Fernando González, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, and Antonio Guerrero. These five Cuban heroes who courageously monitored private organizations inside the U.S. that planned attacks against Cuba are enduring harsh sentences up to double life in supermax prisons. Their loved ones are denied or delayed visas to visit them.

The Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) “urges all friends of Cuba throughout the world to create a mass movement to protest the perpetration of another attack on human dignity. We demand justice for the crimes of Posada Carriles not to go unpunished.” Jail Posada and Free the Cuban Five.

Go to [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org) to read ICAP’s entire message.

## LATIN AMERICAN BRIEFS

### ARGENTINA

#### Strikes spread after cops kill teacher

Teachers had been striking for a month in the province of Neuquén in Patagonia when on April 3 they decided to raise the struggle a notch and block the road on Route 22. Under orders of the right-wing Gov. Jorge Sobisch, police moved to violently stop the action. One particularly brutal cop, who had been charged in prior violent attacks and was a member of the Special Group for Police Operations—sort of an Argentine SWAT team—fired a tear-gas canister from six feet away that smashed the head of chemistry teacher Carlos Fuentealba.

In response to this provocation, teachers supported by other workers held a mobilization of tens of thousands in Buenos Aires and a national strike of all teachers on April 9. It was supported by the Confederation of Educational Workers for the Republic of Argentina (CTERA) and by the two main labor confederations. The main demands were for a living wage for teachers—which they are not paid at present—and for Sobisch to step down as governor of Neuquén.

Sobisch, a notorious right-winger, has had to criticize the cop who did the killing and has lost much of his political support, but he has so far refused to resign. The struggle continues against him and on April 16, 30,000 workers marched in the city of Neuquén (La Jornada-Mexico) to condemn the governor, whom they consider responsible for Fuentealba’s death. Another 180 protests and public meetings took place throughout the country. Sobisch’s attempt to gain support by raising teachers’ wages by decree the night before the demonstration failed miserably.

While the national government, led by President Nestor Kirchner, has criticized Sobisch and the police for their violence and has so far escaped blame for the repression, some left-wing forces have

raised the following question: “If the president insists on an economic policy that holds down wages, doesn’t it make such confrontations between the workers and the state inevitable?”

### MEXICO

#### FLOC organizer found killed in office

An organizer of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO (FLOC), Santiago Rafael Cruz, was found beaten to death in the FLOC office in Monterrey, Mexico, on April 9, according to the FLOC web site. FLOC is a labor union that has organized migrant farm workers in North Carolina and Ohio. FLOC’s founder and current president is Baldemar Velásquez, and the group has organized workers for struggles against both growers and agribusiness.

Cruz, who was originally from Mexico, had been living in Toledo, Ohio, before FLOC sent him to recruit migrant workers for a guest worker program in February. On its Web site, FLOC said Cruz’s job “involved helping H2A ‘guest workers’ going to work in the fields of North Carolina under FLOC contracts with the visa processing process, investigating and helping resolve grievances concerning abuses in the recruiting system and employment conditions, and managing the office administration.”

FLOC connected Cruz’s killing to his work: “We have put up with constant attacks in both the U.S. and Mexico, including having our staff harassed, our office burglarized and broken into several times, and a number of other attempted break-ins,” the site read. “Now the attacks have come to this.” ([www.floc.com](http://www.floc.com))



### ECUADOR

#### Overwhelming YES for Constitutional Assembly

By a landslide, 82 percent of Ecuador’s over 6 million voters approved the formation of a Constituent Assembly with full powers, which will be elected next August or September. The vote, taken April 15, was a virtual referendum on the new Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, who had staked his political future on its outcome. Only 12 percent voted no, and even in centers of strength for the neo-liberal parties and the oligarchy like Guayaquil, the yes vote won by 2-1.

Popular demonstrations celebrated the victory, and Correa announced in its aftermath that Ecuador had paid off its debt to the International Monetary Fund and would ask the IMF and the World Bank to leave the country. It is expected that the vote will strengthen Correa’s hand in carrying out his promises to remove the U.S. military base at Manta and to carry out popular reforms.

