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## From Alabama to Colombia

# Coal company faces war crimes charge

By Minnie Bruce Pratt  
Birmingham, Ala.

In a blow against transnational exploitation of workers and for North-South worker solidarity, Drummond, an Alabama-based coal company, was put on trial in federal court here, charged with the murder of labor union organizers at its mines in Colombia.

In 2001 Valmore Lacarno Rodríguez and Víctor Hugo Orcasita Amaya were murdered by a group of men, some wearing military uniforms. Lacarno and Orcasita were president and vice-president of the union representing 3,000 miners, SINTRAMIENERGETICA. Shortly thereafter Gustavo Soler was murdered when he became union president.

Rafael García, the former head of the Colombian intelligence department, the Administrative Department of Security (DAS), made a sworn statement that directly implicated Drummond in the murders. Under oath he stated he was an eyewitness to a meeting where Augusto Jiménez, president of Drummond LTD in Colombia, paid cash to members of the Self Defense Units of Colombia (AUC), the paramilitaries—to assassinate the union leaders.

Colombia is the world's deadliest country for union organizers. An AFL-CIO report estimates that 4,000 trade unionists have been murdered there since the mid-1980s, over 2,000 of them

since 1991. ([aflcio.org/issues/jobseconomy/globaleconomy/](http://aflcio.org/issues/jobseconomy/globaleconomy/))

The Drummond deaths took place during a unionization struggle of many years in which workers' demands included an end to extremely dangerous work conditions, low wages, 12-hour shifts and physical intimidation of union officials.

Drummond operates the La Loma mine in Colombia, the world's largest open-pit coal mine. Workers there produce 25 million tons of coal a year. A subsidiary of Drummond is also the largest U.S. producer of coke, a coal-derived fuel necessary to steelmaking. (New York Times, July 13)

Originally based in the 1930s out of the coal fields around Jasper, Ala., Drummond was one of the largest coal producers in the U.S. until the 1990s. The company moved its main mining operations to Colombia in 1993 to make higher profits by paying workers far lower wages than those in its unionized U.S. mines. The company is now one of the biggest foreign investors in the country and maintains barracks for the Colombian military on its mine property in order to "safeguard" its properties. (Wall Street Journal, Oct. 3, 2006)

### 'For justice'

The Birmingham trial, held from July 11-26, featured conflicting testimonies from union organizers and company executives.

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## 'CUBA SÍ, BLOQUEO NO!'

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Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) youth delegation before the magnificent statue of Commandante Che Guevara, a hero of the Cuban revolution, executed by CIA puppets in 1967 in Bolivia. Inscribed on the base of the statue—part of the Che memorial in Santa Clara, Cuba—are the words, 'Until the final victory' in Spanish. FIST, the Venceremos Brigade, Pastors for Peace and the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange jointly challenged U.S. travel restrictions to Cuba. There will be more on the FIST trip to Cuba in future WW issues.

Caption and photo by Monica Moorehead



**ALABAMA**

# Giant coal company on trial for 'war crimes'

*Continued from page 1*

Lawyers for the company attempted to discredit Juan Aguas, with the Colombian energy workers' union, by accusing him of giving testimony against Drummond because he was receiving a small stipend for living expenses from U.S. unions.

The lawyer challenged him, "You are doing this for money, right?" Aguas answered with dignity, "No, for justice." (Interview with Chapin Gray)

The United Steel Workers, along with the International Labor Rights Fund, filed suit in 2001 against Drummond under the Alien Tort Act. Passed originally in 1789, the law gave victims of U.S. pirates in international waters or foreign countries a legal right to sue their attackers in federal court.

In recent years activists have attempted to turn this law against transnational corporations believed to be exploiting and terrorizing workers. Companies sued under the act include Exxon Mobil, Occidental Petroleum and Chiquita Brands International. Executives with Chiquita recently admitted that its subsidiary company was making monthly payments to paramilitaries in Colombia. Chiquita is also being sued by the families of 144 people killed by paramilitaries in the area where Chiquita workers harvest bananas. (AP, July 7)

The Drummond case was the first to come to trial in the U.S. court system, and a victory in this case would have built momentum for other suits against other transnationals, according to Beth Stephens, a specialist in the statute and law professor at Rutgers University—Camden. (New York Times, July 13)

Birmingham U.S. District Judge Karon Bowdre dealt activists a heavy blow when she threw out the wrongful death segment of the case, claiming her court has no jurisdiction. The case then went to trial on the claim that Drummond participated in war crimes in that it colluded in murders sanctioned by the state. (Birmingham News, June 21)

Drummond's chief executive in Colombia, Augusto Jiménez, flatly denied paying or making agreements with any paramilitary group. He said, "Drummond is not part of the conflict." (Birmingham News, July 23)

**International worker solidarity**

The international anti-globalization movement of the past two decades has established the fact that the vested interests of transnational corporations are in direct conflict with workers organizing in every corner of the globe.

There are also sworn affidavits by a number of witness-

es, including some former members of the paramilitaries, that document payments by Drummond for violent intimidation of workers.

None of this information—which would establish Drummond's active role in "the conflict"—was allowed as testimony in U.S. federal court.

Nor was there testimony about Drummond's current treatment of its Alabama workers. On June 22, as pre-trial motions were being heard about the case in federal court in Birmingham, workers at the Drummond Shoal Creek mine had to be evacuated because of methane gas buildup. The same mine was shut down in February 2006 because methane ignited and exploded. Shoal Creek is Alabama's largest coal mine. (Birmingham News, June 22)

Drummond's Alabama mines have had a history of fires, cave-ins and other safety issues over the years. They were unionized by the United Mineworkers of America, which issued a statement condemning the murders of Colombian trade unionists.

UMWA Vice President Jerry Jones said: "We strongly condemn these assassinations of our trade union brothers. ... When Drummond chose to switch many of its operations to Colombia, it did so knowing that country's hostile political climate and egregious human rights violations." (umwa.org)

International worker solidarity is sorely needed in Alabama, where non-U.S. capital is moving in to exploit the work force, even as Southern-based companies move to Mexico and Latin America for super profits. In Alabama thousands work at three nonunionized major auto plants—Mercedes Benz, Hyundai, and Honda—with a fourth major plant on the way. A giant German steel corporation, ThyssenKrupp, has broken ground for a new plant in Mobile that will generate 20,000 direct and indirect jobs. (al.com) Labor costs for German firms are about 30 percent cheaper in Alabama than in Germany. (Cobb and Stueck, "Globalization and the American South")

On July 26, Drummond was found "not liable" for the murders of the three Colombian trade union organizers, in a decision that the Birmingham News characterized as a "defeat for labor" in efforts to hold U.S. companies accountable for actions and treatment of workers internationally.

But, instead, with the reindustrialization of Alabama, could conditions be developing for a revitalization of worker struggle there, and in solidarity with workers internationally? □

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# Credit crisis looms over UAW talks

By Martha Grevatt

Like a rapidly spreading virus, the subprime mortgage crisis has become, in a matter of weeks, a generalized crisis of the debt and credit markets. Even the wealthy, when they get the urge to merge, are having trouble financing their acquisitions. In a relatively short time every sector of the economy will feel the impact.

This has already happened in the auto industry. While the transaction is still going forward, the sale of Chrysler to Wall Street private equity firm Cerberus faces new, unanticipated difficulties. Since the subprime meltdown, which has now infected the entire credit industry, investors are shying away from the bond market. "A group of six banks acting for Cerberus Capital Management LP, the buyer of Chrysler, cancelled plans to sell \$12 billion in loans for Chrysler's auto business after failing to interest investors," explained the July 26 Detroit News.

"The investors' frosty response to the loan sale will raise the cost of the \$7.4 billion deal to sell Chrysler," the article added. "Depending on how the agreement is structured, the firm might end up having to pay higher interest rates than originally envisioned." On \$12 billion these higher rates could add up to hundreds of millions of dollars.

The whole purpose of the \$12 billion loan is to finance a new level of restructuring at the workers' expense. The billions are to be used in the power-train division to build new plants that—through robotics and computerization—will build more fuel-efficient engines and transmissions with less than half the workforce previously employed. Both Cerberus and Daimler—which will still own 21.9 percent of the new Chrysler holding company—as well as the banks will be fierce in their determination to see this restructuring and downsizing completed.

Chrysler, unlike Ford and GM, has not seen increased sales in the international markets. Chrysler needs a huge infusion of capital to increase its competitive edge and grab a bigger share of the North American market. Cerberus will be in a life-and-death struggle against GM and Ford, as well as the Asian and European transplants.

## What does it mean to workers?

What does the latest development—the debt crisis and its effect on the sale to Cerberus—mean for Chrysler workers? The big lenders want to see the new Chrysler bosses put the squeeze to the union. These lenders are like an invisible man sitting in on and directing the negotiations with the United Auto Workers.

Cerberus itself is of a type of vulture capitalist known for "stripping and flipping." Cerberus typically buys distressed industries, imposes huge cuts in wages and benefits, lays off large numbers of workers, closes some facilities and then sells the company at a huge profit.

Now Cerberus, a private equity and hedge fund corporation, will form a new privately held corporation called Chrysler Holding. Since there is no scrutiny or transparency, these speculators will be free to do whatever is necessary to increase profits at the expense of Chrysler workers—unless the workers fight back.

While making no guarantees, Cerberus has assured the UAW that, with regard to the purchase of Chrysler, they have a "no-exit strategy." Still, if strip and flip is now strip and hold, the result is the same—workers are being stripped of their means of subsistence.

Whatever Cerberus can squeeze from the workers at Chrysler, General Motors and Ford will demand the same from their workers in the name of staying competitive. During this protracted industry crisis, there is bitter competition among the Big Three to dominate the North American auto market. They too are feeling the effect of the credit crunch. It is getting in the way of their own restructuring, which they had hoped to accomplish by

selling off "non-core" parts of the business to private equity. Just weeks after GM announced the sale of GM's Allison Transmission division—seven plants employing thousands of workers—to the Carlyle Group, the sale is off.

All of the Big Three are seeking huge wage and benefit concessions from the UAW. For months they have been citing a combined \$100 billion owed on retiree health care costs—so-called legacy costs. Cerberus is liable for \$20 billion of these costs. Management of the three say huge cuts are needed for them to compete with Japanese transplants. They want the workers to feel obligated to shoulder the burden of making the companies profitable. The three have been applying intense pressure to drive down the workers' standard of living.

## Labor power and surplus value

"Standard of living" is a commonly used expression for the quality of life a worker's family can enjoy after selling his or her labor power to an employer. The price of labor power is determined by what it costs for a worker to live and produce, and also to reproduce a new generation of workers, which these Wall Street predators have written off. The means of subsistence must cover medical care and pensions for

*Continued on page 4*

## PENNSYLVANIA

# Local anti-immigrant law shot down

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

A federal district judge ruled July 26 that the racist, anti-immigrant law passed earlier by the city of Hazelton, Pa., was unconstitutional and found in favor of 11 plaintiffs, including three undocumented immigrants, who had challenged the ordinance.

