

MUNDO OBRERO

Nueva ley de la inmigración 12



LGBT Rainbow Solidarity with Cuban Five 3

RACISM & POLICE BRUTALITY
A deadly mix **Centerfold**

MIDDLE EAST
Lebanese Army vs. Palestinians 8

1967 or 1948?
When Israeli occupation began 8



AGENT ORANGE
Vietnam appeals for justice 11

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Setback for CIA Venezuela pulls plug on pro-coup TV

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Venezuelan counter-revolutionaries, with the full support of the U.S. and other imperialist governments, have been attempting to use the non-renewal of Radio Caracas Television's (RCTV) broadcasting license to destabilize the popular progressive government of President Hugo Chávez.

Some background will help explain these events and the reasons why it is important to defend Chávez's Bolivarian government.

After his landslide December 2006 re-election victory, Chávez reaffirmed his promises to consolidate the Bolivarian Revolution, nationalize industries that had previously been privatized and, most importantly, rebuild society on a socialist base. He announced then that RCTV's license would be allowed to expire on May 27, 2007.

This private station had used public airwaves for 54 years. Since Chávez took office in 1999, RCTV has been a vicious arm of opposition to the Bolivarian revolution, using racist and vulgar attacks against Chávez while demanding his removal. Yet in spite of RCTV's role in actually promoting an aborted military coup in April 2002, it was not closed or silenced.

Airwaves are limited and are public by law. Venezuela's government has a constitutional right to deny RCTV's license renewal.

According to Andrés Izarra, the former manager of RCTV who resigned in 2002 to protest its having supported the failed coup, RCTV broadcast on VHF, which has the widest range and therefore largest reception nationally. The state-owned stations have a narrower reach than multi-million-dollar private stations like RCTV, Venevision and Globovision have.

A public-service television station, TVes, will replace RCTV. This will encourage the participation of the people and of independent producers.

Izarra, who is now managing Telesur, said in an interview with El Universal that "The fundamental thing is to impel a cultural revolution, and that change needs the creation of consensus ... and in my opinion this is a fundamental tool for those changes towards socialism that the country is considering."

Aim to disrupt the revolution

Since Chávez's December announcement, RCTV and the anti-Chávez forces have mounted a campaign against the government. Although they have dominated the airwaves, they hypocritically use "lack of freedom of speech" as their slogan to try to destabilize the revolution.

These forces are now staging daily pro-
Continued on page 9

Anti-war vets resist USMC retreats on bad discharge

By John Catalinotto

The U.S. Marine Corps launched another offensive this May—this one not a landing on some foreign beach but a legal attack on its own anti-war Iraq veterans. Given the results of the first skirmish in Kansas City, Mo., on June 4, the USMC already seems to be deciding that it might retreat rather than find itself fighting another losing battle with a popular army.

Instead of deciding on a less-than-honorable discharge for PFC Adam Kokesh, a board of three Marine officers admitted that military rules shouldn't apply to members of its Inactive Ready Reserve and recommended a "general discharge," barely a punishment. Kokesh will still appeal to get his honorable discharge restored.

The hearing arose following an action by a group of about a dozen members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), who performed street theater in a few cities to bring the war home. Dressed not in complete official uniforms, but in outfits resembling uniforms, they acted out the kind of roundups of the civilian population that occur daily in Iraq. Anti-war activists played the role of Iraqi civilians.

It caused quite an uproar to see Marines pushing civilians down on the street, covering their heads with bags, terrorizing them. Someone in the Pentagon must have disliked having it known that Marines in occupied Poland in 1942. The officers decided to take steps to try to stop the veterans from exercising their right to free speech. (See www.ivaw.org for more information and videos.)

Brass try to stop street theater

The USMC brought charges against Kokesh, and charges are pending against Staff Sgt. Liam Madden and Cpl. Cloy Richards, in effect, for speaking out against the war.

While the charges cannot lead to imprisonment, getting a less-than-honorable discharge has serious consequences. Since Richards is disabled, he would lose monthly disability payments and also could lose the free medical care now available to him. The troops could also lose or even be forced to repay educational benefits.

If the Marine Corps succeeds in enforcing less-than-honorable discharges, it could intimidate other veterans. But

bringing charges like these in a broadly anti-war atmosphere can also boomerang on the brass.

One surprising result of the Marines' charges is that the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a veterans' group that almost always backs U.S. government policy, made a statement supporting the Marine veterans' right to speech and to protest. This VFW position is a sign of widespread disgust with the Iraq experience, even though the VFW says it backs the war.

The veterans involved acted more angry than intimidated. They went on a special bus covered with anti-war slogans—called the Yellow Rose of Texas Bus for Peace—from Washington to Kansas City from June 1 to 3 and gave interviews to the media all along the way. At each stop they drew more attention to the existence of a solid group of anti-war Iraq veterans. They also said that the Marines who are still on active duty and still in Iraq support them.

Madden, who received an honorable discharge from active duty Jan. 20, was a co-initiator of the "Appeal for Redress" and is known among aware GIs. The "appeal"
Continued on page 2



AUTO CONTRACTS

- Bumpy road ahead 4
- Revive spirit of Flint! 4

WW PHOTOS: MARTHA GREVATT



'Another U.S. is necessary'

Social Forum expects thousands

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

From June 27 to July 1, Atlanta will host the first-ever Social Forum held in the United States. The U.S. Social Forum will gather thousands of grassroots and community activists from across the country who will engage each other in political discussion and strategy planning. The operating slogan for the five-day event is, "For another world to be possible, another U.S. is necessary."

The major sites for the Social Forum are in downtown Atlanta at the Civic Center and adjoining parks, plus space in nearby hotels, churches, libraries and theaters.

Delegates will be coming from other parts of the world, including many countries in Central and South America, the Caribbean and Europe as well as Mexico and Canada.

The Social Forum offers hundreds of workshops organized by a wide range of local and national groups engaged in issues such as the reconstruction of the Gulf Coast, union organizing, immigrant rights, health care, anti-war and counter-recruiting, anti-imperialist solidarity, sex and gender discrimination, creating progressive media and people's survival institutions.

In addition, participants in the U.S. Social Forum will be able to experience cultural exchanges with planned and spontaneous musical and dance events, poetry slams, a film festival, sports activities, drumming circles and jam sessions.

A Youth Camp and 13 Focus Tents offer specific programming on Palestine, Africa, Peace and Justice, Health and Wellness, and other issues.

An opening march through downtown Atlanta on Wednesday, June 27, will incorporate local struggles for quality and accessible healthcare, education, housing and public transportation for all with national and international demands for these and other human rights.

The march organizers are encouraging those coming to the Social Forum to bring their banners, signs, flags, puppets, drums and other creative expressions to illustrate the vibrancy, diversity and passion for fundamental change that motivate this gathering.

Among the many dynamic methods to mobilize for the U.S. Social Forum used by women's organizations, youth and student groups, and the lesbian, gay, bi and trans community is a People's Freedom Caravan. Leaving

from Albuquerque, N.M. and going through Texas and the Gulf Coast, it will join together as many as 1,000 people—Indigenous people, Katrina survivors, immigrants, low-wage workers and environmentalists—in a caravan of buses and vans.

A Family Reunion scheduled for Saturday, June 30, will bring together those impacted by the "injustice" system in the U.S., which imprisons more people than any other country. Those formerly incarcerated, together with families and friends of prisoners, will assemble to take up the urgent need to struggle against police brutality and harassment, the death penalty, sentencing and drug policies.

The World Social Forum movement developed as a response to the closed summits held by the governments and corporate elite of the dominant industrial capitalist countries, where decisions impacting billions of people are made in secret.

In January 2001, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, some 12,000 people from around the world met to discuss the disastrous impact of capitalist globalization in response to a call that "another world is possible."

Annual World Social Forums now draw many tens of thousands of people and national, regional and local social forums are common in many areas of the world. However, not until 2007 has there been an attempt to focus the many movements in the U.S. on gathering together and taking up the critical question of how to build an effective challenge to those in power.

Many will come to this event with serious expectations, wanting more than interesting and stimulating discussion and a chance to make good contacts.

A delegation from Workers World Party will be participating in the Social Forum, in workshops and informal gatherings, eager to learn more about the many struggles engaged in by working and oppressed peoples, to introduce the perspective of socialism and workers' power as a solution, and to meet like-minded activists with whom common strategies can be developed.

Anyone wishing to prearrange a meeting with WWP at the Social Forum can contact the party at forum2007@workers.org.

For more information about the U.S. Social Forum, including registration, volunteering, workshops and other planned events, go to www.ussf2007.org. □

This week ...



★ In the U.S.

- USMC retreats on bad discharge 1
- Social Forum expects thousands 2
- LGBT Center hosts meeting for Cuban Five 3
- Auto bosses cry poverty to wring concessions 4
- Revive the spirit of 1937! 4
- Supreme Court okays paying women less 5
- ICE raids breed resistance in Ohio 5
- On the picket line 5
- 'Street naming WILL happen'. 6
- Group calls for community control of police. 6
- Community rallies behind Black alderman 7
- Anti-racist struggle saves community center 7

★ Around the world

- Venezuela pulls plug on pro-coup TV 1
- Lebanese Army pounds Palestinian refugees 8
- Two-faced on human rights 8
- Occupation of Palestine started in 1948. 8
- Portugal general strike 9
- Nigeria charges Pfizer with deadly drug tests 10
- Vietnam's Agent Orange survivors get support 11
- Senegalese people boycott elections 11

★ Editorials

- New Orleans dissed, again 10

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Anti-war vets resist

USMC retreats on bad discharge

Continued from page 1

effectively calls for a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. Issued first last Oct. 23, it is now signed by nearly 2,000 active-duty troops—60 percent of whom have spent at least one tour of duty in Iraq.

Call for defense committee

Navy Petty Officer Jonathan Hutto, who initiated the appeal with Madden and is now chairperson of the Appeal for Redress Task Force, sent out a statement to active duty troops on May 31 calling for the formation of a defense committee of active-duty troops and National Guard for "Madden and all those within the ranks who face reprisal and/or retaliation from the brass anywhere in the world for speaking out against an unjust war."

The statement notes that the "disloyal statement"

Madden is charged with making stems from his saying on a college campus that the U.S. has committed "war crimes" in Iraq.

"Madden maintains he could never be disloyal being he served on the ground in Iraq for seven months and served his country for five years. Furthermore, Madden maintains if the uniform can be worn for imperialist adventures, surely it can be worn for peace and justice," wrote Hutto.

Besides spreading publicity and raising money to support Madden and others, a goal of the defense committee will be to "mobilize a grass-roots movement from the bottom-up calling for an end to retaliation/reprisals, an end to the Iraq War and democracy within the ranks." (www.appealforredress.org)

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

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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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LGBT Center hosts meeting for Cuban Five

By Brenda Sandburg
New York

The lesbian, gay, bi and transgender community is using its power to help build the worldwide movement to free the Cuban Five.

As part of its effort to forge new ties, Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five held a meeting at the Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Transgender Community Center in New York City June 2. Leaders from various organizations voiced their commitment to work on behalf of the Cuban heroes, noting that the U.S. government's persecution of them is connected to its imperialist wars abroad and attacks on immigrants at home.

A representative of the Cuban government welcomed the support of the LGBT movement. "The Cuban Five represent the altruism and courage of the Cuban people," Jorge Luis Dustet, second secretary to the Cuban Mission of the United Nations, told the crowd. "Thank you for the work of the Rainbow Solidarity. Our message to you will always be: ¡Hasta la victoria siempre!"

The Cuban Five—Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González—were prosecuted in the U.S. because they infiltrated CIA-backed right-wing terrorist organizations operating in the U.S. in order to monitor and stop their plans to attack Cuba. Imprisoned for nearly nine years, the five were given sentences ranging from 15 years to two consecutive life terms.

