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# Unless auto workers fight back Labor unions face new wave of cuts

## Delphi contract whets bosses' appetite for lower wages, benefits

By Jerry Goldberg  
Detroit

What caused the United Auto Workers (UAW) leadership to go along with a contract that severely lowers the wages and benefits of its Delphi auto parts workers? Was it the best the UAW could do under the threat of a bankruptcy court imposing even more onerous conditions?

The new contract between Delphi Corporation and the United Auto Workers (UAW) reduces wages for workers from \$27 per hour to a maximum of \$18 per hour—\$14 per hour for new hires.

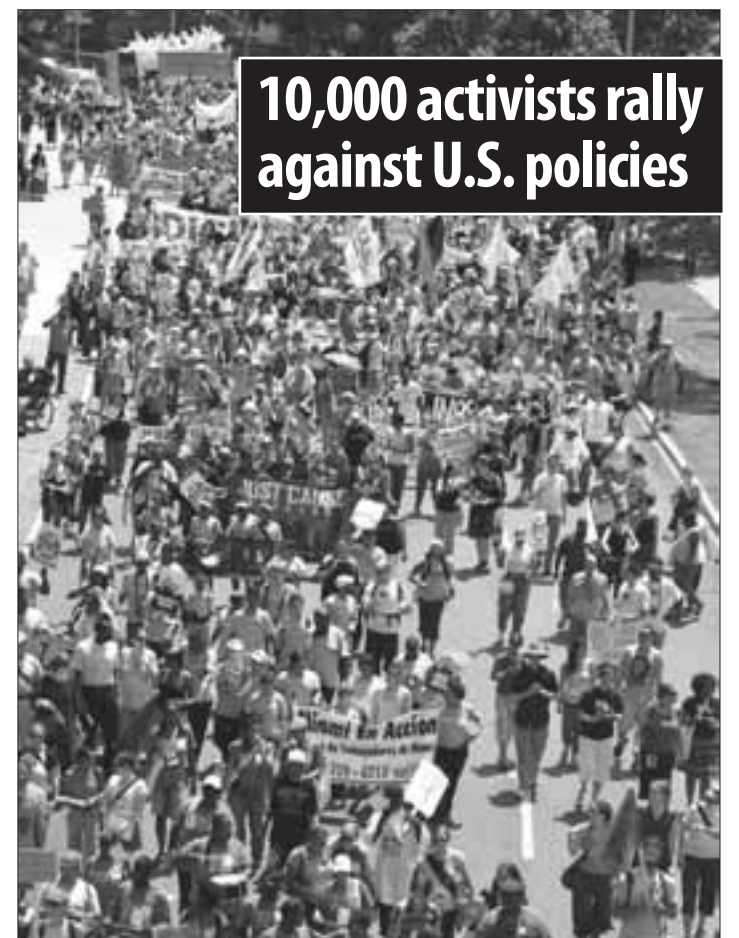
It eliminates fixed pensions and health care benefits for future Delphi retirees, replacing the pension plan with 401(k) plans and IRAs. It drastically reduces health benefits by imposing deductibles of \$300 per individual and \$600 per family with co-pays of \$1,000 per individual and \$2,000 per family. Previously these auto workers' health costs were virtually 100 percent covered. The contract also eliminates the jobs bank which guaranteed workers' wages during lay-offs.

It provides that only four of Delphi's 21 plants will be kept open as Delphi operations, with four plants scheduled to be transferred to a "third party" or General Motors, and three more plants designated as "footprint sites" for future parts production in their vicinity.

Significantly, 32 percent of the workers rejected the contract despite the UAW leadership's line that the alternative to the settlement was a more vicious contract to be imposed by the bankruptcy court, and the fact that 13,000 of the 17,000 current Delphi workers who voted were temporary workers recently

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Thousands march at June 27 opening ceremony for the United States Social Forum in Atlanta. See centerfold.

WWW PHOTOS: IMANI HENRY AND JOHN CATALINOTTO

# Where have all the bees gone?

This week ...



By G. Dunkel

*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.*

— *Lake Isle of Innisfree,*  
William Butler Yeats, 1892

Right now in the U.S., Yeats would have a great deal of difficulty finding a “bee-loud glade” in which to pursue his poetry. Between 50 and 90 percent of the honeybees in 35 states have died since last fall, due largely to what is being called a “colony collapse disorder” (CCD).

Bees are not just important for poetical inspiration, honey and beeswax. As Yeats points out, in the oblique way poets employ, they are vital for the pollination that produces beans and about a third of all the food consumed in the U.S.

While there are other pollinators, like bumblebees and hummingbirds, the figure generally used is that honeybees are essential in producing about \$15 billion worth of food a year.

Even the production of milk starts with pollination of alfalfa, a staple in the diet of dairy cows.

Bees have been dying in bunches for years from mites, fungal infections, bad weather, insecticides directed at pests and herbicides directed at “weeds,” but what makes CCD different is the absence of bodies. The queen is present, laying eggs with just a handful of workers. To put this in context, beekeepers generally start a hive with a queen and 12,000 workers; hives can contain as many as 600,000 workers before they split.

“It was like something had vacuumed the bees out of there,” William Palmer, owner of East Troy Honey, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel May 12. “The bees were missing.”

There have been several congressional hearings on CCD and some members of Congress have been trying to get the U.S. Department of Agriculture to spend more money to determine what is going on, since a major portion of the food supply is on the verge of being affected. The USDA is only spending \$7.5 million, though some severely afflicted states are spending considerable sums.

The National Academy of Science is calling for more basic research because scientists are not even sure about what wild pollinators are significant for which crops.

Mid-Atlantic Apiculture Research and Extension Consortium (maarec.cas.psu.edu) summarizes the possible causes for CCD under active investigation. Radiation from cell phone towers has been ruled out, because the disorder occurs in rural areas where cell phone service is not available. Genetically modified crops are not a major suspected cause, because CCD also happens in areas where they aren’t planted.

According to MAAREC, scientists are examining the following research areas as priorities, but are not exclud-

ing other possible causes:

- chemical residue/contamination in the wax, food stores and bees
- known and unknown pathogens in the bees and brood
- parasite load in the bees and brood
- nutritional fitness of the adult bees
- level of stress in adult bees as indicated by stress induced proteins
- lack of genetic diversity and lineage of bees

According to some scientists, the chief culprit is the most commonly used insecticide on the planet: imidacloprid. This potent chemical can be sprayed on plants or coated on seeds, which then release the insecticide as the plants grow. According to a 1999 study by the Environmental Protection Agency, about 6 billion tons of insecticides are used each year.

The New Jersey Star-Ledger reported on May 28: “In sublethal doses, however, research has shown that imidacloprid and other neonicotinoids [a class of synthetic pesticides—WW], such as fipronil, can impair honeybees’ memory and learning, as well as their motor activity and navigation. When foraging for food and collecting nectar, honeybees memorize the smells of flowers and create a kind of olfactory map for subsequent trips.”

According to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, imidacloprid and fipronil combined for 56 percent of the total amount of insecticides used to combat household pests and termites. (Star-Ledger, May 20) New Jersey is one of the states where CCD has affected blueberry, cranberry and peach production.

U.S. agribusiness, which grows 80 percent of the world’s supply of almonds, uses half of all the commercially available beehives in the whole U.S. (Washington Post, June 1). Big 18-wheel trucks, full of hives, pour into California’s Central Valley in February and then are moved on to service crops all over the country.

Scientists feel that this constant moving might be stressful on the bees, but don’t yet have proof. CCD hit the big beekeepers first but now isn’t limited to their hives. Local producers are also being hit with CCD.

All the causes of this decline that are under investigation are really linked to how capitalism has structured agriculture—how it has stressed and intensely overexploited a single species in deep ignorance of the ecological consequences. Bees have declined rapidly in the past but not to such an extent.

This fairly desperate research effort may succeed. If it doesn’t, agribusiness may be able to import the bees it needs—of course, at a high cost that it will pass on with its profit margin to consumers. But the declines in bees, birds (see Workers World, Jun. 29), frogs and so many other species point to the fragility of life itself under capitalism. To really solve this crisis, we need to remove its root cause, the social system that has engendered capitalist production. □

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Vol. 49, No. 27 • July 12, 2007  
Closing date: July 4, 2007

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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 55 W. 17 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Phone: (212) 627-2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$25; foreign and institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at www.workers.org/email.php.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

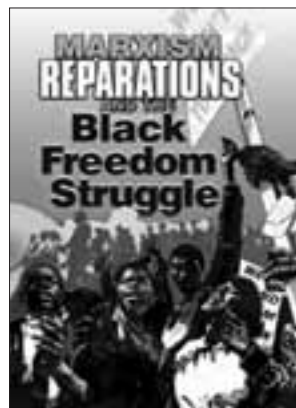
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## With Bush weakened

# Supreme Court pushes right wing's agenda

By Deirdre Griswold

The first full term of the Supreme Court presided over by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. ended on June 28 with a flurry of right-wing rulings. They came after months of decisions that eroded civil liberties and increased the powers of the corporations and the state.

As a result, progressive movements of all kinds are discussing how to turn back this intensified right-wing offensive.

The Bush administration is now thoroughly discredited among the masses, and senators and representatives of all stripes who will be seeking reelection or have presidential ambitions must work hard to dissociate themselves from the last six years of war and repression. In this political climate, the third pillar of the government—the judiciary—has stepped in to deepen the attacks on oppressed peoples, the working class in general and sections of the middle class, too.

Every school child is taught that the U.S. government was designed to spread the power of the state among three branches: the executive, the legislative and the judicial. This political system of “checks and balances” is supposed to protect the people from any one branch becoming the vehicle for power-hungry tyrants.

What they don't tell you, however, is that the extreme and growing concentration of wealth at one pole of society and poverty at the other, which is the natural

outcome of a capitalist economic system where everything—even the water we drink—eventually becomes the private property of the rich, also determines how these branches of the government function.

Much has been written in recent years about the “imperial presidency” that has emerged in the U.S., where the president and his cohorts in the executive branch have again and again preempted the Congress and the Constitution by starting wars and other hostile interventions around the world.

But the decisions by the Supreme Court in this term show that it, too, is tied to the rich and powerful and is bending the law to further down press anyone who might challenge the established order. And what is that order? A class dictatorship by the mainly white, male owners of fabulous wealth that is mainly concentrated in ownership of the gigantic corporations and financial institutions that dominate economic life.