In the first trial decision of its kind, U.S. District Judge James Munley of Scranton, Pa., overturned the ordinance that sought to penalize businesses that hire and landlords who rent to undocumented immigrant workers.

Munley ruled that immigration policy is the purview of the federal government and that Hazelton's actions preempted the federal laws and violated the plaintiffs' due-process rights and those of others in the community.

The ordinance sought to impose hefty fines on landlords who rent to immigrants and deny business permits to companies that employ them. Another measure required potential tenants to register with City Hall and pay for a "rental permit."

## Tip of a right-wing iceberg

But this was no "local" law. Hazelton's right-wing ordinance was the test case for the "legal" front of an organized national racist anti-immigrant backlash. It represents the tip of a dangerous iceberg targeting undocumented and documented immigrant workers.

Kris W. Kobach is a professor at the University of Missouri—Kansas City School of Law. Kobach, who has ties to right wing extremist organizations, including the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), served as the lawyer for Hazelton. At a panel discussion in Philadelphia last spring, Kobach advocated that "Every city should have the right to choose who can live there or not."

Kobach was a White House Fellow in the personal office of Attorney General John Ashcroft during Bush's first term. He was given a speaking role on the opening day of the 2004 Republican National Convention, where he called for U.S. troops to be sent to the Mexican border. He currently serves as the chair of the Kansas Republican Party.

Kobach, who has been criticized for accepting donations from people associated with white supremacists, is also serving as attorney for people challenging state policies that grant resident tuition rates to undocumented students in Kansas and California.

## Immigrants scapegoated for economic decline

In reaction to the massive demonstrations in support of immigrant rights in 2006, Hazelton's Mayor Lou Barletta pushed through the "Illegal Immigration Relief Act" last July. Barletta claimed that immigrants "were the cause of rising crime and a declining economy" in this city of 30,000 located 80 miles north of Philadelphia.

Although most of Hazelton's economic problems stem from the declining coal mining industry in the region, Barletta chose to scapegoat those least able to defend themselves. The ordinance threatened not only immigrants without papers, but thousands of documented Latin@ workers who make up 30 percent of the city's population, drawn to the area because of Hazelton's affordable housing and industrial parks.

Barletta received substantial financial support from anti-immigrant groups, and nearly a dozen other cities, including Riverside, N.J., have adopted similar laws. Munley's ruling does not affect those measures.



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

May 1 rallies for immigrant rights took place in cities across the country. Here workers rally in Union Square, New York.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed the suit challenging the ordinance on behalf of Hazelton residents, landlords and business owners. Vic Walczak, legal director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania and a lead attorney in the case said: "The trial record showed that these ordinances are based on propaganda and deception. Hazelton-type laws are designed to make life miserable for millions of immigrants. They promote distrust of all foreigners, including those here legally, and fuel xenophobia and discrimination, especially against Latinos."

Hazelton's ordinance was never implemented because Manley issued a temporary order blocking its enforcement once the law was legally challenged. Kobach, however, has indicated that Hazelton will appeal, and higher courts have a reputation for being more reactionary.

This legal battle also takes place amid a climate of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids targeting undocumented workers around the country. The struggle to win policies that truly protect the rights of all workers, including those forced to cross borders for jobs, must continue. □



# ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

## S. Calif. grocery workers win! NYC taxi workers strike?

The 65,000 organized grocery workers from Bakersfield, Calif., to the Mexican border won a huge victory July 22 when they ratified a new four-year contract by 87 percent—without having to strike. Not only does the UFCW contract eliminate the hated two-tier system of wages and benefits for new workers, but it provides raises for the first time since 2002 and vital health care and pension benefits. The settlement restores almost all the losses in pay and health benefits that workers suffered three years ago after a 141-day lockout and strike against the major supermarket chains Ralphs, Albertson's and Vons.

Peter Dreier, writing in the July 26 Los Angeles Daily News, attributed the union's success to outreach to and support from labor, religious, community and academic leaders during seven months of negotiations. The UFCW organized a Walk for Respect campaign where workers went door to door to collect more than 50,000 signatures from shoppers pledging to boycott the chains in the event of a lockout or strike. "This effort helped transform the campaign from a labor-management fight into a moral crusade," wrote Dreier.

As part of a parallel negotiating campaign in Washington state's Puget Sound area, UFCW locals held a demonstration June 18 to illustrate the pay gap between grocery workers, who make \$13 an hour (about \$18,000 a year), and the CEOs of the three major supermarket chains, who each stashed away about \$9 million last year. Figuring out that the pay gap was 500 to 1, the workers spread out 501 loaves of bread in front of a Safeway supermarket to show why they are demanding "more bread."

## Equal pay suit; Goodyear retaliates

The Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2007 was quickly introduced in Congress to redress a recent anti-woman, anti-worker Supreme Court decision. The court ruled in May that Lilly Ledbetter could receive no back pay or damages from Goodyear even though a jury found that she had been paid less than male colleagues for many years. By invoking a very narrow interpretation of Title VII of the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act, which was designed to eliminate discrimination based on sex, race and national origin, the court severely restricted workers' ability to file suits against employers. The new act counters that ruling by affirming workers' right to fight discrimination.

But just as the bill was due to be voted on by the House of Representatives at the end of July, Goodyear sued Ledbetter. The Fortune 500 company, the largest tire producer in the world, which earned \$4.9 billion in the second quarter of 2007, demanded that she pay its legal fees, which must total millions of dollars. Even though it may be legal custom for the losing side to pay the winner's court fees, Goodyear's audacity puts it in the running for the new On-the-picket-line OGRE award: Outrageously Greedy, Ruthless Employer! To send Goodyear executives a "shame-on-you" message, sign a petition on the National Organization for Women website: [www.now.org](http://www.now.org).

## Minimum wage raise (finally)

The new federal minimum wage is now \$5.85 an hour, up from \$5.15 as of July 24, the first increase in a decade. It ends the longest period without an increase since the federal minimum wage was enacted in 1938. Each summer for the next two years the wage will increase by 70 cents until it reaches \$7.25 an hour in 2009. Government figures show about 1.7 million workers, mostly young women of color, earned the minimum wage or less in 2006. If they worked a 40-hour week, they earned a yearly income of \$10,700 before taxes. At \$7.25 an hour they will make just over \$15,000 a year before taxes.

In stark contrast, the political servants of the capitalist class, that is, members of the House of Representatives, received an automatic annual cost-of-living raise on June 28. Now they are paid almost \$170,000 a year. Why can't the minimum wage be at least above the poverty level and be tied to the cost of living index with annual raises? Under the corporate profit system the bosses resist this minor step as if their pockets were being picked. Just ask Goodyear bosses why they're in favor of the status quo.

The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission plans to install a high-tech GPS video-and-fare system in all of the city's 13,000 yellow cabs by the end of the year. But not if the New York Taxi Workers Alliance has anything to say about it. Bhairavi Desai, NYTWA executive director, announced July 25 that the organization's 8,400 members, mostly immigrants from India and Bangladesh, will strike in September if the system is forced on all the workers. They say it amounts to "spyware," which can be used to track every trip drivers take. Driver Lea Acey was quoted in the July 26 AFL-CIO blog ([blog.aflcio.org](http://blog.aflcio.org)) as saying, "Even if I want to drive with my family to the park, I have to log in. If I'm an independent contractor, why is it TLC's or the garage's business where I am when I'm off-duty? It beeps all day long if I don't log in, like an ankle bracelet they put on criminals." In a first for the AFL-CIO, the NYTWA, which is a workers' organization, not an official union, joined the New York City Labor Council in February 2007.

## New Orleans labor, community protest racism

On July 28 unionists joined residents and community activists to protest the racist plan for rebuilding levees along the Monticello Canal in New Orleans. A levee and flood wall was built along the affluent, mostly white Jefferson Parish side of the canal, but the poorer, mostly African-American Carrollton and Holly Grove neighborhoods on the opposite bank have been left unprotected. Even though both sides of the canal routinely flood during a heavy rainfall, let alone a hurricane, the levee along the opposite bank is not scheduled to be built for five years. Activists formed a human levee along the unprotected canal bank to call attention to this obvious racist discrimination. As Joe Sherman, who lives in the Carrollton/Holly Grove areas, said on the Tom Joyner Morning Show Web site ([BlackAmericaWeb.com](http://BlackAmericaWeb.com)): "How can you say the community is not at risk when you have protected one half of the community and not the other? This is unacceptable." ([blog.aflcio.org](http://blog.aflcio.org), July 27) □

## Credit crisis looms over UAW talks

*Continued from page 3*

retirees that must be a necessary part of subsistence.

Through decades of struggle, the labor movement has secured the right of workers to maintain their subsistence even while retired and no longer producing.

Profit is what the capitalists are able to keep for themselves after selling what the workers produce at a price above what those workers get for their labor power. Marxists call it surplus value. The owners of the means of production can increase surplus value by raising prices or they can force down the cost of production. Under monopoly capitalism the corporations' massive debt adds to the pressure to cut costs.

The UAW leadership, at least at present, agrees that concessions are necessary. It is a position that flows from an assumption that corporations have an entitlement to make money, even if it costs the workers. On the shop floor, this has led to a down mood, as rumors revolve around not whether there will be concessions but to what extent.

Yet in break-room discussions questions arise. Why

should workers pay for a crisis they did not create? What did we do? Frivolously, the Big Three spent all the money that the workers presented to the bosses when unions made concessions in the past. The bosses greedily gave money to themselves, making decisions based on their own self-serving interest in the marketplace. If the bosses made the mistakes, why should the workers suffer?

A change in worker consciousness is not only necessary but inevitable. As surely as seasons follow seasons, pessimism will yield to anger, and anger to a righteous thirst for justice.

The only assumed entitlements should be a worker's right to a job—a job with a living wage, health care and a defined pension.

That's a "legacy" worth fighting for.

*Milt Neidenberg contributed to this article.*

*Martha Grevatt has worked at the Chrysler Twinsburg, Ohio, Stamping Plant for 20 years and is active in her local union.*

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## March on Washington

SEPT. 29

People's encampment in front of the Capitol Sept 22-29

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Volunteers needed!



# No rest for anti-war movement

By Workers World New York bureau

The U.S. Congress is preparing to recess. The White House moves to Texas. The puppet Iraqi Congress is set to take the month of August off. But the occupation, the war, the murder of Iraqis and the dying of U.S. troops goes on, and more money goes to the U.S. military-industrial complex.