Dustet said the U.S. government's recent release of terrorist Luis Posada Carriles shows the innocence of the Cuban Five and how necessary it was for the Cuban government to send them to the U.S. to collect information on people like Carriles. Carriles organized the mid-air bombing of a civilian passenger plane in 1976, which killed 73 passengers, and directed the bombing of tourist hotels in 1997. He escaped from prison in Venezuela in 1985 and secretly entered the United States in 2005. The U.S. government arrested him on an immigration violation but freed him in April, ignoring calls by the Venezuelan and Cuban governments for his extradition.

Teresa Gutierrez, founder of the New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five, said their case is thoroughly political and has everything to do with U.S./Cuba relations. The U.S. government imprisoned the five as a way of attacking Cuba. She emphasized that the main way to free them is to change public opinion and organize pressure on the U.S. government.

"We've almost run out of legal options," Gutierrez said. "That's why these meetings are so important. We have to reach new sectors."

Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five was initiated in January 2007 to build support among the LGBT communities. The group issued a call that demands a new trial and freedom for the Cuban Five, declares the right of the Cuban people to sovereignty and self-determination, and demands a halt to U.S. acts of war against Cuba, including the economic blockade and CIA-trained and -funded attacks by mercenary "contra" armies operating on U.S. soil.

In four months the call has received endorsements from more than 1,000 unions, organizations and individuals in 40 countries, as well as every state in the continental U.S.

Leslie Feinberg, one of the initiators of the Rainbow Solidarity call and author of the soon to be released book "Rainbow Solidarity: In Defense of Cuba," present-



WWW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Helena Wong, Benjamin Ramos, Leslie Feinberg, LeiLani Dowell, Joan Gibbs and Teresa Gutierrez applaud Secretary Jorge Luis Dustet from the U.N. Cuban Mission as he holds up Rainbow Solidarity with the Cuban Five photo.

ed a framed copy of the call with the first 1,000 signatures to Dustet. The crowd responded by cheering Dustet and giving him a standing ovation.

Feinberg told the crowd that the call has been translated into Chinese, Tagalog, Farsi, Turkish, Greek, Croatian, Portuguese, Italian, Danish, Japanese, French and German, and additional translations are planned in Swahili, Urdu, Indonesian, Arabic, Korean and Bengali. A streaming video in American Sign Language is also in the works.

"On what basis does this initiative call for solidarity from communities struggling against oppression based on sexuality, gender expression and sex?" Feinberg asked. "In essence, what defined the left wing of the early gay liberation movement in the United States, and what fueled its vitality, was its solidarity on the basis of a common enemy, not a common oppression." The community at that time stood with immigrant workers organizing the United Farm Workers and with the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords.

"Today, our communities have a particular responsibility in the United States to defend the Cuban Five because this country is the aircraft carrier from which Wall Street and the Pentagon are launching a

covert war against Cuba," she said. "And those who are battling oppression based on same-sex love are called upon to play a leadership role in this struggle because it is our love and our lives that have been used as a political cover for this dirty war against a people who have fought enslavement for 500 years."

Ben Ramos, a coordinator of the Popular Education Project to Free the Cuban Five and co-chair of the meeting, noted that it was natural for the LGBT community to take up the case of the Cuban Five. "We have been integral in the anti-war movement, we are instrumental in the development of unions and workers' rights campaigns" and in fighting to free political prisoners, Ramos said. Ramos was also a leading organizer of the event.

Other speakers proclaimed their support for the five as well.

"We have a responsibility to the Cuban Five because their story is our story," said Helena Wong, director of the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence. She said immigrants come to this country because of what the U.S. government is doing to their homelands and then are locked up in detention centers for trying to start a new life here. Likewise, she said, "The government puts resources into Israel and Iraq and to militarizing the borders," while refusing to meet the needs of the Black and Brown communities devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

YancyMarkGandionco,

on the LGBT Desk of the U.S. Chapter of BAYAN Philippines, compared the U.S. government's imprisonment of the five to the Philippine government's attempt to quash resistance by arresting progressive leaders. Charged with sedition and rebellion, they were held in prison for two years and freed because the Filipino people stood up. "The most powerful weapon is the weapon of resistance," Gandionco said.

Joan Gibbs, an attorney and activist who is focused on freeing political prisoners, pointed to the success of the Puerto Rican movement in freeing five Nationalists who were imprisoned for more than 25 years. She said the victories of the civil rights movement were also won in the streets. Gibbs also paid tribute to Cuba for fighting apartheid in Africa and giving asylum to great fighters like Assata Shakur. "When the African people called, only one country went without imperialist designs and that was Cuba," she said.

LeiLani Dowell, a leader of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) and co-chair of the meeting, spoke about the International Youth Conference on the Cuban Five that was held in Cuba in April. She said the participants stressed over and over that it is primarily the responsibility of the people of the U.S. to build awareness of the Cuban Five to win their freedom. She repeated the words of Cuban National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón: "The U.S. people will find the keys to unlock the gate for the Cuban Five." □



Leslie Feinberg is one of today's most prominent transgender rights activists, and an organizer in national and international progressive movements for over 25 years.

Leslie's 1993 novel, *Stone Butch Blues*, was translated internationally and won the American Library Association Award for Gay and Lesbian Literature and the LAMBDA Small Press Literary Award. Her non-fiction work, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan*

of Arc to Dennis Rodman, is the first analysis of the historical roots of transgender oppression. More on Leslie Feinberg, her life and works can be found at www.transgenderwarrior.org

If you buy your book at www.Leftbooks.com it will include a bookplate autographed by Feinberg

From Protest to Resistance
The Democrats have caved in
Congress won't end the war!
**It's up to the people—
time to take it back to the streets!**

On June 16, from 1 - 5 pm, the Troops Out Now Coalition is hosting an Anti-war Strategy Meeting at the Solidarity Center (55 W. 17th St. 5th Fl, in Manhattan). All progressive organizations, coalitions, individuals—anyone interested in mobilizing to shut down the war—is welcome to join us for the discussion, as we examine and begin planning for the necessary "Surge" of anti-war mass action this Summer and Fall.

Go to www.troopsoutnow.org or call 212-633-6646 for info

A never-ending story

Auto bosses cry poverty to wring concessions

By Martha Grevatt

"Never before have we faced such a threat."

Those are pretty strong words, coming from a 99-year-old corporation that has weathered strikes, sit-downs, recessions, depressions (including the Great one), mergers, spinoffs, scandals, management upheavals and even a film parody by Michael Moore.

What on earth could GM spokesperson John Buttermore have been referring to?

You guessed it. The high cost of employee and retiree health care benefits.

The punch line is that Buttermore uttered these words prior to negotiations with the United Auto Workers—in 2003. Four years and numerous concessions later, GM, Ford and Chrysler (soon to be part of Cerberus) are still crying the health care crisis blues.

In reality it is the UAW-represented workers who are facing unparalleled threats. Spurred on by the sale of Chrysler to a powerful Wall Street private equity firm, the Big Three bosses and their financiers are making noises about the "need" for more and bigger concessions than ever before.

While the biggest threat is to health care—a basic necessity and recognized human right—its cost is being used to justify demands for a wide range of concessions. The extent of the planned restructuring was harshly spelled out by auto industry writer Jerry Flint:

"The present contract expires in mid-September, and negotiations for a replacement start this summer. It's no secret what Detroit needs:

"More contributions from today's workers to their own health care and pen-

sion plans.

"Much smaller company contribution to the over-65 retirees for their health care. Either a modest deferral in cost-of-living pay increases or else a dual-pay system, with new hires getting less.

"There are lots of little things, too: getting custodial workers out of the UAW contract, so janitors aren't paid like production workers; allowing four-day weeks, meaning 10 hours a day, without overtime; allowing nonunion workers to do some jobs around the factory." (Forbes, June 4)

Officially negotiations don't begin until July. Is it not poor protocol for management to make demands on the union via the media before the start of talks?

The program—"what Detroit needs"—is extreme. Consider the demand that workers contribute to their pension plan. Flint, a writer on the auto industry since 1958 and a former editor at Forbes, surely must know that pensions are deferred wages. How can workers be expected to pay part of their own wages?

Why should new hires be paid a sub-standard wage? Why should cost of living increases be cut? Why shouldn't janitors, who work as hard for the least pay, get union wages?

How can workers be asked to give up something as precious as the eight-hour day? Yet, sadly, a number of plants already have local agreements allowing 10- or even 11.5-hour days.

Even by the companies' line of reasoning, these concessions are not justified. The latest statistics show an actual decrease in labor costs.

In 2003 GM complained that, to build a car, a GM worker took 45 hours—compared to 32 hours at Toyota's non-union U.S. plants, where injuries are routine as a

result of the push for productivity.

Claiming wages and benefits cost \$52 an hour, GM said its average labor costs per vehicle came to \$2,340.

Brand-new figures from the Harbour Report, which tracks industry productivity, show a GM worker now builds a car in 32 hours, compared to 30 at Toyota. Even with GM now claiming costs (including retiree health care) of \$70 an hour, labor costs have been actually reduced by \$100 per vehicle.

Actually, the company's claim that labor costs have risen \$18 an hour in four years is laughable. There were no raises the first two years of the contract and only a 2 percent raise the third year. A 3 percent raise the fourth year was canceled at Ford and GM—a concession negotiated to pay for costs of health care.

Because of massive buyouts to shed workers, automakers are providing health benefits to more retirees—but to fewer active employees. The overall number of people receiving health care coverage has actually decreased since the buyouts.

More layoffs, less protection

Last year GM, Delphi and Ford announced the combined elimination of some 86,000 jobs; in February Chrysler added 13,000 more cuts. At the same time programs negotiated to alleviate unemployment are under attack. A "jobs bank" was initiated when technology made fewer workers necessary. Workers in the bank were guaranteed 40 hours' pay.

Now the jobs bank is threatened. As early as January of last year, GM CEO Rick Wagoner while at the North American Auto Show in Detroit made the statement: "I don't think it's any question the jobs bank is an expense." Now 400 UAW

skilled trades workers in Flint and Lansing are being forced out of the bank—before the negotiations have even started.

Will the Supplemental Unemployment Benefits for laid-off workers also face the axe? How many of the union's hard-fought gains will be left after these critical negotiations?

The takeover of Delphi, Chrysler and many parts suppliers by private equity firms only elevates the crisis. Private equity profits are derived primarily not from the earnings of the companies they buy, but from their ability to resell companies after drastically reducing labor costs.

New statements from Ford should alert workers to even greater dangers.

"I put a simple question to Ford Motor Co. Executive Chairman Bill Ford Jr. on Thursday: Is Detroit's auto industry in play?" wrote Detroit News auto columnist Daniel Howes on June 1.

"That's true of the entire business world today—everything is in play," he told me in an interview at the Detroit Regional Chamber's Mackinac Policy Conference. "Private equity has almost limitless capital. Almost no deal is too big to be done. ... 'Everything is always on the table,' he said."

In February DaimlerChrysler CEO Dieter Zetsche said basically the same thing. Three months later he announced the sale of Chrysler to Cerberus.

There is no impending crisis. The crisis is here. Workers who see through the bosses' "poor little rich company" charade must construct a strategy to halt the theft of their wages and benefits.

Grevatt has worked for 20 years at Chrysler's Twinsburg, Ohio, stamping plant and serves on the executive board of her local union.

70 years after sit-downs

Revive the spirit of 1937!

By Martha Grevatt

Final article in series on the Flint sit-down strike.

Those who fail to learn from history—or so goes the cliché—are doomed to repeat it. While the statement contains more than a grain of truth, it assumes that all of history is a series of bad things, and that all these bad things are the result of people not learning from past mistakes.

