

MUNDO OBRERO

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que la Revolución
Bolivariana avanza 12

YES! Time to revive May Day

By Fred Goldstein

The most significant thing about this year's attempt to revive May Day as a day of international working class solidarity is that it comes from a segment of the working class itself—particularly from the Black working-class leadership of the Million Worker March, along with others.

May Day has historically been a day for the working class to declare itself as a class against the bosses and to raise its particular demands in each country and its international solidarity with the struggles going on around the world. May Day began as a struggle for the eight-hour workday in the United States in 1886. It became international in 1890. From then on throughout the world, including the United States,

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Workers are taking control in Venezuela

By Betsey Piette
Caracas, Venezuela

Everywhere in Venezuela today workers are forging ahead with new formations of workers' organization. They are taking over factories here, experimenting with co-management there. Workers are challenging the old class relationships and coming to a collective realization of their historic role in the struggle for socialism.

There are no guarantees that they will succeed. The problems faced by the Venezuelan working class are massive: 80 percent live in poverty, millions are in need of better housing, education, higher wages and better benefits. But as the workers of Venezuela begin to flex their muscles and to exercise their rights under the Bolivarian Constitution, there appears to be a growing recognition that their collective power should stop at nothing short of state control. It is a struggle that holds out great hope for the world's working class.

Throughout the process of the Bolivarian Revolution, the role of the workers has gone through a dramatic transformation. In April 2002, workers were participants in massive demonstrations that turned back an attempted coup d'etat against President Hugo Chávez. Progressives within organized labor played a key role in defeating employers' lockouts during the pro-business "general strikes" of December 2002 and January 2003. But today the momentum of the class struggle is propelling workers into a leadership role.

To understand just how dramatic is the change taking place in Venezuela's working class today, we need to take a brief look at the history of organized labor in this oil-rich Latin American country. For over 30 years prior to the U.S.-backed attempt to overthrow Chávez in April of 2002, the workers' struggle against neoliberalism was held in check by the leadership of the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV), the country's main labor council.

The CTV subordinated the interests of the workers to big busi-

ness political parties that opposed Chávez. From 2001 to 2003 the CTV cooperated with Venezuela's largest chamber of commerce federation, the Fedecamaras, in four job actions they called "general strikes," which most observers admit were really employers' lock-outs.

It also appears that the CTV received continuous financial assistance from a known conduit for the CIA, the National Endowment for Democracy, disbursed through the AFL-CIO. This is documented in an article on ZNet by Alberto Ruiz entitled "The Question Remains: What is the AFL-CIO doing in Venezuela?" (March 2, 2004)

Many former CTV members left it after becoming aware of this U.S. backing.

Workers form new labor council

In 2001, the CTV was forced to hold the first leadership election in its history. However, it was so corrupt that 50 to 70 percent of the workers refused to participate in this process, and Venezuela's Supreme Court refused to recognize the results. In 2003, during the CTV-backed lockout by the business opposition, many workers responded by occupying factories to keep them open, running them as cooperatives. When owners threatened to shut down factories, workers took over plants, including a Pepsi-Cola bottling facility in Villa de Cura owned by an active supporter of the coup.

A large grouping of Venezuelan workers, fed up with the CTV's corporate unionism, gave up attempts at reform. In May 2003, at a jubilant gathering in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas, workers from nearly every sector of the country's labor force joined together to form a new confederation, the National Union of Workers (UNT).

In less than two years the UNT has demonstrated astonishing growth. In 2003 and 2004, 76.5 percent of newly signed collective bargaining agreements were with UNT-affiliated unions, compared to 20.2 percent with the CTV. The UNT clearly dom

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On Mumia Abu-Jamal's 51st birthday, his supporters demand his freedom. See page 3.

WW PHOTO: GREG DUNKEL

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Interview with Colorado anti-racist activist

By Larry Hales
Denver

On Feb. 3 Black activist Shareef Aleem was arrested while addressing a public meeting of the Colorado University Board of Regents, which he was also recording for Denver Community Television.

Aleem was also showing support for the students' dissent against education and fee hikes and their protest of attacks on Ward Churchill, a professor who blamed U.S. foreign policy for leading to the 9/11 attacks.

Aleem stood up in the meeting after one activist had been asked to leave for openly addressing the Regents. He reiterated that the meeting was advertised as being public and stated, "Is this a free country or not? Do we live in a democracy or not? If not, let's stop calling it that."

Campus cops then pushed aside an older Black woman and began grabbing Aleem, who told them to leave him alone and not touch him. He said he had a right to be there and that the students should be allowed to speak.

This reporter interviewed Aleem on April 24. Aleem described the confrontation, which was recorded on tape. It ended as cops shot Aleem in the neck with a taser, then arrested him and charged him with second-degree assault on an officer.

Larry Hales: When did you first become active here in Denver?

Shareef Aleem: I've always been active, but I began to get increasingly active while I was selling incense and oils, and I began listening to people's stories about police brutality. That was in 1988. Then I went to the Million Man March in 1995, came back and started working with Black activists in the community.

Three years ago I formed the New Urban Perspective, to educate youth of color through hip hop culture. I taught classes out of a storefront mosque. After Paul Childs [a 15-year-old mentally disabled Black youth killed by Denver cop James Tourney, who had killed an 18-year-old disabled Black youth, Greg Smith, a year earlier] was killed, I formed Operation Get Tourney and joined Denver Copwatch. I've also worked against the city jail proposal, lecture at schools, teach yoga and give classes on health.

