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Setback to racist death penalty

Kevin Cooper execution halted

Protesters cheer news at San Quentin gate

By Bill Hackwell
San Quentin State Prison
California

In a dramatic change of events on Feb. 9, less than four hours before his scheduled execution, Kevin Cooper was granted a stay from death by lethal injection. The U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals earlier in the day had ruled nine to two to send the case back to a federal judge in San Diego because a significant amount of information had surfaced indicating that San Bernardino police had planted and tampered with evidence in order to get a conviction of Cooper in the 1983 deaths of four people.

Prior to the ruling, California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, a Democrat, began an appeal process to petition the Supreme Court to overrule the stay. The San Francisco office of the ANSWER Coalition immediately activated its phone fax and email network, flooding the Attorney General's office to demand he not appeal the lower court's decision.

Despite the stay, opponents of the death penalty continued their mobilizing efforts to march on San Quentin, where Kevin Cooper was in a deathwatch cell 12 feet from the execution chamber. It had become clear when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger denied Cooper even the customary clemency hearing that the state of California was hell bent on following through with the execution, despite the growing evidence of Cooper's innocence.

In recent weeks the Cooper case has galvanized progressive forces around the state and has also become a focus of national attention as sentiment against the death penalty gains momentum. Demonstrations have taken place all over California, including protests at Schwarzenegger's mansion in Los Angeles. Full-page ads by the Committee to Stop the Execution of Kevin Cooper appeared in the New York Times

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WW PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL



The joy outside San Quentin by Leilani Dowell **5**



Protesters in San Francisco (top) and Los Angeles rallied into the night to stop the execution.

WW PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA

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RUTHIE WEEKS

Fighter for a just society

By Steven Ceci and
Renee Washington
Baltimore

Baltimore lost a fighter and champion for poor and working people's rights on Jan. 25. Ruth Weeks, more affectionately known as "Ruthie," passed away from cancer after a year-long battle against the disease. Ruthie was an active member of the All Peoples Congress and Jesus Saves Church for All People, and attended many Workers World Party activities.

Ruthie graduated from Frederick Douglass High School, received an Associate of Arts degree at the Community College of Baltimore, and later received her Bachelor of Science at Coppin State College. She worked as a teacher's assistant for Chimes of Baltimore, a non-profit organization serving the disabled.

So many things could be said about Ruthie that it is hard to know where to start. Ruthie was a leading organizer in campaigns to stop utility shutoffs and lower the gas and electric rates. She participated in a sit-in at the office of Constellation Energy in which eight people were arrested, including her son, Tony Weeks.

She was active in building the Korea Truth Commission, which in June of 2001 heard evidence of U.S. government war crimes in Korea. Ruthie traveled to New York City for the hearing and helped build a solidarity event for the commission in Baltimore at Dr. Kwame O. Abayomi's church. She marched in all the major anti-war protests called by ANSWER after Sept. 11, 2001, and served as a bus captain on many different trips to Washington. Ruthie saw unity as a very important concept and advocated it all the time.



WW PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

Ruthie always had a smile and a word or song of encouragement for everyone. Many times she would sing, "This Little Light of Mine, I'm Going to Let It Shine." That song sort of sums her up. She would give whatever she could for justice and people's rights, regardless of her personal situation or the tough times she might be going through.

Ruthie Weeks' legacy will continue through her two sons, Tony and Reggie Weeks; her two daughters-in-law, Angela and Anita Weeks; five grandchildren—Andrea, Shaylin and Amina Weeks, Nikisha Reid and Marquette Payne; her great-grandson, Montas Flood; her sister, Antoinette Turner; her brothers Robert Darby Sr., Ralph Darby, Larry Darby and Joseph Darby; and her cousin, Roy Miller. But her legacy extends beyond her family and stretches out to all those who worked and struggled with Ruthie to make this world a just society. □

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CHICAGO

Thu., Feb. 19

Silencing Dissent: Political Repression and the Patriot Act. A Forum on the Future of Civil Liberties. Keynote Speaker: Michel Shehadeh, L.A. 8 defendant, National Council of Arab Americans, Free Palestine Alliance. Additional panelists: Stan Willis. National Council of Black Lawyers; Michelle Morales, Borique Human Rights Network; Emma Lozano, Pueblo Sin Fronteras; Suzanne Adely, Arab American Action Network; Emile Schepers, Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights. Sponsored by the Chicago Coalition Against War and Racism. 7:30 p.m. At Depaul Univ.-Loop Campus, Lewis Law Center#241, 25 E. Jackson(at Wabash). For info (888) 471-0874 or e-mail CCAWR@aol.com.

Haiti, the world's first Black republic; Leslie Feinberg on Massachusetts same-sex marriage ruling. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

Fri., Feb. 20

Black History Month forum: Socialism and the struggle for Black liberation. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17th St., 5th fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

Sat., March 6

Fightback Conference on the Economic Oppression of Women. Sponsored by IWD Committee of IAC. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. At P.S. 41, 11th St. & 6th Ave. For info (212) 633-6646.

SAN FRANCISCO

Sun. Feb. 22

ANSWER benefit dinner. Recognizing Those on the Front Lines of the Struggle Against War and Racism with Cynthia McKinney, Stephen Funk, Michel Shehadeh and many more special guests. Reception 5 p.m., dinner 6 p.m. To purchase tickets (415) 821-6545.

Fri., Feb. 27

Celebrate Black History Month and commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Haitian Revolution. With Pierre Labossiere, Haiti Action Committee; Glenn Nance, S.F. African-American Historical Society; LeiLani Dowell, Peace & Freedom Party congressional candidate. Sponsored by International Action Center. 7 p.m. At African & African-American Arts & Culture Center, 762 Fulton St. For info (415) 821-6545.

LOS ANGELES

Every Friday

Workers World Party weekly meetings at 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 7. At 422 S. Western. Phone (213) 500-0529 for info.

NEW YORK

Fri., Feb. 13

Demonstrate against a new coup in Haiti. Noon. At Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, 47th between 1st & 2nd Aves, Manhattan. For info (212) 633-6646.

Fri., Feb. 13

Workers World Party meeting. Two topics: Pat Chin on U.S. plans to recolonize

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SAME-SEX MARRIAGE RIGHTS

The struggle is on!

By Frank Neisser
Boston

The battle lines are drawn here in Massachusetts over the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people to be treated as equal human beings under the law.

Since the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts handed down its ruling on Feb. 4 that a compromise institution for same-sex marriage rights was not equality, Massachusetts has become the flashpoint for an anti-LGBT hate campaign by the religious right and the political establishment. And it has also become a rallying point for all those who love justice, decency, solidarity and fair play.

The SJC had ruled in November that it is unconstitutional for the state to deny same-sex partners the same right to marry that other couples have.

That state ruling followed on the heels of the momentous U.S. Supreme Court decision last June that overturned anti-gay "sodomy" laws.

These decisions were tremendous, hard-won victories that showed how far the LGBT movement has come in the struggle to overcome centuries of bigotry and to educate and win over working people by the millions to the demand of equal rights for all.

Both before and after the SJC's November decision, for example, people in Massachusetts supported equal marriage rights. The polls showed about 59 percent supporting and about 35 percent opposed.

The right to marry is a basic question of equality. There are more than 1,000 benefits on the state and federal level associated with marriage that are currently denied to same-sex partners, including numerous tax, insurance, hospital visitation and bereavement rights.

Civil unions only provide a small number of these and, as the Feb. 4 Massachusetts court ruled, create an inferior second-class status.

'Separate is not equal'

After the November state court ruling, the first act of the Massachusetts Legislature was to ignore the plain language of the decision and to instead move to pass a "civil union law" as an alternative.

But on Feb. 4, the court decided that the legislature's civil unions proposal would establish "an unconstitutional, inferior and discriminatory status for same-sex couples," adding, "separate is seldom, if ever, equal."

The legislature scheduled a special session on Feb. 11 to consider an amendment to the state constitution that would define marriage as between a man and a woman.

The day before, on Feb. 10, thousands of supporters of same-sex marriage rights—including labor unionists, progressive religious groups and others—filled the Nurses Hall and surrounding corridors inside the State House, the State House steps and surrounding streets, opposing any state constitutional amendment that would deny same-sex marriage rights.

Following that protest, legislators proposed a "compromise": a constitutional amendment that would limit marriage to a man and a woman, but would also establish civil unions for same-sex couples. It would also retroactively convert to civil unions the marriages of same-sex couples who marry before the amendment goes into effect. Such an amendment would create an inferior second-class status and would be unconstitutional.

The legislature will take the matter up for a vote that could come as early as Feb. 11. It would have to be passed by two consecutive legislatures and be approved in a

general election, at the earliest in November of 2006, to become part of the constitution.

Groups that have organized rallies, media conferences and other mobilizations include the Freedom to Marry Coalition of Massachusetts, Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD)—which brought the suit to state court that won this decision—Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, Human Rights Campaign, National Organization for Women-Massachusetts' Chapter and others.

The president of the 400,000-member strong Massachusetts AFL-CIO sent a letter to the legislature in support of same-sex marriage and against the amendment.

Unions representing 200,000 workers across the state have endorsed same-sex marriage, seeing it as a matter of equal rights and key to expanded benefits for their thousands of LGBT members.

Endorsing unions include the Service Employees Industrial Union Locals 509 and 2020, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, National Association of Government Employees, the Massachusetts Nurses Association, the United Auto Workers of Massachusetts and an electrical workers' union—IBEW Local 1505.

Flashpoint of a national struggle

The right wing and the political establishment have been pulling out all stops to fan the flames of bigotry and hatred and use this issue to turn back the clock on civil and human rights.

The Catholic Church and the religious right have held rallies around the state and taken out full-page ads in the Boston Globe spreading hate messages, including the myth that lesbian, gay, bi and trans

parents are bad for children's physical and mental wellbeing.

However, since November, progressive forces have rallied in defense of same-sex marriage rights and against any constitutional amendment.

On a national level, other state legislatures, with Ohio in the lead, are considering legislation or constitutional amendments against same-sex marriage.

President George W. Bush—with an eye towards his reactionary political base in an election year—has attacked the Massachusetts court decision. He has publicly declared that he will make the battle to block same-sex marriage rights a pillar of his re-election campaign.

Bush has supported the "Federal Defense of Marriage Act," which seeks to override progressive state rulings like the one just won here. And he is expected to support an anti-LGBT amendment to the U.S. Constitution defining marriage as "between a man and a woman."

Democrat front-runner John Kerry, who claims to support "gay rights," has declared he's against same-sex marriage and might support an amendment to the Massachusetts constitution to bar this right.

The attacks on same-sex marriage are a wedge that can also be used to try to reverse or outlaw civil union benefits and domestic partner benefits that have already been won. The right to civil marriage is a democratic right and state function. Based on separation of church and state, this has nothing to do with religion.

All progressives should rally and mobilize to defend same-sex marriage rights as a question of fundamental justice and oppose attempts to write bigotry, discrimination and curtailment of rights into federal and state laws and constitutions.

The struggle is on. □

Community fights racist school closures

By Nancy Mitchell
Oakland, Calif.

Parents, teachers, students, community members and their supporters rallied outside the State Office Building here on Feb. 4 to fight the projected closing of five predominantly African American and Latino public schools.

The closing of the four elementary schools and the one elementary/middle school would force approximately 1,000 students to travel long distances from their homes to new, already overcrowded, schools. Working parents would have to fear for the safety of their children, who would have to cross some of Oakland's busiest streets.