### Resegregating the schools

The court decision that will have the widest impact struck down programs in Louisville, Ky., and Seattle that have been allocating children to different schools in order to promote a racial balance. Similar programs exist in hundreds of school districts across the country.

The landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education* had

mandated the end of segregated schools in the South, finding that the old segregationist claim of “separate but equal” schools was a fraud. But racism in housing and jobs existed in the North, too, where there were no segregation laws. Even after the end of formal segregation, Black children all over the country continued to be concentrated in a few districts where the schools historically had been underfunded and neglected.

By the 1970s, with militant, mass struggles for civil rights and Black liberation at their height, programs to achieve a racial balance in all schools, North and South, were in place as a way of implementing the 1954 decision. Those programs have now been dealt a heavy blow.

A June 29 *New York Times* editorial about the recent Supreme Court decision, entitled “Resegregation Now,” points out that while the U.S. is more diverse than ever, schools were already becoming more segregated, even before this ruling. It points out that more than one in six Black children “now attend schools that are 99 to 100 percent minority” and predicts that “This resegregation is likely to get appreciably worse as a result of the court's ruling.”

The issue here is not whether integration or separation is better for the African-American community. That is up to Black people to decide. Many parents and leaders in the community might prefer well-funded, modern schools closer to home where Black teachers and administrators could determine the curriculum. That should be their right.

But this decision will do nothing to promote such an outcome. On the contrary, it is a ruling by a right-wing court that will lessen the educational opportunities available to many Black children and increase the disparities that already exist.

### A win for monopoly pricing

On the same day as this ruling, the Supreme Court also overturned a part of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, nearly a century old, that had forbidden manufacturers and distributors from getting together to dictate a minimum resale price. These big capitalists are now freer to conspire together to keep retail prices high.

Continuing on its right-wing roll, the court ruled that school authorities in Alaska didn't violate a student's free speech rights when they suspended him for raising a banner reading “Bong Hits 4 Jesus” at a sporting event. While no one knows exactly what the irreverent sign was supposed to mean, the court interpreted it as promoting illegal drugs.

Many thousands of cases are taken to the Supreme Court each year. It chooses only a few to consider and rule on. That this court chose such a seemingly minor case in which to intervene against academic free speech shows once again that the mantra of conservatives about defending local authorities against the big, bad federal government, plus their pretended opposition to government interference in the lives of the citizenry, is nothing but posturing.

But wait—there's more!

One week earlier, the court had dealt a blow to investors who want to sue companies and executives because of suspected fraud, making it more difficult for class-action lawsuits to go forward. After the Enron debacle, which wiped out a lot of people's savings, investors got very nervous and began looking for ways to hold high-paid executives accountable.

That decision was the second in just one week “that was a defeat for shareholders and a victory for the defendant compa-

*Continued on page 11*

## 'Incident at Oglala' commemorated

By Brenda Ryan  
New York

In Native American history, June 26th is a day of anguish. On that date in 1975, two FBI agents in unmarked cars drove onto a ranch on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. More than 150 agents, vigilantes and law enforcement surrounded the property and opened fire. In the resulting shoot-out, a young Native man and two FBI agents were killed.

This assault has not ended. For 31 years, Leonard Peltier, a Lakota/Anishinabe organizer of the American Indian Movement (AIM), has been in prison, falsely accused of killing the FBI agents. U.S. prosecutors have publicly admitted that they do not know who actually fired the shots that killed the agents, but they have refused to consider Peltier for parole or to turn over thousands of pages of documents that could prove his innocence.

The New York City Leonard Peltier Support Group and the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee commemorated the Pine Ridge attack with a screening of “Murder on a Reservation.” The film, which includes commentary from Peltier and witnesses to the assault, was shown at the International Action Center in New York.

An event was also held in Oglala, S.D., near where the shootout occurred. For the eighth year, people gathered to remember the more than 60 Native people who were murdered during a three-year “Reign of Terror,” which began when AIM members occupied Wounded Knee, the site of the 1890 massacre of Chief Bigfoot's Hohwoju (Minneconjou) people. The elders and chiefs of the Oglala Lakota had asked AIM to lead the takeover to fight mistreatment from corrupt tribal and federal officials.

It was during this period that the peo-



Self portrait by Leonard Peltier

ple at Pine Ridge had asked members of AIM for help and protection. Peltier and a small group of AIM members set up camp on a ranch owned by the Jumping Bulls, a traditional Lakota family.

The Oglala commemoration began with a prayer ceremony at the gravesite of Joseph Stuntz, the young Native man killed during the Pine Ridge shoot-out. People then walked two miles to the Jumping Bull property where the incident occurred.

Peltier, recognized around the world as a political prisoner, has been honored throughout the year. In April, he was nominated for the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. The recipient will be announced in mid-October. And in March the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art and Warrior Artists Productions presented the world premiere of the stage adaptation of Peltier's book, “Prison Writings: My Life Is My Sun Dance.” (Available at Leftbooks.com.)

The Leonard Peltier Defense Committee also sent a statement to the U.S. Social Forum, which was held in Atlanta from June 27 to July 1. It included a message from Peltier: “Our work will be unfinished until not one human being is hungry, or battered, not one single person is forced to die in war, not one innocent languishes imprisoned and no one is persecuted for his or her beliefs.” □

## Assata Shakur: The struggle continues

By Caleb T. Maupin

Whenever Assata Shakur is mentioned in the capitalist media, sensational and deceptive words are used to describe her. But to workers and oppressed people of the world, she is known as “fighter,” “liberator” and “hero.”

This year, events will be held in four cities, and possibly many more, to commemorate the 60th birthday of one of the world's strongest fighters for truth, justice, Black liberation and socialism. July 16 will be the day when the supporters of this revolutionary will show the world that they stand with her against those who seek to lock her away once again.

As a young Black woman attending City College in New York City, Assata Shakur joined the Black Panther Party. Eventually, as the Black Panther Party was broken up by the harsh tactics of the FBI's COINTELPRO program, she joined the Black Liberation Army. The BLA was committed to armed struggle against the capitalist class, in defense of the Black nation and its right to be free.

Assata Shakur was accused of killing two police officers. Supporters have outlined how she received a blatantly unfair trial. The defense was not permitted to question perspective jurors. When it became clear that expert medical testimony was proving that she could not have pulled the



trigger to kill the officer after she herself was shot, the funds were cut off for medical expert witnesses.

“Witnesses” presented by the prosecution eventually recanted their testimony. In this “land of justice,” Assata Shakur was convicted. She found herself in solitary confinement at a maximum-security prison. But amazingly, she was able to escape from prison and arrive safely in Cuba, a liberated territory.

Assata Shakur now lives in Cuba, knowing full well that if she returned to the U.S. she would face a life in prison.

The rulers of the U.S. want to do whatever they can to get her back in their clutches. In the more than 20 years since her escape they have not ceased to try and recapture her. They've offered \$1 million to whoever would return her to the U.S.

But on the island of Cuba, where workers and oppressed people have seized power, she is defended against those who would return her to a prison cell. □

# Autoworkers face neocons at the bargaining table

By Martha Grevatt

What has three heads and drops bombs?

If you follow news about the auto industry, the three heads would be a dead giveaway. Cerberus, the three-headed guard dog of Greek mythology, is the name and mascot of the Wall Street hedge fund buying Chrysler. The more we learn about the firm, however, the more we might conclude that the modern-day Cerberus is not the guardian of hell but its more famous horned denizen.

As is often stated in the media, former U.S. Treasury Secretary John W. Snow is the firm's chair and former vice president and spelling blunderer Dan Quayle its Global Operations chair. Yet Quayle did not leave politics; he is one of the 25 elite signers of the mission statement of the neocon think tank, the Project for the New American Century. Their document proclaims that: "We need to increase defense spending significantly if we are to carry out our global responsibilities today and modernize our armed forces for the future. ... We need to accept responsibility for America's unique role in preserving and extending an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles."

Other signers include Dick Cheney and such now-disgraced figures as I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Paul Wolfowitz and Donald Rumsfeld.

Rumsfeld is an investor in Cerberus, which is rumored to require a minimum outlay of \$1 million to join the club. Cerberus, in turn, is a major contributor to

Republican candidates, although it also funds Democrats such as Joe Lieberman.

These contributions don't come without strings. MCI, partially owned by Cerberus, was a subcontractor in an \$8.8 billion project to build a secure computer network for the Navy and Marines. When MCI was in danger of being dumped by the Navy, Cerberus held a fundraiser for California Representative Jerry Lewis, who was then chair of the House Appropriations Committee. One hundred and thirty-three thousand dollars later, MCI was kept on the project. Among those investigating the scandal was Carol Lam, later fired by Alberto Gonzales.

Cerberus owns Netco, a Navy supplier, and IAP Worldwide Services, a major provider of logistics support to the U.S. Army in Iraq. IAP had the contract to run the privatized Walter Reed military hospital, whose shoddy care to wounded Iraq veterans has inflamed public outrage. It was IAP who mismanaged the delivery of desperately needed ice during the Katrina disaster.

Cerberus' paid lobbyist, former top Quayle aide Craig Whitney, formed a political action committee, Improve America PAC, almost exclusively with Cerberus funds. The first lobbyist Cerberus contracted with, Patton Boggs, made available the services of Laurence Harris, a former Federal Communications Commission staffer who would join MCI's board of directors; retired Marine Colonel John Garrett; and Marcus Dunn, a former aide to two members of the House Armed Services Committee.



Cerberus

Former Utah Republican Senator Jake Garn was paid \$410,000 in 2003 to lobby for Cerberus.

Cerberus also has ties to Washington's closest military ally. The firm owns Israel's second largest bank, Leumi, and collaborated with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in the privatization of Israel's state banking system.

It's not only Chrysler workers who have this monster to contend with; Cerberus is now looking at buying Jaguar and Land Rover from Ford. The firm may also decide not to withdraw from the purchase of Delphi. Cerberus is buying Tower Automotive and owns other auto parts companies.

Not inclined to be left out, Bush family friend the Carlyle Group has just arranged to buy Allison Transmission from General Motors.

As the military faction of the U.S. ruling class sinks its teeth into the auto industry, it's clear the UAW has a quite a formidable foe to negotiate with—but as the Iraqi people have shown, it is a foe that is not unbeatable.