All the more reason that the anti-war movement in the U.S. must keep active throughout the summer in preparation for the confrontations in the early fall, especially the Sept. 22-28 encampment and Sept. 29 mass marches in Washington and Los Angeles organized by the Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC). That's when the U.S. Congress will reopen its limited debate on funding the war and mass anti-war opinion in the U.S. will again have an opportunity to intervene.

## Newark, N.J., Aug. 25

A month before that, on Aug. 25, another important local anti-war action—with a unique character—is planned for Newark, N.J. The Peace and Justice Coalition, an alliance of 120 peace and justice organizations, mainly organizations representing people of color, will march. According to a statement issued for a press meeting held July 31 at the Bethany Baptist Church in Newark, "The People's March for Peace, Equality, Jobs and Justice will draw connections between the funds and resources being used to conduct a war abroad and the problems in our communities here at home."

Lawrence Hamm, chair of the People's Organization for Progress (POP), a mem-



WW PHOTOS; JOHN CATALINOTTO

Vinie Burrows, above. Grannies for Peace and Pakistani activist Shaeed Comrade, right. Larry Holmes, TONC, below right.

ber of the Peace and Justice Coalition, said, "Everyone who wants peace in Iraq and social and economic justice at home should participate in this march on August 25 in Newark." (See [peaceandjusticecoalition.org](http://peaceandjusticecoalition.org) or call: 801-457-4998)

In New York City, organizers campaigning against the war on Iraq and for the impeachment of Bush and Cheney held a series of rallies from July 26 to July 29, including an afternoon rush-hour rally at the south end of Union Square that drew hundreds of anti-war activists and attracted the attention of sympathetic passersby. Speakers included actor Vinie Burrows, TONC leader Larry Holmes, Cindy Sheehan and others from the World Can't Wait organization, which



called the action.

## Planning meeting Aug. 11

Dustin Langley, a TONC spokesperson staffing a table at the Union Square rally, told Workers World: "There has been a momentum developing around the Sept. 29 action and lots of interest in the encampment scheduled for the preceding week. People want a big march, but they want to do something more. There is so much anger throughout the population at the Bush gang for refusing to leave Iraq and so much frustration that the Democratic Party leaders are doing nothing to stop Bush."

Langley said that there were more than 40 organizing centers for the September actions listed on the TONC website and

that these organizers had already scheduled more than 60 buses to go to Washington. "Of course that is just the beginning," said Langley, "and we are holding a planning meeting on Aug. 11 at 3 p.m. at the Solidarity Center here in New York—that's at 55 West 17th Street in Manhattan. This meeting will help connect with some of the hun-

dreds of people who have volunteered with us since May, when we started organizing for the actions, and find a way for them to fit into the effort.

"In addition to the more than 1,600 organizations and individuals who have endorsed, including World Can't Wait, Cindy Sheehan, Not In Our Name, Fernando Suarez del Solar, Cynthia McKinney and Code Pink," Langley said, "one of the most promising fronts has come from our attempt to link the fight against the war to the struggle for adequate and affordable medical care. When Michael Moore's film, 'SiCKO,' hit the theaters, one of our organizers who is a nurse, Sharon Black, came up with a leaflet linking the struggles. It's a natural, first because people are as mad about the health care situation as they are about the war, and second because it is obvious that the money wasted killing people in Iraq could more than pay for adequate health care at home."

For more information, see [troopsoutnow.org](http://troopsoutnow.org) or call 212-633-6646. □

# Bush gang doublecrosses GIs, vets

By Caleb T. Maupin

Jonathan Town was one of the hundreds of thousands of U.S. youth sent to Iraq. He was sent to occupy Iraq and defend the U.S. occupation from Iraqis determined to free their country from it.

Town was probably told countless times by the military recruiters who persuaded him to enlist that he would be given medical care and taken care of if he was injured. He was probably encouraged by the words of George W. Bush and his cronies about "supporting the troops." He probably felt that those who whipped up the right wing into a frenzy about how opposing the war was "betraying the troops," would stand beside him when he was wounded in battle with the Iraqi resistance.

But he was misled.

On a fateful day in 2004, a well-armed unit of Iraqi resistance fighters, who had endured sanctions, bombings and other inhumanities by the U.S. government, struck back at the occupation military forces. They fired a 107-mm rocket at the U.S. base in Ramadi, Iraq. The projectile ripped through a building and exploded three feet above Spc. Town's head.

Town later awoke in a hospital bed and has since suffered from hearing loss, headaches, memory loss, anxiety and an inability to sleep. The military was happy to hand Town the metallic item attached to a ribbon known as a "Purple Heart"; however, when it came to the actual health care he needed to recover from his injury, the government was a little less inclined.

Discharged in 2006, Town wanted to be treated for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), something afflicting tens of thousands of GIs. The Pentagon decided to avoid taking responsibility for his problem. The military claimed he had a

previously existing "personality disorder," and the fact that an 18.8-kg explosive had gone off right above him had nothing to do with his current ills.

Town is not the only one. Records show that since 2001 more than 22,500 GIs have been categorized as having "personality disorders" in order to block the required treatment they would receive from veterans' hospitals if they had PTSD. What's significant is that Town, who has two children and spent seven years in the military, received honors 12 times. You would think the Pentagon would give him special treatment.

What an insult it is to say that those who have seen body parts laying on the ground, children dying and all the other carnage of war, are unaffected by having been sent to kill and die in a criminal occupation. And then to blame their trauma on a "personality disorder" that they already supposedly had, in order to avoid paying the bill.

What person who is not already a sociopath would be able to look at such horror and not be disturbed? It seems that to those who run this country, people are commodities, something Karl Marx wrote about years ago in his book, "Capital," and in his economic manuscripts. Under the capitalist system, words can echo in Dick Cheney's bunker about "supporting the troops," sentimental stories can run on the FOX news channel and NBC, but in the end those sent to repress the people opposing imperialism are themselves considered nothing but cannon fodder by the powers that be.

Because Town put up a fight and got some support, Congress held a special hearing July 25 and the Pentagon decided it had better allow his treatment for the time being. But his case still exposes the

war makers: they may call the troops heroes, but profit rules when it comes to paying their bills. GIs and veterans will have to fight another war at home to make sure they get the benefits they were promised. □



# Chicago protest to confront war Democrats

By Workers World Chicago bureau

Demanding "Not another dollar—not another day—not another excuse," anti-war forces in Chicago are mobilizing to protest the so-called debate among the Democratic Party's presidential candidates, set here for Aug. 7. In order to bring out thousands of union members, the debate's AFL-CIO organizers have relocated it to Soldier Field, Chicago's NFL football stadium.

Union workers want to elect pro-worker candidates, and they want an end to the Iraq war. It's too bad the Democrats in the debate won't give them the chance. No candidate can be pro-worker and pro-imperialism at the same time. And all the leading Democratic candidates, although they all pretend to be against the Iraq war, are in favor of continuing the war and the U.S. military domination of the Middle East.

Delaware Sen. Joe Biden wants to carve Iraq up in three pieces. Former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards wants to have no more than 100,000 troops in Iraq. None of the above Democrats is for immediate and complete withdrawal from Iraq. And when it comes to Palestine, or

Lebanon, or Sudan, or Iran, they become much more enthusiastic about war and intervention. (Information from their websites)

For example, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama generally supports the Iraq Study Group plan, which would keep U.S. troops in Iraq to train the occupation government troops, to "fight terrorism," and to protect U.S. forces and equipment. In other words, he is not for withdrawal at all. New York Sen. Hillary Clinton wants to "cap U.S. troops at Jan. 1, 2007 levels."

The Democrats who actually favor immediate withdrawal from Iraq—Ohio Rep. Dennis Kucinich and former Alaska Senator Mike Gravel—don't have a chance at the ruling-class funds and media attention that the others get.

The Aug. 7 protest's initiating organizations—the Chicago Coalition against War and Racism and Chicagoland Code Pink—have called for a demonstration at Soldier Field to start at 4 p.m., two hours before the debate's starting time. A struggle with the Democratic city government for the right to free speech is under way. The latest information is posted at [www.ChicagoTroopsOut.org](http://www.ChicagoTroopsOut.org) and will be updated continuously. □



# Milwaukee cops found guilty in Jude case

By Bryan G. Pfeifer  
Milwaukee, Wis.

After nearly four days of deliberations, a federal jury on July 27 found former Milwaukee cops Jon Bartlett, Andrew Spengler and Daniel Masarik guilty of conspiring to violate the civil rights of Frank Jude Jr. and his friend Lovell Harris and of assaulting Jude. Both Jude and Harris are Black.

The jury acquitted cop Ryan Packard of both counts. Four former officers earlier pleaded guilty to federal crimes in the case. Other cops not charged were fired from the police force due to community protests in May 2005.

Jude was nearly killed on Oct. 24, 2004, when he was savagely beaten during a party by as many as 15 off-duty white cops in Bayview, a Milwaukee neighborhood. The cops claimed Jude stole the badge and wallet of one of the officers, who hosted the event at his house. He was hospitalized for days and required reconstructive surgery. No badge or wallet was found and Jude was never charged with anything. Just before the beating of Jude, Harris and two white women companions of Jude were able to escape. Before escaping, Harris was slightly injured.

Spengler, Bartlett and Masarik each face up to 20 years in prison and \$500,000 in fines at their sentencing hearing Nov. 29. These three cops were acquitted by an all-white jury in a state trial in April 2006. Their acquittal sparked a 4,000-

person protest and other massive protests, many led by City Alderman Michael McGee Jr., who is now in federal custody on various state and federal charges that McGee's supporters challenge.

Despite the cops' convictions, they all continue to receive pay and benefits under a Wisconsin state law unique to Milwaukee.

This law states that while firefighters or cops appeal their dismissals from the Fire and Police Commission or until they are sentenced on a felony, they continue to be paid. Since being fired in May 2005, Masarik, Spengler and Bartlett have received \$475,000 in pay and benefits.

## Resistance to racist oppression

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett; Milwaukee Police Chief Nanette Hegerty; U.S. Attorney Steven M. Biskupic, who tried the federal case; former Milwaukee County District Attorney E. Michael McCann; and other political servants of the rich, hailed the Jude verdict as justice for the Black community in Milwaukee. They opportunistically are using the Jude verdict in an effort to show the ostensible "fairness" of the Milwaukee and U.S. court system. That is a ruse on their part. All of these political servants are an integral part of the oppressive apparatus to keep



Frank Jude in hospital after police beat him. Center left, speaking to the press after the verdict.

people subjugated, particularly people of color.

The Jude verdict in the federal case is a partial victory for the working class and oppressed in Milwaukee and nationally. This victory didn't result, however, from any love for the people on the part of the racist oppressors.