In fact, far from being all bad, the history of the working class is rich with examples of true class solidarity, examples that it would do well to repeat now—albeit with modifications.

This past February marked the 70th anniversary of the victorious 44-day Flint sit-down strike against General Motors.

Workers' gains over the last 70 years are now under attack. Contracts between the Big Three automakers and the United Auto Workers will expire in September. Health benefits, pensions, job security provisions and wage increases all face the axe. The issues are being defined as not whether to take concessions but how far they should go. Time and again autoworkers have agreed to concessions with a promise that their particular plant will be kept open, only to see their plant close anyway.

The crisis facing autoworkers calls for a new outlook, but one that revives the spirit and ideals of decades past.

The ideas advanced during the Flint strike might today seem ahead of their time. In fact, they were right in step with

what was a turbulent and exciting decade.

Few workers today consciously think of their jobs as their personal property. Yet this idea was commonplace during the 1930s. Both union leaders and rank and file strikers voiced this demand during the Flint strike. A labor journalist of the time wrote that "All through the last half of 1937 I felt that the idea born of the sit-down, that the worker has a right to his job ... was one of the most significant additions to the makeup of the American mind ... I am fairly certain that it—with the thoughts and feelings it awakened—is destined to play a big role in the future of America." (Louis Adamic, "My America")

In 1984 Workers World Party's late chairperson, Sam Marcy, revived this concept in his groundbreaking work "High Tech, Low Pay."

"The right to a job is a property right," Marcy asserted. "The right to seize and occupy the plants is an accompanying right."

'A Job Is a Right'

Three years later the Job Is a Right Campaign, which WWP helped to organize, raised the slogan during a massive wave of plant closings by GM.

While the grassroots movement did not stop the plants from closing, the central demand for a moratorium on plant shut-downs was incorporated into the UAW contracts with the Big Three.

The moratorium helped to slow down the restructuring. Every round of negotiations since 1987 has seen more plant closings, and the UAW's ranks have dropped far below their peak membership in the 1960s and 1970s. Still, for an auto worker about to lose a job, even a three- or four-year guarantee of a livelihood means a lot.

If a job as a worker's right had not been raised at the grassroots level by class-conscious activists, would it have been realized at the bargaining table, even in a limited way?

Now is the time to popularize the idea again. It is particularly timely, given the tendency by Ford, Chrysler and GM/Delphi to replace permanent UAW employees with "enhanced temporaries." These workers should be made permanent, with their job property rights guaranteed. Job property rights should also be guaranteed for unorganized workers, who face dismissal by companies such as Wal-Mart for even uttering the word "union."

Workers need to feel, as they felt in the 1930s, a sense of entitlement when it comes to their jobs. The notion that a job is some sort of gift or favor needs to be discarded.

The bosses will cry that plant closings are necessary, blaming "overcapacity." Our answer could be to call for a shorter workweek. This was tremendously popular in the 1930s; during a 1937 Cadillac strike, a banner read: "6 hours work, 8 hours sleep, 10 hours play, union pay."

The six-hour day was the one demand of the sit-down that was never realized.

In fact, since the eight-hour day was enacted in 1938, the only legislative action to take place was a step backward, reclassifying whole groups of workers as salaried and therefore ineligible for overtime protection. U.S. workers lag far behind even their European counterparts when it comes to vacations and hours of work.

No progress without struggle

The great abolitionist Frederick Douglass said that "Without struggle there is no progress." In fact, without struggle there is not only no progress but there is usually regress.

Without struggle the working class, including the autoworkers, will continue to lose ground.

Things may get worse before they get better, but the uprising will come. Autoworkers may not be the first to rebel. They might be preceded by any number of bold actions—such as the "Great American Boycott," a mass political strike of immigrant workers that revived May Day in the U.S. in 2006. The first workplace to be occupied might be a hospital, a non-union sweatshop or a field of strawberries. The workers who lead the charge might well be a majority African-American, or immigrants, or women.

The bosses will always resort to the age-old tactic of divide and conquer. Workers have to make sure it fails.

Continued on page 5



LABOR HISTORY

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

GE negotiations begin

A coalition of 13 unions began negotiations May 21 with General Electric over pensions, health care and job security, affecting 23,000 workers all over the country. The current contract ends June 17.

"We are determined to bargain a contract that acknowledges GE's enormous financial resources and assures good jobs for current and future employees at GE," said Rich Michalski in a May 22 Machinists union press release. The union says it won't allow "GE to renege on long-standing commitments to its employees or to benchmark itself against financially troubled competitors."

During negotiations on May 24, representatives of the Electrical workers union reported that GE tried to make the case that workers should shoulder more of the cost of health care and that retiree benefits should be cut back or cut entirely.

UE negotiator Steve Tormey countered that GE comes to the discussion of the U.S. health care system "with an essential conflict of interest." Because of all the money it makes on the dysfunctional, profit-driven health care system, "You don't have clean hands." Union reps urged GE to join the fight for a single-payer national health care system. For the latest on negotiations, visit www.geworkersunited.org.

Tomato pickers win pay raise

In 2005 the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) representing tomato pickers in Florida won a precedent-setting agreement with Taco Bell. The fast-food chain agreed to pay more per bushel of tomatoes to boost the workers' pay and help improve their working conditions. This April MacDonald's agreed to the same terms.

In mid-May Yum Brands, which owns Taco Bell, announced that it was extending the agreement to all five of its brands. Now the Latin@ immigrants and Black migrant workers will earn more with every tomato slice on sandwiches at KFC and A&W Restaurants.

The Student/Farmworker Alliance pointed out in a May 22 email that "Burger King and the rest of the fast-food industry are running out of excuses to refuse to work with the CIW."

Three firms charged with discrimination

Five Black current and former employees filed a lawsuit May 17 charging Bank of America with discrimination against African Americans in pay, promotions, training and support services. The suit charges that African Americans were assigned to largely poor Black neighborhoods and clients with low net worth. The complaint covers from April 2003 to the present. Plaintiffs are seeking class-action status.

In a separate action an employee charged Bank of America May 18 with failure to pay overtime to employees who worked through meal breaks and outside of normal business hours. The complaint also seeks class-action status.

Lorene F. Schaefer, an executive at General Electric, filed a lawsuit in federal court in Connecticut on May 31 accusing GE of systematically discriminating against women in top management in both pay and promotions. She expects 1,700 women to join the suit so it can be certified as a class action.

The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled on May 31 that a lawsuit claiming off-the-clock violations would proceed as a class action lawsuit on behalf of nearly 80,000 current and former Wal-Mart employees. □

Continued from page 4

It won't be the first time. In 1937 GM used red-baiting, anti-Semitism and racism to turn workers against unions. They failed. They used both the official state apparatus and extra-legal terror to scare the workers from joining unions. They failed.

They had a precise plan called the Mohawk Valley Formula for breaking strikes. It failed.

There are signs here and there—in Canada, Australia, Wales, Spain and probably elsewhere—that the sit-down tactic is being revived, and workers are getting results.

There is no Santa Claus and there are no shortcuts, but a bold fight around a bold program can revive the spirit of 1937 and stop the backwards-moving train in its tracks. Workers have—as Karl Marx said—a world to win.

Martha Grevatt has worked for 20 years at Chrysler's Twinsburg, Ohio, stamping plant and serves on the executive board of her local union.

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On a technicality

Supreme Court okays paying women less

By Sue Davis

In a 5-4 decision on May 29, the Supreme Court ruled that it didn't matter that supervisor Lilly M. Ledbetter had over the course of 20 years been paid less than her male peers. What mattered was a technicality. She hadn't filed her case (Ledbetter v. Goodyear) with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission within 180 days of the first time the discrimination occurred.

In 1998 Ledbetter, the only woman among 16 supervisors at the same management level, discovered she was being paid as much as 40 percent less than the men, even those with less seniority. Though she started at the same salary, she received smaller and smaller raises between 1979 and 1998.

Ledbetter first faced discrimination in the early 1980s. "My department manager, when he would evaluate me, he would tell me things like, 'If you meet me at the Ramada Inn, you can be No. 1, and if you don't, you're on the bottom,'" Ledbetter told the May 30 New York Times. After the manager demoted her, she filed sex discrimination charges with the EEOC and was eventually reinstated.

Only in the 1990s when she overheard other supervisors bragging about all the money they earned did she suspect discrimination. But that didn't matter, ruled the Supreme Court. Though other courts have given the 180-day timeline in Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act broad interpretation over the years, the new decision applies "even if the effects of the initial discriminatory act were not immediately apparent to the worker and even if they continue to the present day," wrote the Times.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, who wrote a forceful minority decision,

pointed out that the ruling ignores "workplace realities" and "is totally at odds with the robust protection against workplace discrimination Congress intended Title VII to secure." Pointing out that information about pay is all too often veiled in corporate secrecy, she said the court should treat a pay claim like those for a "hostile work environment." The 2002 decision she cited said that a case could be filed "based on the cumulative effect of individual acts."

Title VII doesn't just address discrimination based on sex but also on race and national origin. Between 2001 and 2006 workers filed nearly 40,000 pay discrimination cases. In 2006 alone there were 2,038 cases based on race and 1,469 based on sex under Title VII. Women can also use the Equal Pay Act to redress discrimination, though financial relief is limited and excludes punitive damages. Title VII is the only federal law that men of color and those born outside the U.S. can use to redress discrimination.

No wonder there's been a firestorm of reaction against the reactionary decision. Groups like the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the National Women's Law Center and the National Organization for Women have all denounced the decision for severely limiting all workers' legal options.

Meanwhile business groups are clinking champagne glasses. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's National Chamber Litigation Center hailed the decision as a "victory" because corporations will now be protected from "employees trying to dredge up stale pay claims."

It's important to point out that this is the second repressive, regressive Supreme Court decision since April. Then the court upheld what some reproductive rights organizations

are calling the National Abortion Ban. The two justices appointed by the current president—Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito—sided with the majority in both cases. That's not surprising, since George W. Bush appointed them to the court to do his racist, anti-choice, anti-worker bidding.

Though many who oppose Bush see the only solution as supporting the Democrats, who will then hopefully get legislation passed affirming the right of all workers to pay equity, there's another, surer way to get it. Lower-level managers like Ledbetter can organize to win union representation. Pay scales have to be published in union contracts and must legally be followed by the bosses. That's another reason all workers need union protection.

Another possibility would be for the two major labor organizations to turn up the heat on the bosses by jointly calling for a national day of protest where workers from coast to coast could demand raises to make up for the last 30 years of inflation, a 30-hour work week for 40 hours' pay, and pay raises and adjusted Social Security benefits for all workers who have traditionally been discriminated against: women, people of color, members of the LGBT community, people living with mental and physical disabilities, and immigrants.

The New York Times reported on March 27 that a new tax study showed income inequality grew significantly in 2005. "While total reported income in the United States increased almost 9 percent in 2005, average incomes for those in the bottom 90 percent dipped slightly compared with the year before, dropping \$172, or 0.6 percent."

Pay inequality affects all working people. Isn't it time for workers to unite and demand what's rightfully theirs? □

ICE raids breed resistance in Ohio

By Caleb T. Maupin
Cleveland

The shopping centers of Painesville, Ohio, which usually bustle with activity, are empty.

Parents are afraid of being separated from their U.S.-born children. "Everybody's terrified right now," Veronica Isabel Dahlberg, executive director of Hispanas Organizadas de Lake y Ashtabula (HOLA) told the media shortly after raids began. (Cleveland Plain Dealer, June 2)

About 400 people began seeking sanctuary in the local Roman Catholic Church. Parents wouldn't let their children go outside.

With the pretext of looking for a rapist, the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) on May 18 had begun conducting massive sweeps through the immigrant community. In two weeks it has arrested 37 people whose only offense was entering this country without papers.