All five schools are part of Oakland's "small schools" program, implemented by the community in 1999 to help raise student achievement levels. Each has raised its test scores over the past three years. The Coalition Against School Closures has formed to fight the closure and raise the community's demand for equal quality education.

Despite the public outcry, state school administrator Randolph Ward insists the schools must be closed in the name of "fiscal solvency."

Activists have focused attention on exposing Ward, the unelected trustee of Oakland schools, and his role in slashing

education budgets and union-busting in California. Ward was brought in to Oakland in June, when the state of California took over the economically struggling local school district and stripped the school board of its authority. According to research done by Oakland activists, his first act was to impose a 4-percent wage cut on Oakland teachers and lay off more than 60 school custodians. Ward's austerity programs during his six-year reign in the Los Angeles Compton schools froze the wages of the lowest-paid teachers in the area and busted the school bus drivers' union.

In 1998 he imposed on the majority-Latino Compton schools one of the harshest implementations in the state of the anti-immigrant Proposition 227 law. Ward has also been a registered member of the right-wing libertarian American Independent Party, which advocates stripping away affirmative action and bilingual education.

Ward makes over \$250,000 a year in his new Oakland position. He was recommended by Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown, the magnate of the racist gentrification of Oakland's oppressed communities. Ward is rumored to be planning a sell-off of the Oakland Public Schools Administration building, which sits on valuable lakeside property, to Oakland developers.

The Feb. 4 rally marched to City Hall to meet with Jerry Brown, but security

Continued on page 8



OAKLAND, CALIF.

'No to the closing of our school.' Parents and students demonstrate against school closures.

As grocery chains refuse union offer

Workers dig in heels, step up picketing

By Ian Thompson
Los Angeles

Four months into the historic strike and lockout of grocery workers in Southern California fighting against supermarket giants Vons, Ralphs and Albertson's, the members of the United Food and Commercial Workers remain militant on the picket lines and steadfast in their demands to maintain healthcare benefits and decent wages.

Community support for the 70,000 strikers is also as solid as ever. Unions and activist groups are strengthening picket lines at grocery stores throughout Southern California and holding solidarity actions across the U.S.

On Feb. 4, just days after a 20,000-strong march and rally in Inglewood, Calif., to support the grocery workers, the seven UFCW local unions involved in the strike and lockout held five simultaneous, coordinated press conferences to announce their offer to enter into binding arbitration with the supermarkets as a means of ending the strike.

Among those present at the Los Angeles

press conference were UFCW local presidents Connie Leyva, Rick Icaza and Greg Conger. They were joined by the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Los Angeles Mayor James Hahn, officials from unions working in solidarity with the UFCW, and representatives of various community support organizations, including the Community Action Project to Support Labor (CAPSL), a project of the International ANSWER Coalition.

Under the terms presented by the union, an arbitrator to be selected jointly by the union and the bosses would hear evidence and arguments from both sides and then render a final decision to settle the strike and lockout. In addition, during the arbitration process all striking and locked-out workers would return to work for the supermarkets and the scabs would be fired.

Less than one hour later, the supermar-



WW PHOTO: MARSHA GOLDBERG

Rally on Wall Street. 'No peace, no profits!'

kets arrogantly rejected the union's offer, demonstrating the bosses' true motives. They do not want to end the strike and lockout on anyone's terms but their own. They want to drastically slash healthcare benefits and force a permanent two-tier wage system on these low-paid workers, all to increase the massive profits the companies already enjoy. More than that, the bosses are ultimately striving to bust this union of multinational workers and drive wages into the ground.

The night of the press conferences, one of the striking locals held a spirited rally at a Vons in Culver City, attended by over 300 workers and community activists.

UFCW picketers—joined by members of the Screen Actors Guild, CAPSL, the National Lawyers Guild, the Peace & Freedom Party and the Los Angeles Striker Solidarity Organization—marched around Vons chanting, "One day longer, one day stronger," and hounding the few customers who dared to cross the picket line. All rally participants vowed to continue the fight for healthcare and union rights and to strengthen the picket line at another L.A.-area Vons every week until the union prevails.

Solidarity coast to coast

National solidarity actions are also on the rise.

In late January the AFL-CIO announced it would coordinate a national cam-

paign to help the UFCW win the strike.

Unions and people all over the U.S., from Baltimore to Seattle, are realizing that the struggle of 70,000 multinational grocery workers in Southern California to save hard-won healthcare benefits is their struggle, too, and are carrying out solidarity actions at Safeway stores.

On Feb. 5 in New York, 1,000 grocery workers, union members and community activists marched on Wall Street in solidarity with the Southern California grocery workers. They protested investment firms and stockbrokers who are instructing rich investors to buy stock in Vons (Safeway), Ralphs (Kroger) and Albertson's in order to artificially inflate their financial profiles. In fact, these greedy supermarket chains have each lost hundreds of millions of dollars in sales during the strike and lockout. Why urge investors to buy now? Because Wall Street and the super-rich corporate interests it represents stand to profit if the grocery workers lose this strike.

Like Wal-Mart, the company that the supermarket bosses have invoked throughout the strike as the main reason they need to lower wages and cut healthcare, the supermarkets are not above violating federal and state laws to further their anti-union interests. This week, the union revealed that Ralphs hired at least 200 people to work under phony names and Social Security numbers during the lockout. The U.S. Attorney's office in Los Angeles is currently investigating these serious charges.

The supermarket and Wall Street bosses fully intend to win the strike and smash the union by breaking the law with impunity, refusing to negotiate, and starving out the workers. They believe they can set a nationwide precedent by making workers pay for their healthcare benefits.

But the determination of the workers and community stands in the way of the supermarkets' greedy aspirations. As a striking grocery worker stated while picketing outside a Vons store this week, "We are going to stay out here as long as it takes to win this whole thing." □



Stickers shout slogans to mostly empty store.

WW PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA

Seniors under attack on many fronts

By Heather Cottin

Washington and Wall Street are campaigning relentlessly to loot seniors in the United States. Since most workers will live to be seniors someday, this full court press is really an attack on every worker.

President George W. Bush and his supporters have never ceased their campaign against Social Security, the one social program that has helped to keep millions of seniors out of poverty.

Backed by right-wing and libertarian think tanks, the Bush administration claims the Social Security system is under-funded and doomed to fail in its present form.

Although establishment institutions such as the Brookings Institute have demonstrated the mendacity of this prediction, conservatives continue to press for reforms that would "allow" workers to place their Social Security taxes in a "personal retirement account." Some of the money could then be invested by the private sector in the stock market.

In other words, the capitalists want to get their hands on the billions of dollars

generated by the Social Security system.

A model of Bush's proposal was created in Sweden in the 1990s and went into effect in 2000. A recent report showed that Swedish workers lost between 30 and 40 percent of the money they were forced to place in the system in the first two years of the program. The money didn't actually disappear. As with any loss in the stock market, capitalists got it.

And the United States isn't Sweden. In addition to Social Security, Sweden has a "guaranteed pension" that provides a minimum income above the poverty line to anyone with little or no private pension income. ("Retirement Lessons From Sweden," New York Times, Feb 5)

In the U.S. only one employee in four has a pension guaranteed by an employer. (Boston Globe, May 15, 2002)

The plan to swindle money from every worker who pays into Social Security is one method the capitalists and their government stooges have come up with. They don't have their hands on that dough yet.

But the ruling class is plundering seniors right now.

Most major corporations have cut back

company-paid health benefits for retirees, forcing many older workers to bear the bulk of health-care costs themselves. James Norby, president of the National Retiree Legislative Network, said companies have stopped paying health benefits to people who have been retired for 15 or 20 years.

This is the wave of the future, says Uwe Reinhardt, a health economist at Princeton University. "Twenty years from now, no company will offer retiree health care."

The results are devastating for retired workers. TXU, a Fortune 500 company, forces retirees to come up with 60 percent of their health premiums. For Elise Bolt—forced to take early retirement—medical insurance costs went from \$100 a month to \$725. Another retiree's health premium went to \$2,066 on Jan. 1, dwarfing his \$1,276 monthly pension. (New York Times, Feb. 3)

Some companies are already eliminating retiree health benefits—especially prescription drug coverage. They didn't even wait for the Medicare drug discount cards to begin next June. The cards will provide discounts of 10 to 25 percent

from retail prices on many drugs.

The drug program is as bogus as the rest of the new Medicare law, which is about privatizing Medicare, charging people "more money for less health care and taking away the core guarantees of Medicare," according to Diane Archer of the Medicare Rights Center.

Even Medicare's administrators admit the new drug cards are confusing. A New York City pharmacist said, "The reimbursements are very poor"—a signal that pharmacies may soon try to wriggle out of accepting the discount cards.

But drug companies are ecstatic. "The government expects to spend \$1.8 trillion on drugs over the next 10 years," said Alan Spielman, general manager of federal programs at Medco Health Solutions, a big pharmacy benefit manager. "It is a major growth opportunity for us." (New York Times, Feb. 6)

Meanwhile, poverty among seniors is growing. According to the Census Bureau, 16 percent of elderly women and 9 percent of elderly men live below the official poverty line. For elderly Blacks the rate is 33 percent and Latinos 22 percent. □

JOY OUTSIDE SAN QUENTIN

'Cooper will not die tonight'

By LeiLani Dowell
San Quentin Prison, Calif.

We have won a victory. Kevin Cooper is still alive.

On Monday a federal court responded to intense pressure from people on the streets to stay his execution. While the battle is by no means over, it is imperative that the movement take a moment to claim and honor this victory.

We sit on pins and needles all day. The word comes in the middle of a morning meeting: "The Ninth Circuit's granted a stay." Fifteen minutes later: "Attorney General Lockyer's 'weighing his options' on whether or not to appeal the stay." We stop everything, send emails out nationwide asking folks to flood Lockyer's office with calls/faxes/emails.

Spend the rest of the day running around, getting last-minute carpools arranged, logistics done, receiving non-stop calls: "What's going on with the case? Are we still rallying tonight? What can we do right now to help?"

The case of Kevin Cooper—a poor, African American man—illustrates not the exception but the rule of the death penalty in the United States. When we hear that:

- 73.7 percent of the people on death row in California in 2003 were people of color;
- the overwhelming majority of those on death row in the U.S. were convicted for murders of whites, although 50 percent of all murders are against Black people;
- most of those on death row could not afford to hire a lawyer to represent them;

we know this is nothing short of modern-day, legalized lynching, an outright attack on the poor and people of color.

As we begin to pile into cars and vans, the word comes through again: "Lockyer's appealed the stay of execution." I wonder, as crazed as we're all feeling, how Cooper must feel as each new piece of information comes over the wire.

Like Malcolm X, Kevin Cooper's time in prison has been spent becoming more politicized and more conscious of the forces at work in the U.S. death penalty and prison system. As the execution date approached, he refused to participate in what he called the "sick rituals" of the death penalty. He refused to choose his "preferred" method of execution—lethal gas or lethal injection. He told authori-

ties he didn't want a last meal. He refused to roll up his sleeves to do a pre-execution check of his veins.

We arrive at the rally alongside highway 580, on the west side of San Quentin. There is apparently another large crowd on the other side of the prison, where the main rally will be held. Signs read, "End the racist death penalty" and "Free Kevin Cooper." Chants include, "It's racist, it's anti-poor, we won't take it anymore" and "U.S. justice is a lie, Kevin Cooper must not die."