The Black community and its allies, with Jude and his family's support, won this victory through years of protests and innumerable courageous sacrifices. In the process they exposed to a large degree the nakedly barbaric and racist nature of the entire oppressive apparatus in Milwaukee from the police force to the courts. And the beating of Jude was so savage he gained empathy from large segments of the white and Latin@ working class, many of whom started questioning out loud what the real role of the police is.

In this possibly explosive rebellion-type situation the rich bosses were forced

to make concessions. Thus the cops who beat Jude became liabilities and the judicial process was injected with some "credibility."

But the justice that has been won thus far is due mostly to the struggle put up by the Black community in coalitions such as Justice for Jude Justice for All! to demand justice for Jude and all victims of police terror.

Protest actions are continuing to demand full justice for Jude. This includes an Aug. 3 community march and rally down Dr. Martin Luther King Drive, historically a vital part of the Black community in Milwaukee but which now is being quickly gentrified. This action will make the connections between the bosses' war at home and their wars abroad.

Jude also has a \$30 million claim pending against the City of Milwaukee on behalf of himself and his spouse, Maria Jude, that he filed on June 19, 2006. □



PHOTO: JUDY CONDER

From left, State Senator Tyrone Brooks and Robert Howard explain progress investigating 1946 murders.

ran the banks and businesses, controlled the political offices and court system and often operated as a paramilitary organization known as the KKK.

In mid-July 1946, Roger Malcolm and a white farmer, Barney Hester, got into an argument. Hester suffered stab wounds and was taken to a hospital. Malcolm was arrested and taken to the jail in Monroe, the county seat of Walton County. The Black community immediately feared for Malcolm's life. The Hester family ranked among the most powerful and it was unlikely that such an act of defiance would not be met with a harsh response.

The next day, segregationist Gov. Eugene Talmadge running for his third term as Georgia's top elected official campaigned in Monroe and delivered a racist tirade, pledging that under his watch, the social status quo of white supremacy would be maintained. He met with the injured man's brother, George Hester, and is reported to have offered immunity to anyone "taking care of the Negro."

On July 25, Loy Harrison, the landowner for whom Roger Malcolm and George Dorsey worked, came to the jail and paid the \$600 to bail Malcolm out. Accompanying him in his car was Dorothy Malcolm, her brother George Dorsey and his wife, Mae Murray Dorsey.

Allegedly saying he was taking them home, Harrison took a circuitous route, arriving at the isolated Moore's Ford Bridge at about 6 p.m. As the car approached, some two dozen shotgun-carrying white men surrounded the vehicle, first dragging out Roger Malcolm. George Dorsey, a recently returned WWII veteran, tried to help him. Both men were quickly beaten to the ground.

Seated in the back seat, the two women screamed at the lynch mob not to hurt their husbands. When Dorothy Malcolm recognized one of the men, the racists

forcibly removed the women and broke their arms as they resisted.

Dragged down an embankment along the Apalachee River, all four were shot, their bodies riddled by hundreds of bullets. Dorothy Malcolm was seven months pregnant. One of the killers cut the fetus out of her womb and tossed it next to her corpse.

Loy Harrison wasn't hurt. A reputed Klansman himself, he later claimed not to have recognized anyone even though none of them had their faces covered.

The brazen murders made national headlines. President Harry Truman took the rare step of sending FBI agents to Monroe.

The 500-page synopsis of the federal investigation named some 55 possible suspects. Yet no one was ever charged in the cold-blooded murders of Roger Malcolm, Dorothy Malcolm, George Dorsey and Mae Murray Dorsey.

In 1968, local activist Robert Howard began researching the case. Tyrone Brooks, now a Georgia state senator but then a 20-year-old civil rights worker, was sent to Monroe by Martin Luther King Jr. Brooks often recalls the impact of seeing the pictures of the brutally violated bodies taken by the undertaker who prepared them for their burials.

For Howard, this racist crime confirms the complicity of politicians, police agencies, the legal system and the Ku Klux Klan, all of whom were able to operate with impunity not just in 1946 but in the many decades since.

Together, Howard and Brooks have worked unceasingly to get the case reopened. Although it is most likely that many of those who plotted this lynching and pulled the triggers that day in 1946 are dead, a few of those named in the FBI investigation still live in Walton County, and the re-enacted drama still lacks its ending. □

# Lynching re-enactment spurs demand for justice

By Dianne Mathiowetz  
Monroe, Ga.

Sixty-one years have passed since two African-American couples died here at the hands of a racist mob. The July 25 re-enactment of these events in this rural Georgia county and its promise of future struggle show that where there has been no justice, there will be no peace.

It is common, especially here in the South, to read a newspaper article or see a report on television of Civil War buffs re-enacting one of the bloody battles that occurred between Union and Confederate forces. A point of pride of the "enactors" is to portray the events with historical accuracy down to the smallest detail.

A reenactment of a different sort took place at Moore's Ford Bridge at the Walton-Oconee county line near Monroe, Ga., on July 25.

These re-enactors also were careful to stay true to the events that took place on this spot 61 years ago in 1946. They portrayed the bloody horror of a Ku Klux Klan killing of two African-American couples, Roger Malcolm and Dorothy Malcolm, and George Dorsey and Mae Murray Dorsey, before a crowd of several hundred local residents and others from around the state who gathered to demand justice now.

The facts of what has come to be known as the Moore's Ford Bridge lynching illuminate the pervasive racist violence that sustained Jim Crow segregation for almost 100 years after slavery itself ended.

The two Black couples were sharecroppers in this rural area some 60 miles east of Atlanta. Although slavery was nominally over, the life of most Black people was controlled by a small number of wealthy white families who owned the farm land,



# An 'unstoppable movement' to end death penalty

By Minnie Bruce Pratt  
Montgomery, Ala.

Lisa Thomas walked up the steps of the Alabama Capitol Building here on July 25, completing her journey on foot along the historic 1965 civil rights march route from Selma. Thomas, an anti-hunger activist who runs a food bank in her hometown of Brewton, Ala., was protesting the imminent execution of Darryl Grayson.

Grayson had been on death row in Alabama for 27 years, longer than all but five of the 195 men there. Convicted of murder, with allegations of rape, he had been asking for DNA testing since 2002, saying that in fact because of his substance abuse he had no memory of committing the crime. The Innocence Project, a non-profit organization that represents death row inmates, had also taken on Grayson's case.

Thomas was met by a stalwart and diverse crowd of 60 people, including Esther Brown, executive director of Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty in Alabama.

Brown, who as a young person in Hitler-ruled Berlin was an anti-Nazi activist, said that Grayson "had gotten Alabama justice for the poor and the Black" from an all-white jury.

She emphasized that Grayson, an African-American man, was intimidated into confessing by white police interrogators. (Opelika-Auburn News)

Speakers appealed to Gov. Bob Riley to stay the execution and authorize administration of a DNA test. They also condemned the extreme inequality in the Alabama judicial and prison system, which the Rev. Elizabeth O'Neill, pastor of Immanuel Presbyterian Church, described as a "pipeline between poverty and prison."

Alabama is the only state that does not provide an attorney for death row prisoners following their conviction. It ranks behind every other state in providing legal aid for low-income or indigent people in non-criminal matters. Prisoners have sued the state for a wide range of horrendous conditions and actions including physical torture, overcrowding, lack of treatment for mental illness, and segregation and medical mistreatment of HIV-positive inmates. There is also a long history in the state, most notably in the case of the

From right: Lisa Thomas (with DNA sign), Faya Toure, Rev. Kenneth Glasgow, Edward Vaughan, Esther Brown on steps of Alabama State Capitol.

WW PHOTO:  
MINNIE BRUCE PRATT



Scottsboro Brothers in the 1930s, of using accusations of rape to railroad Black men into the death penalty.

Those gathered at the rally to demand justice for Darryl Grayson included members of the Grayson family; long-time civil rights activist Alabama State Sen. Hank Sanders of Selma; Faya Toure, founder of 21st Century Youth; Alabama NAACP President Edward Vaughan; and former prisoner Rev. Kenneth Glasgow, chair of the Alabama NAACP Prison Project.

Many attending were part of Alabama Arise, a coalition of over 150 religious, community and civic groups that fight

racism, poverty and the death penalty. Letters of solidarity were read from the United Methodist Church and from Hurricane Katrina and Rita survivors now living in Mobile.

On July 26, Grayson was executed by lethal injection. Speakers at the protest named this killing a "state murder," and spoke of how during his time in prison Grayson had become a poet, a journalist and a mentor to others on death row. Inmates at maximum security Holman Prison in Atmore, where death row is located, showed their respect and solidarity with Grayson on July 25 and 26 by

wearing dress whites and not participating in sports during exercise yard. (helenl.wordpress.com)

During the rally Diane McNaron, a singer, cultural worker and member of the Birmingham Peace Project, had affirmed the significance of Grayson's life. She spoke of how he represented "other African-American brothers and sisters who had come through slavery, lynching and segregation" to launch the 1960s civil rights movement. She said Grayson had taken his place in that history as part of an "unstoppable movement that will end the death penalty." □

## 'Stop execution of Kenneth Foster'

By Gloria Rubac  
Houston

Belief in Texas death row activist Kenneth Foster's innocence is spreading from his family to abolitionists, to the community, to major newspapers, to the streets of Austin and San Antonio. Despite his innocence, Foster is scheduled to be executed on Aug. 30.

Since being sent to death row in 1997 at age 19, Foster has educated himself about the criminal justice system, done a lot of reading and thinking, and has become an activist for all those on death row. He is a founder of the Death Row Inner-Communist Vanguard Engagement (DRIVE) Movement. DRIVE has held several hunger strikes and organized many acts of resistance to death row conditions.



Marchers show solidarity with Kenneth Foster. Austin, Texas, July 21. WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

According to DRIVE, "Comrades are united in trying to change conditions on Texas death row. We have put aside all minor barriers of ethnicity, creed, color and beliefs, to focus on the injustices forced upon us by the system. By means of inner resistance, organizing, outer petition drives, protests and direct actions, DRIVE hopes to solidify our stance and remain relentless in the fight against oppression!"

On July 21, hundreds of supporters and family members gathered at the state Capitol in Austin. Speakers included Mario Africa with the MOVE organization in Philadelphia, Shujja Graham and Darby Tillis—both exonerated and now off death row—and Foster's father, grandfather and daughter.

Foster's daughter, 11-year-old Nydesha Foster, drew wild cheers of applause each time she took the stage. Nydesha spoke, then read a poem for her father and later did an African dance.

Families of other death-row prisoners also participated, including Sandra Reed, mother of Rodney Reed, and the family of Tony Ford. Media coverage was extensive. In the week following the Austin protest, three major newspapers have taken an editorial stance against Foster's execution: the Austin American Statesman, the Dallas Morning News and the Fort Worth

Star Telegram.