LH: What does Copwatch do, and what did you do with Operation Get Tourney?

SA: Copwatch watches cops, at traffic stops, anywhere we see them doing arrests. We get their actions on videotape and inform people of their rights when being stopped and harassed by cops.

Operation Get Tourney set up large demonstrations and rallied the community to get James Tourney off our

streets, and to win justice for the Childs family. We were instrumental in getting a 10-month suspension for Tourney, which was a small victory, albeit a slap on the wrist. The city overturned the suspension, gave Tourney 10 months of back pay and let him back on the job.

LH: Have you met with many people that have been the victims of police brutality?

SA: I've met with the Childs family, Denise Washington's family, Frank Lobato's family and the Bonner family. They all had family members killed by cops here in Denver or the surrounding areas. Most people I talk to are from Denver or Aurora.

I got hours of testimonies from people, even a woman attacked this Friday. She lived next door to where Frank Lobato was killed. The cops broke through her door, and began asking her about her daughter. She was asserting her rights, and one cop called her a "bitch." She got bruises on her legs, her arms, and she thinks one of her wrists is broken because it's swollen and she can't move it, but she doesn't have insurance.

LH: What happened on February 3?

SA: I went to the Board of Regents meeting as press, for DCTV, and to support the students. I was videotaping, and I got tired of them trying to silence the students, so I spoke up, and the cops attacked me. I told them to leave me alone, that I had a right to be there, and they kept

trying to grab me. A cop pulled me down on top of him. You can see that in the tape. This whole thing is bogus, but they charged me with assaulting an officer when I didn't do anything.

LH: How can people support you?

SA: Writing the judge or the district attorney. My next court date is May 26. Man, since I've been active, I've lost my house, my car. I have five kids and I'm trying to

make a living, but I'm gonna fight the system, because I believe we can win, and don't want my children to have to deal with this. I don't want them to be brutalized by the cops. I want them to be really free. That's my life, and I do what I gotta do. Martin Luther King Jr. said, a man that isn't willing to die for something, is not willing to live.

In defense of Aleem, send emails to defendshareef@yahoo.com and cards or letters of support in care of Aleem to 4860 Chambers Road, P.O. Box 173, Denver, CO 80239. Letters of protest can also be sent to Judge Michael A. Cox, Adams County Justice Center, 1100 Judicial Center Dr., Brighton, CO 80601, or to Don Quick, 17th Judicial District Attorney, 1000 Judicial Center Dr., Suite 100, Brighton, CO 80601. □



Shareef Aleem



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BOSTON

Sat., April 23

Solidarity with the People's Struggle in Colombia & Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. Featured speakers: Gerardo Cajamarco, Colombian Trade Unionist; Dario Zapata, Permanent Committee for Colombian Peace; Jorge Marin, MLK, Jr. Bolivarian Circle; Berta Joubert, IAC; City Councilperson Chuck Turner. 6 p.m. At USWA Local 8751, 25 Colgate Rd., Roslindale, Mass. For info Int'l. Action Center (617) 522-6626.

LOS ANGELES

Fri., April 22

IAC Forum: Upheaval in Lebanon: What U.S. progressives need to know and how the U.S. presence in the Middle East hurts working people here at home. Hear Joyce Chediak, a Lebanese-American who has written extensively on the Middle East for Workers World

newspaper. Also John Parker, West Coast Coordinator of the International Action Center. 7:30 p.m. At IAC, 5274 W Pico Blvd, Suite 203 (between LaBrea and Fairfax). For info (323) 936-7266.

NEW YORK

Fri., April 22

Workers World Party Public Meeting: Hear first-hand accounts of the revolutionary process underway today in Venezuela. Berta Joubert-Ceci and Betsey Piette, WWP leaders in Philadelphia, just returned from attending mass meetings celebrating the third anniversary of the defeat of the 2002 coup against President Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

Workers World

55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
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Fax: (212) 675-7869
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Editor: Deirdre Griswold
Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, Leslie Feinberg, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
West Coast Editor: John Parker
Contributing Editors: Greg Butterfield, Pat Chin, LeiLani Dowell, Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Milt Neidenberg
Technical Staff: Shelley Ettinger, Adrian Garcia, Maggie Vascassenno
Mundo Obrero: Carl Glenn, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Carlos Vargas
Internet: Janet Mayes

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Rally on May 1st in Denver

MAY DAYINTERNATIONALWORKERS' DAY

UNITE, FIGHT BACK! Jobs, healthcare & education, not war & incarceration!

Bring the troops home now!

NO NEW JAIL!

ON THE STEPS OF THE CITY AND COUNTY BUILDING ON MAY 1ST • 11 AM — 1 PM

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

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

National Office
55 W. 17 St.,
New York, NY 10011
(212) 627-2994;
Fax (212) 675-7869
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 424,
Atlanta, GA 30301
(404) 627-0815
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
426 E. 31 St.,
Baltimore, MD 21218
(410) 235-7040
baltimore@workers.org

Boston
284 Armory St., Boston,
MA 02130
(617) 983-3835
Fax (617) 983-3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
P.O. Box 1204
Buffalo, NY 14213
(716) 566-1115
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
(773) 381-5839
Fax (773) 761-9330
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
phone (216) 531-4004
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org
Detroit
5920 Second Ave.,
Detroit, MI 48202
(313) 831-0750
detroit@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 130322,
Houston, TX 77219
(713) 861-5965
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
5274 West Pico Blvd.,
Suite 203
Los Angeles, CA 90019
(323) 936-1416
la@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 9202,
Philadelphia, PA 19139
(610) 453-0490
phila@workers.org