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

## So. Cal. grocery workers okay strike

From Bakersfield, Calif., to the Mexican border, 95 percent of grocery workers at Albertsons, Ralphs and Vons voted on June 24 to authorize a strike after the chains failed to meet a deadline for a formal offer. The 65,000 workers are represented by the Food and Commercial Workers union. (UFCW press release, June 24)

The primary issues are the same as when the workers struck in 2003-2004: wages and health care insurance. Negotiations, which have been going on for six months, have led to an agreement that the time new employees have to wait before getting healthcare benefits will be slashed, but both sides remain far apart on how to fund the health plan and the size of raises. Another unresolved issue is what to do about workers hired after the 2004 strike, who received lower wages and benefits.

In the meantime, each of the supermarket chains stole more than \$3 billion in profits from the workers in 2006.

To show why the workers need a raise, the union has created a TV ad to be aired in July. "Supermarket Swindle" is now posted on its web site ([www.respectfcw.com](http://www.respectfcw.com)) and on YouTube.

The video explains that the workers have had zero raises in the last five years, in contrast with huge raises received by the chains' CEOs: \$9.5 million, or a 210.5 percent hike, for Albertsons' CEO; \$8.3 million, or a 124.3 percent hike, for Kroger's CEO; and \$7 million, or a 600 percent hike, for Vons' CEO. Meanwhile the cost of food prices went up 12.2 percent in the last five years.

In Dallas and Houston more than 13,000 Kroger workers in Locals 408, 455 and 540 narrowly averted a strike after they voted to ratify a three-year contract on June 25. They will receive wage increases up to as much as \$3 an hour; adequate, affordable health care benefits; increased vacation time with greater flexibility; and improved pension security. (UFCW press release, June 25)

At a Swift plant in Marshalltown, Iowa, about 1,900 workers in UFCW Local 1149 voted June 30 to ratify a three-year contract with raises from \$1.40 an hour, for the base rate, to \$2 an hour for certain job categories. Additional health care benefits will be provided, with the maximum lifetime health insurance coverage increased from \$1 million to \$2 million. (UFCW press release, July 1)

If grocery workers in other parts of the country can negotiate raises and better health care benefits without having to strike, the workers in California shouldn't have to strike either. Stay tuned.

# Labor unions face new wave of cuts

Continued from page 1

hired at a much lower pay than the traditional UAW wages.

At the Lockport, N.Y., UAW local—where a higher percentage of seniority workers remain on the job, and where the rank and file had actively carried out the "work to rule" strategy to slow down production advocated by the Delphi rank-and-file activist organization "Soldiers for Solidarity"—the workers voted down the contract by a 4-1 margin.

## Auto bosses drive down wages

In a recent commentary, Gregg Shotwell—a Delphi and GM worker with over 25 years seniority and an organizer of Soldiers for Solidarity—stated: "Delphi, just like [former CEO Robert S. "Steve"] Miller said in the beginning, is shutting down, chopping up, and selling off all U.S. operations. And yes, like [UAW International President Ron] Gettelfinger confessed, GM made it all possible. The deal was conceived in a back room in Flint in 1998."

What Shotwell refers to is the fact that General Motors created Delphi in 1999 by spinning off its parts plants into this new corporation in an attempt to reduce its costs for parts by lowering the wages of the auto parts workers.

Even after the spinoff, GM called the shots for Delphi and continued to be involved in Delphi labor negotiations. In 2004, GM, Delphi and the UAW negotiated a supplemental agreement to the 2004 UAW contract with Delphi, an agreement never voted on by the rank and file. This supplemental agreement created a permanent second and lesser tier of wages and benefits for newly-hired Delphi workers.

The new Delphi UAW contract takes the second tier wages and benefits from the 2004 Supplemental Agreement and extends them to the entire Delphi workforce.

In July 2005, as Wall Street clamored for a more aggressive posture to take down UAW wages and benefits, Steve Miller was named Delphi CEO. Miller is a "vulture capitalist" who made his name at Bethlehem Steel, where he used bankruptcy to destroy the wages and pensions of the steelworkers. He quickly took Delphi into bankruptcy in October 2005 and announced plans to lower the Delphi workers' wages to \$9 per hour.

However, the Delphi workers, even under bankruptcy, were in a unique position relative to most workers in similar circumstances. Usually workers at a bankrupt company have limited power—their bosses are on the verge of shutting down production anyway and use this threat to

bludgeon the workers into take-backs and concessions.

In contrast, Delphi produces many of the parts that keep General Motors running at a time when GM desperately needs to maintain production as it develops new model lines to recover market share from Toyota and Honda. When Delphi shuts down, General Motors immediately shuts down.

## Rank-and-file sensed potential to challenge bankruptcy

The rank and file sensed this potential for a struggle. On their own, a group of Delphi workers organized Soldiers for Solidarity, and traveled the country organizing Delphi workers to challenge the bankruptcy and wage cuts, layoffs and destruction of pensions that were threatened.

They developed a strategy called "work to rule," encouraging workers to strictly stick to all safety rules in the plants, as a means of slowing production and asserting workers' control.

Faced with GM's fears of a Delphi strike and this rank-and-file uprising preparing the workers for a massive fight to challenge the onerous contract Miller threatened, over time Miller was forced to tone down his arrogant bluster and was even removed as Delphi CEO.

It was the power that the Delphi workers had to shut down GM production that put them in a relatively strong position. The UAW leadership could have used this power to challenge the bankruptcy proceeding, telling Delphi and the courts that if they tried to impose Miller's wage cuts, the union would strike Delphi, shut down GM and mobilize the UAW's power to strike a blow at the use of bankruptcy as the new, favored method of union-busting and destruction of workers' wages and benefits.

This could have galvanized the entire working class.

Instead, the UAW leadership used GM's fear of a shutdown of production to essentially force GM to soften the blow to current Delphi workers, as the union cooperated with Delphi in transitioning in the second tier of lower wages and benefits for all Delphi workers.

First the UAW got GM to offer significant buy-outs to give Delphi workers an incentive to retire or otherwise leave the corporation. Through these buy-outs, approximately 13,000 of the 17,000 UAW Delphi workers left the company and were replaced by temporary workers who made \$14 an hour with no benefits. Many of the workers who took the buy-outs have stated they only did so because they felt

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By Sue Davis

# Yet another Con Edison power outage

By G. Dunkel

In New York City, where Con Ed's boast that it provides the most reliable system in the country provokes raucous laughter, the energy company has lived up to its reputation. On June 27, the second day the temperature went over 90 degrees, the Upper East Side of Manhattan and the South Bronx lost power for 45 minutes.

John F. Miksad, Con Ed's senior vice president for electric operations, told the New York Times that the power outage was caused by a lightning strike, a "very rare event." He did admit that it was possible to take measures against such events but didn't say that Con Ed had.

This was after Con Ed supposedly spent \$90 million to fix the problems that caused an 10-day outage last summer in the areas of Astoria, Sunnyside, Woodside and Long Island City in Queens, which caused major disruptions in the lives of the more

than 200,000 people it serves in that area. The State Public Service Commission concluded in February that Con Ed's performance in last year's crisis was "unacceptable and a gross disservice to its customers."

It was also after Con Edison asked for an 11.1 percent rate increase—really a 17 percent increase for residential customers—that would bring it more than \$1 billion a year.

Politicians swiftly ran to press conferences after this latest outage. Billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who staunchly defended Con Ed last summer, defended it again. He said it was "a minor inconvenience to people" because "the power came back on in 15 minutes."

Actually, power was cut for more than 45 minutes and subway lines—which hundreds of thousands of workers use to go home—were severely disrupted. Some, whose commute is normally one hour, spent more than three getting home.

Gov. Eliot Spitzer chimed in the next day, saying, "We are quite confident we will be ready for this summer."

Some of the local politicians were harsher. "Their word over the last year has proven not to be worth very much," said Michael N. Gianaris, an assemblyperson from Queens. "Their history is to obfuscate." He also referred to smaller outages that hit Queens after the big one on June 27 that also were caused by lightning.

"Apparently their system is to wait for a blackout to happen and then make improvements," said Queens Councilperson Peter Vallone Jr.

Western Queens Power for the People ([www.powerforthepowerpeople.info](http://www.powerforthepowerpeople.info)), an organization that sprang up after last year's outage, is organizing a flashlight march July 17. The march will tell Con Edison "Accept responsibility for last year's outage! Pay us what you owe us! No 17 percent rate hike (use your \$12 billion profits for upgrades)." □



Trying to get home from work. Then, forced out of the New York City subway by power outage June 27.

## Labor unrest at Wall St. Journal

While Rupert Murdoch is negotiating with Dow Jones to buy the Wall Street Journal for \$5 billion, staff members walked off their jobs on June 28 to demand a fair contract. Represented by the Independent Association of Publishers' Employees, CWA/TNG Local 1096, the workers held their last bargaining session on June 27.

A June 29 union press release noted that Dow Jones' management was still "very reluctant to compromise. That is why it was so important for us to demonstrate our unity. We meet again on July 12." Worried about Murdoch's intention to make the paper solely an online periodical and issues of editorial control, the workers took the unprecedented step of not showing up at their desks until midafternoon.

## Air traffic controllers 'dress up'

Air traffic controllers, who were forced to accept a new contract last September that included a restrictive dress code, are signaling their dissatisfaction with the contract in "high-flying fashion." Some men are coming to work in dresses or kilts. (Associated Press, June 28)

When the 15,000-member National Air Traffic Controllers Association (organized in 1987) and the Federal Aviation Administration reached an impasse in contract negotiations last September, the FAA was permitted by law to implement a new one. Controllers don't like changes in schedules, no mandatory breaks every two hours and pay issues, including a pay cut for new hires.

The law allowing the FAA to impose contracts on the controllers was passed after President Ronald Reagan stopped the controllers' strike in 1981 by firing nearly 12,000 workers who refused to return to work and disbanded PATCO, the controllers' union at that time.

## Postal carriers protest outsourcing

Postal carriers in Paterson, N.J., and 17 cities in Florida held informational picket lines on June 17 to show their opposition to job outsourcing in their areas. More demonstrations are planned in other areas by the Letter Carriers union (NALC) to inform the public that low-wage, no-benefits, part-time contractors are being hired to replace union workers. That threatens to diminish postal service and to endanger the 118-year-old union.

This frontal attack on mail carriers is part of the Bush administration's drive to privatize government functions and deprive workers of union representation.

## Atlantic City dealers join UAW

Casino dealers at Bally's Atlantic City dealt themselves a good hand when they voted June 4 to join the autoworkers union. Dealers at Caesars Atlantic City and Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino had voted to join the union in March. Many of Atlantic City's 45,000 casino workers are already represented by unions, but dealers were not among them until this year. □

*Continued from page 4*

forced out by the company and the union leadership who essentially encouraged them to leave.