In the first of his two columns on Foster, columnist Bobby Ray Sanders wrote, "Another trip to Death Row. Another man scheduled to die on the gurney in Texas' infamous killing chamber. Another human being who does not deserve this tragic fate."

"And another case that speaks to the absurdity of how capital punishment is applied in general throughout this country, but particularly in the Lone Star State."

"The case of Kenneth Foster Jr., scheduled to die next month for a 1996 murder in San Antonio, is further proof of how cruel, capricious, unjust and utterly insane our death penalty laws have become. ... Texas has become the 'capital' in 'capital punishment,' and it is time for us to put an end to the madness. We can start by making sure this one innocent man's life is spared."

Upcoming events include a march and rally in San Antonio on Saturday, Aug. 18, and an emergency action in Austin on Aug. 21. Activists with the Save Kenneth Foster Campaign are continuing activity just as Mario Africa said in front of the Capitol: "We have to make it politically untenable for the state and the governor to go through with this execution!"

Information can be found at [www.freekeneth.com](http://www.freekeneth.com) and at [www.savekeneth.blogspot.com](http://www.savekeneth.blogspot.com).

## 100th prisoner executed



HOUSTON

PHOTO: JOHN AXFORD

To protest the horrific milestone of the 100th person from Harris County (Houston) being executed on July 24, abolitionists took their outrage to the home of Harris County District Attorney Chuck Rosenthal. A press conference featured speakers from the Oct. 27 March to Stop Executions committee, the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement, the Harris County Green Party, the Nation of Islam and the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. The state had put African American Lonnie Johnson to death after

late appeals failed to stop his execution. Johnson claimed until the last minute that he was picked up by two white youth after his car broke down and "the only difference from me and James Byrd is that I lived to tell about it." He claimed the youth pulled a gun and a knife on him, beat him up, urinated on him and used the N word. If Harris County were a state it would be second behind the state of Texas in the number of people it has had put to death. Texas will hit its 400th execution on Aug. 22.

—Gloria Rubac



## Rebellion, crisis & social transformation

# The global struggle's connection to Detroit's 1967 upheaval

On July 23, 1967, a confrontation between Detroit vice-squad officers exploded into a major rebellion in that city's African-American community, the largest rebellion in U.S. history at that time. President Lyndon B. Johnson sent in National Guard and U.S. Army paratroopers to repress the population. The result was 43 dead, 467 injured and more than 7,200 arrests. More than 2,000 buildings burned down. The following is Part I of excerpts based on a talk give by Abayomi Azikiwe, editor of the Pan-African News Wire, to a Workers World forum in Detroit this July 21.

On July 23, 2007, the city of Detroit will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Great Rebellion of 1967. It will not be surprising that the corporate media will label this series of events as a "riot" in an effort to minimize its significance and to strip the upheaval of that year from its political and social significance. Yet, when the five days of confrontations with police and national guard troops, the shopping for free, arson attacks on businesses as well as sniping are placed within the context of what was taking place around the United States and the world at that time, it will illustrate that the so-called "Detroit Riots" were in fact an act of mass rebellion very much connected to the global struggle against racial capitalism, neo-colonialism and imperialism.

The city of Detroit had experienced a consistent growth in African immigration from the pre-World War I period right through the late 1960s when the rebellion took place. The city had been a central destination point during the period of slavery for the Underground Railroad, being located right across the river from Canada.

With the industrialization of the city during the early 20th century, Detroit became a magnet for the influx of labor from the Black Belt regions of the South where Africans were fleeing from the wretched conditions of sharecropping and tenant farming that were enforced with Jim Crow laws, lynchings, mass poverty and landlessness. Consequently, when Henry Ford and other industrialists offered increased salaries for the labor of African workers, many people made the trek to Detroit with the aim of increasing their living standards and enhancing their opportunities for greater personal and political freedom.

However, the city of Detroit was always a focal point for racial exploitation, segregation, tension and unrest. Dating back to the disturbances of 1833 and 1863, the city

has been noted for its periodic outburst of violence and rebellion. During World War II there were two historic incidents that illustrated the problems associated with large-scale African migration within the context of labor exploitation and white intolerance.

The efforts by whites to keep Africans out of the Sojourner Truth Homes on the East Side laid the basis in many ways for the so-called "Race Riot" of 1943. The 1943 racial clashes are often attributed to the competition for housing and access to public accommodations in the city. In June of 1943, white mobs chased, attacked and murdered African men and women in the streets along Woodward Avenue and in other sections of the city. In response Africans destroyed white-owned businesses in their communities and set up self-defense patrols that would not allow whites in their communities.

The corporate media at the time attributed the so-called "Race Riot" to the behavior and attitudes of zoot-suit wearing African-American youth who carried knives and flaunted laws related to segregation and the white-dominated caste system prevalent in Detroit at the time.

### Urban renewal devastated communities

In the aftermath of World War II, the city adopted a massive urban renewal program that set out to remove large sections of the African community on the city's East Side. The major areas affected were known as "Black Bottom" and "Paradise Valley," where African Americans had established, as a result of residential and labor segregation, viable communities with small businesses, social clubs and religious institutions.

By the early 1960s, the communities on the East Side were devastated. The main business district along St. Antoine and Hasting streets were destroyed in order to make way for the Chrysler Freeway, which transported whites to the burgeoning suburbs and outlying areas of the city. Of course the growing Black electoral political power that resulted from the large-scale immigration during World War II and its immediate aftermath was suspected by the African community as the major reason behind the mass dislocation.

Beginning in the aftermath of World War II, African-American families began to move into the areas around 12th Street, 14th Street, Linwood, Dexter, etc. This



WW PHOTO:  
CHERYL LABASH  
Abayomi  
Azikiwe

## PART I Background to conditions in Motor City

area had been dominated by Jewish-Americans who had earlier moved from the Paradise Valley area that Africans had populated beginning with the increased migration during and after World War I.

The transformation of this community took place very rapidly. In fact some apartments, flats and single home subdivisions were racially changed within weeks. By the middle years of the 1950s the Virginia Park community and its environs became virtually all-Black neighborhoods. As a result of the lack of political representation within city government, with the exception of City Councilman Patrick, who was elected in 1957, African-Americans felt disenfranchised by the municipal authorities.

A neighborhood which was characterized by its sturdy and well-built apartments, flats and single-family homes soon deteriorated and by 1960 the Virginia Park Community organization held a forum asking the question as to whether 12th Street was becoming another skid row. Despite the fact that the neighborhood was virtually all-African, the majority of merchants and many of the landlords remained Jewish-American. The community soon began to complain about the problems associated with poor city services and the refusal of the local merchants to reinvest in the community and to assist in its upkeep.

By 1963, the racial tensions in the city had reached a major crossroad. In that year, the Detroit Council for Human Rights (DCHR) was formed under the leadership of the late Rev. C. L. Franklin, pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church. New Bethel had been located in the heart of Paradise Valley on Hastings and Willis during the late 1940s through 1961, when it was ordered demolished as part of the

so-called Detroit Urban Renewal Plan.

The DCHR in conjunction with the Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL), formed by Richard Henry, Milton Henry and the Reverend Albert Cleage of the Central Congregational United Church of Christ among others, organized the June 23, 1963, "Walk to Freedom" down Woodward Avenue. The demonstration, which invited Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as the keynote speaker and march leader, drew approximately 200,000 people, and became the first real mass demonstration for social justice and civil rights in the U.S.

The June 23, 1963, march represented a milestone in the history of Detroit as well. The fact is that the established labor and civil rights leadership had to run and catch up with the momentum tapped into by Rev. Franklin, Rev. Cleage and the organizers of the march. The political dynamics surrounding the evolution of the march and the development of the Detroit Council for Human Rights requires much more attention than this discussion will allow. Suffice it to say that the attitudes of the masses of workers and poor in Detroit were becoming more difficult to contain by the city's power structure.

The march down Woodward Avenue set the stage for the March on Washington on August 28, 1963. Dr. King had delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech initially here in Detroit at Cobo Hall on June 23. The speech was later released as an album by Motown Records. Nonetheless, the popular version is the one that is canonized by the corporate media delivered at the Lincoln Memorial.

What is interesting about the rebellion of 1967 is that many had felt that because of the relatively affluent character of African Americans in Detroit—their greater access to homeownership, quality housing, industrial jobs and an educated middle class composed of professionals and business owners—that no large-scale rebellion would take place. The events of August 1966 on the city's East Side, known as the "Kercheval Incident," was contained and defused and utilized as proof that the city would not explode as New York had in 1964 and Watts in 1965 or as Chicago had in 1966.

However, these predictions proved false with the rebellion erupting on July 23, 1967, becoming the largest and most deadly in U.S. history.

Next, Background on the international dimensions of the African-American question.



National Guard, U.S. paratroopers patrol Detroit, July 1967.

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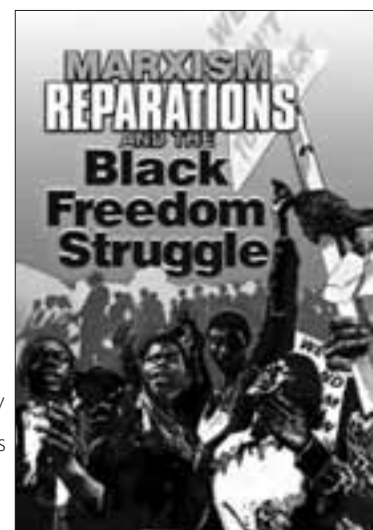
## Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

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# Protest hits siege of Gaza

Palestinian families and solidarity activists carrying flags, banners and signs filled the sidewalk in front of a busy mini-mall in an Arab-American community in Anaheim, Calif., on July 28 at an emergency protest demanding an end to the brutal six-week U.S.-backed Israeli siege on Gaza. The street rally brought public attention to the fate of 6,000 Palestinians stranded at the Rafah border checkpoint, the main route for Palestinians in Gaza to reach work, food and other basic resources.

Mustafa Barghouti, leader of Al-Mubadara in Palestine, spoke to the Anaheim crowd by phone. Also speaking at the rally, chaired by Muna Coobtee of the ANSWER coalition, were Nader Abuljebain of the National Council of Arab Americans, Lily Karam of the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund, Zahi Damuni of Al-Awda San Diego and John Parker of the International Action Center.

Both the September 22-29 encampment and demonstrations, in Los Angeles and Washington, to stop the war against Iraq, and the Oct. 27 anti-war protest were announced as continuing steps in the mobilization against occupation and war.