A 10-year-old boy named Ramón

had his father taken away. A 17-year-old woman was ripped out of her bed by male ICE agents. Another woman reports that agents "manhandled" her. Meanwhile, 50 anti-immigrant bigots gleefully stood in the streets waving their American flag, as if the disappearance of 37 people was something to celebrate.

Twelve of those arrested in the raids were from the nation of Honduras. Honduran nationals lived under U.S. military occupation during the 1980s. The U.S. used this small nation as a base for death squads and terrorist organizations it funded to overthrow the revolutionary socialist government of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Those who resisted the occupation by the U.S. forces, or tried to fight the extreme poverty in Honduras, faced extra-judicial killings and disappearances.

The infamous U.S. Battalion 316 roamed Honduras, rounding up those who tried to make a better life for themselves and change the

conditions of the people. Now those coming to the U.S. to find work are suffering the same tactics of oppression. They have been disappeared in the night by those who serve the same global capitalist-imperialist system that occupied and repressed their homeland.

But these brutal tactics are proving what Mao Tse-Tung said long ago: "Where there is oppression, there is resistance." Though many remain terrified, the immigrant community is not cowering.

The day after the arrests began, hundreds went to Painesville's City Hall to protest. They were organized by a diverse group of clergy and local Latin@ organizations.

They marched to the church where those seeking refuge were staying. They carried Mexican and American flags and held signs bearing the message, "We come here to feed our families." Elias Goiz, captain of the local Salvation Army, made it clear: "We are here to support the families divided by the arrests!" □

Black activists to racists:

'Street naming WILL happen'

By Monica Moorehead
New York

On May 30, the New York City Council defeated a proposal to rename a street in Brooklyn in honor of a well-known Black Nationalist activist, Sonny Carson. The proposal sought to replace the name Gates Avenue with Sonny Abubadika Carson Avenue. Carson passed away in December 2002 following two heart attacks.

The City Council vote split along racial lines. Twenty-four out of the 25 councilpeople who voted against the street renaming were white; out of the 15 votes for the street renaming, 14 were people of color and, of the seven abstentions, all were Black.

Carson was a founding member of the Brooklyn-based December 12th Movement which, since its inception in the late 1980s, has defended self-determination of Black people and other nationally oppressed peoples in the U.S. and around the world. Carson helped to initiate Black Men Against Crack, a community group fighting against the government-instigated drug epidemic.

A 1974 film, "The Education of Sonny Carson," was based on the activist's life growing up in the predominantly Black community of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, where police brutality remains rampant today.

When Carson was alive, the racist mainstream media was forever demonizing him for being "anti-white"—a diversion from the fact that the Black community was and is still denied any real political or economic power due to the repressive measures of the white-dominated status quo.

Nana Soul from The Ghetto Chronicles interviewed Black New York City Councilperson Charles Barron, who told her: "The vote today to deny Sonny Carson's name was a slap in the face to the entire Black community and a blatant display of the abuse of white power at its worst. The vote was split down the middle and it was whites versus people of color. I hold Christine Quinn—Speaker of the Council—responsible for being more divisive than Sonny Carson ever could have been in his life. Fortunately for us, we have some



New York City Hall May 30 press conference demands street renaming for Sonny Carson.

PHOTO: JOHNNIE STEVENS

Black men and women that will put his name up anyhow. So Sonny's name will go up and we will have a ceremony because we have a right to self-determination for the Black nation. Black Power!"

Since the defeat of the street-naming proposal, death threats against Barron have appeared on a Web site "frequented by police officers," according to New York One News. The Web site contains a message board called "NYPD rant" on which two posts called for Barron to be shot in the head. The same site has posted messages calling for the execution of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Statement of D-12 Movement

An April 23 press statement of the December 12 Movement reads in part: "On April 20, 2007, legal representatives of the Brooklyn Bedford-Stuyvesant Community went into court under an Article 78, seeking and being granted a stay of action by the City Council on 'Introduction 556-A,' which seeks to name approximately 53 streets in the five boroughs, until New York City Council Speaker Christine

Quinn and Council members Alan Gerson, Dennis Gallagher and Joseph Addabbo of the Parks and Recreation Committee 'show cause' for their unprecedented action which removed the properly and legally presented request of Brooklyn's Community Board 3 for the renaming of Gates Avenue to Sonny Abubadika Carson Avenue.

"It is the view of the December 12th Movement that the actions of the City Council members named above were fundamentally racist and an attempt to deny the Black Community equal protection under the law on the one hand and our right to community control on the other. ...

"The Council members' 'capricious' cover of Mr. Carson being a 'controversial' person, and Council member Gerson's statement that "we own all the streets" cannot hide that there continues to be two New Yorks—one Black, one white.

"A Black community without rights; a community where over 50 percent of Black men are unemployed, over 50 percent of young Blacks drop out of high school and a young unarmed Black man can get shot

50 times the night before his wedding. A community where just yesterday we find that the Imus racist rant was carried on by white police in the police precincts against Black women; a Black community where we are being priced out of existence, under the unwritten New York City housing policy that Blacks live where whites don't want to live, until they decide to live there again—witness Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant.

"It was Sonny who led the fight to rename Reid Avenue to Malcolm X, Sumner Avenue to Marcus Garvey, Fulton Street to Harriet Tubman Boulevard and Elementary School P.S. 262 to El Haqq Malik Shabazz School. It was Sonny who recognized that we lived in a community with many streets and cultural institutions named after slave owners and criminals who passed white approval. We do not plan on letting this racist action of this white City Council and mayor override the wishes and will of our community."

Go to www.workers.org/ww/2003/carson0109.php to read the Carson obituary.

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Charging new case of abuse

Group calls for community control of police

By Workers World Denver bureau

On the early morning of May 18, at around 2 a.m., Allen Kerford, an 18-year-old Black youth who suffers from bipolar disorder, noticed several Denver police vehicles flashing their lights and using their sirens to disperse a crowd of club-goers at Club Vinyl on 1082 Broadway.

According to the Colorado United Communities Against Police Brutality (CUCAPB), the actions of the police "were aggressive, constitute harassment and were agitating the crowd." Kerford, noticing the crowd's reaction, commented that the officers were being rude. He stated that they would get better results if they didn't flash their lights and blare their sirens.

"An officer told Mr. Kerford to shut up and that he would be arrested if he didn't leave. Mr. Kerford then remarked that he had done nothing wrong and so the officers had no reason to arrest him. He then proceeded to walk away. One of the officers then sprayed Mr. Kerford with pepper spray," related the anti-abuse group in a statement.

After being pepper sprayed, Kerford began to run but was chased and pinned against a wall by a Denver police vehicle.

Somewhere along the way he had picked up a small rock. Kerford showed police the rock that easily fit in his palm. Having just been attacked, he told them, "I don't wanna use this. Just let me go." The group says, "He was then rushed by eight cops who beat him, causing lacerations, bruising and further injury to his person."

Kerford was taken to Denver Health Medical Center and then Denver County Jail. To this day, says the group, he has not received proper care for his injuries.

Says the CUCAPB, "The community has learned of this case and is again in outrage at DPD officers' harassment of club-goers, of the dismissal of Mr. Kerford's concerns, and of the unprovoked attack and escalation that left Mr. Kerford with what he thought was his only alternative, which was to attempt to defend himself from attack by Denver police officers."

Instead of receiving an apology, Kerford was charged with three counts of first-

degree assault on a peace officer, three counts of felony menacing, one count of resisting arrest and one count of criminal mischief.

In response to this latest incident of abuse at the hands of Denver police, the group issued the following demands:

- That there be a review of police procedures, especially regarding the aggressive handling and harassment of club-goers and a review of police procedure regarding mentally disabled persons, that the procedures be made public and the community be involved in changing them;
- That all charges be dropped, as Mr. Kerford was unjustly provoked and attacked and because his disability and the unprovoked nature of the attack led him to feel he had to defend himself;
- That an official apology be made to the community, especially communities of color, to Allen Kerford's family for the ordeal and most notably to Allen Kerford himself
- That all officers involved be suspended,

ed, an investigation by an office independent of the city be conducted and that the histories of complaint against the officers be made public

• That the community be given control over the police department and over discipline regarding the abuse of community members.

CUCAPB is calling on the community to support Kerford and his family at his next hearing on Friday, June 22, starting 8:30 a.m. at the Denver City and County Building, Courtroom 472W, in front of Judge Eileen Ortiz-White.

Colorado United Communities Against Police Brutality (CUCAPB) used to be called Colorado Communities United Against Police Brutality (CCUAPB). It recently changed its name on learning that another group in Minneapolis had been doing great work under the name Communities United Against Police Brutality since 2000. CUCAPB says, "We apologize both to activists in Minneapolis and around the country for any confusion and/or slights regarding the use of the name."

'He was targeted'

Community rallies behind Black alderman

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Milwaukee

On May 28, Michael McGee Jr., a Black Milwaukee alderman, was arrested and charged with various state and federal charges. As of June 4 he was still in jail on \$100,000 bail, reduced from \$250,000 set when he was arrested.

Despite the U.S. legal system's "innocent until proven guilty" rhetoric, the main corporate mouthpiece in Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, called for McGee's resignation as an alderman in a May 29 editorial only hours after the press conference announcing his arrest.

Many white Sentinel columnists joined in writing racist diatribes against McGee, repeating the state and federal accounts almost verbatim despite no trial yet and disregarding the COINTELPRO tactics carried out against him in the past.

The next day, Milwaukee Common Council President Willie Hines immediately removed McGee from all three committees he was on.

If convicted of the federal charges, McGee could face up to 30 years in prison and a \$500,000 fine. The charges include alleged solicitation of about \$5,000 in bribes from business owners in exchange for help in getting or keeping liquor licenses. McGee was a member of the Common Council's Licensing Committee.

The federal complaint also alleges McGee extorted business owners to donate to a successful campaign he waged against being recalled. In a field of eight candidates, McGee won with an overwhelming 64 percent of the votes in April.

State charges of solicitation to commit a felony/conspiracy and a felony/substantial battery have been filed and more charg-

es could be forthcoming, according to Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chrisholm. He alleges McGee threatened business owners physically if they didn't pay him to get the licenses they needed.

Two other Black men, Little Stewart and Dimitrius Jackson, face similar charges. If convicted, each could face a maximum penalty of seven years in prison. Most details of the state case remain sealed in accordance with a higher court ruling limiting release of wiretap information in Wisconsin.

McGee has appeared only in state court. A June 5 preliminary hearing will involve witnesses being called as the state seeks to bind over the three men for trial.

The investigation, according to the FBI and the state, began a year ago when a business owner allegedly called the FBI. McGee and his supporters became the subjects of wiretaps and undercover surveillance.

After McGee's arrest, Chrisholm also revealed the state is "investigating" his recall campaign, resulting in the arrest of two campaign workers on May 31 and June 3. The state has charged them with paying people \$5 to vote for McGee Jr. on absentee ballots.

A progressive record

McGee Jr. has been a longtime progressive community leader. His father, Michael McGee Sr., is a former Black Panther. Since being elected 6th District alderman in April 2004, McGee Jr., according to his supporters, has been targeted by white politicians and their bosses because of his proven record of assisting the poor and working class Blacks who make up the majority of his constituents, as well as engaging in other progressive activities

such as:

- Advocating a safe spot for late-night youth vehicle cruisers and protesting against their treatment by the police;
- Consistently criticizing police terror, particularly after the near killing of Frank Jude Jr. by off-duty police, and leading protests against the acquittal of the officers;
- Assisting the family of Jasmine "Juicy" Owens, a four-year-old killed in a drive-by shooting in May, and helping other victims of random violence;
- Working to create living-wage jobs and improve social and economic conditions for the Black community;
- Writing a personal letter to Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez to inquire about heating oil assistance for poor people in Milwaukee;
- Opposing the handcuffing of emotionally challenged children in Milwaukee public schools; and
- Allowing his "Word Warriors" radio program to be used as a forum for the Black community.