Richmond, Va.
P.O. Box 14602,
Richmond, VA 23221
richmond@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
(585) 436-6458
rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
3930 Oregon St.,
Suite 230
San Diego, CA 92104
(619) 692-4496

San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco,
CA 94103
(415) 561-9752
sf@workers.org

State College, Pa.
100 Grandview Rd.,
State College,
PA 16801
(814) 237-8695

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300,
Washington, DC 20037,
dc@workers.org

Harlem says 'FREE MUMIA'

Chants of “Death row, hell no!” and “Brick by brick, wall by wall, we’re gonna free Mumia Abu-Jamal” resonated on the streets of Harlem April 23 with a spirited march in support of the African-American revolutionary journalist and political prisoner. Hundreds of Abu-Jamal supporters met at the Harlem State Office Building, then marched to the historic Schomburg Library of African American History and Culture and wound up at the Salem United Methodist Church for a standing-room-only indoor rally. The demonstration occurred one day before the 51st birthday of Abu-Jamal, who has spent almost 23 years on Pennsylvania’s death row follow-

ing a first-degree murder conviction for the 1981 killing of a white cop. Evidence suppressed by the courts and the police points to Abu-Jamal’s innocence. The speakers and cultural performers emphasized the urgent need to continue building broad, mass pressure on the repressive judicial system to grant Abu-Jamal a new trial. Rally participants included Pam Africa, former New York City Mayor David Dinkins, City Council members Margarita Lopez and Bill Perkins, Herman Ferguson, Nana Soul, Larry Holmes, Brenda Stokely, Camille Yarborough, Spirit Child and an audio taped greeting from Abu-Jamal.

— Monica Moorehead



November 23 in New York City.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

New Yorkers march for racial justice



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

By Imani Henry
New York

Over 400 people came out here April 18 on Racial Justice Day to express their outrage against the infamous brutality of the New York Police Department.

This 10th Racial Justice Day was called “the largest protest against police misconduct since Sept. 11, 2001.” The first Racial Justice Day was called by the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights in 1993 after the 1991 brutal murder of Manuel Mayi in the Bronx by a white racist gang.

Due to an inadequate police investigation and the failure to identify the incident as a bias crime, not one of Mayi’s assailants has been brought to justice. At the time, one of the suspected killers was an officer of the New York City Housing Authority.

This year’s Racial Justice Day was organized as an emergency response to the April 15 release of former NYPD officer Francis Livoti from a North Carolina prison after serving time for violating the civil rights of Anthony Baez. Livoti killed Baez with an illegal and brutal choke-hold in 1994 after Baez’s football accidentally grazed Livoti’s police car as he played touch football with his brothers near his home.

Livoti was acquitted during his first trial in 1996. In 1998, he was found guilty of violating Baez’s civil rights, sentenced to seven years in prison and fined \$12,500.

Traditionally on Racial Justice Day, the surviving family members are spotlighted. At a rally outside City Hall, the mothers of Timothy Stanfield, Nicholas Heyward Jr., Manuel Mayi and Anthony Baez repre-

sented their fallen children. City Council member Charles Barron and Bran Fenner from the Police and State Violence Working Group of the Audre Lorde Project also brought messages of solidarity.

This year’s Racial Justice Day was the first since the death of key organizer Richie Perez in March 2004. Activist and partner of Perez, Martha Laureano-Perez, addressed the crowd.

Tearful parents talked about the support they had received from Perez and his longtime friend and fellow activist Vicente ‘Panama’ Alba, and credited the two with giving them tools to fight back against the injustices of the police, courts and mayor’s office.

The protesters were predominantly people of color and activists in their twenties or younger. Groups such as FIERCE, Audre Lorde Project, International Action Center, Committees Against Anti-Asian Violence DRUM, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Justice Committee, Positive Work Force, El Puente, Desis Rising Up Movement (DRUM), a South Asian organization, and Sistafire, among many others, organized contingents.

The Baez family and the Coalition Against Police Brutality have put out a call to the movement calling for the stepping up of federal investigations into cases of police violence, and the creation of a truly independent Civilian Complaint Review Board with subpoena power to monitor and investigate police brutality and corruption.

CAPB media spokesperson Rickke Mananzula assisted with the writing of this article.

Rally for Mumia in San Francisco

Michael Franti and Spearhead held a concert in San Francisco to celebrate Mumia Abu-Jamal’s 51st birthday and to demand his freedom. Hundreds of people gathered at Mission High School for the April 24 event, which was sponsored by the Mobilization to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. Pam Africa of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal and human rights attorney Lynne Stewart were among the featured speakers. Stewart, who was convicted by a Manhattan jury in February of “conspiracy to aid terrorists,” will face a possible 35 years in prison when she is sentenced in September. “Mumia is probably one of the finest people to be alive in this era,” Stewart told the crowd. “An injury to



Lynne Stewart above, Michael Franti and Spearhead, right.



him is an injury to every one of us.” Quoting Bertolt Brecht, Stewart said: “‘And I always thought that the simplest words must be enough ... that you’ll go down if you don’t stand up.’ Stand up for Mumia, stand up for Lynne Stewart, stand up for yourself.”