In the new settlement, GM again intervened to soften the blow. The 4,000 Delphi workers who continued to be covered under the traditional UAW contract are given an extra \$35,000 payment a year for the first three years of the contract, funded by GM, to soften the blow of their wages being reduced from \$27 an hour to \$18 per hour effective immediately. And the other 13,000 newly hired temporary workers are made full-time union members with the wage and benefit package outlined above.

### UAW leadership concession strategy is dead end

Why did the UAW choose this path of using its power to shut down GM production to transition to a lower wage and benefits package, rather than taking on the fight to maintain the traditional UAW wages and benefits which were won over 60 years of militant unionism?

Faced with globalization and the ability of corporations to transfer production overseas and utilize new technology to quickly integrate overseas low-wage production, the UAW leadership essentially accepted the ruling-class argument that

auto workers, at least in parts production, had no alternative but to accept a fundamental lowering of wages and benefits as an alternative to production disappearing entirely from the U.S.

It was this ideological view of the need to accept lower wages and benefits that guided the UAW leadership throughout the Delphi struggle.

Of course, the idea that auto workers are overpaid and that U.S. companies cannot be profitable as a result is a complete fabrication.

UAW President Gettelfinger in a speech noted that each auto worker produces approximately \$300,000 in value, quoting a study by the U.S. census on manufacturing. Even if an auto worker makes \$80,000 with overtime, that still is \$220,000 in surplus value for the bosses. And of course, in the 1990s, under the same UAW contracts that exist today, Ford, Chrysler and GM all made record profits when they were building products the consumers wanted.

The current crisis facing the U.S. auto makers is largely a product of their own greed, in refusing to shift to gas efficient and smaller cars because the profit margin was less than that for SUVs and trucks, thus causing them to lose market share to Toyota, Honda and Hyundai.

For the capitalists the question is not

whether they can make a profit. Rather, it is how to increase the rate of profit, which means lowering the value of the workers' labor.

In its court papers asking to repudiate the UAW contract, Delphi never argued it could not make a profit paying traditional UAW wages, as it was required to do under the law. Rather, Delphi simply argued that because its competitors were paying less, they should be allowed to pay lower wages and benefits as well.

The UAW leadership's Delphi strategy has opened a Pandora's Box. Any parts producers paying decent wages and benefits will now want a "Delphi contract." The Delphi settlement has helped whet the appetites of Ford, Chrysler and GM to impose a similar contract in the assembly plants as well, especially with Chrysler having been sold to Cerberus, a private equity corporation. (See article on preceding page.)

The next period will tell a lot about the future of the UAW, both at Delphi and throughout the auto industry. For one thing, thousands of Delphi workers took early retirement in the belief that GM will guarantee their pensions in the future. But the contract supplement dealing with this question was conveniently omitted in the contracts distributed to the workers. Delphi's pension plan is already under-

funded by billions of dollars.

The introduction of the 13,000 younger workers who were hired by Delphi in the last year potentially brings an element of fresh energy and militancy into the union. Can these workers be organized and mobilized to fight Delphi's scheduled plant closings and layoffs and defend their jobs?

Even under the lower wage and benefits scale, in the current economic climate in the industrial Midwest, these are still desirable union jobs that these younger workers will surely feel are worth fighting for. In the already devastated industrial Midwest, Delphi plant closings will destroy more and more communities. Perhaps community organizers as well as union activists can raise the demand for a "Moratorium on Plant Closings," and reach out and organize the new younger Delphi UAW members to fight to stop the proposed plant closings and defend their right to their jobs.

Most significantly, if the Big Three push to impose a "Delphi contract" on the assembly plants, will this wake up the rank and file and produce a fight back?

These questions will be answered in the coming months. All class-conscious workers must be prepared to come to the aid of the auto workers in the battles that are sure to come. □

# 10,000 organizers bring worldwide struggles to Social Forum

By John Catalinotto  
Atlanta

Some 10,000 grass-roots organizers, anti-racist fighters, farm workers, domestic workers, anti-war veterans, former prisoners and their families, spokespeople for lesbian/gay/bi/trans rights, women's rights and environmental organizations, and activists in virtually every progressive struggle underway in the U.S. today came together in Atlanta from June 27 to July 1 for the U.S. Social Forum.

They came from 1,000 organizations and held more than 1,000 workshops, meetings and plenary sessions, one major march and other demonstrations in five days under the broiling sun of central Georgia—and one torrential rainfall. They came from all 50 states, and 400 international guests came from 70 countries, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

There are undoubtedly different evaluations of how successfully the USSF organizers and its different departments were able to address the needs and rights of all oppressed groups present. Still, there were some remarkable features. These include the composition of the forum and its strong spirit of grass-roots struggle and solidarity. Forum participants were multinational, with more than half being people of color. They were almost all personally engaged in struggle and they were looking to give and get support.

There were people of all ages, including many youths under 30. The workshops included but also stretched beyond the movement veterans who cut their teeth in the Civil Rights and Black Liberation

movements, the anti-Vietnam War movement and the other struggles that took place in that relatively progressive period of the late 1960s and early 1970s. A workshop organized by the youth organization FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together—on the contributions of Che Guevara reflected this youth upsurge in the struggle.

There was strong representation from sectors of society that normally have the least access to funds for traveling. This lack often limits participation of people without personal or organizational resources in national gatherings. Either the many local or regional groups were able to overcome many of these obstacles or the national organization was.

## From welfare rights to organizing the South

People worked on issues from health care monopolies to welfare rules in West Virginia, state repression of ex-prisoners in Los Angeles, combating the modern enslavement of immigrant farm workers and domestic workers, food preparation, gaining full rights for those with “disabilities,” preparing vegan food, understanding of the need of trans people for gender

neutral bathrooms, struggling to organize labor in the South, battling police brutality, defending immigrant rights.

Also, freeing political prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, Puerto Rican liberation fighters and the Cuban Five and defending the rights of the more than 2 million prisoners of an oppressive state, and fighting to end the occupations of Palestine and Iraq. This list doesn't begin to exhaust the choices. A message from Mumia Abu-Jamal to the forum was played at the closing plenary session and at the family reunion rally organized by family members of prisoners and former prisoners.

Hundreds of workshops—each with a half-dozen to a few hundred participants—took place at each of the sessions over the three conference days. Special tents on Africa, Palestine, youth and others hosted hundreds of guests. And full-time networking went on in every space on the venue throughout the forum.

## From Katrina to TransJustice

The plenary sessions—attended by some 500 to 1,500 people depending on the particular evening and

topic—gave organizers an opportunity to reach the most people with one talk.

The plenary sessions attempted to cover the following six struggles: Gulf Coast Reconstruction in the Post-Katrina Era; War, Militarism and the Prison Industrial Complex; Indigenous Voices: From the Heart of Mother Earth; Immigrant Rights; Liberating Gender and Sexuality: Integrating Gender and Sexual Justice Across Our Movements; and Workers' Rights in the Global Economy.

The plenary on Katrina drew a strong audience and made a strong statement that the survivors of the hurricane were

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IAC's Imani Henry speaks at USSF plenary June 30.



FIST June 30 panel on Che's Living Legacy included, left to right, Mia Campbell, Women's Fightback Network; Mike Martinez, Bolivarian Youth; FIST members Caleb T. Maupin, Larry Hales, Dante Strobino, Tyneisha Bowens and Glenn Spagnuolo, Recreate '68 Alliance.



Countering Historical Injustice workshop panel at the USSF on June 29 included far left to right, Gloria Rubac, Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement; Jewel Nelms, mother of Frances Newton, executed in 2005; Njeri Shakur, TDPAM; Javier Rodriguez, March 25th Coalition; Monica Moorehead, Millions for Mumia/IAC; Larry



Holmes, Troops Out Now Coalition; Saladin Muhammad, Black Workers For Justice and Kuusela Hilo, BAYAN-USA. Other panelists were Alicia Jrapko, International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five; Larry Hales, FIST; Nellie Bailey, Harlem Tenants Council; Teresa Gutierrez, May 1st Immigrant Rights Coalition; Sharon Danaan, Cleveland Lucasville 5 Committee; John Parker, IAC; Arturo J. Pérez Saad, Workers World activist and Mia Campbell who read a statement from Toni Zeidan, Leonard Peltier Defense Committee.

Indigenous women speak at July 1 closing plenary.

WW PHOTOS: JOHN CATALINOTTO AND MONICA MOOREHEAD

# Message from Cuban organizations to the U.S. Social Forum

The Cuban and international organizations based in Cuba, joined together on the Cuban Committee of the World Social Forum, would like to express our appreciation of and solidarity with the United States Social Forum, which will be an important political contribution to the struggle for that other world that is possible and necessary, and that together we are committed to building.

It was in the greatest interest of our organizations to be present at the Social Forum in Atlanta. Unfortunately, restrictions currently in force on the granting of visas—the result of the stubborn and hostile policy against Cuba followed by the United States government—prevent us from being with you on this occasion.

Atlanta would have been another platform for denouncing the unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade to which our people have been and are being subjected; for opposing the demented, unbridled militaristic escalation of the United States government and its wars of aggression and plunder against other

peoples; for demanding freedom for the Cuban Five, unjustly imprisoned in the United States for fighting the terrorist actions of Cuban-American right-wing forces based in the United States that have cost Cuba thousands of innocent victims; and for condemning the impunity and hypocrisy of the Bush administration in providing protection and refuge to the notorious Cuban-born terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, recently exonerated from charges and set free in the United States, among other important issues. We very much would have liked, as well, to explain to you the successes achieved through the modest work of cooperation in solidarity carried out by the Cuban Revolution in the interest of the well-being and social justice of other peoples, who for centuries had been denied their right to health, knowledge and hope.

However, those who believed that Cuba's voice would be silenced in Atlanta were wrong once again. We feel that we are represented by numerous friends and social actors from the United States

and other corners of the planet, and that in solidarity they will raise our banners of struggle and multiply our ideas. We stand together with the noble people of the United States who are mobilizing and uniting to celebrate their first Social

Forum. It is to them that this message of gratitude and unwavering solidarity goes. Another world is possible!