McGee's supporters say the way he is being treated as opposed to white politicians and/or corporate bosses who have actually admitted to far worse crimes, is preposterous and outrageous.

"There is nothing like this even remotely connected to his history as an activist and his history as an elected official," said former Black Alderman Fred Gordon regarding the charges against McGee. "I don't understand why it happened or if it did happen. Clearly, it's a major move by the government to take down Alderman McGee. People are very upset. They're very distressed. They're very angry."

Gordon, along with Black former Acting

Mayor Marvin Pratt, filled in for McGee on the May 29 "Word Warriors" program on WNOV-AM. Station manager Jerrel Jones said no final decision has been made on McGee's status at the station but that the show would continue with various hosts.

At McGee's state court hearing May 30 at the Milwaukee County Courthouse, supporters appeared with "McGee 4 Me" shirts and hats.

After the hearing many McGee supporters made statements. "I don't believe it. I'm sticking with him. I'm sticking by him and I'm riding for him," said long-time community activist Lucille Berrien.

Activist Lamont Harris said the case is weak and shows that the government targets leaders who represent the poor and particularly people of color.

"I am disappointed that people would abuse their power to blow this up and make it much bigger than it appears to be," Harris said. "What we are seeing here is when you step up for this community and do something good, you will be targeted."

"The same thing happened to Marcus Garvey. The same thing happened to Malcolm X. When you're trying to liberate your people you are going to be targeted," one caller said.

Another caller said, "When we needed him for jobs, he was there. We needed him for the Jude situation, he was there. When we needed him for the handcuff situation in the Milwaukee public schools, he was there."

McGee supporters say that if he has given grounds for suspicion, it is grassroots representatives of the Black community in his district who should have the right to pass judgment. □

Anti-racist struggle saves community center

By Bill Bateman
Providence, R.I.

Ten months of determined struggle by members and allies of the Black community have won an important victory here as the administration of the citywide Boys & Girls Club network was forced to reopen the South Side Boys & Girls Club.

Last July, the administration, without warning, had locked the doors and erected a fence around the club. Stunned parents and alumni immediately tried to find out what was going on.

Rather than meeting and working with the parents and community, the administration and board of directors issued vague and half-hearted explanations for the closing: "The club experienced a flood." "The club is not up to fire code in several areas."

No plan of action, schedule for repairs or reopening date was given. Outraged parents, alumni and former staff formed Saving Our Club Kids (SOCK), but were not allowed into the building to evaluate the situation.

The SOCK coalition organized community forums that drew hundreds. The administrators were asked to come, give an explanation and work with the community, but they refused to show up time and time again. When SOCK members went to the Boys & Girls Club administration seeking a meeting, the executive director hid in his office.

The South Side Club constituents are 98 percent working class youth of color, while the executive director and the president of the board are rich, white men. The execu-



Community celebrates victory for south Providence youth.

PHOTO: LISA REELS/PEOPLES ASSEMBLY

tive director draws a salary of \$125,000 a year and the board president is a high-paid lawyer in a major Rhode Island firm. The other board members are mostly white. The 10-person staff administering the citywide network sucks up \$650,000 yearly in salaries.

Veteran activists were stunned by the level of arrogance and heartlessness and the degree of disconnect from the community. Many said they felt that without the struggle, these racists would have sold the

building, pocketed the money and gone about their business with one less club in the network, assuming that the poor people of the South Side were incapable of doing anything about it.

But they were in for a surprise. The club, built in 1959 in the heart of the Providence Black community, had become a sacred place for generations—something very dear and important in the lives of thousands of families. The closing struck a nerve and a firestorm of grass-roots resis-

tance spread quickly. People viewed this very literally as a matter of life and death for children of the South Side. Without its support, their children were in danger of being sentenced to prison or even losing their lives.

The SOCK coalition worked tirelessly, meeting every week, holding forums, marches, demonstrations, informational picket lines and fundraisers. It truly followed the path that Dr. Martin Luther King called the key to peoples' victory: "Persistent agitation, persistent protest, persistent organization."

The level of organization and the depth of commitment shown by SOCK blew holes in the wall of silence and indifference erected by the Boys & Girls Club administration. The props they stood on were knocked down one by one. First to go was the issue of money for "repairs" when the mayor of Providence pledged \$600,000. Then the president of the board came out of the woodwork and allowed a SOCK delegation in the building and began talks. Then the coalition forced a hearing with the Fire Safety Review Board, gaining an extension on the issue of sprinklers.

The South Side Boys & Girls Club will reopen by the time the schools close for the summer. The SOCK coalition will become an alumni association that will permanently monitor the Boys & Girls Club administration to ensure that the community's needs are being met relative to the composition of staff and board, quality of programming and community/parental involvement.

SOCK will celebrate its victory at a block party/open house on Sunday, June 10. □

With Washington's blessing

Lebanese Army pounds Palestinian refugees

By Joyce Chediak

June 5—Under the pretext of ridding Lebanon of groups that do not have the support of the Palestinians, the Lebanese Army's wholesale bombardment of Palestinian homes has spread to a second refugee camp.

A new front was opened June 3 against the Ain al-Hilweh Palestinian camp in southern Lebanon. Palestinian families there were caught in a fierce rifle and grenade exchange between an armed group and the Lebanese Army.

The army had already laid siege to the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp for 17 days, pounding it with missiles and machine-gun barrages.

While Palestinian homes are destroyed, Washington praises the Lebanese Army for acting in a "legitimate manner" and has sent the Beirut regime eight planes filled with weaponry.

In the midst of this massive assault, on May 30 the U.N. Security Council approved an international tribunal to investigate the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. This U.S.-backed tribunal has nothing to do with bringing justice to Lebanon and everything to do with bashing Syria and strengthening Lebanon's right-wing.

These combined events pose a grave danger for Lebanon and the entire region. Unable to win in Iraq, Washington is desperately seeking to tighten its grasp in the strategic and oil-rich Middle East, no matter what the cost to the people who live there.

U.N. cover for U.S. aggression

While the U.N. does nothing to stop the assault against the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, its tribunal on Hariri's death, falling under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter, will have an unusual bite. Its resolutions will be binding, the U.N. will be able to indict and interrogate officials, and military action may be used to "restore international peace and security." Washington means this tribunal to be the political cover for U.S. intervention, and possibly a war on Syria.

The Security Council resolution calling for the tribunal was passed 10 to 0. However, China, Qatar, Indonesia, Russia and South Africa abstained on a technicality. They objected to placing the tribunal under Chapter VII, as it requires political consensus in the country in question. No such consensus exists in Lebanon.

Hezbollah, which leads the progressive opposition in Lebanon, called the resolution "illegal and illegitimate" and "a vio-

lation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and an aggressive interference in its internal affairs." Hezbollah and other groups' demands for equal representation in the Lebanese government have fallen on deaf ears. Six months of mass demonstrations, trade union strikes and sit-ins by the progressive coalition, however, have ground the Lebanese government to a halt.

New threat to Syria

The U.S. utilized the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005 to increase its control in Lebanon. However, Washington is still blaming Syria for the killing. The tribunal is a dagger aimed at Syria. It would provide imperialism with cover to violate Syrian sovereignty, witch-hunt its government and demand entry and inspections, much as it did in Iraq prior to the Desert Storm invasion. These are pre-war moves.

Meanwhile, Palestinian civilians are being bombed indiscriminately and the Lebanese Army is keeping reporters far away from the camps, according to many press sources.

Approximately 6,000 civilians are trapped in the Nahr el-Bared camp and their situation is "dire," says the Red Cross. (New York Times, June 5) The majority remaining are the elderly and disabled. "Approximately 150 people are in wheelchairs. ... Since the [latest army] offensive began on Friday, no relief supplies have made their way into the camp." The army is striking deeper in the camp, further destroying homes and the civilian infrastructure. (Aljazeera.net June 3)

Franklin Lamb on Live from Lebanon, which is podcast online, interviewed refugees from Nahr al-Bared coming to Beddawi camp. On May 28 he said the residents of al-Bared were reporting sniper fire into the camp from private militias located on the slopes above army positions. Additionally, many young Palestinian men are being arrested as they leave al-Bared, said Lamb.

Palestinians say they are main target

"Not one Palestinian in either camp or observer I know believes that the goal is for the army to 'wipe out the terrorists'

and 'protect our Palestinian brothers,'" Lamb continued. "Rather, the Palestinian community in Lebanon believes that the whole Fatah al-Islam, a very strange case, was designed to assault their 420,000 population here."

It is widely reported in the international press that the two armed groups in question, Jund al-Sham and Fatah al-Islam, which are based in Palestinian camps and recently attacked Lebanese Army positions, are not Palestinian and have no popular standing. Even the Washington Post, no friend to the Palestinians, said they "hide out in the country's 12 crowded [Palestinian] camps." (June 4)

Appearing on the Democracy Now radio show May 24, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh accused the Lebanese and U.S. governments of secretly backing the groups. This March, Hersh had reported in the New Yorker magazine that the U.S. and Saudi governments were covertly backing Sunni-based groups like Fatah al-Islam as a buffer against Iran and growing Shia influence in the area.

Palestinians say that they, not these groups, are the main target, and implicate the government in these groups' having a presence in the camps.

Interviewed on electroniclebanon.net May 28, Kaled Yamani, a youth organizer for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in Biddawi camp, explained that "Fatah al-Islam originally [was] here in the Baddawi camp." It clashed with Palestinian security and a Palestinian was killed. "Two of those caught were handed to the Lebanese government, a Saudi and a Syrian, and they were moved into Nahr al-Bared," where the various factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization do not have arms or power.

Hajj Rif'at, director of media for Fatah and Lebanon spokesperson for the PLO, said Fatah al-Islam "was imposed on the camps. ... From the start, when this group first arrived in the [Biddawi] camp ... we raised our voice as Fatah and the PLO and we said that this group poses a danger on Lebanese-Palestinian relations. But unfortunately, no one listened to us until we found ourselves in the bind that we're in now." (electroniclebanon.net, May 28) □

Two-faced on human rights

Instead of pushing the U.N. to indict Syria, why doesn't Washington call for an international tribunal to indict Israel for last year's bombardment of southern Lebanon cities and towns? Human rights groups have already denounced the systematic destruction of the civilian population there as a war crime.

At the very least, Washington could call for international condemnation of Israel for dropping 100,000 cluster bombs in southern Lebanon. According to U.N. human rights head Jan Egeland, "What's shocking and completely immoral is: 90 percent of the cluster bomb strikes occurred in the last 72 hours of the conflict, when we knew there would be a resolution." (BBC, Aug. 30, 2006)

Don't hold your breath waiting for U.S.

censure. After all, the Pentagon gave Israel these anti-personnel weapons and the green light to use them.

Lest we forget, for three decades the U.S. used its veto to stop U.N. condemnations of Israeli aggression against Arab countries. Many of the bombings and attacks were directed against Lebanon.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government reacted derisively to the July 2004 International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling that Israel's Apartheid Wall was a "grave violation of the Geneva Conventions."

Showing just how much it cares about international law, at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Washington blatantly and daily violates the provision of these same conventions on the prevention of torture. —J. Chediak

Occupation of Palestine started in 1948

By Michael Kramer

The June 1967 Arab-Israeli War resulted in a vast expansion of the Zionist colonial project in Palestine, a seizure of territory that much of the world recognizes as an illegal occupation. But it wasn't the first illegitimate occupation.

That first occupation began with a project calling itself the State of Israel. Its armed wing is known as the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). It occupied Western Palestine in 1948 and still does to this day.