—Story and photos by Brenda Sandburg

Cops target Black community leader

By David Sole
Detroit

On April 18, Benton Harbor police arrested activist and civil-rights leader the Rev. Edward Pinkney in his home. Pinkney has been an outspoken critic and organizer against police brutality and economic devastation in the largely African American city in western Michigan.

He has been charged by the Berrien County prosecutor with four felonies and a misdemeanor following his leading role in the successful election recall of a city commissioner who strongly supports the police chief.

Benton Harbor’s Black community rose up in rebellion in June 2003 after the death of an African American motorcyclist in a police chase. Residents had long been protesting racist police actions. The economic depression in the city also has angered the community, which only has to look across the bridge to the predominantly white and wealthy sister city of St. Joseph.

Massive repression followed the uprising. Two hundred local and state police—armed with armored personnel carriers, helicopters and dogs—occupied the city.

The Rev. Pinkney was one of the community leaders who spearheaded a large, regional civil-rights march in Benton Harbor a few weeks after the rebellion. His continuing activities to expose police brutality, to fight for jobs and investment in Benton Harbor, and to expose the racist courts and political machine that operates in Berrien County have angered the ruling elite.

As leader of the Black Autonomy Network of Community Organizations (BANCO) in Benton Harbor, Pinkney led a recent petition drive that put the recall

of City Commissioner Glenn Yarbrough on the ballot. Yarbrough, brother of former Mayor Charles Yarbrough and supporter of Police Chief Samuel Harris, was voted out of office in the Feb. 22 recall election.

The county prosecutor then went to Berrien Trial Court to overturn the election. Pressure was reportedly brought on one witness to testify that Rev. Pinkney “bought votes for \$5 each.” The media went along with this frame-up, running articles denouncing Pinkney and attacking his character. Other charges include “attempting to influence absentee voters” and helping voters who couldn’t read to fill out their ballots!

In mid-April Chief Judge Paul Maloney overturned the recall of Yarbrough and ordered a new recall election to be held Aug. 2. Pinkney’s arrest followed only a few days later.

The same day as the Pinkney’s arrest, members of Benton Harbor’s African American community packed the City Commissioners’ meeting to protest another case of police brutality.

Alzeni Crumble, a county probation officer, had been stopped by two white Benton Harbor traffic cops earlier in the day. According to witnesses and others who were permitted to view the police video of the incident, the police threw Crumble to the ground.

Supporters of the Rev. Pinkney are preparing for a march and rally to demand that the frame-up charges be dropped and for an end to police brutality and racism in Berrien County.

Donations are urgently needed for his defense. Checks can be made payable to Attorney Tat Parrish and sent c/o Rev. Edward Pinkney, 1940 Union Street, Benton Harbor, MI 49022. □

When colleges become factories, professors

Special to Workers World
New York

Teachers in the higher education industry in the United States are in turmoil. This is reflected in week-long strikes by graduate student-teachers at two elite universities, Yale and Columbia, as well as organizing drives at 60 public universities among teaching adjuncts and a number of strikes at community colleges.

Before World War II, higher education in the U.S. was generally restricted to elite schools serving children of the ruling class or the wealthier professionals and small businesspeople. The demands for a workforce capable of mastering and creating advances in science and technology were slight and easily satisfied.

Professors had tenure, which basically meant they owned their jobs and could be fired only under the most unusual circumstances. They had long vacations, long holidays, generally interesting work and academic freedom that let them study and publish pretty much what they wanted. They could use their free time for research, writing or consulting, which often brought in substantial outside income.

All this has changed.

Currently only 30 percent of the 1.3 million people engaged in post-secondary instruction are full-time employees with tenure or were hired with the possibility of obtaining tenure. Full-time teachers with no possibility of tenure make up 15 percent. Part-time faculty, called adjuncts, and graduate students make up the other 55 percent of all higher-education instructors in the United States. In the City University system of New York (CUNY), over half the courses are taught by adjuncts.

The industrialization of higher education is plunging ahead with full force.

The American Federation of Teachers

says it has 60 organizing drives going on among adjuncts in publicly funded universities. Most adjuncts are poorly paid. Wages run from \$390 for a three-credit course in North Carolina to about \$3,500 a course at CUNY, where the adjuncts are part of a union, to \$4,800 a course in California community colleges. (aapaz.org/salaries.htm)

Since adjuncts often work at more than one institution, it is hard to find estimates of their average yearly income. It would be a very lucky full-time adjunct who made more than \$45,000 a year, and most make less than \$30,000. These are relatively low wages for skilled workers with substantial training who may very well be in debt for their own education.

Working conditions for adjuncts, even ones in a union, are bad. They are lucky if they get a drawer in a shared desk; getting access to e-mail and voice mail, which would let their students contact them, is rare.

The most common benefit an adjunct gets is a library card. Very few are covered by pensions. At CUNY, depending on how many hours they work, they do get some health-care coverage, but no sick leave.

Twenty-five years ago, the Supreme Court denied faculty in private colleges and universities the right to unionize since, it said, they were part of management. This is called the Yeshiva decision. The professorate were represented by the American Association of University Professors, which became almost entirely a professional organization. The AAUP has acted like a union only sporadically, where it has some strength in public higher education institutions. At Rutgers, in New Jersey, it called for a strike in the late 1980s.