— Cuban Committee  
of the World Social Forum  
Havana, Cuba, June 25



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

"How many ways to be LGBT: From Rainbow Flags to Rainbow Solidarity" June 28 panel at USSF included left to right, Andre Powell, IAC; Bev Hiestand, Buffalo United for Choice; Leslie Feinberg, an initiator of Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five; Elizabeth Rivera, TransJustice Project of the Audre Lorde Project and Caleb T. Maupin, Cleveland FIST. (Not shown in photo: Tyneisha Bowens, Raleigh FIST.)

## Challenge to U.S. blockade of Cuba

Left, Daniel, a volunteer, painting one of the buses to go on the Pastors for Peace caravan to Cuba. With donated boxes of medical and educational equipment and tools to be loaded in donated trucks and buses, Daniel joined others preparing for the send-off of these gifts on July 1 in Brooklyn, N.Y.

On the 18th Pastors for Peace caravan to defy the imperialist U.S. blockade against Cuba, volunteers plan to meet others from all over the world in socialist Cuba. Groups such as FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together, the Venceremos Brigade, U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange, Pastors for Peace and others will protest the reactionary U.S. blockade, laws banning travel to Cuba and all attacks on the Cuban people.

Right, the U.S./Cuba Friendship Caravan successfully crossed the U.S.-



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Canadian border on June 30, bolstered by about 100 demonstrators rallying and marching alongside them all the way to U.S. customs.

However, a June 30 press release from Pastors notes that aid destined for mater-



PHOTO: RAMON B.

nity clinics and nursing homes in Cuba was detained. "Pastors for Peace spent six hours in a standoff with Homeland Security attempting to negotiate passage of the medical aid before the shipment was detained for thirty days to

investigate its security threat to the U.S." For more information, visit [www.pastorsforpeace.org](http://www.pastorsforpeace.org) or call 347-423-4330 or 212 926-5757.

—Anne Pruden

## Cuba surpasses world on same-sex, trans rights

By Leslie Feinberg

The Communist Party of Cuba has welcomed an update of the revolutionary Family Code to include same-sex and trans rights, reported National Center for Sexual Education (CENESEX) Director Mariela Castro Espín at the 5th International Culture and Development Congress held in Havana on June 11-14.

Journalist Dalia Costa reported from Havana on June 18, "If the initiative is approved, gay and lesbian couples would enjoy the same civil, patrimonial, inheritance, housing and adoption rights as heterosexual couples." ([caribbean360.com](http://caribbean360.com))

Costa added, "Norma Guillart, an expert involved in the work of a group of lesbians in CENESEX, told IPS that the reform would also recognize the right of any woman to assisted reproduction services, which are currently limited to married couples."

Castro Espín said that in expectation of the legal changes, a request has already been filed with the Ministry of Public Health to provide reproductive assistance

to three lesbian couples. (Cuban News Agency)

The amendment to the Family Code, Costa stated, would also "stipulate that the family has the responsibility and duty to accept and care for all of its members, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation."

The planned reform, drafted by the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) and backed by CENESEX, will be introduced to the people's parliament as a draft law.

### Same-sex marriage

Currently in the U.S., efforts by Republicans and Democrats—both political parties of capitalist big business—have pushed for reactionary legislation defining marriage as "between a man and a woman" solely to block the rights of same-sex couples.

But in Cuba, Article 36 of the Family Code of the revolutionary workers' state was defending the rights of women emerging from colonial and imperialist patriarchal enslavement when it codified in 1975

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## 'Gay Cuba'

By Leslie Feinberg

Two Cuban-backed documentaries about changing attitudes on the island towards same-sex love and gender variance—which in turn deepened that change—opened in theaters on the island in the mid-1990s.

"Gay Cuba" (1996) was a project of Cuba's Félix Varela Center (CFV). Activist Sonia de Vries—raised in Amsterdam and now living and organizing in Kentucky—wrote and directed the documentary, which objectively struck a blow against the political blockade of Cuba by U.S. imperialism.

"Gay Cuba" is a series of interviews—a radio host and a singer/poet, an artist and a gay male elected union general secretary, a transgender factory worker and a journalist, an HIV-positive doctor and an interpreter, soldiers and teenaged law students—who offer personal anecdotes and individual observations about attitudes towards same-sex love in Cuba.

The interviews are interspersed with archival footage of the revolutionary seizure of power. The sound track incorporates the music of world renowned Cuban

musicians Pablo Milanés and Silvio Rodríguez.

The Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) hosted the pre-release screening of the documentary in Havana in 1994. The same year, the FMC invited a group named "U.S. Queers for Cuba" to visit the island. (Leonardo Hechavarría and Marcel Hatch)

"'Gay Cuba' was shown at the Havana International Festival of Latin American Cinema to public and critical acclaim," wrote Larry R. Oberg.

The documentary turned its cameras onto the audiences of "Strawberry and Chocolate" ("Fresa y Chocolate"), another film made with the help of the Cuban state. "Gay Cuba" captured some of the enthusiastic responses of Cubans who had just seen "Strawberry and Chocolate"—a 1993 film about a heterosexual communist and a homosexual Cuban—at the Yara cinema.

"Fantastic!" a filmgoer who described himself as a heterosexual, masculine male exclaimed. "If I could have a friend like that I would!"

Jorge Perugorría, a lead actor in "Strawberry and Chocolate," said in this

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lavender  
&  
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# South Korea says 'No!' to U.S. bases

On June 25 Hyun Ae Ja, a member of the Korean parliament, was in her 21st day of a hunger strike to protest the building of a naval base on Cheju Island, located just south of South Korea and facing China across the Yellow Sea. Cheju Island is a well-known resort town boasting beautiful beaches and gorgeous landscapes, "the Korean answer to Hawaii," according to the travel advertisements.

The following are excerpts of an interview conducted by Sue Harris of People's Video Network with Hyun Ae Ja and translated by Haesook Kim.

Kangjung village in Cheju province was the fourth selected because the three earlier selections refused the naval base. The Cheju provincial government announced in the media that through a 1,500-person survey—out of the total population of 50,000 on the island—Cheju wanted the base.

Although Noh Moo Hyun, president of South Korea, named the island an "Island of Peace," the government nevertheless had plans to build the military base on it, and the provincial government forced the inconsistent policies on the people.

As a member of KDLP [Korean Democratic Labor Party], which has been struggling against war, I was willing to struggle against the government's military plan.

Recently public opinion against the base is showing a sharp increase, particularly from the Kangjung villagers, but the provincial governor is still strongly insisting on the base. Unofficially, I received infor-

mation that the South Korean government and Ministry of National Defense have expressed a withdrawal opinion, but they are in a dilemma because the provincial governor's pro-base position is so firm.

Since the FTAs [Free Trade Agreements with the U.S.], the economy of the island has been suffering. The provincial government argues that the military base will bring increasing benefits to the economy and some people agree.

It is true that a lot of difficulties exist. However, while the ministry has advanced the base plan and pushed a plan to build an air base there as well, the National Assembly has reduced the budget in 2006 and 2007.

During the investigation by the Assembly, it was discovered that the provincial government had rejected public opinion and hadn't completed the basic investigation, which was to include an environmental assessment. As a result, it won't be easy to pass the plan through the Assembly.

The people on Cheju Island inherited the spirit of the April 3, 1948, uprising, so that their sentiments against war are firm. We won heroic victories in both the 1988 and 2002 struggles for the withdrawal of military bases.

Now a provincial task force committee, composed of 50-60 social and civic organizations, has been formed; and the city task force committee, consisting of about 10 social and civic organizations, has also been created and is playing an important role. More than 50 percent of Kangjung villagers have already signed a petition against the base. □



PHOTOS: HAESOOK KIM

Sue Harris of People's Video Network and the International Action Center, top center, participates in meeting in Kangjung village. PVN visited Hyun Ae Ja at her encampment in front of the civic building in Cheju Island and interviewed her. There was a press conference and later that evening there was a town meeting of about 300 people where Harris's statements were received with great enthusiasm.

## 'Gay Cuba'

Continued from page 7

documentary, "Strawberry and Chocolate" is the story of an encounter ... between a communist militant and a homosexual, and how their friendship develops out of this encounter. What happened with the film is that it surpassed the cinematographic phenomena, and became a social phenomenon. People had never before discussed homosexuality so much."

Cuban journalist Gisela Arandia stressed in "Gay Cuba," "For people in other parts of the world, 'Strawberry and Chocolate' might be just another movie. For Cuba, it was an essential moment in our society's development, because never before had these topics been dealt with in public."

### Measure of change

"Gay Cuba" was a weathervane that pointed in the direction of prevailing winds of change in the revolutionary battle against the legacy of centuries of colonialist and imperialist cultural domination.

The interviews offered a cross-section of consciousness.

"They're people. One should treat them normally, but keep them away," one youth with her friends told the interviewer.

"They are part of our Cuban-ness, part of our people. We have to accept them as such," said an older man.

One young woman recalled going to a judgmental therapist about her attraction to other women. "I stood up, but first told him that he was mediocre and a bad psychologist and that I regretted being there. Then I stood up and left."

Another young woman remembered going to see a psychologist to try to change her same-sex attraction. "At the end of the week, she told me, 'Look, love, I see that you are happy as you are. Don't try to change. It's nothing out of this world.

Nothing bad.'"

A cross-dressing factory worker explained, "Besides working here I am an artist. I imitate Sarita Montiel. I'm a drag queen. Everyone calls me 'Sarita.' My relationship with the workers here in the factory is wonderful. I've been here 12 years."

One young Cuban said when she was in high school, she thought that she was not accepted into the communist youth (UJC) group because there was discussion about whether she was or was not a lesbian.

Another Cuban emphasized, "I've read the statutes of the UJC, and I don't remember reading any article that said that being homosexual is an obstacle to being a member of the UJC. There are thousands of homosexuals in the UJC, from the roots to the leadership."

Lourdes Flores, from Cuba's National Center for Sex Education, stated in her interview, "As a center we see homosexuality as a sexual orientation, just like heterosexuality or bisexuality." She added, "We have led workshops on the topic of homosexuality; sexuality in general, homosexuality in particular. The workshops are very interesting. For example, we have workshops with teachers, doctors, the general population, community activists and youth."

"Gay Cuba" showed viewers a transgender performance organized by a neighborhood Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR).

### 'Break the blockade!'

The political views towards the Revolution of those who spoke on camera in "Gay Cuba" largely could only be gleaned through their anecdotes. The

individual experiences narrated in this documentary were positive and negative, in varying degrees.

Progress in Cuba is the measurable difference between the two.