Cooper has been clear that this struggle is not just about his case. It's also about Mumia Abu-Jamal, the Cuban Five, Leonard Peltier, Nanon Williams, Shaka Sankofa, Amadou Diallo, Donovan Jackson, Timothy Stansbury Jr., the first slave brought off the ship, the last person lynched in the South, and every person who's ever been beaten up, locked up, or shot up by the so-called U.S. "justice" system.

We march alongside the dark highway, flashlights and the lights atop media cameras guiding our path. The cops are forced to block the highway at one point to allow us to cross. Cars all along the way honk their approval and support.

Cooper knows that working people are being sent to execute other working people of color in Iraq. He says it best: "War and the death penalty cannot be separated. ... We who are poor, no matter what our race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or nationality, are all targets. The so-called upper class sees to this, and are unapologetic about it. These so-called high society people look down on us and dehumanize us. Doing so makes it much easier for them to kill us, to wage war on us, to execute any and all of us poor people. They do this at any given time, and this is the reality of living in a capitalist society."

At some point near the end of the march, I notice folks hugging, slapping each other on the back. The final word as the marchers file into the rally: the court knocked down Lockyer's appeal. Cooper will not die tonight.

In an article entitled "Exactly What People Is He Talking About?" Cooper



WW PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

LeiLani Dowell

links the execution he faces to the slaughter of Native Americans—"the very first people to experience our death penalty"—and to attacks and murders on gays and lesbians, women, the poor and people of color. He says, "If you look at who the first people were to be executed in this country, and who is being executed now, we all look alike. Those who have historically done the executing in this country all look like you [addressing President Bush]: rich, white, powerful and self-righteous."

The rally lasts until around 10:30 p.m. Speakers vow to continue to fight, denounce the system of torture that is the prison industrial complex and death penalty, lend their poetry to the moment, and yell to the crowd when the sound system dies. Speakers vow to continue to fight.

I refuse to believe the victory is real until the next morning.

We claim this victory as ours, because it is not the victory, or even the result, of sympathetic judges in the court system. This victory shows that a significant change in consciousness is taking place on the question of the death penalty. And that change is the result of our efforts, our vigilance, our militancy.

For his part, Arnold Schwarzenegger, California's new governor, released a statement on Monday that reads, "I believe that our legal system and judicial review are the very best in the world. ... To the survivor and families of the victims in

this case, I share your frustration that closure to this chapter of your lives has been delayed."

Schwarzenegger seems to have taken his action-hero antics into the gubernatorial seat. Rather than allow even a hearing on the case, rather than investigate the death penalty process in California itself—which recent studies show does not offer even the most basic safeguards against malfeasance—he would rush into "closure" by killing another Black man.

As far as the justice system being the "best in the world," he's right. It is

the best in the world when the goal is the repression of dissent, the control of a population that faces few options, a population facing rising unemployment, decreasing social services, and endless war—at home and abroad. A population that realizes more and more every day that the virus causing all these symptoms is capitalism.

Every time this system attempts to execute one of us—be it through police brutality, executions or imperialist war—our resolve must become stronger to fight back. And we will continue to fight until we are satisfied that Cooper has received a fair trial, that all the evidence surrounding his case has been presented, that the case will be handled in a way that is not permeated with racism. And then we will fight until the racist and anti-poor U.S. death penalty and prison system is finally laid to rest.

Cooper: "Some of this death isn't even physical. It is mental, emotional and psychological. But nonetheless it is a death that no human being has the right to inflict on any other human being. ... We must put aside our differences that we may have and unite as one solid force. ... After all, it is our side, we poor people, that is having crimes against humanity inflicted upon us."

As we celebrate Black History Month, we should take pride that the legacy of the struggle continues with Kevin Cooper, and with the movement to free him and end the death penalty.

LeiLani Dowell, a Workers World Party member, is the Peace & Freedom Party candidate for the 8th Congressional District in San Francisco.

Execution of Kevin Cooper is halted

Continued from page 1

and several California newspapers.

Actors and well-known progressive figures—including Denzel Washington, Mike Farrell, Danny Glover, Anjelica Houston, Angela Davis, Noam Chomsky and many others—have lent their names to stop the execution. Legislators from all over Europe spoke out against the execution, including the mayor of Schwarzenegger's hometown in Austria.

As media trucks lined up in front of the west gate to San Quentin, hundreds of protesters started to march the one and a half miles from the Larkspur Ferry to the main gate near the Richmond-San

Rafael Bridge, which crosses San Francisco Bay. The loud and militant demonstration forced the California Highway Patrol to stop traffic in the westbound lane of the bridge.

The march had large contingents from the Campaign to End the Death Penalty and the ANSWER Coalition. When the protesters got close to the gate of San Quentin, they were met by another 100 cheering anti-death penalty protesters who had just heard that the U.S. Supreme Court had refused to intervene to block the stay of execution.

Speaker after speaker reiterated that this was a victory for the people. The fact

that Kevin Cooper was still alive signals that people see the death penalty as not just a flawed system from a technical point of view but one that is a racist instrument of repression against the poor. Several former death-row prisoners spoke, including Shujaa Graham and Juan Roberto Melendez, a Puerto Rican who had been on death row for 17 years and was the 99th person to be exonerated. Melendez said, "The judicial system makes so many mistakes that an innocent man can easily get killed."

Jesse Jackson, who had met with Cooper several times in the previous week, told the crowd, "This is part of a

struggle across the nation to remove a system that is flawed."

Gloria La Riva, speaking for the ANSWER Coalition, drew thunderous applause when she said, "It's George Bush who should be sitting on death row for his war crimes in Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan and for killing over 150 prisoners while the governor of Texas."

Although buoyed by the victory, activists left San Quentin knowing that Kevin Cooper's reprieve, which gives him at least 40 days before the state can issue another death warrant, is a period in which the struggle must not just continue to exist but must grow. □

GI resistance during the Vietnam War

By John Catalinotto

*"Keep asking me, no matter how long
On the war in Viet Nam, I sing this song
I ain't got no quarrel with them
Viet Cong."*

— Muhammad Ali

Heavyweight champion boxer Muhammad Ali stunned U.S. ruling-class opinion when, as a member of the Nation of Islam, he refused to go into the army in 1966 and spoke publicly against the war on Vietnam. His comments both reflected the developing consciousness among African Americans and contributed to spreading and deepening Black resistance to this oppressive war.

Between 1965 and 1969, the U.S. land forces grew to over 500,000 troops in Vietnam, but the Vietnamese revolutionaries continued to fight and to win battles. Both passive and active resistance within the ranks of the U.S. military grew along with the civilian struggle here against the war. Black troops often took the lead.

Such military resistance was widespread in Vietnam by 1970. The French daily *Le Monde* reported that over four months, 109 soldiers of the First Air Cavalry Division were charged with refusal to fight. "A common sight," *Le Monde* reported, "is the Black soldier, with his left fist clenched in defiance of a war he has never considered his own."

A chronicle of Black military resistance would require a book of its own. At first individuals spoke up, then there were mass refusals to obey orders and even strong actions against the hated officers, often racists, who gave those orders to go into battle.

Many of these hundreds of struggles occurred with little written comment at the time. This article will focus on three that wound up in court battles and defense campaigns that left a paper trail, but were born of struggle.

Harvey and Daniels

On July 23, 1967, a rebellion in Detroit's African American community began. U.S. troops from the 82nd Airborne Division were sent in. Forty-three people were killed and thousands injured.

On July 27, four days into the rebellion, Corporals Bill Harvey and George Daniels were with the Second Infantry Training Regiment of the U.S. Marine Corps in Camp Pendleton, Calif., where thousands of young men were preparing for combat duty in Vietnam.

That day at lunch the Marines began discussing the war in Vietnam and that other war, the one against Black people in the United States. Many Black Marines knew they could be sent to the cities of the U.S. and ordered by their officers to shoot down Black people these troops saw as brothers and sisters in the struggle against racism.

Some of the troops wanted out of the Marine Corps. Others were reported to have stated that under no condition would they bear arms against the Black people. Some wouldn't fight in Vietnam.

They asked for a "mast," a formal meeting with the commanding officer, to discuss these questions. The Marine officers considered this request a first step toward mutiny. They decided to crack down.



Muhammad Ali

The next day 18 Black Marines were ordered to fall out and proceed to the Company Office. They were threatened with mutiny charges, then harassed and intimidated. The brass singled out two Black men, George Daniels and William Harvey, and arrested them on Aug. 17.

The brass couldn't make the charge of promoting disloyalty stick on Harvey, but still found him guilty of "disloyal statements" and sentenced him to six years in prison. For allegedly saying that "the Black man should not fight in Vietnam because he would have to come back and fight the white man in the United States," Daniels received the maximum sentence of reduction to the lowest rank, forfeiture of all pay, dishonorable discharge and 10 years in military prison.

Daniels and Harvey received heavy prison terms simply for what they said. The Marine brass tried to keep the case secret. But news got through to the American Servicemen's Union, which broke the story in the June 11, 1968, issue of its newspaper, *The Bond*.

Melvin L. Wulf of the American Civil Liberties Union, with Edward F. Sherman of the Harvard Law School and attorney Conrad Lynn, began preparing appeal briefs. On March 7, 1969, the *New York Times* reported that the appeals, presented the day before to two Navy appeals boards in Washington, D.C., were "a test of the military's power to punish enlisted men who dissent against the Vietnam War." Daniels and Harvey won and the two were released by that September.

The Fort Hood 43

In 1968, the Tet Offensive shook U.S. forces in Vietnam, leaving thousands killed. A workers' general strike nearly led to revolution in France. At home, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated and Black rebellions erupted in 160 U.S. cities and towns. Among the forces used to suppress these rebellions were 15,000 Army and 45,000 National Guard troops.

Following King's killing, some 5,000 GIs from Fort Hood, Texas, were sent to Chicago. There the notoriously racist Mayor Richard Daley, a Democrat, ordered "looters and arsonists" shot on sight. At least nine Black civilians died.

By August 1968, Chicago was preparing for massive anti-war demonstrations set to confront the Democratic National Convention. And Fort Hood was preparing to send troops from the First Armored Division, many of them combat veterans recently returned from Vietnam, to Chicago. There they were to be ready to use maximum force in the Black community, should it join the protests.

When Black troops heard of these orders, they spent the night of Aug. 23, 1968, in an all-night assembly of protest. General Boles, commander of the division, pleaded with the troops to disperse. He even offered to allow them to discuss the question all night.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



When morning came, however, Military Police arrested 43 of the troops for failure to report for reveille. Twenty-five of the 43 were combat veterans; eight had been decorated for bravery.

The news quickly reached the outside world this time. An ASU member at Fort Hood called the ASU office in New York. A Black MP supplied the names of the 43 soldiers. Within three days the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee and the ACLU were supplying legal help while the ASU went to the base to visit the arrested troops and get the stories for publicity and to build support.

The courts-martial took place in groups of five or six soldiers. The six troops the military brass considered the ringleaders of the assembly were tried at the end of October 1968. Their civilian attorney was top ECLC lawyer Michael Kennedy. Life Magazine's Roger Vaughn was at the trial covering the case.

The Army would have liked to put the troops away for the kind of sentence the Marines gave to Daniels and Harvey. With so much attention on the case, however, a too-harsh sentence could backfire.

The brass settled on giving short sentences and letting many of the GIs off on a technicality. They saved face without discouraging further resistance. In the October trial, two were given three-month sentences and bad-conduct discharges, two got just bad discharges, and two were acquitted.