The rally was sponsored by the Palestinian American Women's Association; Al-Awda Los Angeles, Riverside and San Diego Chapters; Palestine Aid Society; National Council of Arab Americans; Free Palestine Alliance; Palestine National Initiative (Al-Mubadara); Al-Bireh Society; Arab Community Center of the Inland Empire; ANSWER Coalition; Union of Palestinian Women; Campaign to End Israeli Apartheid, Bethlehem Association, Birzeit Society. And endorsed by the Council on American Islamic Relations-LA; Women In Black-LA, International Action Center-LA; and the March 25 Coalition.

—Maggie Vascassenno

WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN



## Interview on Iraq

# 100,000 resistance fighters; occupiers' moral low

*Abduljabbar al Kubaysi, resistance supporter and secretary-general of the Iraqi Patriotic Alliance (IPA), whom the U.S. occupation forces imprisoned at the airport near Baghdad from September 2004 to December 2005, gave an interview this July in Paris to Willi Langthaler of the Anti-Imperialist Camp. We publish a few excerpts from al-Kubaysi's statements below regarding the U.S. role in fomenting sectarian fighting, on the current strength of the resistance and on Saddam Hussein's role. For the entire interview, see anti-imperialista.org.*

In the beginning, the media used to check on the site of the blast and often eye witnesses contradicted the official version that a person blew himself up. Now they [the regime] cordon off the area and impede questions to the locals. They want to have the news spread that militants did the massacre, while it was governing forces or the U.S. who planted explosive loads. In most of the cases there is no person involved killing himself. In these cases [without suicides] you can be sure that the ruling coalition is involved.

For example, the regime changed the name of an important road in the Al Adhamiye district in Baghdad from a Sunni religious figure to a Shiite one during the night. It was the Shiite community of al-Adhamiye itself that changed it back to the original name. Then the troops came again with their Hummers. ...

But actually they did not succeed in creating the rift between Sunnis and Shiites. Yes, in official politics there is a rift. The Sunni Islamic Party, which is with the Americans, and the Shiite block, which is with Iran and the U.S., argue along such lines, but these groups did not succeed in convincing the ordinary people to go with them. Here and there, there might be some minor conflicts, but in substance the broad masses on both sides insist that they are Iraqis regardless of their religious beliefs.

Look to Najaf and see the positions of the Arab Shiite ayatollahs, who continue to advocate national unity and oppose

the occupation. Or look to Diala province, which is composed of 50 percent Shiites and 50 percent Sunnis and at the same time is a strong base of the resistance. Two big Shiites tribes, al Buhishma and the followers of Ayatollah Abdul Karim al Moudheris, are with the resistance and everybody knows it. The Ayatollah's son fell in combat. He was the leader of a big tribal contingent of the resistance.

In Baquba, the provincial capital, they cannot do the same cleansing as in Basra with the Sunnis or as in Amara with the Mandaeans. In Baquba both Shiite and Sunnis support the resistance. Certainly there are attacks by the different resistance groups on the Iraqi government agencies, the U.S. army, Iranian forces and the Shiite parties and militias like the Madhi army which are inside the political process, but you will not hear of sectarian killings.

There is another example: Tal Afar

in the northwest of Iraq near Mosul. Between 50 and 70 percent of its population is Shiite. Nevertheless it is one of the capitals of the resistance. ...

### Resistance has 400,000 active people

The resistance is still gaining strength. Judging by numbers alone, they rose from some thousands to where they now exceed by far 100,000 fighters. Their combat capabilities increased as well. But they could also develop intelligence structures penetrating the Iraqi army and police but also sometimes the environment of the U.S. Army. So altogether the system of resistance includes some 400,000 people.

The U.S. Army and its allies are really demoralised. While the resistance fights to liberate its country, they only fight for money. Thus they are becoming more and more savage. They increased the numbers

not only of direct U.S. troops, but also of mercenary forces, which are even more barbarian. Taken all together they consist maybe of some one million troops.

Look to the U.S. losses released by the Pentagon itself which are obviously sugar-coated. If you disregard the months of special military operation like against Falluja or Tal Afar, you can see a clear tendency. At the beginning you had some 50 U.S. soldiers killed per month, then later it was up to 80 and now some 100 get killed each month.

The resistance is now a real popular movement; it is a culture among the people. Everybody contributes his or her share. And the fact that no government helps us has also its good side. If they would pay, then you would always have corruption. The typical Arab façade would have been erected. Now, instead, there is

*Continued on page 10*

## Iran forum counters U.S. threats



By John Catalinotto  
New York

A public forum providing reports on recent visits to Iran discussed both the human aspects of everyday life in that country and the urgent need to mobilize opinion and struggle to stop the U.S. government from launching a war on yet another part of Asia.

The American-Iranian Friendship Committee (AIFC) and the Stop War on Iran Campaign, with the support of the International Action Center (IAC), organized the forum at the Judson Memorial Church in New York on July 28. The forum was titled "Iran: Focus of U.S. Threats."

Ellie Ommani, her daughter Zheila Ommani, Ann Shirazi and Ahmad Shirazi presented slide shows and described the emotional meetings they had with members of their large extended families who live in different cities of Iran. These

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

From left: Ardeshir Ommani, Zheila Ommani, Ahmad Shirazi, Ellie Ommani.

*Continued on page 10*





## SiCKO II

**‘SiCKO II** is not a sequel to Michael Moore’s increasingly popular documentary on the failed health care system in the U.S. It’s the effort of the rightist George Bush administration to make an already bad system worse.

How will Bush do this? By vetoing the bills now before the U.S. Congress that would subsidize health care insurance for millions of children and seniors.

There is an existing program, under different names in different states, that currently provides health insurance for 6 million children. To be eligible for this program you don’t need to be as destitute of funds as you do to have Medicaid coverage. That means with plans like Child Health Plus, working people who are low-income have the opportunity to get medical care for their children.

The bills up before the Senate would increase federal funding to cover an additional 3 million children; the House bill would cover an additional 5 million. Some 9 million of the 45 million people without health insurance in the U.S. are children, so even the House bill would still leave 4 million children uncovered.

The House bill would also improve the benefits for people on the Medicare plan, who are mostly seniors. An increase in tobacco taxes is supposed to pay for each of the bills.

Normally a tussle in Congress over a bill like this, which would be mainly along party lines, would result in some rotten compromise between Republicans and Democrats. Workers and the poor would wind up with a lot less than the bill first promised and some big companies would get even richer from it.

But the arrogant Bush gang and its reactionary hangers-on in Congress promise they will make no compromises. They say they will fight any improvement in government-provided health

care tooth and nail. Government’s role, according to them, is not to help the poor, but to help the rich steal even more from the poor. They denounce the bill as “a first step toward socialized medicine,” and Bush promised to veto it.

What sharpens the struggle over these health care bills is that they are in Congress at a time when the population of the U.S., and especially the working class here, is acutely aware of the health care system’s shortcomings. Bosses have eliminated much job-related health insurance or dumped the payments on the workers’ backs. Health maintenance organizations (HMOs) run by insurance companies have routinely denied needed care. The for-profit health care system has shown that it doesn’t work. And even as people have grown madder about these experiences, Moore’s film SiCKO has generalized their experiences and shown millions that there is another way.

Since this also takes place at a time when everyone knows that more than a half-trillion dollars has been squandered on the criminal wars against the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, it’s easy for all to see where the money should come from to pay for additional health care—with or without a tobacco tax. Stop funding the war.

In other words, instead of a squabble between the parties, this particular dispute has the potential of awakening a real class struggle, one that could unite different sectors of the massive U.S. working class in a progressive effort. Such an effort could provide most for the most oppressed and will help nearly every worker. And this struggle can and should demand health coverage not only for 5 million children, but for all children. It should not leave out any of the seniors on Medicare, either, and take care of all those in between. □

## ‘Joma’ Sison speaks to NYC meeting

Taking advantage of low-cost Internet communications, Philippine immigrant organizations in the New York area—Bayan USA and Anakbayan NY/NJ—along with the International Action Center (IAC) and the International League for Peoples Struggle (ILPS) held an intercontinental discussion July 29 with a leader of the Philippine revolutionary struggle, Jose Maria Sison.

Sison, currently exiled in the Netherlands, is chairperson of the ILPS as well as an historic leader of the Philippines anti-imperialist struggle. He had recently been removed from the so-called terrorist list by a ruling in a European court. Sison is still barred from entering the United States in person, so those in the U.S. interested in hearing his analysis did so through a Skype conference call.

Members and friends of the sponsoring organizations filled the IAC’s Solidarity Hall in Manhattan, directing questions to the Philippines revolutionary leader. In the course of a two-hour discussion, Sison noted the weakened position of U.S. imperialism stemming from its quagmire following the Bush administration’s invasion of Iraq. He also was optimistic about the successes of the revolutionary movement in the Philippines against the government of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.



—Report & photo by John Catalinotto

## July 26 celebrated in NYC

There was a full house in the Local 1199 union hall in New York on July 27 to celebrate July 26 in solidarity with Cuba. The meeting was dedicated to the memory of Che Guevara and Vilma Espín, a leader of the July 26 Movement and head of the Federation of Cuban Women who died recently.

Rodolfo Benítez, Cuba’s charge d’affaires at its United Nations mission, gave the keynote speech. Benítez reviewed the meaning of July 26 for Cuba, citing the many accomplishments of the revolution in spite of the continuing U.S. blockade.

Attorney Leonard Weinglass reported on the status of the legal case of the Cuban 5, held since September 1998 in U.S. prisons for the “crime” of trying to prevent terrorist attacks on their country. Also addressing the meeting were Elombe

Brath from the Patrice Lumumba Coalition; Larry Hamm, People’s Organization for Progress in New Jersey; Antonio Negrón, former Puerto Rican political prisoner; and Victor Toro of La Pena del Bronx and a well-known Chilean activist who has been targeted by the U.S. government for deportation.

Bill Maher, a 9/11 volunteer who was one of the first responders featured in Michael Moore’s documentary “SiCKO,” recounted how he had believed the U.S. government lies about Cuba until he had the opportunity to travel there and experience firsthand the free medical care offered. “I was treated with the utmost respect and dignity in Cuba,” he said. This was in sharp contrast to the complete lack of care he got from the U.S. government.

—Naomi Cohen

## Interview on Iraq

### 100,000 resistance fighters; occupiers’ moral low

Continued from page 9

no excuse. Every section is responsible for itself, to organize its people, to train them, to plan the attacks, to raise money, etc.

Also politically the resistance has taken some steps forward. At the beginning there were hundreds of groups, but people now understand the need for unity. Now we can say that there are eight main groups. What has so far not been achieved is a unified political command, which remains one of the main tasks ahead. ...