It is painful to hear Llane Alexis Domínguez say onscreen that when his father found out he was homosexual, "He actually said he'd like to beat me to death!" In Cuba, however, men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women are not being tortured and lashed to fences to die, beaten to death, stabbed or shot or strangled, decapitated and dismembered—all too frequent occurrences in the U.S.

A gay male Cuban worker sums up that in Cuba in 1994 what was largely left to deal with were individual attitudes. "I don't think that Cuba's situation is as critical for gay people as it is in other countries," he explained. "I have the opportunity to study and to work here and no one can stop me. They might try to, but it's that individual, not the system itself."

He called on the gay community in the U.S. to help break the blockade, which, de Vries pointed out in her 1994 documentary commentary, "has cost the Cuban economy over \$40 billion since 1960; the resulting fuel shortages and scarcity of food and medicine have impacted all Cubans."

### Precious footage

The documentary also provides historic footage of Cuban nova trova singer Pablo Milanés singing his song "Original sin" at a 1994 public concert in Havana. ("El Pecado Original" is available on Milanés's CD "Orígenes.")

Milanés—a Cuban who harvested in the UMAP brigades in the mid-1960s, and

who is beloved in Cuba—told the concert audience, "I dedicate this song to homosexuals, to gay people, and to all those who are marginalized and are suffering in the world."

Milanés sang: "Two souls, two bodies, two men who love each other, are being expelled from the paradise they live in. Neither of them is a warrior with victories to boast of. Neither of them has riches, to calm the ire of their judges. Neither is a president, neither is a censor of his own desires. We are not god. Let's not make the same mistakes again."

Larry Olberg noted, "Introduced at his annual holiday concert held in the vast Karl Marx Theater in the Miramar neighborhood of Havana, 'El Pecado Original' took the audience and the country by storm and did much to advance the cause of gay acceptance." (cubasolidarity.com)

"Gay Cuba" includes footage documenting the position of gay transgender Cubans at the head of the annual, massive May Day march in 1995, which was joined by two lesbian and gay delegations invited from the U.S. There's also footage of a lesbian and gay Cuban contingent in the José Martí procession.

At the close of "Gay Cuba," radio host Anna Maria Ramos concluded, "We have been in 35 years of revolution, a revolution that by no means has been static; that has made changes constantly. In every sense, we are prepared for change. The roots of homophobia have not been driven so deep into the soil of Cuban earth. They can be pulled out."

Next: "Butterflies on the Scaffold"—creating room for more genders.

To find out more about Cuba, read parts 86-103 of Lavender & Red at workers.org.

E-mail: lfeinberg@workers.org

lavender  
&  
red #104



# Hopes and dangers confront Koreans

By Deirdre Griswold

It appears that an agreement has been reached between the Bush administration and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that could reduce tensions between Washington and Pyongyang over the so-called "nuclear crisis."

The anti-imperialist and anti-war movements need to be clear on this fact, however: Imperialist hostility toward the socialist north of the Korean Peninsula has not lessened one bit and will surely emerge in a new form. International solidarity with the embattled DPRK, which has confronted a nuclear-equipped army of U.S. occupation on its border for more than half a century, is more important than ever.

At the end of June, the DPRK admitted inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to visit its Yongbyon nuclear reactor.

This move came soon after the U.S. allowed a bank in Macau to unfreeze millions of dollars belonging to the DPRK. The U.S. had demanded that the north be

denied access to its own assets, claiming they came from money laundering, forgery and other criminal activities. However, this move was widely seen as just another form of U.S. pressure on the DPRK during negotiations—a conclusion supported by the fact that, now that an agreement on the DPRK's nuclear program appears to have been reached, Washington has dropped its allegations about the money.

Talks among six countries—the DPRK, U.S., Japan, China, Russia and South Korea—in February agreed that the DPRK should receive one million tons of fuel oil as compensation for dismantling its nuclear program. This was stalled, however, when the U.S. blocked the unfreezing of the DPRK's assets. Now South Korea is reportedly prepared to supply the north with the first 50,000 tons of this oil, according to a July 2 Associated Press dispatch. It remains to be seen if this will happen or if Washington will throw further roadblocks in the way.

Energy has been a key issue in Korea, which experiences severe winters. While the U.S. helped facilitate the develop-

ment of nuclear power in the south, where many reactors are in operation, it threw a fit when the DPRK announced it was developing the capability to generate nuclear energy—and to produce nuclear weapons to defend itself. The DPRK last October tested a nuclear weapon and has produced several types of missiles that could deliver bombs.

The DPRK is not relying solely on imported oil or on nuclear power to meet its energy needs. It is also trying to increase its capacity to generate electricity from sustainable sources like hydroelectric, wind and tidal power. However, this will take considerable investment and in the meantime fuel oil is indispensable to the DPRK, as it continues to be in the rest of the world.

## U.S.-Japanese threats against Korea

Even as the DPRK has moved to lessen tensions through diplomacy, however, it has had to remain vigilant on the military front.

While the Bush administration remains bogged down in Iraq and Afghanistan—which undoubtedly accounts for its wanting to move the issue of Korea to the back burner for now—it is giving the extreme militarists in the Japanese imperialist ruling class a green light to flex their muscles. Japanese fighter planes recently participated with the U.S. in military exercises in Guam—the first time since World War II that Japanese forces have engaged in operations in other countries.

This sets off alarm bells in Korea, which was a Japanese colony for 35 years and suffered tremendously under its harsh rule.

The U.S. occupied the southern part of Korea toward the end of WWII and has kept troops there ever since—the number currently is almost 30,000. Right after defeating Japan, the U.S. rearmed the hated Japanese troops to restore "law and order" in Korea—that is, to suppress the revolution led by Kim Il Sung that had already liberated the north.

An article by Stephen R. Shalom in the scholarly journal *Critical Asian Studies*, published this March, gives some of the details:

"At first Koreans were told that the colonial government would continue

to function with all of its Japanese and Korean personnel, including the Japanese Governor-General. Japanese soldiers wearing armbands that said 'USMG'—United States Military Government—patrolled the streets.

"Amidst Korean outrage, Washington and [Gen. Douglas] MacArthur soon ordered the U.S. commander on the spot to remove the Japanese officials, which he did, but U.S. personnel then called on the Japanese officials as informal advisors. Many Koreans who had served in the colonial bureaucracy were retained.

"Every Korean who worked for the Japanese Bureau of Justice was kept on, and the national police—a particularly oppressive institution under the Japanese—continued to be led by officers who had served in the colonial force. U.S. officials admitted that there was enough evidence to hang the two top leaders of the national police several times over, but they were not removed.

"A measure of the popularity of the U.S. occupation was that more police were needed to keep order in southern Korea than in the whole of Korea under Japanese rule.

"Utilizing the Japanese colonial structures was not an oversight on the part of the United States. It was the only way to block the emergence of a left-wing government in the south, which had the backing of a majority of the population.

"The result, of course, was the establishment of a reactionary dictatorship in the south, leading to civil war in the south and then war/civil war with the north with casualties in the millions."

For many years, the U.S. has tried to reverse the Korean Revolution and reconquer the north on its own. If a new U.S.-Japanese military alliance against Korea—and potentially against China—is emerging, it may show that the U.S. ruling class realizes it must share both the costs and the anticipated plunder of aggression with others.

In any case, U.S.-Japanese military cooperation has already stiffened the resolve of the Korean people, north and south, to even more fiercely resist imperialist domination, no matter where it comes from. □

## Cuba surpasses world on same-sex, trans rights

Continued from page 7

that "marriage is the voluntary union between a man and a woman."

In Cuba today, common law couples enjoy the same rights as married couples. And children all have the same rights, whether born to single women, couples who are unmarried, married, living together, separated or divorced. (caribbean360.com)

Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba's National Assembly, stated in the spring, "We have to abolish any form of discrimination" against homosexuality. He explained, "We are trying to see how to do that, whether it should be to grant them the right to marry or to have same-sex unions. We have to redefine the concept of marriage. Socialism should be a society that does not exclude anybody."

Castro Espín said that the proposal to add same-sex marriage to the Cuban Constitution will be taken up when that charter is next amended. "For now," she added, "it is sufficient to reform the Family Code, which is recognized as a branch of Cuban law."

In her presentation on the last day of the international congress, Castro Espín emphasized, "The political will exists to eliminate all forms of discrimination in our laws."

"Laws by themselves are not sufficient

for achieving real change," she noted, but they are necessary to achieve forward momentum.

## Trans rights moving forward

The proposed reforms to the Family Code also serve to bolster CENESEX's 2004 national strategy to support the needs of transsexual and transgender Cubans. This plan, Castro Espín explained, "is already being put into effect." (caribbean360.com)

The plan involves winning greater acceptance in the educational system and consciousness-raising among the revolutionary security forces.

Sex reassignment surgery—cost-free, like all forms of health care in Cuba—will be more available on request.

Twenty-four transsexual Cubans, who have won support from CENESEX since 1979, have applied for surgery. Many of them have already had their identity documents amended. Some 40 other Cubans have applied for sex-reassignment.

"Nearly everything is ready," Castro Espín concluded. "An internal Public Health Ministry regulation has authorized the performance of this surgery by the specialized health services, and work has been carried out in training staff and acquiring technology, medical supplies and prosthetics." □

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## Libby, Bush & Iraq

When George W. Bush was a Texas governor, he presided over and allowed 152 executions after a cursory review, commuting only one sentence to life imprisonment. Up to this July, President Bush was equally stingy in handing out pardons or commuting sentences. During that time Bush posed as a champion of law and order and a firm judge of humanity.

Thus Bush's quick decision to commute the three-year sentence of his convicted crony I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby has the appearance of a cynical and hypocritical maneuver inconsistent with his former behavior. However cynical and hypocritical it may be, however, his commutation is sublimely consistent with Bush's ideology, his way of life, his style of ruling and that of his entire inside team of world-class criminals. As such, his freeing of Libby throws a spotlight on the character of the entire U.S. imperialist ruling class and on the reality of class and racial oppression in the United States.

To Marxists, the Bush administration is "the executive committee of the ruling class." The Bush "team"—the word "gang" provides a more accurate description—despite its excessive arrogance and apparent incompetence, fits that Marxist description. Its members come from the imperialist ruling class and reflect its ambitions to dominate the world, its willingness to use military force to achieve its aims and its narrow and provincial view of the rest of humanity, even its imperialist allies. The Bush team is a criminal gang but it is no aberration.