The neo-liberal parties who opposed the Constituent Assembly ran a campaign based on baiting Correa for his friendly relations with President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, who is seen as the most radical of the left-leaning political leaders voted into office in Latin America in the last few years. Correa said after the victory that the “fear campaign had failed.” Chávez, who was with President Evo Morales of Bolivia at a public meeting, congratulated Correa and the Ecuadorian people for the victory.

With a population of over 13 million people, Ecuador is the biggest producer of bananas in South America and possesses the fourth-biggest supply of petroleum. In April 2005 a mass uprising deposed President Lucio Gutiérrez, who had betrayed his campaign promises by suddenly announcing he was “the best ally of Bush in Latin America.” A year later a mass uprising of peasants and Indigenous peoples threw out Gutiérrez’s successor, Alfredo Palacios.

—John Catalinotto

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

## ‘Carrera contra la Muerte’ en el caso de Mumia Abu-Jamal

Por Betsey Piette  
Filadelfia

En el intento más reciente del estado de negar los derechos legales y descarrillar la apelación por su condena a la pena de muerte en 1982 del prisionero político Mumia Abu-Jamal, los fiscales han pedido a la Corte de Apelaciones del Tercer Circuito de los Estados Unidos a que se descalifiquen para escuchar el caso de Abu-Jamal el 17 de mayo en Filadelfia.

Una de las apelaciones pendientes de Abu-Jamal se refiere a las prácticas rutinarias racialmente discriminatorias de los fiscales de Filadelfia. En su caso, esto es específicamente la discriminación racial durante la selección del jurado. Al tiempo del juicio, el ahora gobernador de Pensilvania, Ed Rendell, era el fiscal de distrito electo en Filadelfia. La esposa de Rendell, Marjorie Rendell actualmente es jueza en la Corte de Apelaciones del Tercer Circuito de los Estados Unidos.

En vez de simplemente pedir que Marjorie Rendell de descalifique a sí misma, una maniobra que la defensa preferiría, los fiscales dicen que “quieren evadir cualquier posibilidad de futuras apelaciones” descalificando entonces a la corte entera. No muestran ninguna preocupación de que Ed Rendell, como gobernador de Pensilvania, pueda emitir de nuevo la orden de pena de muerte si la apelación de Abu-Jamal fuera negada.

Desde el momento en que Mumia Abu-Jamal fue arrestado por el disparo a un policía de Filadelfia el 9 de diciembre de 1981, el estado burgués—la policía, las cortes, las prisiones y la prensa—han uti-

lizado todos los medios a su disposición en su campaña para condenar a un hombre inocente.

“La historia del caso criminal de Mumia Abu-Jamal, la cual tiene ya casi 25 años, ha estado caracterizada por discriminación desde el comienzo: en contra de un hombre de raza negra a quien la corte le ha negado un jurado de sus semejantes, en contra de un miembro de la clase pobre quien no pudo costear una defensa apropiada, y en contra de un radical, cuya alegada peligrosa militancia obligó al estado a eliminarle de las filas de la sociedad.”

Así escribe el autor alemán Michael Schiffmann en su nuevo libro, “Carrera contra la muerte—Mumia Abu-Jamal: un revolucionario negro en la América blanca,” publicado recientemente en Alemania.

En su libro, Schiffmann se basa en la evidencia presentada por dos libros publicados anteriormente sobre el caso de Abu-Jamal: “La ejecución de la justicia” por Dan Williams en el 2001 y “Matando el tiempo” de Dave Lindorff en el 2003, y a la vez Schiffmann también presenta nuevas evidencias.

Mientras Schiffmann investigaba documentación para su libro, descubrió dos fotografías en el Internet tomadas por Pedro Polakoff, el único fotógrafo presente en la escena del crimen en 1981. Polakoff llegó 12 minutos después de oír la noticia de los disparos en la radio de las patrullas, y diez minutos antes de la llegada de la patrulla responsable de la investigación y fotografías. Ni una fotografía había sido tomada por la policía cuando Polakoff dejó el área 45 minutos después.