One of the GIs, Pfc. Guy Smith, had spent his last two months in Vietnam in the stockade for refusing the order of a racist non-commissioned officer who assigned him guard duty when he was due for time off. Smith told the court, "I demonstrated against Army policy here and in Vietnam. ... There is racism and prejudice here. General Boles said he would do something about it, but nothing has been done. ... Too many Black people are taking too much now." (*Workers World*, Nov. 22, 1968)

The Army prosecutor's only answer was, "This United States Army, this United States cannot survive without law and order."

Instead of the obedience implied by that plea for "law and order," the Pentagon got more "assemblies" of the Fort Hood type, from Europe to Vietnam. One, which became known as the Darmstadt 53, wound up in a victory for the troops. Four of the Black troops even got to visit Paris and meet with the famous Vietnamese negotiator Madame Nguyen Thi Binh.

The Vietnamese revolutionaries—the "Vietcong" with whom Muhammad Ali had no quarrel—fought like hell against any units that fired on them. But they had a political approach to the war. They knew there was a difference between the rank-and-file U.S. soldiers and their officers. And they knew that Black people were oppressed in the United States and were more likely to sympathize with another oppressed nation. Stories spread in the services that sometimes when guerrillas

ambushed a unit of U.S. troops they would let the Black troops live with the appeal, "Why do you fight us, Black soldiers?"

Billy Dean Smith

In Vietnam, another form of struggle arose alongside passive resistance and mass assembly. It involved a sort of counter-terror to the power the officers had to order you into dangerous combat zones in Vietnam.

It was "fraggings," that is, killing your officer or non-commissioned officer by throwing a fragmentation grenade in his tent at night. By 1970, this was being done so often it could not be considered an act of individual terror. An Associated Press article at the time said the Army investigated 96 alleged fraggings in 1969 and 209 in 1970, totaling 101 deaths. GIs said this told only a small part of the story.

On March 15, 1971, another fragmentation grenade exploded, this one in an officers' barracks in an Army artillery unit in Vietnam, killing two lieutenants and wounding a third. The unit commander, Capt. Rigby, and First Sgt. Willis, who usually slept in these barracks, decided they knew who did it.

They would blame a Black GI who had been giving them trouble, Billy Dean Smith. Smith was outspoken against racism and against the war. He objected to the segregated bars and clubs in Vietnam. He was for taking decisive action against uncontrollable racist officers and was accused of threatening Rigby and Willis.

There was no physical evidence against Smith. But Rigby and Willis had him charged with the murder and he wound up spending almost a year in solitary awaiting trial. Smith pleaded not guilty to the charges.

What was significant was the amount of support Smith was able to attract, both inside and outside the military. Daniels, it should be remembered, in 1967 first got a 10-year sentence simply for what he said. The leaders of the Fort Hood assembly in 1968 got a few months for organizing.

In 1971 the U.S. military was so much on the defensive that they had to at least make it look like Billy Dean Smith would get a fair trial. He was moved to Fort Ord in California. He received effective legal support. And in the end, he was acquitted for lack of evidence connecting him with the fraggings.

Though he was found not guilty of fraggings, Smith nevertheless became a symbol of the militant resistance to racism and the war that fraggings usually represented. Released from prison and the Army, he joined the ASU as a veteran, and also visited Cuba to show solidarity.

Under those conditions, it is no surprise that the U.S. military had to leave Vietnam and the Vietnamese finally liberated their country.

(Catalinotto was a civilian organizer for the ASU from 1967 to 1970. He helped organize the defense of the Fort Hood 43 and attended the October 1968 trial.)

WALLER COUNTY, TEXAS

Black students struggle for voting rights

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

On Feb. 5, four 18-year-old students, attending the historically Black Prairie View A & M University 40 miles northwest of Houston in Waller County, filed a suit against the county's district attorney in federal court because they fear being prosecuted for simply registering to vote.

The four students who filed the suit were Neothies Lindley Jr., K. Thanos Queenan, Vivian Spikes and Brian Rowland. The Prairie View Student Government backs the lawsuit.

The lawsuit was filed a day after Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott issued an opinion that Prairie View students must be allowed to register in Waller County using their campus address.

The development comes on the heels of a massive and militant Jan. 15 protest march and rally by over 5,000 of the 7,000-member student body. They celebrated Martin Luther King's 75th birthday by marching six miles from their campus to the Waller County Court House to demand the right to vote where they attend college.

In a massive show of force, the students took over U.S. Highway 290 for hours, backing up traffic for miles. The march was led by student leaders, Herschel Smith of the Waller County Leadership Council, State Rep. Al Edwards of Houston and U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee of Houston.

First-year student Ashley Moody of Houston, who was shocked and excited to be with so many students, said, "But it's sad, too, that it has to revolve back to something like this."

The issue of students' voting was decided in a 1979 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that said the Prairie View students could vote in Waller County. Yet students say that registering to vote there has always been a struggle.

In November of last year Waller County District Attorney Oliver Kitzman, who is white, sparked controversy by publishing

a letter in the local newspaper threatening to prosecute persons who failed to meet his definition of having a legal voting address.

According to the lawsuit, only Prairie View students failed to meet his definition.

The federal lawsuit seeks to put Kitzman's office under a 1978 federal court order that forced the Waller County registrar of voters to register Prairie View students.

Yolanda Smith, a spokesperson for the Houston NAACP, met with about 50 students last week. Many were afraid to register and felt threatened, she announced at a press conference at the attorneys' office after the suit was filed.

Attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and People for the American Way are representing the four students.

Houston NAACP President Fran Gentry said Kitzman would not have threatened to prosecute Prairie View students if the school were predominately white.

The lawsuit notes that some Prairie View students were actually indicted in 1992, accused of illegal voting based on where they lived. The charges were dropped later that year.

The basic right to vote has been a problem not just at Prairie View University. Everyone remembers that George W. Bush was selected to be president by the U.S. Supreme Court after the voting fiasco in Florida, where many African Americans were denied their right to vote by his brother, Gov. Jeb Bush.

But that didn't happen just in Florida. And it doesn't just happen at Black universities.

According to veteran activist and executive director of the SHAPE Community Center in Houston, Deloyd Parker, "Our community has historically had a hard time voting. They are always trying to steal our votes. Many of our elderly are turned away at the polls. Our people try to go vote and are told at the poll that they already voted absentee. Or they're told they're not on the list even though they've lived in the



Thousands of Prairie View students marched six miles to demand right to vote.

same house for 20 years."

"I took a 78-year-old woman to vote and when she was told she had already voted absentee, she vehemently denied that she had voted. So I had to carry her downtown to straighten it out and then take her back to the poll. How many people have the time or transportation to do that? So, in effect, there's a conspiracy to stop poor people from voting.

"We see it every election. They change the voting place to someone's garage and don't tell anyone until the day of the election. They deny our people the right to cast a challenge vote when they're told they're not on the rolls. This is widespread and it's not just Blacks but a lot of working people," Parker said.

In neither the Democratic Party in Texas nor the Republican Party have any leaders stepped up to the plate to condemn the attacks on voting rights in Waller County. This is no surprise. If they cared about Black students being able to vote, they would not only have expressed outrage but would have taken concrete action.

African-American Democratic politicians did participate in the march on King's birthday, including U.S. Rep. Lee, State Rep. Sylvester Turner and State Sen.

Rodney Ellis of Houston.

State Rep. Garnet Coleman, chair of the Texas Legislative Black Caucus, issued a statement from Austin in support of the march, saying, "It is unfortunate that, in the year 2004, people still have to march for their right to vote in their county of residence."

During the 2000 presidential elections, it seemed hard for some to believe that there was such obvious fraud in Florida. It seems even more unbelievable that in 2004, the struggle continues for such a basic, democratic right—one that rich, white propertied men won following the so-called 1776 War for Independence.

The students at Prairie View deserve the support of all progressives and workers in order to strengthen anti-racist, class solidarity.

The nationally oppressed youth in this country, as demonstrated so clearly by the Prairie View students, have the knowledge of their history and the courage of their forefathers and foremothers and will not allow a racist district attorney to deny them their basic right to vote. When they chanted "Here we come, Kitzman, here we come," they let this racist county official know that they're ready and willing to fight the power. □

Some 500 people marched and rallied for freedom for Native warrior Leonard Peltier in Tacoma, Wash., on Feb. 7. The action, to mark an International Day in Solidarity with Leonard Peltier, marked the 28th year of his imprisonment. Just as international energy companies have helped foment war to exploit the oil of Iraq, they also sought to exploit energy resources on land of the Lakota people in 1975. Leonard Peltier and the people of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota stood in their way. The demonstration was organized by the Tacoma Leonard Peltier Support Group and Northwest American Indian Movement.

—Jim McMahan



'Free Leonard Peltier'

Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Democracy, dictatorships & empire



There is a profound contradiction at the heart of American political life: the claim to a democracy, and the bitter struggle to deny it to almost everyone else in the world, all in the name of "bringing democracy" to the world!

If there is one constant in American past and present history, it is the determination of the powerful elites in this country, to impose their will upon those of other nations, against the wishes of the majority of people in foreign nations.

The American Empire utilizes force, brutal and terrifying, to intimidate the populations of other nations, and this, when alloyed with the mesmerizing power of the corporate press, serves to whitewash what is actually taking place.

When one looks at the present situation in Iraq, when the U.S. (on behalf of the whole world, we are assured) invades a sovereign nation—which has not attacked the U.S.—topples its government, bombs cities, and installs a puppet regime, we are assured (once again!) that this is done for the Iraqis, "not American corporations!"

We have been here before—scores of times!

In 1915, the U.S. invaded nearby Haiti, ostensibly to deal with "violence" on the island. It dealt with it, by bringing more. The U.S. Marines forced the Haitian Legislature to select the candidate the U.S. invaders wanted as president. When Haiti refused to declare war against Germany, the Americans dissolved the Haitian legislature! The Americans then pushed a sham referendum for a new Haitian constitution—one far less democratic than the instrument it replaced. As for the so-called "referendum," under U.S. bayonets it passed, by a ridiculous 98,225-to-768.

When Haitian nationalists rose up to oppose the northern invader some years later, the U.S. let loose a bloodbath, killing some 3,000 Haitians in the infamous Cacos Rebellion. George Barnett, a U.S. Marine general, would complain,

"Practically indiscriminate killing of natives has gone on for some time." Barnett found this violent episode "startling" [See James Loewen's "Lies My Teacher Told Me", (Touchstone, 1996), p. 25-26].

American troops put these proud people who fought two European powers (France and England) to surrender, in shackles on road crews, and dismantled Haitian homesteads to make room for large plantations. As Piero Gleijeses observed, "It is not that [President] Wilson failed in his earnest efforts to bring democracy to these little countries. He never tried. He intervened to impose hegemony, not

Democracy." (Loewen, p. 25)

Indeed, this is not a Haitian tale alone; for the U.S. invaded Cuba four times, Nicaragua five times, Honduras seven times, the Dominican Republic four times, Haiti twice, Guatemala once, Panama twice, Mexico three times, and Colombia four times—this, in the 36 years between 1898 to 1934 alone!

They went, not to plant democracies, like it's some kind of tobacco plant; but to "remove" democracies, to prop up dictators, and to support repression.

Iraq is an inheritor to a grim and dark history, that began in the Americas, spanned the Caribbean, and touched the region before. It brought the ignominious reign of the Shah to the "peacock throne" of Iran, tossing out a democratically-elected president, Muhammed Mussedegh. Mussedegh's great offense? He dared to nationalize the vast oil resources of Iran. For this affront to the American oil merchants, the U.S. imposed the brutal and repressive dictatorship of the Shah—Reza Pahlevi, who turned the nation into a private fiefdom, and a torture chamber. Indeed, it was hatred of the Shah that launched the Iranian Revolution, and put the Ayatollah Khomeini in power there.