Those men and one woman executed in Texas while Bush was governor were all poor and mostly African Americans or of Mexican origin. They suffered from racist and class oppression. To Bush and his cohorts, they were lesser beings. The imperialist ruling class here considers it

better to execute 150 people, even if they might be innocent, than to appear soft and perhaps encourage oppressed people to fight for their liberation.

Libby, on the other hand, is the son of an investment banker. He is one of the Bush team's cronies. Also, he carried out his part of the bargain: he didn't let those investigating the administration know who in the Bush gang leaked the information that Valerie Plame was a CIA operative—an act that could be considered treasonous under U.S. law. To allow him to serve his 30-month sentence might result in his talking somewhere in the future.

Remember that this crime Libby was charged with—obstructing the investigation of who leaked Plame's name—is only a tiny part of the Bush gang's enormous crime: waging an aggressive, imperialist war against Iraq. The Bush administration plotted the war, starting with the excuse of 9/11 and waged a campaign of lies to justify the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. It did this with the complicity of the U.S. imperialist ruling class, who believed they would be enriched by a quick victory. In a way, it is the Iraqi resistance and the failure of the occupation that put Libby on trial.

Bush's decision to commute Libby's sentence is simply a continuation of his gang's arrogant policy that whatever works for them is OK. This attitude reflects that of the U.S. ruling class internationally, who believe their own power can guarantee their profits.

The Iraqis are showing that the U.S. rulers and their military are not so powerful as they believed. And the Bush administration—and the entire ruling class here—can find out that their arrogant displays of arbitrary power at home can arouse a stronger opposition than they believed. □



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

## Organizers bring struggles to Social Forum

*Continued from page 6*

still fighting against a hostile and racist government authority but had not given up on winning back their right to return and to rebuild their lives.

The Indigenous plenary—and a later demonstration on the stage at the Sunday morning "Peoples' Assembly"—showed that the first nations in this hemisphere would be heard.

For anti-imperialists, the militarism plenary was likely the most disappointing. Though the early speakers laid the groundwork for a fighting plenary and an Iraqi oil unionist got a standing ovation when he called for "driving out the occupiers," the strategy talk called only to get rid of the Bush government, which meant little more than electing a Democratic president in 2008.

In addition, one of the speakers, an Israeli woman, made a frontal attack on Hamas for alleged misogyny and had the gall to demand a change in Palestinian leadership. The next night, after the Indigenous plenary, the USSF organizers gave the floor to a Palestinian woman activist to answer this frontal attack on self-determination.

The gender and sexual justice plenary, which opened an insightful discussion involving a lack of understanding and sensitivity within the progressive movement on this issue, ended in a burst of anti-

imperialist and pro-socialist education. Imani Henry of the International Action Center, who is also a leading activist in TransJustice, was able to effectively raise a series of militant issues.

Henry discussed the defense of the Cuban Five—the only time this important case was raised at a plenary—and also of the New Jersey Four lesbians, all African Americans, jailed for up to 11 years for defending themselves. He aroused solidarity for some transgender people at the forum who had been harassed by the Atlanta police, called for making September an anti-war month, and raised a cry for ending capitalism and building a socialist society. He got a standing ovation.

Since at the current time the social forums are structured as a space for discussion and not as a plan for action, those interested in planning joint actions participated in a "People's Assembly"—the last plenary. Though many had left, more than 1,000 people stayed for this session, where all the organizations and regions could raise their proposals. The only anti-war proposal was a call from the Troops Out Now Coalition to make September the next anti-war month and to raise TONC's call for an encampment in Washington, D.C., starting Sept. 22, with a "People's Peace Congress" on Sept. 28 and a mass march Sept. 29 calling for an end to the war abroad and the war at home. □



U.S. Social Forum march, Atlanta, June 27.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

### WW at the U.S. Social Forum

When 10,000 grass-roots activists assembled last week for the first U.S. Social Forum, Workers World was there. Our correspondents attended this historic gathering in Atlanta to report on it and bring the news of this exciting gathering to our readers here and worldwide, both through our newspaper and our Web site ([www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org))

But Workers World reporters also traveled there to join in the social forum's demonstrations, workshops, and plenary sessions. We wanted to show our solidarity with the many organizers who are in the midst of hard-fought struggles against all forms of oppression inside the U.S. And to show support for people's movements around the world, many of which were represented there.

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# Scottish panel finds Libyan wrongfully convicted in Lockerbie

By Gary Wilson

Former Libyan intelligence agent Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed Al Megrahi was wrongfully convicted and sentenced to life in prison for allegedly plotting the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103.

That's the conclusion of the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission. The commission said in its report on June 28 that after a three-year investigation they have found that Al Megrahi, who was convicted in 2001, had "suffered a miscarriage of justice."

The commission listed six grounds where it believed "a miscarriage of justice may have occurred."

Al Megrahi has always said he had nothing to do with the bombing of the airplane, which killed all passengers on board as well as several people on the ground in Lockerbie, Scotland, where the wreckage fell to the ground.

The conviction of Al Megrahi came after the U.S. had repeatedly attacked Libya, including the bombing of the presidential residence. The Reagan administration also imposed economic sanctions on Libya, a form of warfare, and the people of

Libya suffered greatly.

In 2003, the Libyan government agreed to pay \$270 million to families of the Lockerbie victims, under an agreement to have the U.S.-imposed sanctions lifted. Libyan authorities have never admitted any guilt for something that the Scottish commission now apparently agrees they did not do.

## Washington finds a new target

Now, with the Scottish authorities seeming to agree that Libya had nothing to do with the airline bombing, the U.S. media has picked up Washington's new target, Iran, and is reporting that it was really Iran behind the bombing. (AP, June 28)

At the time of the conviction of Al Megrahi, Workers World correspondent John Catalinotto wrote:

"The strongest evidence that a Libyan had a motive for the Pan Am crash—any Libyan—was the crimes of U.S. imperialism against that north African country. The rest was concocted by U.S. and British government agents and experts who had control of the evidence.

"To understand how the U.S. gov-

ernment manipulated the propaganda around the trial, it helps to review some of the events leading up to the December 1988 crash.

"In 1986, the U.S. launched a sneak bombing attack on the Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi from air bases in Britain. ...

"The Reagan administration was constantly tightening economic restrictions on Libya in that period. [Reagan launched a] 100-plane bombing raid that targeted Qaddafi's family home as well as air bases and barracks. One of Qaddafi's young daughters was killed in the raid, along with other Libyans.

"The French Embassy in Tripoli was also bombed, which the Pentagon claimed was a mistake. France had refused to let U.S. bombers fly over its air space on their way to bomb Libya.

"This was a state-sponsored terrorist attack on Libya with the aim of assassinating that country's president. The media here presented it differently. But the rulers knew what they were doing, and they knew it was a crime. They knew Libya had every moral right to strike back.

"But Libya was not alone in this condition."

## U.S. terrorism against Iran

"In the summer of 1988, the USS Vincennes, stationed in Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf, shot down an Iranian airliner. Some 290 civilians were killed. The official Pentagon story was that this was an accident. ...

"Shooting down the civilian airliner was another type of terrorist attack that U.S. forces carried out, not with a hidden bomb but with a sophisticated rocket. ...

"It is unfortunate that the honest and heartfelt feelings of grief and anger of the relatives of those who died on Pan Am Flight 103 have been manipulated against Libya. It would be more fitting if they would join with Libyan, Iranian, Iraqi and other victims of U.S. aggression and exploitation and point their fingers at the real terrorists in Washington and the Pentagon, in the CIA and Congress, who assault the people of the world." (Workers World, Feb. 15, 2001)

*Catalinotto's full report can be read at [www.workers.org/ww/2001/lockerbie0215.php](http://www.workers.org/ww/2001/lockerbie0215.php).*

## With Bush weakened

# Supreme Court pushes right wing's agenda

Continued from page 3

nies. On [June 18], the justices ruled that securities underwriters on Wall Street are generally immune from civil antitrust lawsuits." (New York Times, June 22) The appointed-for-life justices ruled in favor of 10 leading investment banks accused of conspiring to fix the terms and prices for initial public offerings of stock.

In many cases, the shareholders involved are pension funds that have been set up in recent years because Social Security is not enough to live on and workers have been losing pension plans that are partially or wholly funded by employers.

These rulings against shareholders therefore affect many workers as well as middle class individuals while protecting the richest of the rich.

Other rulings by the court in recent months have set back gains made by women and by the millions, overwhelmingly working class and predominantly people of color, who are ensnared by this country's vast prison system.

The court approved the so-called Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, which limits women's freedom to choose whether or not to terminate a pregnancy.

It also made it more difficult for prisoners to appeal their convictions—just at a time when DNA evidence has shown how many people are railroaded to jail on flimsy "evidence."

One ruling said that a prisoner could not file an appeal late, even if the court had given his lawyer the wrong date as the deadline.

Another restricted the jurisdiction of the federal courts to rule on habeas corpus petitions from state prison inmates.

And yet another ruling made it easier for prosecutors in death penalty cases to remove potential jurors who might be doubtful about the use of the death penalty.

Workers who are cheated on their pay also felt the heavy hand of this pro-big-business court. It ruled that employees



Reaction to 1954 court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* against school segregation. Today, the high court has ruled against school desegregation.

had only 180 days to file a discrimination case—even if they were not aware that they were being paid less than other workers until after the time had expired. Many workers are instructed by employers at the time they are hired not to discuss their pay rate with other employees, and become aware of discrimination only after time has passed.

## Not just Republicans vs. Democrats

In most of these decisions, the court was split 5-4. Four members of the court are considered diehard ideological conservatives: Chief Justice Roberts, Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito. But they were joined in all the 5-4 decisions by Anthony M. Kennedy, considered a "moderate."

The five justices who make up this majority were all appointed by Republican presidents.

But they couldn't have been approved without support from Democrats in the Senate.

There was not one dissenting vote when Scalia was confirmed in 1986, or Kennedy in 1988. In 1991, Thomas was confirmed in a 52-48 vote when 11 Democrats, most of them former Dixiecrats, joined the Republican majority in backing the first Black conservative on the court. All the

Republicans and half the Democrats voted for Roberts in 2006. The vote for Alito later last year was again close: 52-48, with four Democrats providing the crucial swing votes.

However, the right-wing character of this majority on the court cannot be attributed just to differences between the Republican and Democratic parties, which are both political arms of U.S. big business, funded by and beholden to the capitalist ruling class, despite who votes for them in the elections.