The June 1967 war lasted only six days. New lands were conquered that included the rest of Palestine—Gaza and the West Bank—as well as parts of Egypt and Syria. Paramilitary youth under the direction of the IDF quickly built and occupied settlements throughout the newly occupied areas.

The IDF military victory, along with the pro-Zionist media blitz that quickly followed, encouraged the immigration of tens of thousands of settlers a year from other countries. The pop song "Jerusalem

of Gold" became a worldwide recruitment anthem in Jewish communities.

Huge sums of money were transferred on a regular basis from the U.S. government to fund occupation infrastructure and ensure the economic stability of the colonial enterprise. And state-of-the-art ground, air and naval weapons systems worth billions of dollars were made available to stabilize the IDF's expanded occupation mission.

Between 1948 and 1967 the Zionists could occupy Palestine—both rural areas and cities such as Jaffa, Haifa and the western half of Jerusalem—with occasional foot patrols, jeeps without armor and a well developed network of informants run by secret police agencies like Shin Bet and Mossad.

The Palestinians had suffered an historic defeat in 1948 and much of the population was in exile. They were an isolated people. Communications were not what they are today. The financial cost of occupation during this period was low.

Following the June 1967 occupation of parts of Egypt (Sinai Peninsula) and Syria

(Golan Plateau), however, the costs quickly rose. Besides paramilitary settlements, the occupation of these areas required mobile armored units, aircraft, radar systems and offshore naval forces. Occasional infantry foot patrols were no longer enough. Large permanent bases for ground and air forces had to be built. U.S. imperialism footed the bill for the initial construction and continues to pay for maintenance.

The Egyptians confronted the occupation of their country by initiating the 1969 War of Attrition and the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. The cost of occupation became too high for the Zionists and by April 1982 they retreated from Egypt. The occupation of Syria continues.

In June 1982, backed by the U.S., the Zionists began an occupation of large parts of Southern Lebanon and parts of Beirut. This occupation met heroic resistance from the day it began. By May 2000 the IDF had retreated from virtually all of Lebanon and another chapter of occupation had ended.

By August 2005 the cost of occupation had grown so high in Gaza that the

Zionists were forced to close down their settlements and evacuate over 7,000 settlers. While Gaza remains surrounded and under siege, not one settler remains. This was a hard-fought victory by the Palestinian resistance—and especially by the self-sacrificing youth of Palestine who have inspired militant youth worldwide.

The liberation of Arab land did not end with IDF tanks fleeing Lebanon in 2000 or Zionist settlers being moved from Gaza to other parts of Palestine in August 2005.

The real liberation for all the people of Palestine—whether they speak Arabic or Hebrew—will begin with the end of Zionist occupation in all of Palestine—including Jaffa, Haifa, Jerusalem and the Galilee—as well as in the Golan region of Syria and Shebaa Farms in Lebanon.

The Zionist occupation of Arab land began not in 1967 but in 1948. Any resistance against this occupation is legitimate and deserves the support of the world's people.

Kramer served in the IDF as a youth and took part in ground operations in the Golan during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.

PORTUGAL

General strike challenges anti-worker policies

By John Catalinotto

Portuguese workers shut down much of the local transport, government services and schools in the country and seriously cut services in hospitals and production in private corporations during a 24-hour political general strike on May 30. The strike of 1.4 million was the latest step in a series of protests against the government's anti-worker policies, actions which included huge demonstrations in October 2006 and last March 2.

The CGTP-IN, the most militant of the labor confederations and one considered closest to the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), called the strike, which was directed at the "neo-liberal" policies of the two-year-old government led by Premier José Sócrates of the Socialist Party (PS).

Like most of the parties in Europe that call themselves socialist, the PS has abandoned any connection with real socialism or even with winning reformist concessions for the working class. The PS has been administering the government on behalf of the biggest capitalists, closing healthcare clinics and schools, removing safeguards that protected workers' jobs and opening the road for greater corporate profits.

At a news conference on the evening of the strike, Jerónimo de Sousa, general secretary of the PCP, called the action "the greatest day of struggle that this government has ever had to confront." He added that the strike "constituted a tremendous



PCP leader Jerónimo de Sousa meets with striking workers

PHOTO: AVANTE

expression of the deep grounds of discontent and popular protest and a clear affirmation of the need for change" in government policy. (Avante, June 1)

Economic statistics illuminate the reasons for the discontent. Some 8 percent of the workers are unemployed, the highest figure in 20 years. In addition, Portugal has one of the greatest gaps in income between rich and poor. "The wealthiest one-fifth of the country's 10.2 million people hold around 46 percent of the national wealth, while the poorest one-fifth live in poverty." (IPS, May 30)

As de Sousa put it, "The situation of the country has reached an unbearable point for the workers and the general population." And that's why "the May 30 general strike is a great strike, with a strong participation in the entire country and in all sectors and activities."

It's rare that a general strike is 100 percent effective. In this one, workers faced the threat of losing their jobs, a hostile government and a negative climate of high unemployment. Also, the top leadership of the UGT—the union confederation closest to the PS—tried to undermine

the strike, although individual unions in the UGT supported it. Under those conditions, it is significant that such a high proportion of the working class participated.

But the PCP leader had to make his case energetically, because the government tried to use spin and the collaboration of the corporate media to underplay the effectiveness of the strike.

The editors of the progressive Portuguese website, Odiario.info, responded to an attempt by the government to claim that only 13 percent participated in the public sector and less in the private:

"The images transmitted by the television stations showed that these assertions were ridiculous. The metro in Lisbon and the suburb across the Tagus River stopped. The majority of the courts and thousands of schools did not function at all. Local governments were almost completely paralyzed. In the large hospitals only minimum service was available."

After naming a list of the larger plants that were shut, the editorial continued: "The government lied to the country. ... The perverse media, an accomplice of the regime, led a disinformation campaign that was unable to hide the reality. Through the general strike, the Portuguese people have condemned the neo-liberal policies of the most aggressive government that the people have had to put up with since April 25,"—the day in 1974 when a decades-old fascist regime was overthrown.

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

Setback for CIA

Venezuela pulls plug on pro-coup TV

Continued from page 1

tests, which they describe as "peaceful," but during which they throw not only insults but stones and glass bottles at the pro-government forces. During a demonstration at CONATEL, the state communication office, counter-revolutionaries fired shots that wounded at least one police official.

The contras have mobilized students from wealthy private colleges to hold daily demonstrations, which are then shown all over the world. They give teary interviews to the national and international imperialist media monopolies from these "spontaneous" protests, calling for help to end the alleged "silencing of the opposition."

At a news conference, the vice president of Venezuela's National Assembly, Desiree Santos Amaral, revealed audio from two phone conversations involving Alfonso Marquina, leader of the new opposition party Un Nuevo Tiempo (A New Time), that showed the protests were not at all spontaneous. These conversations reveal the connection and coordination between the students and the leaders of the opposition. They implicate RCTV owner Marcel Granier with the right-wing Comando Nacional de Resistencia (National Resistance Command) and the students' demonstrations.

An urgent public communiqué from Venezuela circulated by the Internet on May 30 states: "In the last few days documents have been made public that show the payment in dollars to ... these two television stations (RCTV and Globovision) by the government of the United States, through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which is tied to the U.S. Department of State and the CIA through Freedom House."

Progressive individuals and organizations in the United States have joined

many others around the world in issuing a statement supporting the Bolivarian Revolution in this latest confrontation. A letter circulated by the International Action Center (IAC) and signed by organizations, political activists and well-known personalities is being sent to President George W. Bush and his administration, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, members of the U.S. Congress and print and electronic U.S. media. This is its text:

"We the undersigned repudiate the role, overt or covert, of the United States government and media in the campaign of destabilization of the legitimate government of Venezuela and would like to confirm our support for the democratically elected president of Venezuela, Honorable Hugo Chávez Frías and the Bolivarian Revolution.

"A hostile campaign against the Venezuelan government under the name of 'Free Expression' has been opened up by the opposition forces in Venezuela and their allies abroad, particularly in the United States, after the announcement that the broadcasting license of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV) would not be renewed once it expired on May 27, 2007.

"The Venezuelan government's decision is a legal and legitimate one based on their constitution, which guarantees and regulates the access and use of airwaves for the benefit of the general public. RCTV broke these laws and consequently lost its license. It has not been silenced, for it can continue broadcasting by cable, satellite and Internet!

"RCTV has consistently worked against the interests of the majority of Venezuelan people. Its programming has been sexist, racist and pejorative. Most importantly, it actively participated in the 2002 coup against President Chávez. After he

was reinstated to office by millions of Venezuelans, RCTV prohibited its reporters to broadcast ANY of this information, therefore denying its audience vital information about their democratically elected government. According to an article in the Houston Chronicle, that action in the USA 'would not have lasted more than a few minutes with the FCC.' RCTV was not closed then and had been broadcasting until this past May 27!

"Although the opposition and their allies claim that the action against RCTV reflects a lack of freedom of expression (meaning criticism of the president) by private media, it is important to note that 80 percent of TV and radio in that country is in private hands and has not been 'silenced.'

"The U.S. Senate unanimously passed a resolution last week stating 'profound concern' for the Venezuelan government's action and requesting measures from the OAS, which is currently meeting in Panama. This was followed by a statement from U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi stating her 'concern about his [Chávez's] leadership.'

"The U.S. Congress, which became predominantly Democratic due to anti-war voters in the Nov. 7 elections, and which has recently voted to fund a criminal war that has cost thousands of Iraqi and U.S. lives, ignoring the voices of their constituents, has no moral or legal right to interfere in Venezuelan politics, let alone accuse President Chávez for suspending RCTV's license. U.S. congresspeople should instead learn from President Chávez on how to listen to the people.

"In February 1997 Temple University administrators stopped the Pacifica radio station from broadcasting through TU radio station WRTI in the city of the U.S. Constitution, Philadelphia. They shut it

for the sole reason that it was the only station broadcasting the political commentaries of award-winning journalist and former Black Panther, Mumia Abu-Jamal—who remains today on death row in Pennsylvania, a victim of a frame-up. Where was the media and Congress outrage? In fact, in the United States, the voices of the opposition to the war or to U.S. foreign and domestic policy are very rarely heard in the main broadcasting stations or papers. Their coverage of the situation in Venezuela has mostly been one-sided, on the side of the opposition!

"Many countries have supported Venezuela's government action. Among them are Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, several countries in Asia, Alpha Konaré, ex-president of the African Union, the European Union and China.

"We urge the President Bush administration, the U.S. Congress and the U.S. media to cease and desist your campaign of destabilization against Bolivarian Venezuela, its leader President Hugo Chávez, and its people and to respect their right to sovereignty."

Among the initial signers are Ramsey Clark; actors Vinie Burrows and Peter Coyote; George McCollough, director of Princeton Community TV; Cynthia McKinney, former U.S. Congresswoman; Pastor Carla Harris, WURD 900AM radio host; Jon Jonik, cartoonist; Teresa Gutiérrez, May 1st Coalition; Larry Holmes, Troops Out Now Coalition; Sara Flounders, IAC co-director; David Sole, president UAW Local 2334, Detroit; Larry Hales, FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together); John Catalinotto, managing editor, Workers World newspaper; the Women's International Democratic Federation and the National Women's Fightback Network. □



New Orleans dissed, again

The virtually all-white congressional leadership sounded a lot like a lynch mob in the days after the June 4 indictment of Rep. William Jefferson (D-La.). The indictment comes almost exactly a year after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi engineered Jefferson's ouster from the powerful Ways and Means Committee. Jefferson is one of a small handful of Black members of Congress and he represents the district that includes New Orleans.

On June 5, the Republican members of Congress demanded Jefferson's immediate expulsion. The Democratic leadership under Pelosi did not counter the expulsion demand, but instead demanded that Jefferson give up his last remaining committee position.