Similar forces are mobilizing in the Persian Gulf today, to wipe out the Western-backed dictatorships that sit above unhappy, and unstable quasi-states.

Americans, if they have any inkling of history, can no longer claim ignorance, when it happens again. n

Haitian masses resist right-wing takeover

By Pat Chin

With the Haitian masses coming out into the streets as much to oppose the reactionary "opposition forces" as to support the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the capitalist U.S. media are showing signs of nervousness that they may have provoked a struggle with unforeseen consequences for them. Words like "thugs" are beginning to appear in the establishment media here to describe those trying to take over in Haiti. Until now, the media have referred to them only as the "democratic opposition."

It was only weeks after Haiti celebrated the bicentennial of its victory over slavery and colonial rule that the opposition, which has been backed by Washington, escalated its push to topple the Aristide government.

On Feb. 5, an armed gang, "The Gonaives Resistance Front," took violent control of Haiti's fourth-largest city. Seven people were reportedly killed and scores wounded. According to unsubstantiated reports, the armed wing of the anti-Aristide opposition, made up of Duvalierists and former soldiers like ex-army colonel Himmler Rebu, took control of St. Marc, Ennery, Gros Morne and Grand-Goâve, in addition to Gonaives.

The Duvaliers—"Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc"—were a U.S.-supported dynasty that ruled Haiti through extreme terror for 29 years.

As of Feb. 11, however, the government is reported to have retaken some of these cities. And in the northern port of Cap-Haitien, "Aristide supporters set up blazing barricades, blocking the city for a second day against a possible rebel incursion." (New York Times, Feb. 11)

Complicity of Haiti's 4,500-member police force, which has divided allegiances, was evident in some of the takeovers. For instance, the police in St. Marc, under the command of an officer linked to opposition leader and former soldier Dany Toussaint, abandoned their post, leaving all their weapons and ammunition behind.

According to the Feb. 9 Miami Herald, Jean Tatoune leads Force 86, which took part in the Gonaives assault. "Tatoune was convicted of involvement in the 1994 slaying of Aristide supporters in what became known as the Raboteau massacre and was one of more than 150 inmates who escaped from the Gonaives prison in 2002."

On Feb. 7 Aristide told a huge crowd of hundreds of thousands of his supporters in the capital, Port-au-Prince, that the government would "disarm the terrorists." In the southern town of Jacmel and in the Canape Verte and Carrefour areas near the capital, supporters set up roadblocks and prepared to defend their neighborhoods. Some were armed. They also struck back in Grand-Goâve on Feb. 8 by burning a school headed by a coup advocate. In Cap-Haitien on Feb. 7 the relay station of Radio Vision2000, which had agitated against Aristide, was burned down.

On Feb. 9 Prime Minister Yvon Neptune accused the opposition, led by



Pro-Aristide rally Feb. 7 in capital.

Haiti's business elite and the big landowners, of trying to mount a coup. He called on them to stop the violence. According to the BBC, "An opposition spokesman denied backing the unrest and called for foreign intervention to avert civil war."

Haiti's National Popular Party has long warned that the sole purpose of the opposition's destabilization campaign was to provide a pretext for foreign intervention.

Amalgam of Duvalierists and social democrats

Aristide was Haiti's first popularly elected head of state. He first won the presidency in 1990 in a flood of mass support that was also a rejection of the well-funded White House-backed candidate Marc Bazin, a former World Bank official. Nine months later, Aristide was ousted in a bloody CIA-instigated coup d'etat. He returned to Haiti from exile in 1994 and was re-elected president in 2000 with 92 percent of the vote. The opposition boycotted that election but now claim it had "irregularities."

Since then, a well-funded campaign to vilify and destabilize the government has been unleashed. It is backed by the U.S. and several European countries, including France, Haiti's former colonial ruler. These imperialist powers have given financial and other support to the opposition, including the Democratic Convergence, a front whose groups range from social democratic to neo-Duvalierist, and the bourgeoisie's Group of 184, headed by sweatshop magnate Andy Apaid.

An aid embargo has also been in force, creating tremendous hardships for the poor majority. Other dirty tricks include diplomatic meddling, the fomenting of violence in Haiti's shantytowns and small-scale contra-style terrorist guerrilla attacks. These have escalated with the armed takeover of Gonaives, the city where on Jan. 1, 1804, Gen. Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared Haiti's independence from France.

Aristide has made many concessions to IMF and World Bank restructuring demands, which have cost him some popular support. But the U.S. is not satisfied and has been supporting the opposition. Aristide has agreed to disarm political gangs and to jointly appoint a new prime minister with the opposition forces. He has pledged to call legislative elections. But the opposition has threatened a boycott and demands no less than his resignation.

Anti-government figures from the bourgeois elite are not just sweatshop bosses. They also own and control most of Haiti's media. "They are active players in the U.S. campaign to destabilize Haiti's constitutional government," says freelance journalist Kevin Pina.

"They circulate exaggerated reports of violence by Lavalas [Aristide's party], turn a blind eye to violence on the part of the opposition, and underreport the size and frequency of Lavalas demonstrations demanding President Aristide fulfill his five-year term in office. They regularly produce and air commercials calling upon the population to 'claim their democratic rights' by joining anti-Aristide street actions. Just as in Venezuela, where local elites use their media to spearhead the opposition to President Hugo Chavez, the clear objective in Haiti is to throw the constitution in the trash and force President Aristide to resign.

"Here's how it works," explains Pina, referring to the various Haitian and overseas media outlets: "Metropole reports a fabrication; AP and RFI pick it up for their wire services, then Kiskeya and the others report it again in Haiti backed by the credibility of the international press. The positive feedback loop of disinformation for the opposition is now complete." (www.blackcommentator.org, Jan 15)

"Imperialism and its lackeys are trying to engineer another coup and foreign military occupation of Haiti," says Ben Dupuy, secretary-general of Haiti's National Popular Party (PPN). "This is the only way they can hope to take back control of the country."

The PPN and the popular movement continue to mobilize against the cheap labor re-colonizing schemes of the Bush administration and anti-Aristide opposition. This is truly a struggle for Haiti's second independence—this time from U.S. and capitalist domination. □

Community fights school closures

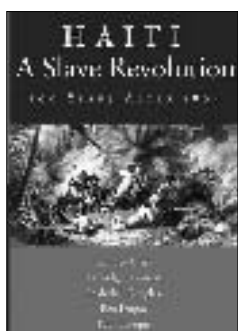
Continued from page 3

guards promptly blocked the doors to shield the mayor from the community.

As the capitalist elimination of jobs and lowering of real wages leads to local budget crunches across the country, more and more cities are implementing cuts in vital services, including school closures—from Boston to Detroit to San Jose.

The Oakland school closures are estimated to save \$1.28 million. Meanwhile, by contrast, the corporations that dominate downtown Oakland continue to reap huge profits. Golden West Financial/World Savings made \$953 million in profits last year, and Clorox made \$320 million. Clorox also won a \$8.79 million contract in the U.S.-occupied Iraq.

After 1,000 angry parents and community members turned out to a hearing on Jan. 8, Ward backtracked and took eight of the 13 proposed schools off the chopping block. But the community is continuing the fight to save the remaining five schools, kick Ward out of Oakland and realize their demand for equal education. □



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Lies, economy and Iraq catch up with him

Bush on the defensive

By Fred Goldstein

The attitude in the capitalist media toward President George W. Bush and his administration has come a long way from the obsequious authority worship that prevailed beginning with the post-Sept. 11, 2001, period, through April 2003 after the invasion of Iraq, and into the early stages of the occupation there.

With the growth of the Iraqi resistance and a steady rise in U.S. casualties in both Iraq and Afghanistan, plus the continued jobless recovery, the atmosphere of war fever and fear has been diluted, if not totally superseded, by skepticism and discontent among the population.

The skepticism and disillusionment of the workers, the oppressed and a section of the middle class should be differentiated from the skepticism and discontent within sections of the ruling class, which is now being reflected in the media and parts of the political establishment.

Bush's fortunes have been steadily declining since the resistance in Iraq broke out and it became clear that Washington had become bogged down in a quagmire—one that it is open ended, costing billions every month, and is only yielding profits for a tiny group of corporate billionaires close to the inner circles of the Bush administration.

Things really started to plunge when it surfaced that the Bush timetable to hand over nominal authority to a puppet regime in Iraq by June 30 was going to fail in the face of widespread resistance. It was clear to the ruling class and everyone else that the only basis for the timetable was the schedule of Bush's election campaign effort. It forced Bush to go hat in hand to ask Kofi Annan and the UN to pull Washington's irons out of the fire.

The Bush administration dangerously subordinated political and military strategy in the explosive arena of Iraq to his election strategy—even though they are in direct conflict with one another. The administration showed its bungling. It was humiliated. It is looking for a way to pull back. Considering that U.S. imperialism has so much on the line as a world power, this must have pushed alarm bells in the ruling-class establishment.

Kay: Mission impossible

Just as this crisis was momentarily easing, David Kay, Bush's hand-picked chief weapons-of-mass-destruction inspector returned from mission impossible and announced that there were no weapons of mass destruction after 1991 and that there was no imminent threat to the U.S.

Kay, a hawkish true believer who was naïve enough to take a job looking for something that the Bush administration had not produced one shred of credible evidence for in two years, was on all the talk shows, testified before Congress, and was quoted in the media.

Every U.S. representative in every mission, embassy and consulate around the world had to face the music and explain away this globally embarrassing fraud that had been perpetrated by the Bush group. In London, Madrid and Rome, the underlings of Washington—Blair, Aznar, Berlusconi, and all the other stooges that supported the war—collectively cringed. In Paris, Berlin, Brussels and all the capitals of the rival imperialists, there was triumphal vindication. This was a diplomatic and political disaster of truly global proportions.

The split lines in the administration

quickly surfaced. George Tenet of the CIA got himself off the hook on charges of "failed intelligence" by declaring that the CIA never said there was an "imminent threat." Colin Powell said he would not have recommended war if he had known. Then everybody got back in line after distancing themselves from the dirty deeds that they each had played a crucial part in covering up.

Bush met the rising demand for an investigation of his administration's handling of intelligence by changing the subject. He appointed a commission and instructed it to investigate how spying can be better carried out against Iran, North Korea and around the world in general. From an inquiry into the criminality of his administration, it became a war-like witch hunt against countries resisting a U.S. takeover.

The 'war president'

But his numbers in the polls were still falling. Karl Rove and his political strategists decided to send him to NBC's "Meet the Press" for an hour on Sunday, Feb. 8. Tim Russert put questions to him about the Kay revelations, the deficit, jobs and the economy and—about his military record in the National Guard during the Vietnam War.

In the interview Bush signaled that his political campaign was going to be based upon reviving fear, belligerence and war fever. Early in the interview he stated:

"I'm a war president. I make decisions here in the Oval Office in the foreign-policy matters with war on my mind. ... And the American people need to know they got a president who sees the world the way it is. And I see dangers that exist, and it's important for us to deal with them."

During the rest of the interview Bush lied, evaded and repeated himself without really being pursued by Russert, who allowed the president to make obviously coached statements. Bush called Saddam Hussein a "madman" numerous times to justify going to war, particularly when confronted with the lack of weapons of mass destruction. He talked about weapons "capabilities" and ridiculously said that you have to go to deal with threats "before they become imminent."