Tres de las fotografías originales de

Polakoff fueron publicadas en los periódicos de Filadelfia. Schiffman publicó cinco de las fotografías en su libro para mostrar tres puntos:

1) “La policía manipuló la evidencia y entregó a la corte materiales alterados. En las fotografías de Polakoff, la gorra de policía del oficial Faulkner se ve claramente que está sobre el techo del Volkswagen de Billy Cook y sólo después se ve en la acera frente al edificio 1234 de Locust donde fue fotografiada por el fotógrafo de la policía quien llegó diez minutos después de Polakoff.

2) “En la corte, el policía James Forbes testificó que había “asegurado” las armas de Faulkner y Mumia sin tocar las partes de metal para no destruir las huellas digitales. Sin embargo, en la única foto reproducida en el libro se puede ver que Forbes sí está tocando las armas en sus partes de metal, y muchas otras fotos de Polakoff dejan ver bien claramente que Forbes tocó estas armas por todos lados, destruyendo así cualquier posible evidencia de huellas digitales.

3) “el segundo testigo más importante de la fiscalía, el chofer de taxi Robert Chobert, simplemente no estaba estacionado en el lugar, supuestamente inmediatamente detrás del coche de patrulla del oficial Faulkner, donde afirmó haber estado y desde donde afirmó haber observado a Mumia disparar la bala que mató al oficial”.

Schiffmann también escribe que Polakoff escuchó a todos los oficiales policiales expresar su convicción de que Abu-Jamal había sido el pasajero en el VW de Billy Cook y había disparado y matado a Faulkner con un solo tiro desde el asiento

trasero del coche—una historia muy distinta de la que presentaron los fiscales en el juicio. Sin embargo, el pasajero en el carro de Cook era Kenneth Freeman, no Abu-Jamal.

Según Polakoff, la opinión policial estaba basada en el testimonio de tres testigos que aún estaban en el lugar—un trabajador de un estacionamiento, una mujer drogadicta y otra mujer—tod@s l@s cuales desaparecieron o murieron a los pocos días del tiroteo.

Ninguna mención de esos testigos aparece en ningún reporte presentado por la policía o la fiscalía. Schiffman escribe que Polakoff le dijo que simplemente lo ignoraron cuando repetidamente se comunicó con el despacho del fiscal para reportar su versión—y dar sus fotos de la escena del crimen.

“Carrera contra la muerte” también presenta un análisis balístico enteramente original cuyas conclusiones fueron determinadas después de más de tres años de investigación, algo que también claramente disputa el caso del estado.

El libro de Schiffmann es importante no solamente por su profunda investigación sobre el caso de Mumia, sino por ubicar el caso en el contexto histórico de los movimientos en pro de los derechos civiles y del movimiento de poder social de la comunidad negra; la extraordinaria y a la vez típica historia de Mumia, como un joven negro confrontando el racismo; y el desarrollo de los EEUU en un estado policial virtual para muchos segmentos de la población. El libro ha sido publicado en Alemania. Todavía espera encontrar una casa editorial en los EEUU. □

## La Ciudad de Nueva York invertirá mil millones de dólares en escuela para policía

Por G. Dunkel  
Nueva York

El multimillonario alcalde de Nueva York Michael Bloomberg, ha reservado \$mil millones para construir una nueva facilidad de entrenamiento para la policía en el condado de Queens en el lugar que actualmente es un depósito de coches confiscados por la policía. Según el comunicado de prensa, va a albergar un “espacio instructivo, edificios de apoyo y administración, una casa de campo, campos de tiros al blanco, un pueblito para probar estrategias, viviendas, campos para el entrenamiento de chóferes, lugares para perros policía, estacionamiento, una facilidad para el mantenimiento de vehículos y una planta de servicios”.