The Congressional Black Caucus has stood alone in defending Jefferson, holding to the principle that everyone is innocent until proven guilty. The Black Caucus says Pelosi is guilty of a racist double standard. While she has moved fast and hard against Jefferson, she has allowed a white member of Congress also under federal investigation, Rep. Alan B. Mollohan (D-W.Va.), to hold his important committee positions.

No member of Congress has ever faced expulsion before for an indictment. Most recently both Tom DeLay and Robert Ney, Republicans, were allowed to finish up their business and exit "gracefully" while under indictment. DeLay resigned his seat in June 2006; Ney announced he wouldn't run again. Neither faced calls for their expulsion.

In the post-Civil War period only

two members of Congress have faced expulsion, both after having been convicted of crimes. Before that only two members of Congress were expelled, both from Missouri, both in 1861, both charged with treason for siding with the Confederacy.

Rep. Jefferson has certainly been subjected to a racist double standard. There is no presumption of innocence. He's been convicted already in the big business-controlled media.

Prosecutors and their indictments are quite often politically driven, with little concern for truth or honesty. A chief justice of the New York Supreme Court once famously noted that a prosecutor can get a grand jury to "indict a ham sandwich." That is, when the politically appointed prosecutors ask a grand jury for an indictment, they are almost never turned down, even if the indictment might look ridiculous.

Jefferson's indictment all along had the smell of a political attack, aimed at the Black population of the city of New Orleans. He is their representative, and even after he'd been smeared in the media last year, he was popularly reelected.

The Katrina survivors in New Orleans have been battered and besieged already. Now they are being denied their right to representation along with their right to return and rebuild. It is up to the people of New Orleans to choose their representative in Congress. It's also their right not to have the racists who run Congress dictate to them who their representative shall be. □

Nigeria charges Pfizer with deadly drug tests

By Larry Hales

Pfizer, the world's largest pharmaceutical company, is being sued for \$2 billion by authorities in Kano, the third-largest city in Nigeria. Criminal charges are being prepared as well. The suit was brought because of drug experiments that Pfizer conducted a decade ago. The experimentation led to disabilities and the deaths of at least 11 children, according to Nigerian officials.

Around 200 Nigerian children with bacterial meningitis were in the study. Besides the 11 who died, others suffered various injuries and long-term disabilities from the treatment administered by Pfizer, ranging from blindness, seizures, deafness, muteness and brain damage to paralysis.

The experimentation involved the use of an untested and unapproved drug called Trovan Floxacin during an outbreak of meningitis and other diseases in Kano in April 1996. Pfizer and the World Health Organization "volunteered" to help with the outbreak. Meningitis killed 15,000 people in Africa that year.

The lawsuit says that: "In the midst of the epidemic, Pfizer devised a scheme under which it misrepresented and failed to disclose its primary motive in seeking to participate in giving care to the victims of the epidemic."

It further states: "Pfizer never disclosed that it intended to experiment on vulnerable victims or conduct any clinical trials without the necessary approvals from regulatory agencies in Nigeria but pretended it came to render humanitarian service."

Pfizer claims it had an authorization from the government of Nigeria to administer the tests, but Abdulhamid Isa Dutse, the physician who presided over the tests of the antibiotic Trovan, said the letter was written as long as a year after the completion of the tests. (Washington Post, Jan. 16, 2001)

Though the letter stating that the hospital's ethics committee had reviewed and accepted the test was written on stationery belonging to Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital and was dated March 28, 1996, six days before the beginning of the experiment, there was no ethics committee at that hospital at that time.

The Washington Post article says: "Sadiq S. Wali, the hospital's medical director, recently told The Washington Post the document was 'a lie.' He said the hospital had no ethics committee at the time Pfizer's test was underway and did not organize it—or create the letterhead stationery bearing his name that was used in the approval letter—until months later."

While Pfizer continues to claim it had authorization to administer the test, its proof of authorization is now known to be fraudulent.

This deadly fraud is said to have been the basis for the novel and film "The Constant Gardener" by John Le Carré.

It should come as no surprise that Pfizer would commit such a crime in the Third World. Pharmaceutical companies have stepped up their experimentation in poor countries.

A USA Today article in 2005 said that many companies were looking to increase trials outside of the U.S. and Western Europe because of the lower costs in doing so and less strict rules regarding experimentation.

Today, 50 percent of GlaxoSmithKline's tests, 70 percent of Wyeth Pharmaceuticals' and more than 50 percent of Merck's trials are done outside the U.S. and Western Europe.

At the same time, experimentation in the imperialist countries is mostly conducted on oppressed nationalities and the poor.

Workers World reported on two cases: In New York, Administration for Children's Services (ACS) enrolled HIV-positive children in group homes in tests of new drugs. (WW, May 12, 2005) The federal Institute of Medicine in 2006 issued a report calling for relaxing regulations that limited biomedical research on prisoners. (WW, Aug. 31, 2006)

Paul Wright of Prison Legal News said of the proposal for increased testing on inmates and relaxing the regulations, "It strikes me as pretty ridiculous to start talking about prisoners getting access to cutting-edge research and medications when they can't even get penicillin and high-blood-pressure pills."

The experimentations by pharmaceutical companies, in many cases in underdeveloped nations and on the poor and oppressed in imperialist nations, constitute a war, waged by the capitalist mode of production. At the heart of it is pure racism in the service of profit.

The lives of people of color are valued less. Once the effects of new drugs are demonstrated through testing on the poor at lowered cost, the companies can sell these drugs to people in the Western world who can afford them. Other than being experimented on, the poor and oppressed around the world will not have access to the drugs if they prove effective.

The revelation of the tests conducted in Kano and the suffering of the children lied to and taken advantage of should not be taken lightly and the history of tests in Africa has to be further investigated.

It was the experimental use of a polio vaccine in Africa that is pointed to as most likely to have transferred SIV, the simian form of HIV, from apes to humans, unleashing the HIV virus in Africa, which now has 25 million of the world's 39 million HIV cases. □



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

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Vietnam's Agent Orange survivors get support

By Sara Flounders

In the midst of growing anger at the enormous human and social costs of the war in Iraq, it is important to remember the legacy and lessons of a past war. In Vietnam today the scars of war remain, along with a continuing struggle for justice and accountability, in particular a campaign to gain compensation for the damage done by the use of chemical defoliants like Agent Orange.

Such political campaigns can deepen the understanding that the destruction and havoc in Iraq are no accident. The Pentagon uses massive social displacement of the civilian population and environmental destruction in an effort to break popular resistance.

More than 3 million Vietnamese today suffer from the long-term effects of chemical defoliants the U.S. used during the Vietnam War, when the Pentagon deliberately sprayed the forest canopy, crops, soil and water with deadly chemicals in an attempt to deny food and ground cover to the resistance movement.

Identified by different color codes based on the compounds used, the barrels of toxic brews used were popularly called Agents Orange, Pink, Green and Purple. These herbicides contained trace amounts of TCDD Dioxin—the most toxic chemical known to science. Dioxin exposure causes reproductive illnesses and birth defects for two and three descendent generations, along with dramatically increased rates of certain cancers, immune deficiencies and diabetes.

In the U.S. people are more aware of the high rates of sickness and disability among U.S. veterans. Vietnam veterans have waged years of militant campaigns for recognition and compensation for the sicknesses that ricocheted back on them and impacted on their children.

These struggles forced the U.S. government to recognize the damage done. It now automatically awards service-connected disability to Vietnam veterans for over 13 different health conditions, totaling payments of over \$1.5 billion a year. But many veterans are still unable to receive the care they need through the Veterans Health Administration. Their affected children rarely receive assistance from the government.

Other countries that the U.S. pressured

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Mon · June 18
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**Fill the Courtroom &
Attend the Oral Argument 1:00 P.M.**
to continue the civil suit--

• Against 37 U.S. chemical companies
that produced the toxic chemicals
during the Vietnam War.

Vietnam Association of Victims
of Agent Orange/Dioxin

into sending troops into the Vietnam War, including South Korea, New Zealand and England, have agreed to compensate their veterans.

But for the Vietnamese, whose country was laid waste in the war and whose population continues to cope with the toxic environment, there has been no compensation.

Between 1961 and 1971, the U.S. military sprayed more than 18 million gallons of herbicide on southern Vietnam, contaminating over 5.5 million acres.

The U.S. spent between \$300 and \$900 billion on the Vietnam War. By comparison, Washington never came through with even the mere pittance of \$3 billion it formally pledged, in the 1973 Paris Peace Treaty, to pay for Vietnam's recovery and reconstruction. The Pentagon spends this amount every three days continuing the war on Iraq, and just received another \$100 billion from a U.S. Congress elected on promises to end this latest war.

Vietnamese doctors' and scientists' contributions

After Vietnam finally liberated itself in 1975, gaining full sovereignty after decades of French, Japanese and U.S. occupation and wars, it turned its attention to the arduous and sensitive task of rebuilding and knitting together what had been divided, healing the wounds of war in the population and the environment.

Vietnamese scientists made remarkable strides in understanding, measuring and trying to limit or isolate the impact of areas of high dioxin, known as toxic "hot spots" that still litter the Vietnamese landscape. Their studies have measured the types and rates of cancers and the specific forms of birth defects. They know which foods absorb toxins and must be avoided. They have organized and participated in international conferences and symposiums to

share their information with scientists around the world grappling with environmental poisoning. Special hospitals have been established for the care of children born without limbs and with severe health problems. Training and counseling are provided to parents.

Much more could be done in every field to prevent illnesses and speed the clean-up if the chemical companies that profited enormously from the war were made to pay compensation for the destruction they helped to cause.

Vietnamese victims sue chemical companies

In 2003 the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange (VAVA) was formed. According to U.S. law, the U.S. government cannot be sued for any crime it commits, as it claims "sovereign immunity." So VAVA collected funds and gathered over 8 million signatures to support a lawsuit in U.S. courts against Agent Orange manufacturers, such as Dow, Monsanto and 35 other chemical companies that manufactured the herbicides for U.S. military use.

A determined group of lawyers in U.S. have spent years working with Vietnamese survivors on the suit against the chemical companies.

The lawsuit against U.S. corporations, filed on Jan. 31, 2004, in U.S. Federal District Court in Brooklyn, N.Y., was dismissed one year later by District Court Judge Jack Weinstein, who ruled there was no legal basis for the Vietnamese plaintiffs' claims. Weinstein had defended the U.S. veteran victims of Agent Orange.

The Vietnamese victims' lawyers filed an appeal in the Second District Court of Appeals on Sept. 30, 2005. Oral arguments to reinstate the case, continue the civil suit and go forward with a trial will be held in Manhattan on Monday, June 18,

2007, at 1:00 p.m. in the Federal Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit at 500 Pearl St. off Foley Square. Supporters plan to fill the court.

Solidarity with survivors

A campaign to greet a Vietnamese delegation of five Agent Orange survivors and to mobilize people to be in court to support the appeal has gathered national support. Activities during the week of June 11 through June 18 will organize solidarity for this continuing struggle.

A special meeting to greet the Vietnamese delegation will be held on Saturday, June 16, at 6:30 p.m. at the Martin Luther King Jr. Labor Center, 1199 SEIU, at 310 West 43rd St. in Manhattan. The event is organized by the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief & Responsibility Campaign. After the June 18 oral arguments, the Vietnamese delegation will speak in several other U.S. cities.

As part of this campaign to build support for the appeal to reinstate the civil suit, a group of anti-war, solidarity and community organizations are organizing a special screening of a remarkable new documentary film, "The Last Ghost of War," at the Cantor Film Center at 36 East 8th St. at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, June 11.