He spoke about the "good momentum when it comes to the creation of jobs." He defended his tax cuts for the rich by declaring it to be an "economic stimulus plan."

AWOL—right and wrong

To the Bush administration's distress, the capitalist media seized on the Democratic Party's charges that Bush avoided his National Guard service in 1972 when he was in Alabama working on an election campaign. This secondary issue has become a major point of contention.

Of course, every worker or working-class youth has the absolute right to use any means to avoid becoming cannon fodder in an imperialist war—to avoid fighting for the interests of their own capitalist class against the people of another country. Hundreds of thousands of youth did just that during the Vietnam War.

It is another thing for the sons of the rich to stay home while the children of the working class are dying on the battlefields to protect the transnational corporations. If Bush did stay out of the war, and did go AWOL, it is positive only insofar as there was one less soldier to fight the Vietnamese. But it also reveals his character in that he would not go fight for his own

class. However, this charge should not be allowed to whip up military patriotism against those who righteously resisted the war.

In the midst of the various crises and revelations over Iraq, Bush had to submit his \$2.4-trillion budget, in which he gave massive increases to the military and homeland security—and cutbacks for at least 65 social programs. His budget came under attack from the right wing, which demanded more cuts in social spending, and from progressives for his attacks on the workers and the poor.

But the budget, combined with the tax cuts for the rich, will widen the deficit. And this just weeks after the International Monetary Fund issued a dire warning that U.S. deficits are undermining the stability of the dollar and consequently of the entire world capitalist economy.

The growing willingness of the media to criticize Bush, and the use of the Democratic Party primary campaign by the media to point out the crisis of jobs and the general discontent of the masses, shows a growing concern about the conduct of the Bush administration.

O'Neill: 'Bush's Praetorian Guard'

The recent best-selling book "The Price of Loyalty" by Paul O'Neill—former secretary of the Treasury for the first two years of this administration—charges Bush with being a malleable, shallow-minded president, surrounded by a "Praetorian Guard" of ideologues. O'Neill demonstrates how the most far-reaching decisions—tax cuts for the rich, the war in Iraq, the environment, and other matters—are based almost entirely on ideology and for the political advantage of the governing group. This grouping never permitted the broader interests of the ruling class to impinge upon their ideological position or their narrow political agenda. Among other things, O'Neill showed how the group dismissed the objections of Alan Greenspan, head of the Federal Reserve Bank, to the sweeping second round of tax cuts for the rich to the tune of a trillion dollars.

While coverage of the book lasted only a few news cycles, it has been read by everyone in Washington. References to it are sprinkled in editorials, columns and talk shows. For those who think about the fortunes of U.S. imperialism and worry about how to protect the political, military and financial dominance of Wall Street and the Pentagon, everything tends to substantiate O'Neill's view: the Iraq crisis, the rapid buildup of the massive deficit, the diplomatic damage, the near crisis over steel tariffs. The fact that O'Neill is a rock-ribbed conservative and government technocrat, formerly the CEO of Alcoa Corp., whose deep and abiding goals are the preservation of the interests of U.S. imperialism, only serves to lend credibility to his interpretation.

The ruling class and its gov't

But the entire situation only points out the general dilemma of the ruling class. On the one hand, they have an administration that gives them everything they want. They had a war to conquer oil and recolonize the Middle East; they had a huge transfer of wealth with trillions of dollars in tax cuts; they have been relieved of all obligation to spend any money to preserve the environment; they have money shoveled into the coffers of the military-industrial complex; the pharmaceutical companies, the HMOs,

The general dilemma of the ruling class is that, on the one hand, they have an administration that gives them everything they want; on the other hand, their greed endangers the system as a whole.

agribusiness have been given tens of billions in subsidies.

On the other hand, their greed endangers the system as a whole.

This is a permanent contradiction between the class and its government. When the individual monopolies and financiers get everything they want as corporate entities, it tends to undermine the capitalist system and imperialism as a whole. Everything they want is at the expense of the workers and the oppressed; at the expense of humanity as a whole. It tends to provoke social unrest and rebellion and, ultimately, revolution.

They may complain about Bush. But not one of them wants to give up their tax cut. Not one wants to spend a nickel to preserve the environment and save the globe if not forced to. Not one wants to give back their government subsidy. Not one wants to oppose the seizing of Iraqi oil. To be sure, the ruling class hasn't given us any sign that they want to abandon Bush as of now, even though they criticize him.

The Democratic politicians—John Kerry, John Edwards, Howard Dean and the others vying to get control of the capitalist state—want to fix imperialism so that it works better. Their goal is to strengthen the system of exploitation. They will promise jobs and the world. But if they get to Washington, they will do the bidding of the same corporate ruling class that has poured \$170 million into the coffers of the Bush 2004 election campaign. They may have more circumspect and moderate tactics, but their strategic goals will be the same, to strengthen the domination of U.S. imperialism world-wide.

Bill Clinton dumped his jobs program and became a deficit hawk once he got into the White House. He inaugurated the anti-gay "don't ask, don't tell policy" in deference to the Pentagon and the right wing. He joined with Newt Gingrich to destroy the welfare program and plunged millions deeper into poverty and destitution.

Clinton initiated many of the so-called "anti-terrorist" laws that are being used today by John Ashcroft. He passed the Effective Death Penalty provision that drastically curtailed the rights of poor, mainly Black and Latino people, on death row. He initiated the policy of regime change in Iraq. And he carried out the merciless war against Yugoslavia, bombing civilians and committing well-documented war crimes.

And Clinton was fundamentally no different than any president of U.S. imperialism, Republican or Democrat, liberal, moderate or conservative. They have served to enhance the interests of U.S. imperialism, through intervention, war, financial manipulation or any other means. The only time they have made significant concessions to the masses was when the people mobilized for struggle: during the Depression, the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement and so on.

If the Bush administration gets in trouble, the last thing the movement should do is run to the camp of the rival imperialist party, the Democrats. The thing to do is step up the struggle on all fronts. □



What Iowa proves ...

A storm of protest in Iowa and across the country has torpedoed the federal government's attempt to investigate four peace activists and Drake University in Des Moines.

In early February, Polk County Sheriff's Deputy Jeff Warford served grand jury subpoenas on the activists and Drake officials. The business cards he left behind identified him as a member of an FBI-Joint Terrorism Task Force. The four activists had taken part in an anti-war conference at Drake on Nov. 15, hosted by the National Lawyers Guild.

Federal authorities ordered the university to turn over any security records containing descriptions of or observations from the conference, including "any records of persons in charge or in control of the meeting and any records of attendees of the meeting."

The subpoena also required university officials to deliver membership information for the Drake chapter of the National Lawyers Guild. Federal officials said publicly on Feb. 9 that the grand jury inquiry was focusing on whether a Nov. 16 anti-war protest in which activists trespassed at Camp Dodge was "planned" at the conference at Drake.

Bruce Nestor, a Minneapolis lawyer for the NLG, filed court papers that day asking that federal investigators be compelled to explain their actions. "To the extent that the grand jury is being employed for the purposes of ... intimidating and harassing supporters of the peace or anti-war movement," he wrote, "the grand jury has clearly overstepped its authority."

As indignation and anger spread like wildfire, the grand jury appearances of the four activists were postponed. And then, on Feb. 10, the subpoenas were dropped altogether. "We made them want to stop," Brian Terrell, leader of the Catholic Peace Ministry and one of the four targeted by the federal probe, told a crowd of about 100 cheering people outside the federal courthouse. "We're here to make them want to never let it happen again." Signs in the crowd read, "Say no to political grand juries," "You can subpoena us, but you will not silence us," and "Investigate Halliburton, not Iowans."

This struggle has much more political significance than the much-ballyhooed Iowa caucuses. It shows that, through uncompromising independent political action, this right-wing government can be pushed back. □

... about fighting the draft

A burgeoning anti-war movement is needed to force Washington to back down on its attempts to restate a compulsory military draft, too.

Behind the scenes, in this election year, \$28 million has been added to the 2004 budget of the Selective Service System for a draft that could reportedly begin as early as June 15, 2005.

Like the scurrying of rats, the Pentagon brass has launched a campaign to fill all 10,350 draft board positions and 11,070 appeals board openings.

Don't look for a Democrat to say "Hell no, they won't go." Congress moved twin bills—S. 89 and H.R. 163—forward this year that are entitled "The Universal National Service Act of 2003." They would require all young people between the ages of 18 and 26, including women, to "perform a period of military service or a period of civilian service in furtherance of the national defense and homeland security, and for other purposes." These active bills are currently before the armed services committees.

These and other ominous moves indicate that the U.S. ruling establishment is getting ready to revive the draft if it feels it needs to mobilize large-scale troops for its "endless war" of colonial expansion.

But best-laid plans often go astray. Neither the Republicans nor the Democrats are going to implement such

a plan while they're on the campaign trail. Instead, they've arbitrarily extended the tours of duty of GIs in Afghanistan and Iraq—which of course is equivalent to a compulsory draft. This has caused great rage among the rank-and-file—a sentiment reflected by their loved ones at home.

The courage and tenacity of the Iraqi people's resistance has continued to confront the foot soldiers of the occupation. And anti-war sentiment in the United States, now smoldering, could become a conflagration as the war drags on.

It was the resistance of the Vietnamese people and the terrible human toll there that ignited sentiment among U.S. soldiers and civilians against that war. The rising level of anti-war sentiment and the organizing among rank-and-file soldiers forced Washington to sign a peace treaty in 1973 and scrap the draft. It still took another two years before the last U.S. forces were driven out of Saigon and it became Ho Chi Minh City.

Just such a movement must force the Commander-in-Chief, from whichever party of big business, to not only cancel a planned military draft, but to bring the troops home.

All out for the March 20 day of protest against war and occupation in Iraq, Palestine and everywhere! □

Janet Jackson & Cuban artists

The common thread

By Monica Moorehead

Who says that politics and mass culture don't mix? Consider two issues tied to the Grammy awards that aired on Feb. 8 on CBS.

The prestigious Grammy awards for music are presented each year in a television extravaganza. Millions of people watch this show here and around the world to see if their favorite artists will win or perform. In recent years the criteria for winning a Grammy have been mainly based on record sales and the popularity of an artist, rather than the depth of talent.

A performer overflowing with talent is Janet Jackson. She was scheduled to pay tribute to ailing rhythm and blues singer Luther Vandross on the Grammy show. She had to cancel her appearance because of what had occurred during the half-time show at Super Bowl XXXVIII on Feb. 1. Jackson opened up that show singing her "Rhythm Nation" hit, which raises a number of social injustices, including racism.

During the finale, during a duet performance, Justin Timberlake ripped her outfit, baring Jackson's right breast for a few seconds as they were performing before tens of millions of viewers around the country. Whether this was orchestrated or just an accident, the main issue is the tidal wave of controversy that has evolved.

The Federal Communications Commission is opening up an "investigation" after claiming to have received 200,000 calls and e-mails of complaint.

A lawyer in Tennessee is filing a class-action lawsuit against CBS and Viacom, the Super Bowl promoters. She is basing her legal argument on the claim that those who witnessed Jackson's breast were subjected to "outrage, anger, embarrassment and serious injury." (New York Times, Feb. 8)

The entire half-time show, inspired by the youth-oriented network MTV, was criticized by many as "lewd."

And while Timberlake was also criticized for his action—although not as intensely as the criticisms bestowed on Jackson—he was still welcomed to perform at the Grammys, while Jackson was not.