Let us remember that the West started with insulting the resistance, calling it foreigners and followers of the old regime. They wanted to imply that the resistance has no connection to the Iraqi people. Actually the resistance sprang up on a very grass-roots level to defend its identity against the enormous provocations of U.S. neo-colonialism. They were former soldiers, tribesmen, nationally and religiously inspired people who acted in their immediate environment. It was neither

foreigners nor Baathists who were the driving force of the inception, although Baathists were participating as well.

The way the U.S. deposed Saddam was perceived as an aggression against all Iraqis including those who opposed him. To be honest, eventually Saddam personally played an important role in impelling his people into resistance. He did not try to save himself by hiding as was being reported. No, he went from city to city, from Tikrit to Samarra, Anbar and also Baghdad. He contacted sheikhs, officers and so on. He said that they should resist not for him as a president, but for the nation and for Islam. He asked them even to not use his picture any more as a rallying symbol. Only in the following months was the Baath able to reorganize as a party and join the resistance as such. From the point of view of the resistance it was a great luck that the occupiers could not arrest Saddam for a long time. □

## Iran forum counters U.S. threats

Continued from page 9

descriptions shattered the stereotypes of life in the Islamic Republic that U.S. political figures and the corporate media present in their effort to demonize not only the government in Tehran but also the 70 million Iranians, who are all at risk from the threat of massive U.S. bombing.

The main message was that Iran is a society in transition, a society that underwent a profound change when a revolution ousted the U.S.-backed shah in 1979. There have been many advances of an uneven character, and nothing happening in Iran can justify a U.S. hostile intervention against that country, let alone a massive war.

IAC co-director Sara Flounders discussed the work being done to organize against the threatened U.S. attack, which includes a petition campaign run from the Web site stopwaroniran.org that has over 23,000 signers. She also discussed the encampment in Washington planned

for Sept. 22-29 by the Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC) to protest the occupation of Iraq, and how stopping a new war on Iran would be a focus in activities at the encampment. (See troopsoutnow.org)

Ardeshir Ommani of the AIFC presented a brief analysis of the current situation, including the double-edged policy of the Bush administration, which on the one hand opened up high-level diplomatic talks with the Tehran government, but whose public statements have been unremittably hostile to Iran.

In the discussion period, compelled by a few hostile statements from what was generally a sympathetic audience, the panel sharpened the discussion further and ably defended the liberation struggle in the Middle East in all its forms, including the fight of the Iraqi people to end the U.S. occupation, that of the Palestinians to end the Israeli occupation of all their lands, and the overall struggle against U.S. imperialism. □

[www.TroopsOutNow.org](http://www.TroopsOutNow.org)



## CUBA

# Youths, workers challenge U.S. travel ban

By Larry Hales  
Buffalo, N.Y.

Activists from the United States who support the Cuban people and the Cuban Revolution marched across the Peace Bridge from Fort Erie, Ont., to Buffalo, N.Y. on July 28 to protest the U.S. travel ban against Cuba and the over 40 years of U.S.-imposed blockade of the island.

The action was led by the Venceremos Brigade, a group that has been traveling to Cuba since 1969, openly challenging the U.S. blockade and travel restrictions imposed on the country. Members of the U.S. Cuba Labor Exchange and the youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) were also among the nearly 80 people who defied the travel ban.

Deciding to actively challenge U.S. travel restrictions is a serious matter, as potential fines can be heavy. Just this year the reactionary Bush administration announced a new task force whose goal is

to intensify the harassment of supporters of the Cuban revolution, and even people simply going to the island for a vacation.

The protests on the walk across the mile-long Peace Bridge were lively, with up to 15 people crossing at one time, with their luggage, and shouting chants such as, "Cuba Sí! Bloqueo No!" and other chants in support of the Cuban Five, five political prisoners here in the U.S. whom Cubans consider heroes for providing information about terrorist anti-socialist groups of Cuban exiles in Miami.

As the protesters went through U.S. customs, some of them were harassed by customs agents and in some cases were even insulted. Then dozens of supporters on the U.S. side greeted the weary travelers with cheers and chants and regaled them with a cookout.

FIST, which is the youth organization of Workers World Party (WWP), had a contingent of 17 people, one an infant. A representative of the League of Young



Marchers cross 'Peace Bridge' on way home from Cuba.

WW PHOTO:  
CHERYL LABASH

with leadership of the UJC, with Cuba's National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX), with a professor at the Communist Party's school on Marxism and Socialism, with U.S. graduates of the Latin American School of Medicine

Communists (UJC) in Cuba told the FIST contingent that it was the first pro-socialist youth group in a long time to travel to the island from the U.S.

While on the island, the FIST youth, along with veteran WWP members, visited

and with the director of the medical school. These visits were just a few of the highlights of the trip, which included a visit to the memorial in Santa Clara for the Argentine-born hero of the Cuban Revolution, Che Guevara. □

# Cuba's CENESEX proposes ground-breaking transsexual rights

By Leslie Feinberg

Mariela Castro Espín, director of Cuba's National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX), recalled that three decades ago a Cuban from Matanzas who was born female-bodied but identified as male came to Havana for help.

In response, Cuban revolutionary leader and president of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), Vilma Espín, recommended in 1979 that a special committee be established, coordinated by the National Work Group on Sex Education—CENESEX's predecessor. The FMC had formed the Work Group in 1972; CENESEX was established in 1989.

The first result, Castro Espín related, was an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice to issue new identity papers. Three transsexual Cubans got new identity documents under that accord.

In 1988, the first sex-reassignment surgery—from male to female—was carried out successfully in Cuba. The operation was successful and the person lives without difficulty.

But the media coverage, Castro Espín remembered, was tinged with more sensationalism than science. Historically unchallenged prejudice welled up. As a result, the CENESEX director explained, the operations were temporarily halted until the need for them could be explained to the population. Clinical and psychological care continued for transsexual Cubans, but with a lower profile.

Castro Espín stated in the January 2006 La Jornada interview, "We were unable to convince people of the need to carry out these operations. This reluctance also came from the professionals in the Ministry of Public Health who were not experts on the subject. This is where I feel the strongest resistance, even as we speak."

Journalist Gerardo Arreola added that in recent years, "A group of transsexuals joined CENESEX and were trained as sex health promoters in the campaign for the prevention of AIDS. In the center they have a permanent open debate forum and receive specialized care. The health system provides them with free hormone treatment."

## Sex change and social change

"At the beginning of 2004," Arreola wrote, "there was a new momentum when CENESEX launched a national strategy: it increased and diversified its professional staff, obtained support from President Fidel Castro and directly contacted ministries and social organizations to discuss, based on entity profile, the subject of transsexuals."

Two years later, Mariela Castro Espín said, this move has accelerated change. "It seems all this work is now bearing fruit. People are now more receptive. We have also articulated a more persuasive discourse. I see great flexibility, even among official leaders."

Castro Espín, as director of CENESEX, took a plan about expanding rights for transsexuals to two parliamentary committees on Dec. 20, 2005.

Granma reported the following day that CENESEX had "released results of a survey on gender identity in today's Cuban society to the committees on Education, Culture, Science, Technology and the Environment, and Youth, Children and Women's Rights."

"Mariela Castro said that for people with a non-traditional gender identity to fully develop their potential as a member of society, it is first necessary to identify them so as to assure that they receive adequate specialized assistance. She also noted the need in Cuban society of a profound understanding of gender and sexuality."

Correspondent Gerardo Arreola interviewed Castro Espín for the Jan. 9, 2006, issue of La Jornada about the move to widen rights for transsexuals. Castro Espín outlined that her proposal to parliament would make free sex reassignment surgery and hormones available to all transsexual Cubans—all forms of health care are provided cost-free on the island. New identity documents would also be immediately issued.

Arreola reported, "This is part of a national policy to recognize the rights of these people to live a full life in the gender they chose."

Castro Espín stated, "The draft was very

## Fidel Castro backs effort

well received by the representatives in the two commissions examining the project." She added, "They not only accepted the proposal, but asked many questions and made recommendations."

By 2006, a transsexual Cuban woman traveled abroad on her new passport. Four others who had sex reassignment surgeries abroad got changed identity papers as soon as they returned home. "The Courts of Justice were finally convinced," Castro Espín concluded.

In early 2007, Cuba's National Assembly of Popular Power agreed to discuss making sex-reassignment surgery free of cost to all transsexuals on the island who request it.

The newsletter Diversity (Diversidad) reported: "The measure would complement the present Identity Law that already acknowledges the right of citizens to change name and sexual identity. This places Cuba at the vanguard of the legislations that acknowledge the rights of transvestites, transsexuals and transgender in Latin America."

In fact, by providing free health care, Cuba is leading the world on rights for transsexual and gender variant people.

## Revolution takes work

Mariela Castro Espín and CENESEX don't rest on these laurels. She emphasized the need for legislation and other actions to block discrimination and raise popular consciousness.

A job is a right in Cuba. However, she said, "there may be transsexuals who have a job and are not rejected, because the law protects them, even if they go cross-dressed. But the administrators always find a way to get rid of them."

Addressing a conflict between revolutionary security police and trans Cubans two years earlier, Castro Espín was very clear. She stated that neighbors had complained about street solicitation. But when the security police arrested transsexuals and transvestites, based on an assumption that they were prostitutes, Castro Espín stressed that they were acting on backward ideas and prejudice.

"The police take measures—that's what they are there for," she explained, "but

they interpret things with their own way of thinking. They have learned over their lifetimes that transsexuals and homosexuals are intrinsically bad." (Associated Press, Sept. 5, 2004)

"This attitude was not in keeping with the policy or the law, because these do not penalize a person for cross-dressing." (La Jornada, Jan. 9, 2006)

Castro Espín noted, "We have been given procedural guidelines so these people know how to defend themselves in case of police transgression of the regulations."

She explained that CENESEX intervened and set up a channel of communication with the revolutionary security forces and the Ministry of the Interior. Together they ordered police not to hassle transgender and transsexual Cubans. They also agreed to provide education to Cuba's National Revolutionary Police officers, including a seminar on distinct expressions of gender and sexuality.

Castro Espín noted that the transsexual and transgender Cubans who had been harassed came right to CENESEX to lodge complaints and demand redress. "Of course, they came to demand their rights, because I don't know if you have noticed, we Cubans have a strong sense of justice and fight when we have to," she said.

"They spoke of everything that bothered them. I asked if I could tape what they had said to prepare a report. And that's what I did; a short report so they could read it over rapidly and then a longer one with many annexes.

"That is how a national strategy came about for attention to transsexuals with an integral vision since 1979, which was created by my mother, Vilma Espín, president of the Cuban Women's Federation. What we did was to broaden this work, to enrich it." (BBC Mundo, Sept. 18, 2006)

"We are even carrying out a very important study on representations of transsexuality," she concluded, "to carry out educational campaigns to teach society to respect these people and respect their rights."