Some private colleges do have unions. The union is well established at Emerson College in Boston. College president Jacqueline Liebergott has made it clear she

wants the union to disband or stop being so active. Its competitors are not unionized and Emerson wants to be like them. It doesn't want to bargain over class size or staffing issues, or even to accept mediation. (Boston Globe, April 14)

Private elite colleges tend to rely on graduate students, who are lower paid and have fewer benefits than adjuncts.

Public universities are covered by different laws and often have unions. At CUNY, a public university system whose 200,000 students are almost entirely the daughters, sons or members of the working class, with over half born outside the U.S., the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), AFT Local 2334, represents the faculty, including adjuncts, and staff members with college degrees.

Under New York State's Taylor Law, strikes are illegal and contracts remain in force until a new one is signed. The PSC, which has been working under an expired contract for over two years, is conducting a militant pressure campaign. It has held a few large demonstrations—the latest on April 19 and presences at the monthly Board of Trustees meetings, mass telephone calls one day a week, and leafleting students.

Management has raised its offer of a wage increase from 1.5 percent over four years to 6 percent, but this is still well below inflation. It still hasn't budged on equity for adjuncts and some other key issues.

It is not clear whether the PSC's pressure campaign is going to achieve an acceptable contract, or whether its members are willing to go further. But it is clear that if teachers in higher education don't take more militant, vigorous action, their positions and benefits are going to continue to erode.

The writer is a delegate to the PSC from AFT Local 2334.

ON THE
PICKET LINE
by Sue Davis

Big victory in Illinois

The Services Employees won a hard-fought, many-year struggle to organize 49,000 child-care workers in Illinois on April 7. The vote to join the union was a landslide: 13,484 to 359. The workers, who are paid by the state to care for 200,000 children of low-paid workers, have been fighting to unionize for many years. But the state refused to recognize their right to join a union until this March.

"We expect this vote in Illinois will be the catalyst for more than half a million family child care providers across America [to join] our union," says Anna Burger, SEIU secretary-treasurer. SEIU's membership will now jump to 1.8 million.

Westchester bus drivers win

It took nearly seven weeks of pounding the pavement for 568 bus drivers in New York's Westchester County to win a decent contract on April 20. Members of Local 100 of the Transport Workers will receive a 12.75-percent raise over the course of four years.

But an even bigger issue was lowering the retirement age with full benefits. The union argued that it should be lowered from 62 to 57, because many drivers incur serious injuries after working behind the wheel for years. The drivers were able to negotiate it down to 59. The agreement also included an increase in health-care benefits.

Campus protests unite students, instructors

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Amherst, Mass.

Although carefully concealed or downplayed by the big-business media, burgeoning campus rebellions and related struggles are rising to a fever pitch across the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

Throughout the spring 2005 semester hundreds of campus community actions including boycotts, counter-recruitment protests, hunger strikes, tent cities and walkouts have taken place with the peak of activity thus far happening the week of April 18-22.

Many of these actions are in response to budget cuts in relation to the U.S. war on Iraq, union contract struggles, education and fee hikes, fighting racism, military recruitment, living wages and union recognition for campus workers.

In the Northeast one of these actions took place April 21 at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst where students demanded: "No contract? No peace" and "Hands off student organizations!"

"If we're going to fight against oppression we have to fight all oppressions. Everything is connected. We have to unite. If we don't unite the students, faculty and community, nothing is going to happen," said a

Venezuelan graduate student and teaching assistant while picketing on April 21.

This international graduate student, a member of the Graduate Employee Organization-UAW Local 2322, who requested anonymity due to the increasing repression of the Department of Homeland Security, walked out with her union sisters and brothers and thousands of undergraduate students boycotting classes in solidarity. (www.geouaw.org)

GEO, with a membership of 2,400, has been working without a contract since July 1, and has been bargaining with the administration for over a year. Other campus unions are in similar circumstances. About 18,000 undergraduate students and 6,000 graduates students attend UMass-Amherst.

The union called the one-day walkout in response to the administration's proposals of real wage and health-care cuts, an end to health benefits for currently covered same-sex couples, and drastic increases in childcare costs. Escalating protest actions beyond A21 will increase if the administration continues to bargain in bad faith says GEO.

The graduate students and their allies in the Take Back UMass Coalition, the student-worker coalition representing undergraduates, the faculty union, the Massa-

chusetts Society of Professors-National Education Association (MSP) and many others came out en masse on A21 in solidarity with GEO.

They were also protesting the administration's proposal to strip undergraduate student organizations of their independence and power by placing undergraduate student organizations under administration control. (www.takebackumass.com)

An injury to one is an injury to all

The MSP supported A21 by issuing a petition solidarity statement with the boycott and walkout. Over 200 faculty members signed this statement in a few days and it was published as an ad in The Daily Collegian, the undergraduate student newspaper.

The MSP, GEO and Take Back UMass have jointly advanced five key demands: Support the Community Action Plan, not Chancellor John Lombardi's student "reorganization" plan; increase the number of faculty in classrooms and labs; no cuts to real wages or benefits, including same-sex domestic partner benefits; student control of student organizations; and



UMass-Amherst grad student protests.

WW PHOTO:
BRYAN PFEIFER

fair contracts for all campus unions.

To build for A21, GEO, Take Back UMass, the MSP and their allies held 50 teach-ins informing over 9,000 graduate students about issues related to the current struggles.

Chants from bullhorns such as "No contract, no peace," "What do we want? Contract: When do we want it? Now," and "Racism? No Way" could be heard all over campus, and also by Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney when he tried to sneak into a Massachusetts Board of Higher Education meeting on campus.