A clear double standard is involved.

It is, however, important to put this particular incident into a broader political context.

We live under a system where almost everything is bought and sold as a commodity, all for making profits for big business. Tragically, women's bodies are also viewed as commodities to be used and abused to sell everything from cosmetics

to alcohol to sex and everything in between. Women's bodies are especially enriching the multi-billion dollar music industry.

Janet Jackson's sexuality has been exploited, as has Mariah Carey's, Beyoncé's and Madonna's—to name just a few—by music executives. This exploitative relationship has become the norm and not the exception.

Also consider the fact that the Super Bowl was virtually one big "erectile dysfunction" commercial ad. The cameras lingered on scantily outfitted women cheerleaders throughout the game. Television programming itself—and not just cable shows—is all sexually explicit. Degrees of nudity are everywhere in the movies, tabloid press and the Internet.

And what about the action of a white Southern male—Timberlake is from Tennessee—stripping an African American woman in public? Isn't it reminiscent of centuries of brutal rape and sexual humiliation of Black women on this continent?

So why is Janet Jackson being castigated and held up as responsible for what happened to her during the half-time show? Why should she be treated in such a demonized manner?

It was public knowledge that she was ordered to "quit or be fired" as a presenter at the Grammys, unable to even show her face at the public event. By the night of the event, the official statement was that Jackson was not allowed to perform because she refused to publicly apologize.

Timberlake, on the other hand, was awarded two Grammys within the first hour of the program.

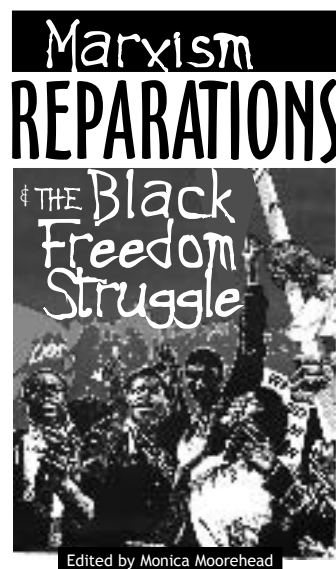
The real culprits are let off the hook: the capitalists who make profits off of selling women's bodies as commodities, but who at the same time preach and promote bourgeois morality.

Illegal ban of Cuban artists—where is the outrage?

There's another issue associated with the Grammys that has received qualita-



Cuban singer Ibrahim Ferrer, left, and Deputy Culture Minister Abel Acosta speaking at Feb. 4 press conference in Havana denouncing the visa denials



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Final Declaration

Havana meeting says 'no' to FTAA

tively less press. Renowned Cuban artists invited to attend the Grammys were once again denied visas to travel to the U.S. for political reasons.

"Something as noble as music is being converted into a policy against Cuba," said Abel Acosta, Cuban vice minister of culture and also president of the Cuban Institute of Music. (Associated Press, Feb. 5)

Acosta stated further, "This policy is really hypocritical. It's the most arbitrary in the world. They give visas to whom they want when they want to."

The institute called the U.S. action a "new offense against Cuban culture and people." (French Press Agency, Feb. 6)

The Cuban official and some of the aggrieved artists held a media conference in Havana where they showed the letters of denial dated Feb. 4 from the U.S. Interests Section.

The letters cited Section 212f of U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Law, which states that the U.S. president can deny entry to those whose visit is deemed "detrimental to the interests of the United States." Forty-five Cuban artists were reportedly denied visas. (New York Times, Feb. 9)

Those who have been denied the right to come to the U.S. include the Grammy winner Ibrahim Ferrer, guitarist Manuel Galvan, pianist Guillermo Rubalcaba, percussionist Amadito Valdes, lute player Barbarito Torres and singer Eugenio Rodriguez. Ferrer, a multiple Grammy winner, is a member of the Buena Vista Social Club, which gained worldwide fame and popularity several years ago after the showing of an Oscar-nominated documentary.

Cuban artists were also denied visas to attend the Latin Grammys held in Miami last year.

These artists are the latest victims of the 43-year-old anti-communist blockade of Cuba by the U.S. Despite this criminal U.S. foreign policy, Cuban music has gained popularity here. Washington knows that Cuba, a country with a population of 11 million people, poses no military threat to the people of this country. In fact, it is the Bush administration that is intensifying military threats against Cuba, which the people there are taking very seriously.

The only "threat" that Cuba poses is as a beacon of awareness for the U.S. population, showing the achievements of a socialist society like free health care, free education and a rich culture free of capitalist profit and exploitation.

The illegal travel ban imposed on Cuban artists and others, like the Rev. Raul Suarez of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Havana, by the Bush administration certainly merits a public outcry.

The common thread between Janet Jackson and the Cuban artists is that they are all victims of U.S. imperialism, a racist, sexist, homophobic, pro-war economic and political system that is causing so much poverty and suffering worldwide. □

Some 1,230 people from the 35 countries in the Western Hemisphere met in Havana Jan. 27-30 to oppose U.S. imperialism's attempt to impose the Free Trade Area of the Americas on the hemisphere. Below are excerpts from the final document issued by the meeting.

To all the peoples of our America:

Men and women, of all races, rich in our diversity of origins, cultures and beliefs, representatives of social and political organizations of the 35 countries of our continent, we have met here, in the land of Martí, filled with the memory of the acts of Bolívar and San Martín, Zapata and Sandino, of all those who fought to give sovereignty and dignity to our peoples, to make our Third Hemispheric Encounter of Struggle against the Free Trade Area of the Americas. We stand against this project, which if carried out threatens to bring the misery of our peoples, the injustices and the inequalities that we experience in our countryside and cities, to its highest level, and to subordinate once and for all the future of our nations to the interests of the giant U.S. corporations.

Since our last encounter, millions of inhabitants of the continent were added to the popular consultations speaking out against the creation of the FTAA. In this period, we organized important mobilizations against the badly named "free trade," like the battle of Cancún against the World Trade Organization, as well as the one we carried out in Miami against the FTAA in spite of the gigantic repressive apparatus there. In this same year, we saw all over the continent multiple examples

of popular fights of resistance against the different forms of the neoliberal war, of which "free commerce" is one of the main weapons. Above all, the Bolivian people carried out a true popular rebellion against the loss of sovereignty and natural resources and against the FTAA that finally threw out of power the puppet the United States maintained as Bolivia's president. ...

Meanwhile, the government of the United States is working every day to impose bilateral or regional treaties and mega-projects, for example, the "free trade" agreement between the United States and Central America, with the threat to continue with the Andean region, with the exception of Venezuela. To stop the advance of these plans and treaties is also to block the way to the FTAA. ...

The other face of these economic calamities at this time of war neoliberalism is militarization; with the pretext of the fight against drug trafficking and now terrorism, militarization is the indispensable partner of "free trade." Plan Colombia, Commando North and the "cooperation" in general of our governments with the hawks of the Pentagon are the other side of the pincers of the policy of economic integration that subordinate our nations to North American interests. ...

Sisters and brothers of our America, Negotiations concerning the FTAA have entered the final stretch, and bilateral and regional treaties are the favored roads leading there. No longer is there time. For that reason it is from this land, a worthy example of resistance, and inspired by the revolt of the Bolivian people, we make the following CALL to all the peoples of the continent:

- To rise up to defeat the FTAA, fighting simultaneously against bilateral and regional treaties, agreements and plans and redoubling in our countries and on a continental scale the campaign against the FTAA. ...
- To exert pressure on the national congresses to put them on the side of their peoples in the fight in defense of sovereignty.
- To mobilize with all those in the world who will go out next March 20 to demand the end of the occupation of Iraq and to stop U.S. war and aggression.
- To mobilize April 24 against multilateral financial institutions and the external debt.
- To conduct simultaneous actions with the August 29 protests against the re-election of Bush to be carried out in New York on the occasion of the Republican Convention.
- To add us to the mobilizations that on key dates are summoning diverse popular forces and which include our plan of action of struggle against the FTAA.
- To build a great continental day of struggle as our central action of this year as of the first day of the ministerial meeting on the FTAA scheduled in Brazil in 2004. ...

From this free territory of America, which we supported and for which we demand the end to the blockade and respect for its sovereignty, we say:

Our America is not for sale!
Popular sovereignty yes, FTAA no!
Neither war nor free trade
Together let us build the other
America that is possible! □

MUNICH, GERMANY

Thousands protest NATO conference

By John Catalinotto

Some 10,000 people surrounded by 3,500 police demonstrated on Feb. 7 against the NATO Security Conference in Munich, Germany. The demonstrators demanded the "withdrawal of occupation troops from Iraq." They were also protesting the German government's plans to increase its and other European Union military intervention all over the world, starting in Afghanistan.

Left groups were there, including immigrant groups from Turkey and Kurdistan and working-class organizations from

Germany and Austria. So were ATTAC-Germany and some of the more progressive unions and religious organizations.

Talks at the rallies attacked the aggressive war policies of the United States and the European Union, according to the Berlin daily, Junge Welt, of Feb. 9. Anti-militarist Tobias Pflüger of Tübingen, who made one of the major talks, said "the stated military strategy of the European Union is 'together we will struggle for good,' but its true goals are aimed at gaining more power and economic influence to the detriment of the people of the South." A larger role for NATO with participation

of the German Armed Forces can be expected in Iraq, he said.

The singer-songwriter Konstantin received loud applause when he asked soldiers in case of war to "disobey the generals' orders."

The day before German police had used clubs to attack a group of demonstrators blocking a street near the meeting. Pflüger, who is a candidate of the Party of Democratic Socialism for election to the European Parliament, had his neck injured when police arrested him. In all 259 demonstrators were arrested on Feb. 6, then released the next day at noon.

A few dozen war opponents were able to confront U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld during his dinner with high-ranking NATO generals. Rumsfeld was defending Washington's decision last March to go to war on Iraq.

Rumsfeld downplayed differences with the U.S.'s European allies regarding last year's invasion of Iraq as unimportant. He welcomed the European NATO states' participation in the so-called "war on terror." German Defense Minister Peter Struck asked that starting in August an international colonial force made up of troops from Germany, France, Spain, Belgium and Luxembourg be sent to take the lead in the occupation of Afghanistan.

Impacto de Mumbai en el Foro Social Mundial

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declaración de la asamblea contra la guerra tuvo referencias para Palestina.

Algo importante fue que mucha gente, al ver que en mi tarjeta de identificación de delegada ponía ANSWER —la coalición Actúa Ahora para Parar la Guerra y Poner Fin al Racismo— me ofrecían mucho apoyo, especialmente gente de EEUU. Virtualmente, todas las personas reconocían a ANSWER y hacían comentarios positivos y pedían información.

Muchos de los grupos asistentes en otras partes del FSM, palestinos y otros grupos árabes, los trabajadores indios gritando contra la guerra de EEUU en Iraq en la parte exterior, y otras fuerzas marxistas y del Tercer Mundo que estaban expresando posiciones claramente anti-imperialistas en estas reuniones, no estaban representados, desgraciadamente, en la asamblea contra la guerra.