The film, shot in Vietnam, France and the U.S., documents the largest chemical warfare operation in history, its impact on children and parents, and the continuing lawsuit. New York Newsday described this "must-see documentary" as a "powerful tool for starting a much-needed national conversation on Agent Orange." The film's producers, Pham Quoc Thai and Janet Gardner, will join the evening's special program along with Constantine Kokkoris, a member of the legal team representing the Vietnamese plaintiffs, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark and actor/writer/activist Vinie Burrows. □

Senegalese people boycott elections

By G. Dunkel

Fewer than 30 percent of the voters in the former French colony of Senegal in West Africa went to the polls June 3 to vote in the parliamentary elections. The low turnout reflected the massive success of the opposition's call to boycott the elections and represented a setback for Senegal's president.

Senegal has been singled out by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and big Western donors as a window to let the rays of democracy shine on Africa. For decades it has had multiparty elections that these institutions and their media have been able to proclaim "fair and democratic."

When Abdoulaye Wade ran for reelection as president three months ago, he got 56 percent of the vote with 75 percent of the registered voters participating, according to the official figures. He has been invited to Paris at the end of June to bask in a warm reception from the new rightist French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, who will present him as a French success story

in Africa.

The Front Siggil, however, a coalition including most of Wade's opposition, charged that Wade and his Popular Democratic Socialists stole the presidential election. ("Siggil" means "keep your head up" in Senegal's most prevalent language, Wolof.) Siggil leaders called for an "active boycott" of the parliamentary elections, after Wade refused to meet with them, according to Fallou Gueye, a New York spokesperson for the Assembly of African Workers—Senegal, one of the more left-wing groups in the Siggil alliance.

In a statement issued March 22, Siggil said, "These grounds for complaint, far from concerning simple, minor failures or marginal irregularities, sometimes inherent in the conduct of election, in reality proceed from the clear desire of Abdoulaye Wade and his government to commit fraud with the aim of maintaining themselves in power at any price."

The statement went on to document how the voting lists were manipulated to allow Wade supporters to cast multiple votes, how the vote counts were manipu-

lated, and how in some areas the voting was disorganized and prolonged beyond the set time.

The strength of Siggil's argument was not the only reason a large majority of the Senegalese people boycotted this election.

The economic development Wade promised when he was first elected in 2000 didn't really start until shortly before the elections this year. There were so few jobs generated by Wade's program that thousands of young Senegalese risked and many lost their lives in rickety boats trying to reach Spain's Canary Islands.

The government's failure to keep its promises to teachers led to a series of one- and three-day strikes this year, supported by students and parents, that threatened to invalidate the whole school year. After Wade again promised to keep his earlier promises as May ended, the teachers agreed to call off their job actions and go back to work June 3.

Sharp increases in the prices of basic foods and gasoline have made daily living difficult, even for those who have jobs.

When Wade ran for president in 2000,

his platform included reform and investment in education, economic development and an end to the isolation of Casamance, the part of Senegal south of The Gambia, a small, narrow country entirely surrounded by Senegal.

It can easily take 48 hours to travel between Ziguinchor, the main city in Casamance, and Dakar, the capital—a distance of less than 200 miles through The Gambia.

In 1990, the government of Senegal bought an oceangoing ferry called the Joola, and began regular service between Ziguinchor and Dakar, which took about 15 hours. This led to a tremendous economic boom for Casamance and the rest of Senegal, but the government didn't maintain the Joola and allowed its operators to overload it.

On Sept. 26, 2002, the Joola sank; 1,953 people lost their lives, more than died in the sinking of the Titanic. The ferry has not been replaced and the people of Casamance are still suffering from the resulting isolation from the rest of Senegal and the world. □

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

El porqué activistas inmigrantes se oponen a la nueva ley

Por Arturo J. Pérez Saad

El Congreso de los Estados Unidos está discutiendo el nuevo proyecto de ley referente a la inmigración. Este proyecto tiene el respaldo del presidente George Bush y de los principales grupos en ambos partidos, Demócrata y Republicano. Este nuevo proyecto de ley se ha presentado como “una gran concesión” para regular la inmigración y estabilizar la situación para l@s trabajador@s inmigrantes y los empresarios.

Es cierto que los testarudos reaccionarios en el Congreso se oponen al proyecto. Estos racistas muestran abiertamente su hostilidad hacia tod@s l@s inmigrantes que no tienen documentos y hacen convocatorias chauvinistas a l@s ciudadan@s estadounidenses. Por supuesto que hay que contestar a todos los políticos y comentaristas fanáticos y racistas—de quienes Lou Dobbs es el ejemplo mejor conocido. Se les debe contestar, oponer y protestar.

Pero lo que ahora es importante estudiar y lo que este artículo expondrá, es que much@s en el movimiento pro inmigrante de aquí también encuentran que este proyecto es totalmente inadecuado para las necesidades de l@s inmigrantes. Much@s activistas lo consideran como una violación a los derechos de l@s inmigrantes.

Lo que propone el proyecto de ley

Si esta propuesta de ley bipartita se convierte en ley, cambiaría fundamentalmente todas las leyes migratorias que han estado vigentes desde el 1965 a leyes en pro de las corporaciones y en contra de l@s trabajador@s. Aunque este proyecto promete “amnistía” o “legalización” para l@s inmigrantes, exige primero que se cumplan estos puntos principales:

Primero, la militarización de la frontera sureña con 18.000 soldados o personal de patrullas. Si se aplican los estándares internacionales, este despliegue militar parecería un acto de guerra. La más reciente tecnología sería empleada para detener a l@s campesin@s y trabajador@s que emigran de sus países y tratan de cruzar la frontera hacia el norte en busca de trabajo. Y por supuesto la tecnología también mantendría información sobre quién llega por avión de otras regiones del mundo.

Segundo, la construcción de una pared estilo ‘apartheid’ de 370 millas en la frontera con México. Esta pared forzaría a l@s trabajador@s inmigrantes intentar entrar por otros terrenos más peligrosos. La tasa actual de mortandad de l@s inmigrantes que según algunos reportes es de una persona muerta por día, sin duda alguna aumentaría.

Tercero, la construcción de 20 campamentos adicionales de concentración o centros de detención, los cuales podrían alojar a más de 25.000 inmigrantes por día. Durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, el gobierno de los Estados Unidos—bajo la presidencia democrática de Franklin



Arturo J. Pérez Saad

Roosevelt—llevó a cabo un programa de desalojo y encarcelamiento contra toda persona de descendencia japonesa ubicada en campos de concentración.

Después de que los tres objetivos estén logrados, el/la trabajador/a indocumentad@ puede entonces solicitar la visa temporal de categoría “Z” por cuatro años. El/la trabajador/a tiene que pagar \$5.000 para iniciar el proceso. En el momento de renovarla, ella o él tendría que volver a solicitarla, pagar otra multa, salir del país, solicitarla de nuevo desde el país natal y entonces pagar una multa adicional. El precio, de por lo menos \$10.500, excluyendo los costos legales, no garantiza nada.

En ninguna parte aparece que el desempleo en los países de origen de est@s trabajador@s estuvo causado por las políticas neoliberales impuestas por Washington. Éstas políticas han resultado en un aumento de la pobreza y en más migración desde los países donde los acuerdos de libre comercio están en vigor.

En junio, las cuotas para solicitar un cambio del estatus van a subir drásticamente hasta tres veces el nivel actual como resultado del recorte por el gobierno de los programas sociales para poder pagar los gastos de la guerra. ¿Quién puede pagar esas cuotas? ¿Será cierto que el gobierno quiere reconocer los derechos de l@s inmigrantes que ya están en este país? ¿O querrá simplemente permitir la entrada de una fuerza laboral más grande que no tendría otra opción que la de trabajar sin derechos, como “trabajador@s

invitad@s”?

Esta no sería la primera vez. Durante los años de 1940 hasta los sesenta, el programa de “Braceros” importó desde México a “trabajador@s sin destrezas” para trabajar en el sector agrícola bajo condiciones de esclavitud, sin derechos y con salarios bajísimos—algun@s incluso no recibieron salario alguno. Entonces, el gobierno de los EEUU l@s devolvió a su país. Much@s de aquell@s que no fueron compensados por su trabajo durante esa época protestaron el Primero de Mayo del año pasado en el lado mexicano de la frontera en solidaridad con l@s trabajador@s indocumentad@s que están actualmente en los EEUU. Est@s trabajador@s han seguido presionando al gobierno de los EEUU para que les otorguen una compensación justa.

Es irónico que en el mes de mayo, mientras el proyecto de ley estaba bajo consideración, Luis Posada Carriles, agente de la CIA y terrorista por él mismo reconocido, fue excarcelado después de haber estado detenido por haber entrado al país y haberse quedado sin documentos desde 2005. El mensaje aquí es que si se es terrorista partidario de los EEUU, se queda impune, no importa si tiene la documentación correcta o no.

El diablo está en los detalles

Hay muchas otras provisiones macabras en la propuesta de ley, incluso una que autoriza a las agencias estatales para que funcionen como agencias policiales fronterizas, un bio-chip electrónico obliga-

torio para la identificación, la casi inevitable separación de la familia, un sistema de puntos, y la llamada “Ley de Sueño”. Esta última permitiría a l@s hij@s de trabajador@s indocumentad@s el acceso a 720 días de educación universitaria o al servicio militar. Como las fuerzas militares de los EEUU están sobre-extendidas en medio de un aumento de las tropas en Irak, el Pentágono ve a est@s jóvenes como potencial carne de cañón.

En suma, esta ley de “gran concesión” está lejos de ser “amnistía” o “legalización”. Esta ley crearía una clase marginada permanente de trabajador@s que sería excluida permanentemente de la oportunidad de obtener un estado legal. Puesto que solo legalizaría a quienes tengan rango académico o destrezas especiales, promovería una fuga de cerebros de los países en camino a desarrollarse. También le hará más fácil a l@s inmigrantes de otros países imperialistas en el hemisferio norte venir a los Estados Unidos.

En los años 80, el gobierno estadounidense hizo maniobras semejantes respecto a l@s inmigrantes y pasó finalmente el Acta de Control de Inmigración y Reforma (ACIR) conocida como la “Gran Amnistía” de 1986. Aunque la ACIR legalizó a 2,7 millones de trabajador@s indocumentad@s, dejó fuera a más de 1,5 millones, penalizó a l@s trabajador@s indocumentad@s con multas considerables y criminalizó el emplearles, aunque en realidad las sanciones contra las empresas nunca se realizaron.

La administración de Bush depende del ambiente político actual de miedo, llevado a cabo por las diarias redadas terroristas contra comunidades de inmigrantes, para impedir una lucha progresista contra la nueva ley. Pero el deseo de las masas es seguir luchando.

El día en que fue anunciada “la gran concesión”, el 17 de mayo, más de 30.000 inmigrantes y personas solidarias, se manifestaron en Los Ángeles, demandando la renuncia del jefe de la policía, William J. Bratton, una investigación completa del Departamento de la Policía de Los Ángeles debido a los ataques del 1º de mayo en MacArthur Park, y “legalización ahora”. Parece que el movimiento pro inmigrante se ha dado cuenta que la única manera en que se ha ganado justicia ha sido en las calles.

El Congreso está en receso hasta el 4 de junio y la camarilla de cabilderos del capital financiero se está poniendo en posición y examinando esas partes de la legislación propuesta que vayan a responsabilizar al patrono e impedirle que super-explote a l@s trabajador@s. Pero como dijo entonces Frederick Douglass, líder libertador afroamericano del siglo XIX: “El poder no concede nada si no se demanda. Nunca lo ha hecho y nunca lo hará.”

Como fue mostrado por las protestas masivas del 1º de mayo, grandes sectores de la comunidad inmigrante saben que la protesta en las calles es lo que logrará la derrota de esta ley y ganará todos los derechos para l@s inmigrantes. □