Pavel Payano, newly-elected Student Government Association president and Take Back UMass member, summed up the day's mood among participants: "The day was 'very successful. We shut down campus. It shows how much this community supports us.'"

For more information on upcoming actions and how to support this struggle, visit www.geouaw.org or www.takeback-umass.com. □

Housing market crisis threatens economy

By Milt Neidenberg

The housing industry, a key component in the recent expansion of the capitalist economy, is sending mixed signals. For almost three years, the Federal Reserve Board kept interest rates at 1 percent so the banks and other financial institutions could flood the currency markets with cheap dollars. The resultant home-buying craze triggered a huge spike in prices and construction of new homes.

“The national median home prices [for March 2005] jumped 11.4 percent to \$195,000 from the same month a year ago ... the biggest since December 1980. ... Home sales have been bolstered by low mortgage [rates] ... but some analysts said the housing sector has begun to show signs of easing. ... Last week a U.S. Commerce report showed a 17.6 percent plunge in housing starts for March.” (USA Today, Mar. 25)

One institution that capitalized on the frenzy in the housing market is the Federal National Mortgage Corporation—popularly known as Fannie Mae.

Created by Congress during the Great Depression, it was designed to provide stability and liquidity in the mortgage market. When the housing market collapsed, Fannie Mae provided local banks with federal money for financing home mortgages. It raised the levels of home ownership and the availability of affordable housing.

In 1968, President Lyndon Johnson shifted Fannie Mae to the private sector, to remove it from the budget deficits accumulated during the Vietnam War.

Today, Fannie Mae is a publicly-traded company on the stock market. Its primary aim is to accumulate huge profits for its corporate heads and big-time investors.

Fannie Mae is a Government Sponsored Enterprise (GSE)—a monopoly with special privileges, including borrowing money below market-interest rates, exemption from state and local taxes, and a credit line at the U.S. Treasury.

It is the largest non-bank financial services company in the world. Fannie Mae and its junior partner, nicknamed Freddie

Mac, have grown rich on these freebies. Their combined assets are 45 percent greater than those of the nation’s largest bank. On the other hand, their combined debt is equal to 46 percent of the current national debt.

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are the only two Fortune 500 companies that are not required to inform the public about any financial difficulties they may be having. In the event of financial collapse, investors believe U.S. taxpayers will be responsible for hundreds of billions in outstanding debt.

Another Enron in the making?

Last year Freddie Mac revealed accounting errors of \$4.5 billion to \$4.7 billion, resulting in the termination of three of its top executives, who were bailed out in a golden parachute of benefits.

This year the Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight, a government agency, charged Fannie Mae with cooking the books. Fannie Mae was significantly undercapitalized and covered up a \$9 billion shortfall. Two of Fannie Mae’s top executives resigned with golden parachutes.

Beginning in June, Fannie Mae will be required to add 30 percent to its reserves—calling for about \$7 billion of additional borrowing.

On Feb. 17, the Wall Street Journal carried the banner headline, “Greenspan urges limits on Fannie portfolio growth.” The article set off alarm bells. “Fannie share price fell ... to its lowest level since August 2003. ... Limits on the finance provider’s enormous mortgage portfolios, which reached \$1 trillion, 500 billion, would hurt their profits. ‘It’s an earnings killer,’ said an independent financial consultant, adding that a growing number of investors appear to be selling the company’s stock.”

If Fannie Mae went down, the entire housing industry would collapse. The mortgage behemoth is integrated into Wall Street banks and other major financial institutions. Fannie Mae borrows from the banks, which profit from unloading high-risk mortgage portfolios back to them. Fannie Mae in turn packages and guarantees these volatile high-risk mortgages, and sells them to the highest bidders in the billion-dollar secondary mortgage market. It receives humongous fees for this service.

Fannie Mae has entered the world of derivatives and hedge funds, and since there is neither transparency nor oversight, there is only speculation about whether Fannie Mae has accrued huge losses. It is casino capitalism and Wall Street’s favorite game. This GSE is suspected of establishing trusts to cover up its hedge funds investments.

Since European and Asian banks, private and public, have invested billions in the U.S. housing market, any significant downturn would have incalculable worldwide repercussions.

Is this a rerun of the Savings and Loan (S&L) collapse of the 1980s that cost consumers and tax payers billions of dollars? At that time, speculation, rapid inflation and high interest rates burst the housing bubble. The S&Ls hyped the price of real estate, which led to huge accounting frauds.

There has been no oversight since President Ronald Reagan deregulated the industry. Reagan made it easier for the S&Ls to lend recklessly. He increased the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation’s (FDIC) guarantee to cover bad loans from \$20,000 to \$100,000.

The S&Ls approved huge numbers of highly leveraged loans at high interest rates. If they panned out, fortunes were made. If not, the FDIC would cover each account. Bankers and real estate developers, with their political clout in the Reagan and Bush senior administrations, were able to milk the S&Ls dry.

And they crashed.

A new S&L catastrophe

Is the Bush administration following in the footsteps of his predecessors? Are there similarities today to the housing and real estate bubble of the 1980s?

Currently housing prices have reached stratospheric levels because of low mortgage rates, strong demand and outrageous speculation. A sharp rise in interest rates can kick the props out from this critical market. The housing market directly affects a multitude of other industries, including lumber, steel and construction. It’s also tied to consumer products like furniture, appliances, outdoor items, etc.