The liberal court headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, which ruled against segregation in *Brown v. Board of Education* and other cases, was also full of Republican appointees. Warren himself, when a Republican governor of California in the 1940s, had approved the establishment of the notorious detention camps for Japanese-Americans during World War II.

Later, it was again a mostly Republican court that in 1973 approved *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark ruling on women's right to abortion.

What made these Republican-majority courts different from the one that exists today?

They made their decisions based on the ruling class's fear of the militant mass movements in that earlier period.

For several decades, beginning with the 1950s, millions of people took to the streets in much more than symbolic demonstrations.

The civil rights movement, in which African-American people and some white allies braved police dogs, fire hoses, the Ku Klux Klan and racist police in order to tear down the system of legalized racial discrimination, inspired a whole generation with the courage to fight for justice.

At the same time, all over the world people who had been oppressed and exploited by the rich capitalist colonial powers—including the U.S. as well as Western Europe and Japan—were up in arms, dedicating their lives in revolutionary wars to win their freedom.

The new militancy spread in the 1960s in the U.S. as youth fought the draft, soldiers rebelled against their commanders, and veterans returned from Vietnam decided they'd rather fight the system here than see young people become cannon fodder for the generals.

Soon the women's movement was shaking up the age-old patriarchy. And, with the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion, gay and trans people leaped out of the closet to confront bigotry and police brutality with days of street fighting in New York's Greenwich Village.

All of this dismayed the ruling class, which amasses so much of society's wealth during "peaceful" times when day-in, day-out exploitation goes on undisturbed.

They had to make concessions. And their hand-picked representatives on the court knew it. So they clenched their jaws and made decisions that would have been unthinkable in calmer times.

Today, a right-wing court seems to have the power of a juggernaut rolling over the rights of the masses of people. They're appointed for life and needn't fear a mere change in elected representatives. But let them feel the hot breath of popular, militant resistance and all that could change. □

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## SUPERDOME II

# Tasa de mortandad en Nueva Orleans sube 47%

Por Ellen Catalinotto

L@s residentes de Nueva Orleans están muriendo a un ritmo de 47 por ciento más que los niveles normales desde el huracán Katrina.

Cuando el huracán asestó su golpe en 2005, las agencias gubernamentales racistas e incompetentes fracasaron en proporcionar agua, alimentación y servicios sanitarios a la gente en el Superdome. Según un reporte publicado en junio de este año en la revista, "Medicina para desastres y la preparación de la Salud Pública", la secuela del desastre del Superdome es una tasa continua de casi 400 muertes mensuales, una cifra más allá de lo esperado.

El Dr. K.U. Stephens, jefe del departamento de salud pública de Nueva Orleans, encabezó el equipo de expertos que produjo el estudio que documenta el incremento en las tasas de mortandad. Los autores citan el colapso de la infraestructura de salud pública como la causa mayor de este incremento.

El reporte observa que "solo 15 de los 22 hospitales del área han sido reabiertos con menos de la mitad del número de camas que tenían antes de la tormenta. Una gran porción de la población vive todavía bajo condiciones deficientes, contribuyendo así al estrés dominante y no aliviado entre l@s morador@s".

El hospital público de Nueva Orleans

—llamado Caridad— que proporcionó cuidado médico a mucha de la gente pobre y sin seguro de salud, incluyendo a la mayoría que padece de enfermedades mentales, ha sido cerrado. Más de 4000 doctores se han mudados de la ciudad. La depresión, el estrés postraumático y otros problemas psiquiátricos han aumentado dramáticamente.

La carencia de recursos médicos se ha empeorado debido a la incapacidad de l@s oficiales de salud para contar, monitorear o reportar con precisión las condiciones que necesitan de intervención urgente. El reporte concluye que "una infraestructura de salud pública destruida o malamente recuperada, ha contribuido de hecho al exceso de mortalidad".

El estudio utilizó obituarios publicados en el Times-Picayune de Nueva Orleans, el periódico principal, para obtener las cifras de muertes ocurridas en el área metropolitana de Nueva Orleans desde enero hasta junio de 2006. Los datos oficiales de los certificados de muerte no están disponibles como resultado de la carencia de emplead@s y otros problemas en la oficina estadística de salud de la ciudad. Una comparación del promedio de la tasa de mortandad para 2002 hasta 2003 reveló que los obituarios en el Times-Picayune y los datos oficiales del estado de Luisiana eran muy similares.

Un promedio de 1317 personas murió

cada mes durante el periodo del estudio. Esto se compara con 924 antes de la tormenta, cuando la población de Nueva Orleans era mucho más grande. La cantidad de muertes fue más de 2300 en el curso del periodo de seis meses del estudio, aproximadamente dos veces el número que murió durante la tormenta. La tasa de mortandad durante los primeros seis meses del 2006 fue de 91 por cada 100.000 personas, más del 62 por cada 100.000 antes de Katrina, un incremento de un 47 por ciento.

Alrededor del mundo, la gente expuesta a emergencias catastróficas de salud pública muere por causas indirectas durante muchos años después. Estas muertes afectan a los sectores más vulnerables de la sociedad y son prevenibles en un 90 por ciento de los casos, según los redactores de la nueva revista de salud pública.

### Más allá del reporte

El reporte no se dirigió a las cuestiones de edad, raza, género o causa de muerte. El racismo resulta en amplias diferencias en el estatus de salud entre personas blancas y africana-americanas. Los estudios de las diferencias del estado de salud demuestran esto en todo, desde la mortandad infantil hasta el VIH, los tratamientos para enfermedades del corazón y el cáncer—incluso cuando el estatus de seguro es igual. Un patrón similar se

esperaría en las muertes pos-Katrina.

Otra cuestión importante de salud después del huracán Katrina es la exposición al moho y a otras sustancias tóxicas en las aguas producidas por la inundación. Pero para ver esos resultados se requerirán estudios de larga duración.

Las muertes entre l@s sobrevivientes que aún no pueden volver a Nueva Orleans no fueron incluidas en el reporte. Es@s evacuad@s enfrentan el trauma y el estrés de haber perdidos sus casas, pertenencias y redes sociales. Lograr el acceso al cuidado de salud en sus nuevos locales es solo uno de los múltiples problemas y estreses que enfrentan.

"Podemos entretenernos con números, pero al final, la gente está muriendo a un ritmo acelerado aquí pos-Katrina", dice Juliette Saussy, directora de los servicios médicos de emergencia de Nueva Orleans en una entrevista del 21 de junio en el periódico USA Today.

"La falta de cuidado primario, de tratamiento de salud mental y las largas esperas en las salas de emergencia, han empeorado las enfermedades crónicas que normalmente son controlables", ella dice. "Diabetes, enfermedades respiratorias e hipertensión son fatales, especialmente cuando no se tratan".

*La escritora fue enfermera voluntaria en la clínica de salud Tierra Común en Nueva Orleans en diciembre de 2005.*

## Usados y luego descartados

# 1,8 millones de veteran@s no tienen cuidado de salud

Por Caleb T. Maupin

Rosa Luxemburgo, la revolucionaria polaca y valerosa oponente de la guerra imperialista, escribió de los soldados que regresaban a Alemania después de la Primera Guerra Mundial que ellos habían "sacrificado la cantidad más grande de sangre y posesiones" pero que "regresaban a condiciones de necesidad y miseria, mientras que billones de dólares han sido acumulados en manos de unos pocos".

Ella diría lo mismo hoy de los soldados estadounidenses.

Los hombres y mujeres jóvenes que, con frecuencia impulsados por necesidades económicas se inscriben al servicio militar son traicionad@s. Los reclutadores patrullan los barrios pobres y oprimidos llevando promesas de beneficios para veteran@s. Los políticos capitalistas se jactan sobre cuánto "apoyan a las tropas".

Pero a pesar de toda su retórica y de todas las promesas vacías de los reclutadores, actualmente hay en los Estados Unidos 1,8 millones de veteran@s que no tienen seguro de salud ni acceso a cuidado médico, según el Washington Post del 21 de junio.

Parece que aunque l@s jóvenes donen su cuerpo a los que dominan este país, todavía no pueden conseguir lo que está garantizado en los países socialistas y hasta en algunos países capitalistas: cuidado de salud gratuito para tod@s.

Ya era un escándalo el que 45 millones de personas en los Estados Unidos no tuvieran alguna forma de cobertura de salud. Ahora, cuando cualquier persona supuestamente importante profesa su amor por las tropas que están luchando en la guerra de los ricos, es doblemente escandaloso el que ni siquiera l@s veteran@s puedan obtener servicios de salud.

Añadió el artículo del Post: "Las filas de l@s veteran@s sin seguro han aumentado 290.000 desde el 2000, dijo Stephanie J. Woolhandler, la profesora de Harvard

Medical School que presentó sus hallazgos al Comité de Representantes de los Estados Unidos sobre Asuntos de Veteranos. Cerca del 12,7 por ciento de veteran@s no-envejecientes — o uno de cada ocho — no tenía seguro de salud en 2004, el año más reciente con cifras disponibles, dijo, aumentando lo que en el 2000 era del 9,9 por ciento."

Algun@s de est@s veteran@s son elegibles para recibir los servicios de la Administración de Veteranos, pero no hay hospitales o facilidades cerca de donde viven. Recientemente el gobierno ha cerrado muchos de ellos — justo cuando están regresando much@s veteran@s con problemas múltiples.

Otra investigación reciente, llevada a cabo por el Dr. Drew A. Helmer para el Baylor College of Medicine, descubrió

que en un grupo de 56 veteran@s que regresaron de Irak y Afganistán, el promedio era de cuatro problemas físicos por cada un@, y que un 55 por ciento sufría de trastornos mentales. Estas investigaciones fueron publicadas en el Periódico de Medicina Ocupacional y Ambiental (Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine).

Quizás esta cruel indiferencia hacia l@s veteran@s no debe sorprender.

Bajo el capitalismo l@s trabajador@s están despedid@s cuando su trabajo ya no rinde muchas ganancias; la vivienda pública es reducida mientras aumenta el número de personas sin vivienda; se hacen recortes a los programas de cupones para alimentos; las escuelas están deteriorándose y los salones de clases están abarrotados de estudiantes mientras los ingresos de los súper ricos suben extraordinariamente.

En un sistema basado en las ganancias, cuando la gente ya no es instrumento útil para los que llenan las salas del poder, será desechada como cosa inútil, no importa cuántas promesas tengan que romperse. El único recurso para l@s veteran@s es organizarse y utilizar sus habilidades para resistir y luchar. □

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