El debate sobre estos temas confirmó internacionalmente que la lucha para

agudizar el debate político para fortalecer las fuerzas anti-imperialistas en todo el mundo, para oponerse incondicionalmente a la ocupación de EEUU y defender el derecho total de los palestinos a la autodeterminación, es más importante que nunca. El mismo debate que continúa dentro del Movimiento contra la Guerra en EEUU sigue también adelante en todo el mundo como se ha visto en el Foro Social Mundial. □

Iraq: Impacto de Mumbai en el Foro Social Mundial

Entrevista a Gloria La Riva del International Action Center

Por John Catalinotto

Traducción: Sinfo Fernández

Un redactor de Workers World/Mundo Obrero entrevistó a Gloria LaRiva, coordinadora estadounidense del Comité Nacional para la Liberación de los Cinco de Cuba y líder del movimiento contra la guerra en la Costa Oeste, sobre el Foro Social Mundial que tuvo lugar del 16 al 21 de enero en Mumbai (India).

Pregunta (P.): Usted ha estado presente en el cuarto Foro Social Mundial (FSM), el primero que se celebra después de Porto Alegre. Como participante activa, ¿cuáles fueron sus impresiones sobre esta reunión?

Gloria La Riva (R.): El FSM tuvo lugar en el espacio de la exposición NESCO situado al norte de Mumbai. Era un campo muy grande, rodeado por un muro, como si fuera el terreno de una feria. Teniendo en cuenta los recursos tan limitados del país fue un desafío considerable alojar 1.200 talleres, salas de exposiciones, mítines y reuniones.

Los talleres del FSM acogieron desde unas pocas docenas a varios miles de participantes. Uno de los más amplios fue el Tribunal de Mujeres sobre los Crímenes de Guerra de EEUU, donde Ramsey Clark y yo fuimos invitados a intervenir. Hablé en los talleres sobre los cinco prisioneros políticos cubanos en EEUU conocidos como los Cinco de Cuba. También representé a la coalición ANSWER en algunos encuentros importantes de grupos contra la guerra.

Hasta donde pude observar, la gran mayoría de las más de 100.000 personas asistentes era de nacionalidad india junto a un número menor procedente de otros países del sudeste asiático, como Pakistán, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Nepal, etc., y algunos miles más que llegaban de Europa, EEUU, Latinoamérica, África, Australia, y de otros lugares del mundo. Había entre 130 y 150 países representados.

Muchas reuniones tuvieron lugar en docenas de estructuras similares a tiendas de campaña, hechas de harpillera, aglomerado y harpillera y suelo de tierra. Las reuniones más amplias, como la Corte de Mujeres o el Tribunal en el que Ramsey Clark y yo participamos, tuvieron lugar en locales parecidos a almacenes que llegaron a albergar alrededor de 4.000 personas.

El liderazgo político del FSM está compuesto principalmente por partidos social-demócratas y ONGs y no por organizaciones comunistas o anti-imperialistas. Alguna gente ha criticado con dureza al FSM por recibir fondos de la Fundación Ford, de la Fundación Soros y de otras instituciones parecidas que ciertamente pueden llegar a influir en la perspectiva de los organizadores. Sin embargo, el FSM atrae a mucha gente comprometida con la lucha y creo que la mayoría de los que asistieron son conscientemente anti-imperialistas.

Hubo también un [Foro de la]

Resistencia de Mumbai (RM), con reuniones al aire libre fuera del FSM que tomó en su declaración final abiertas posiciones de solidaridad con la resistencia en Iraq, por ejemplo. En esas reuniones participaron unos cuantos miles de personas. Algunos portavoces, como Arundhati Roy, hablaron tanto en el FSM como en la RM. Ella hizo un llamamiento a la gente en las intervenciones que realizó en ambos foros para que ofrecieran resistencia frente la ocupación de Iraq por EEUU.

El evento del FSM al aire libre fue una reunión puertas afuera de 100.000 personas, un acontecimiento muy emotivo, con unos cuantos oradores importantes y música. Algunos de estos oradores fueron Arundhati Roy y Shabana Azmi de la India, Shirin Ebadi, la ganadora del Premio Nobel de la Paz de Irán, y Mustafa Barghuti de Palestina.

P.: ¿Cuál fue el impacto que tuvo todo esto en la India?

R.: Uno de los aspectos más importantes de la reunión fue el de incrementar la conciencia del movimiento progresista de todo el mundo sobre las luchas de las masas indias, con objeto de alimentar una solidaridad mayor entre los pueblos. Para ir desde el hotel hasta el lugar donde se encontraba el FSM, teníamos que conducir a través de unas cuantas calles y pudimos contemplar montones de personas en una situación económica desesperada... Hay familias viviendo en chabolas rudimentarias, en tiendas de campaña y gente viviendo simplemente en el suelo, sin nada, nada más que harapos, sin ni siquiera una manta para sentarse encima ni un portal donde poder dormir. Una vuelve a casa con la necesidad urgente de hacer la revolución. Se entienden mucho mejor las estadísticas que escuchamos acerca de la pobreza por todo el mundo, acerca de los 800 millones de personas que se van a la cama con hambre. Aquí en la India, como en otros países que padecen opresiones parecidas, mucha gente se muere literalmente de hambre.

En el FSM hubo muchos acontecimientos cada día alrededor de los temas básicos: contra la guerra, anti-globalización, sobre las mujeres, contra el racismo, especialmente sobre los Dalit —conocidos principalmente por el término negativo de “intocables”—, lesbianismo, bisexualidad, transexuales, movimientos campesinos, comercio justo, medio ambiente, cultura. Los sindicatos indios, como el sindicato de trabajadores del ferrocarril, el sindicato de los trabajadores de bancos en lucha contra la privatización de los bancos indios, los trabajadores militantes de la General Electric —a los que han dejado en la calle hace seis meses— todos ellos fueron también una parte importante en las reuniones.

Muchas luchas en la India se formulan alrededor de temas muy básicos: la lucha de las mujeres contra la opresión y la violencia doméstica, como en los casos de asesinatos por la dote, las palizas etc..., y la lucha de los Dalit contra siglos de opresión originada por el sistema de castas. Hubo muchas organizaciones Dalit que llegaron en carromatos de todas partes del

país. Tan solo por esa cuestión y por el fortalecimiento de su causa, mereció la pena que el FSM se celebrase en la India, así como para dar publicidad a la lucha de las masas indias en su conjunto. Por parte de todos los participantes en el Foro, tanto de la India como extranjeros, hubo mucho respeto y reconocimiento hacia la lucha de los Dalit.

La India está bajo las garras de una privatización masiva y de un descenso drástico de las condiciones de vida de trabajadores y campesinos. Dada la absorción creciente de sus industrias por capital de EEUU, está claro que el destino de los trabajadores estadounidenses está enlazado con el de las masas indias.

P.: ¿Puede describir algunos de los foros en los que tomó parte?

R.: El Tribunal de Mujeres tenía 2.000 asistentes cuando empezó a las 10 de la mañana, y duró casi doce horas, con mucha personas de pie durante horas. Esta reunión fue consistentemente anti-imperialista, abarcando las luchas de Palestina, Iraq, Puerto Rico; Corea contó con dos representantes de Corea del Norte, también había dos conferenciantes de Cuba, (por mi parte, yo representaba a los Cinco de Cuba), de Filipinas, la luchas de Hawai, la anterior representante de EEUU Cynthia McKinney, que habló sobre la opresión de la comunidad afroamericana en EEUU, anti-globalización, Irlanda, la Organización de Derechos por el Bienestar de Kensington, Vietnam y otros treinta oradores.

Asistieron centenares de indios convirtiendo probablemente al Tribunal en la mayor mezcla de muchedumbres indias y extranjeras que podía darse, aparte de las reuniones al aire libre. Ramsey Clark, que habló en la inauguración y en [la sesión de] conclusiones y que fue presidente del Tribunal, fue un orador destacado junto con el ex representante de NNUU Denis Halliday, Fatima Meer y otros. Clark pronunció un gran discurso de apertura sobre la necesidad de levantarse contra la agresión estadounidense en cualquier lugar del mundo.

Entre las reuniones en solidaridad con Cuba hubo un taller celebrado por Iniciativa Socialista con Cuba, un grupo de Bélgica. Muchas de las casi 400 personas que asistieron eran del sudeste asiático, así como de varios países europeos y latinoamericanos. Hablé allí sobre los Cinco de Cuba con un representante del Partido de los Trabajadores de Bélgica y con dos representantes cubanos, que hablaron sobre los avances de la revolución cubana. Los participantes en el taller hicieron una marcha por los terrenos del FSM en solidaridad con Cuba.

Desde el segundo hasta el último día, hubo una reunión popular sobre Cuba patrocinada por algunas organizaciones marxistas indias. La organizaron fuera del campus, dirigida por la delegación cubana, con 1.200 personas aplaudiendo un llamamiento entusiasta de solidaridad con Cuba y los Cinco de Cuba.

Cada día, diferentes grupos llevaban a cabo reuniones y marchas de tamaño reducido y medio. Grupos diferentes se reunían y marchaban a través de los ter-

renos, a menudo unos junto a otros o mezclados.

Ramsey Clark, Denis Halliday y yo hablamos también en el taller sobre las Sanciones Económicas organizado por el Instituto Cubano de Filosofía. Winnie Mandela habló brevemente en ese taller. Y recordó una reunión que mantuvieron Ramsey Clark y ella hace treinta y cuatro años, cuando estaba bajo arresto domiciliario en el régimen del apartheid sudafricano.

Clark habló también en el taller del Mundo Árabe que fue presidido por Rania Masri. Hubo también un orador palestino y una mujer siria hablando allí. Clark dijo que es imperativo deshacerse de Bush, pero enfatizó que la gente no debería esperar nada de los demócratas. Dijo que ellos son parte del problema, que es el sistema y la plutocracia de EEUU los que engendran la guerra. En el taller de las Sanciones Económicas declaró que a partir de sus observaciones el socialismo es un sistema más humano y racional que el capitalismo.

Denis Halliday habló en las mismas reuniones que Clark. Tuvo una intervención militante pidiendo el fin de la ocupación.

P.: ¿Qué pasó en las discusiones contra la guerra? ¿Apoyaba el FSM el llamamiento a las acciones del 20 de marzo?

R.: Hubo una “Asamblea Contra la Guerra” que mantuvo una reunión que duró todo el día para discutir diversos puntos de vista sobre la guerra de EEUU contra Iraq. La manifestación del próximo 20 de marzo atrajo el mayor interés y en la declaración final del FSM se apoyó esta fecha como un día de acción internacional. Hubo también un seminario acerca el Tribunal Internacional sobre Iraq.

Asistí al encuentro principal, en el que estuvo discutiendo el programa del 20 de marzo y la Declaración de la Asamblea Contra la Guerra. Hablé allí el 19 de enero, durante la asamblea que duró todo el día. A lo largo del mismo hubo entre 200 y 300 asistentes. La mayoría eran de Europa, de América del Norte y del Sur, así como de Japón y del sur de Corea.

Al tratar sobre la posición y las peticiones de ANSWER acerca del 20 de marzo, pedí de forma firme al Movimiento contra la Guerra que había que situar a Palestina en el punto central por el fin incondicional de la ocupación y transmití que muchas grupos árabes, musulmanes y palestinos de EEUU y de todo el mundo apoyan el llamamiento.

La palestina revolucionaria Leila Jaled que también asistió a la Corte de Mujeres tuvo una intervención muy emocionante e inspirada acerca de la necesidad de que el movimiento contra la guerra defienda a Palestina, incluido el Derecho al Retorno de los refugiados.

Al final, los organizadores manifestaron que la principal exigencia es que las tropas [de ocupación] se vayan de Iraq y que sean los grupos nacionales los que cubran sus propias demandas. Evitaron tomar una posición internacional que clarificara el tema dejándolo en manos de los grupos nacionales de ese país. La

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