The Bush White House is following the Reagan administration policy of attacking labor and the poor while bestowing tax cuts on the corporations and the wealthy

1 percenters. Huge military spending and the endless occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan have created massive current account debt and budget deficits.

The Federal Reserve Board has raised interest rates to 2.75 percent, its seventh quarter-point increase since June 2004, to slow down inflation. It has failed. Reagan, too, raised interest rates that many economists believe led to the October 1987 stock-market crash.

Is the housing industry about to follow the demise of the 1980s S&Ls? Is the auto industry, led by GM and Ford, a barometer of an ill wind facing the capitalist economy? Are they all the product of overproduction, inflation and speculation, leading to a growing stagnation?

Yes!

Even in its early stages, stagflation—economic stagnation plus inflation—is bad news for the housing market. With an exploding debt, Fannie Mae is facing a crisis of monumental proportions. Raising interest rates to head off inflation will soon discourage the home buyer who can’t afford increased mortgage costs.

The consumer/worker is already overloaded with debt. Wages are lagging way behind the rate of inflation and workers can’t buy back the super-abundance of goods and services they produce.

The cycle of overproduction and underconsumption has begun. Housing is the most expensive, yet necessary, commodity the consumer/worker can buy. The housing inventory is overloaded and priced beyond the reach of millions of low-paid workers and oppressed people. Homelessness is on the rise, rents have sky-rocketed and evictions and foreclosures are increasing.

Fannie Mae was created during the 1930s to supply equity to prevent these hardships. Today, as a corporate housing monopoly, its main concern is profits and dividends for its investors. It is up to workers and their communities to protect the basic right to decent, affordable housing, private or public.

As May Day is about to be reclaimed by a progressive and class-conscious coalition of opponents of endless wars and U.S. imperialist occupations, along with resisters of the war at home, the issue of decent, affordable housing, fighting homelessness, evictions and foreclosures, must be at the top of the agenda. □

PICKETLINE

Sign vs. Wal-Mart censored

The outdoor advertising arm of Clear Channel, the giant radio network that promotes right-wing ideology, refused to accept a union-sponsored billboard opposing Wal-Mart on New York’s Staten Island. “This absolutely is censorship,” says Michael Mareno, secretary-treasurer of Local 342 of the Food and Commercial Workers. The billboard would have shown a fire-breathing Godzilla standing near the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge with the following statement: “The Wal-Monster will destroy Staten Island businesses and devastate our quality of life.”

The union has vowed to find a way to post a compromise anti-Wal-Mart billboard near the ferry terminal connecting Staten Island to Manhattan. Unfortunately, unlike in Queens where a coalition of unions, elected representatives and community groups were recently able to send Wal-Mart packing, a number of prominent politicians on Staten Island are backing the mega-store. □

Haitian healthcare workers unionize, fight racism

By Phebe Eckfeldt
Boston

Nursing home workers at Harborside Healthcare in Wakefield, Mass., voted to join SEIU Local 202 in March. The pro-union vote was part of a campaign by Haitian community and religious leaders to improve working conditions in nursing homes in Massachusetts, where they say up to 80 percent of the work force is Haitian. Harborside Healthcare is one of the largest nursing home companies in the country, with 45 facilities—14 of them unionized.

In an attempt to nullify the successful union drive, the company tried to use racism to divide the workers. In a written objection to the vote on April 1, the company claimed that some of the Haitian

workers may have been coerced into voting for the union by threats of voodoo being used against them.

These charges outraged the workers, union and community. Their reaction to the company’s use of racism, stereotyping and the distortion of Haitian culture and traditions was swift and vehement. At an angry protest held on April 20 outside a Harborside Healthcare corporate office in Boston, Celia Weislo, president of Local 202, said, “They lost the election 2 to 1 so they had to trump up charges.”

The worker accused by the company of threatening to use voodoo was present at the protest and denied the accusations. She, in fact, was a union observer during part of the voting and said she voted for the union in order to gain more respect, better working conditions and a pay raise—some-

thing she herself had not seen in five years.

The fight continues, with the workers and the union demanding that Harborside Healthcare recognize the vote. At the Temple Salem Church in Dorchester, the Rev. Pierre Omeler says about 300 of the 1,200 church members work in nursing homes. He has vowed to mobilize the community to demand an apology.

This struggle by the Haitian community underscores in graphic reality the results of a study by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University released in mid-April. The study found that 80 percent of African Americans and half of Latin@ people polled called racial discrimination in Boston a “somewhat serious” or “very serious” problem that can cost jobs and promotions and make them feel unwelcome and unwanted at public places and events. □

Time to revive May Day

Continued from page 1

workers marched under the slogans of the day—against imperialist war, colonial oppression, racism and lynching, freedom for political prisoners, universal suffrage and other demands.

May Day 2005, to be held in Union Square in New York as well as San Francisco, Los Angeles and other cities, is in that tradition.

This 2005 May Day call, signed by working class, community and movement leaders, concludes with such demands as: end the occupation—bring the troops home now; jobs at a living wage; housing, health care, education for all; fight against racism and political repression; hands off Social Security; no draft; workers' right to organize; solidarity with immigrant workers; solidarity with lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people; and solidarity with the peoples of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean who are resisting U.S. imperialism's drive to own and exploit them.

The demands end with a clarion call for the rebirth of worldwide solidarity.