Actualmente, las facilidades para esta clase de entrenamiento están dispersas por la ciudad.

La justificación que ofrece Bloomberg para gastar mil millones de dólares no ha provocado entusiasmo aquí. “Todos los éxitos que ha logrado nuestra ciudad están contruidos sobre una base de seguridad pública. Mientras que invertimos en el futuro de nuestra ciudad, tenemos que a la vez reforzar esta base”, dijo.

Mucha gente en Nueva York pensaría que tener un buen techo sobre la cabeza y un piso debajo de los pies proveerían un mejor “fundamento sólido” para sus vidas. Los alquileres en Nueva York han ido subiendo cada año desde que Bloomberg fue electo a su primer término en 2002 y la construcción de nuevas viviendas a bajo costo se ha detenido virtualmente.

Hace algunos meses especuladores de bienes raíces pudieron comprar Stuyvesant Town/Peter Cooper Village, una comunidad de 13.000 apartamentos que fue construida con la ayuda de la ciudad para proveer a neoyorquinos de la clase media apartamentos a precios módicos. Starrett City, una comunidad construida más para la clase trabajadora y que tiene 8.000 apartamentos, está ahora “en juego” como dicen los negociantes de bienes raíces.

Bloomberg aprobó la venta de las dos comunidades.

El 31 de marzo de 2003, durante el primer año de gobierno de Bloomberg, había 265.702 familias en las listas de espera para viviendas subvencionadas en la ciudad, según la Autoridad de Vivienda de la Ciudad de Nueva York. El 30 de junio de 2006 — fecha del reporte más reciente — había 239.549 familias esperando, una

caída del 10 por ciento.

Mientras que la administración de Bloomberg se felicita con entusiasmo por “la caída” en la lista de espera, el tener 900.000 personas en viviendas de calidad inferior en vez de más de un millón, no es motivo de celebración.

Dado el enorme aumento de alquileres que ha obligado a much@s en la lista de espera a vivir con otras familias o a mudarse con amistades, situaciones que interrumpen la vida familiar y aumentan las presiones sobre el pueblo trabajador en Nueva York, el gastar mil millones para viviendas de bajo costo o utilizar un sitio en Queens para servir las necesidades de la gente pobre y trabajadora para que tengan vivienda, tiene mucho sentido.

La Ciudad de Nueva York dedica mucho más dinero y recursos a su policía que muchos países de poblaciones semejantes a la de Nueva York. El Departamento de Policía de la Ciudad de Nueva York es el más grande en América de Norte y uno de los más grandes en el mundo, si no se cuentan los países donde la policía forma parte del ejército.

Según el reporte del contralor de la ciudad, Nueva York está planeando gastar \$3,8 mil millones en el año fiscal 2007 en

los 37.038 policías que tenían en la planilla de pagos en enero del 2007, incluyendo las unidades de la policía de tránsito y de la vivienda pública.

Compare éste con Austria, por ejemplo, que tiene alrededor de 7,9 millones de personas. Según un reporte para la Organización de Seguridad y Cooperación en Europa, Austria tiene unos 20.000 policías para todo el país que en extensión es mucho más grande que Nueva York. También tiene unos 3.000 guardianes de prisión. Según el CIA Factbook, Austria gasta alrededor de \$2,2 mil millones en sus fuerzas de seguridad — casi \$1,5 mil millones menos que Nueva York.

Consideremos las cifras para Haití, Austria, Burundi, Benin y Suiza, países que tienen poblaciones estimadas entre 7,7 millones a 8,3 millones. Estos países tienen muchas menos personas en sus ejércitos que Nueva York tiene en su fuerza policial. (Vea el CIA Factbook y [www.nationmaster.com](http://www.nationmaster.com))

Esta comparación deja ver claro que si la Ciudad de Nueva York no mantuviera un cuerpo tan grande de gente armada, tendría mucho más recursos para dedicar a las necesidades de su gente. □