*Next: Revolution—'a battle of ideas'*  
To find out more about Cuba, read parts 86-107 of *Lavender & Red* at [workers.org](http://workers.org).

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## La crisis de las hipotecas

# Millones no pueden pagar y corren el riesgo de perder sus hogares

Por Jaimeson Champion

El 24 de julio la compañía de hipotecas más grande de los Estados Unidos, Countrywide Financial Corp., reportó que las pérdidas de su segundo trimestre han sido mucho peor que lo esperado y que los problemas en el sector de hipotecas bajo el principal que se habían reportado anteriormente ahora se estaban expandiendo hacia el mercado de hipotecas de principal.

Las hipotecas de principal son aquellos préstamos hechos a solicitantes con un historial de crédito firme. Los desfalcos en esta área están aumentando, indicando que los problemas discutidos ampliamente en el sector bajo el principal fueron solamente la primera fase de una crisis capitalista mucho más grande.

Debido a su tamaño y amplitud de sus operaciones prestamistas, a esta compañía, la Countrywide Financial, los economistas y analistas la perciben como pronóstico del mercado de vivienda de los Estados Unidos.

El reporte negativo que esta corporación publicó sacó a todos los índices de las acciones principales fuera de su eje, cuando los inversionistas nerviosos vendieron en larga escala grandes cantidades de acciones y bonos. La S&P 500, la Dow Jones Industrial y la NASDAQ, todos sostuvieron grandes bajas ese día.

El mercado de acciones en todos sus años de existencia ahora se encuentra en una posición muy volátil, mientras que los inversionistas intentan descifrar cuan severa es la crisis de las hipotecas.

El punto de vista sobre la crisis que la prensa capitalista ha dado a conocer ha sido de que el problema en las alzas de

desfalcos y falta de pago era solamente del sector bajo principal. Ahora se puede ver que esto no es verdad.

Por muchos meses, las familias con hipotecas bajo el principal, han estado sintiendo el dolor de las crisis hipotecaria. Estas son personas que han tenido que pagar más en intereses para poder obtener una hipoteca debido a su historial de crédito. Una cifra desproporcionada de Africano-americanos y latinos, refleja el estatus económico deprimido de la gente de color en los Estados Unidos. Se ha visto forzados al defalco o a la banca rota en grandes cantidades, en cifras no vista desde la Gran Depresión.

A solo una semana antes del reporte negativo de la Countrywide, en un testimonio dado ante el Congreso por el presidente de la Reserva Federal, Ben Bernanke, había afirmado mientras que las pérdidas en el sector de bajo el principal son grandes y perjudiciales para el crecimiento económico de los Estados Unidos, él cree que podrían ser absorbido por un sistema financiero mucho más grande para el año 2008, y que no se expandirían a otras clases de valores.

Pero el anuncio de Country Financial muestra que la falta de pagos y la consecuente retoma de las casas se está expandiendo a los sectores de la clase trabajadora con mejor adquisición económica y hasta a grandes sectores de la clase media, quienes son los mayores dueños de préstamos hipotecarios de gran principal.

Durante la explosión de viviendas entre los años 2000 y 2006, aquellos con buen historial de crédito les fue fácil obtener préstamos hipotecarios de primera. Estas hipotecas tienen tasas de interés fijas—usualmente el 6% durante 30 años. Las

hipotecas bajo el principal tienen bajas tasas de interés incitantes por los dos primeros años y después “explotan” a intereses de doble cifra por los 28 años restantes de la hipoteca.

Los que tienen hipotecas con mejores tasas de intereses no tienen que preocuparse por una explosión en las tasas de sus intereses, pero el continuo declive en el valor de las casas claramente ha comenzado a afectar su habilidad de pagar sus hipotecas.

Much@s obrer@s fueron persuadid@s a refinanciar sus hipotecas durante el período de precios altos de la vivienda de 2000-2006, a menudo por el ofrecimiento de dinero inmediato en efectivo. Para much@s trabajador@s con deudas enormes por servicios médicos, tarjetas de créditos y otros gastos, pareció demasiado bueno el ofrecimiento para ignorar. Ahora, especialmente en el caso de l@s trabajador@s en las fábricas de automóviles, ell@s están enfrentándose con el doble problema del mercado de vivienda rápidamente deteriorándose y recortes forzados de sus sueldos y beneficios.

Para esos sectores de la clase trabajadora y esos segmentos de la clase media que creían que habían asegurado sus futuros después de años de labor, esta difusión de morosos y pérdidas subsecuentes por el deudor hipotecario del derecho a redimir la hipoteca es un desastre.

Casi 70 por ciento de toda actividad económica en los Estados Unidos hoy en día resulta de las compras de consumidores. Mucha de esta actividad de comprar ha sido estimulado por el acceso fácil a crédito. ¿Cuál trabajador/a o aún estudiante, no ha sido bombardeado con ofertas de tarjetas de crédito? La clase

media y sectores más prósperos de la clase trabajadora son la fuente mayor de este derroche por consumidores. Si estos segmentos de la población fueran forzados a procedimiento ejecutivo hipotecario y llevados a la quiebra por cantidades de gente, la bajada escarpada en el gasto por consumidores podría resultar en catástrofe económica general.

La crisis de hipotecas presenta una doble amenaza. La inmediata, una gran baja en el gasto de consumidores, está claramente incrementando. Además, la crisis ha puesto en peligro Wall Street y el sistema global de finanzas de capital, limitando su capacidad a impedir sus efectos. Agencias mayores de evaluación como Moody's y Standard & Poor's están siendo forzadas lentamente a confesar que dieron clasificaciones de AAA a lo que fue en esencia un papel de basura. Una revisión mayor para clasificaciones para inversiones podría provocar más bajas de valores grandes en los meses que vienen y eliminar cualquier esperanza de la especie de aterrizaje suave a la cual fue aludido por el jefe de la Reserva Federal, Bernanke.

### Wall Street recibe un golpe

Goldman Sachs, el banquero principal de Wall Street, tiene alianzas con Countrywide. Ha dado al prestamista de hipotecas sus servicios banqueros para invertir su dinero. Uno de sus socios es miembro de la junta directiva de Countrywide.

Queda todavía ver qué niveles profundos serán sus pérdidas.

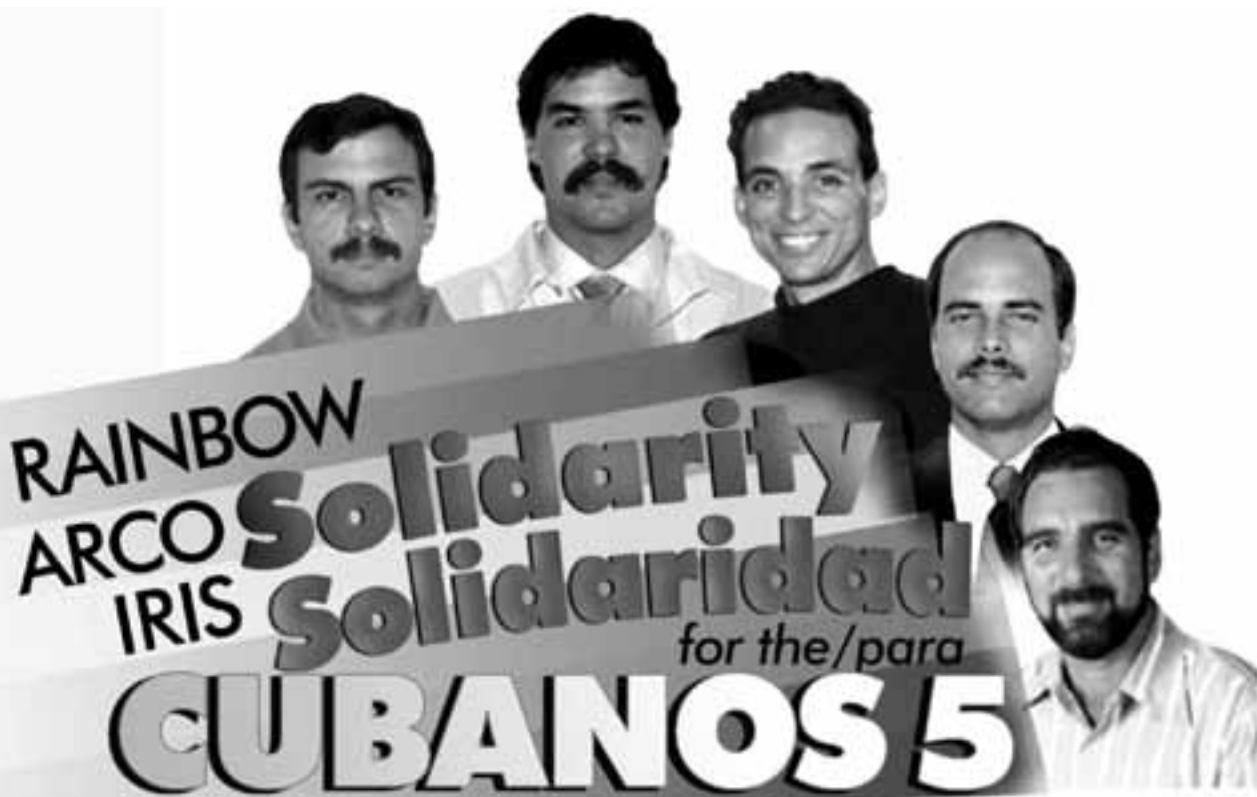
Al determinar la baja del segundo trimestre del 33 por ciento de Countrywide de ingresos y 10 por ciento de acciones, el Wall Street Journal del 25 de julio reportó que Citigroup, Bank of America y J.P. Morgan Chase todos han anotado “el deterioro en la calidad del crédito de préstamos de equidad de vivienda”.

Esta crisis ya está extendiendo a los fondos de pensiones y del mercado de dinero, los cuales ya se han invertidos enormemente en el mercado lucrativo pero arriesgado de bienes raíces, así poniendo en peligro los ahorros de much@s trabajador@s en todavía otra dirección.

Y se ha extendido a las corporaciones privadas de equidad, las cuales han ido adelantando los fondos necesarios para explotar las compras y amalgamaciones que están pasando en los sectores industriales de la economía estadounidense.

El Financial Times anotó el 25 de julio que el financiamiento de \$20 mil millones para que comprara Cerberus a Chrysler “ha encontrado problemas con bancos que han decidido posponer la venta de \$12 mil millones de deuda ligada a las operaciones de producir automóviles.”

La burbuja de precios altos para vivienda ha estallado. Ahora la casa de cartas creadas por Wall Street y sus capitalistas ladrones en su prisa loca para conseguir ganancias también está en peligro de derumbarse. □



**Solidaridad arco iris para los cinco Cubanos** Demandamos un nuevo juicio y la libertad para los Cinco Cubanos—Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández and René González.