Ruling class tried to erase May Day

In the post-World War II era, when U.S. imperialism launched its anti-communist Cold War from a position of hegemony, one of the important tasks of the ruling class—along with witch-hunting commu-

nists, socialists, progressives and militant trade unionists of any type—was the suppression of May Day as a working-class holiday. Reactionary elements were rallied to launch physical attacks on May Day parades as the Cold War ratcheted up in the late 1940s.

As far back as 1949, the Americanism Department of the Veterans of Foreign Wars began a campaign to have May Day declared Loyalty Day.

A decade later, after May Day had been suppressed by the witch hunt, Congress passed Public Law 529 designating May 1 as Loyalty Day in an attempt to make sure that it was not revived.

In 1961, a joint resolution of Congress revised this and declared May 1 as Law Day USA.

Moderate, social-patriotic, official Labor Day marches in early September, organized by the AFL-CIO leadership, were elevated to take its place.

The capitalist bosses were extremely conscious of May Day as a day for the political manifestation of class consciousness and internationalism among the workers and were thoroughgoing in their attempt to wipe it off the calendar of the working class.

Not just a ceremonial May Day

Since the witch hunt abated, there have been many May Day activities organized

**April 21
Protest at
New York's City
Hall demands
right to march
on May Day.**

WW PHOTO JOHN
CATALINOTTO



by various political groups, although less and less so since the collapse of the USSR. Those attempts, regardless of their varied politics, and well-meaning in many instances, were nevertheless strictly symbolic and ceremonial in character. This was because they were not, and for the most part could not be, connected to any genuine development of a militant, class-conscious current in the leadership of any section of the organized working class. A working-class leadership of the caliber of the Million Workers March had not yet matured.

What is distinctive about the attempt to revive May Day as a militant, working-class day of political struggle in 2005 is that it emanates from advanced leaders in the workers' movement who have fought the workers' battles and who have watched working-class rights being torn away.

These are the leaders of the Million Worker March (MWM). And they want to strike out on an independent political path.

The MWM leaders have watched in anger and frustration as the AFL-CIO leadership has continued along the path of support for the war; ignored racism and the myriad of social and economic issues of the workers; engaged in lackluster, top-down organizing or no organizing at all; and placed much of its reliance—to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars in workers' dues—in the Democratic Party politicians.

The May Day 2005 development does not come out of the blue.

The MWM leaders announced their determination to open up an independent road by coming out on Oct. 17, 2004, on the steps of the Lincoln Monument, in the midst of the presidential election campaign, and declaring that the workers should organize "in our own name."

They linked opposition to the war with struggle for workers' rights at home. In doing so, they had to fight the hostile upper crust of the AFL-CIO leadership, which was fully committed to elect the imperialist, pro-war Democratic Party candidate John Kerry as president and which was deeply opposed to the independent class politics advocated by the MWM.

Additionally, the MWM had to contend with various currents in the anti-war movement and radical movement that were panicked by any attempt to divert resources or attention from the Kerry campaign and turned their backs on the ground-breaking effort to chart an independent course.

MWM leaders refused to bow down, and came out publicly for the 2005 revival of May Day from the steps of the Lincoln Monument.

Then they took another historic step forward by uniting with student, youth and community activists and the Troops Home Now Coalition on March 19, 2005, for a joint anti-war, anti-imperialist, pro-working class rally and march on the second anniversary of the Iraq War. This rally, which boldly brought together the workers' struggle and the militant anti-war struggle, was additionally significant because it began in Harlem.

The 2005 May Day demonstration is not just ceremonial. It is an attempt to stimulate the reemergence of the class

struggle and it is political preparation to shape the struggle in a militant, class-conscious, independent direction. It has been called by working-class leaders in alliance with other progressive and revolutionary forces in the U.S.

This is not merely an exercise in paying homage to the past, but a concrete preparation for the future—for struggles that are imminent as the Bush administration and the capitalist class bear down upon every sector of the working class and the oppressed, and even sections of the middle class, with union busting, budget cuts, attacks on Social Security, and continuing war and war spending in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

May Day must again become rooted in the working class. Once it does, the connection between May Day, imperialist war and the class struggle becomes a material factor in the struggle that is powerful and truly profound.

One particular May Day event, held at the height of World War I, is particularly relevant today because it sheds light on the vital connection between the working class, war and militarism.

Liebkecht, May Day and World War I

One of the most important May Day demonstrations in history, after the original demonstration in Chicago in 1886, was the one called by socialist leader Karl Liebkecht on May Day, 1916, in the midst of the first global imperialist war. Liebkecht was a Social Democratic Party representative in the Reichstag, the German parliament. He was the only one out of 116 Social Democratic deputies to vote against war credits.

The German capitalist class was whipping up social patriotism, chauvinism and war fever. Millions of German workers were on both the eastern and western war fronts. Demonstrations against the war were illegal. The anti-war struggle had been suppressed.

Liebkecht dared to call a May Day anti-war demonstration in Berlin. Hundreds of thousands of workers turned out. He began his talk with "Down with the war, down with the government."

He had issued and distributed a May Day Manifesto which declared: "Poverty and misery, need and starvation, are ruling in Germany, Belgium, Poland and Serbia, whose blood the vampire of imperialism is sucking and which resemble vast cemeteries. ..."

"Let thousands of voices shout 'Down with the shameless extermination of nations! Down with those responsible for these crimes! Our enemy is not the English, French, nor Russian people, but the great German landed proprietors, the German capitalists and their executive committee.'"

Liebkecht was dragged off the platform by police, who were there in the thousands, and put on trial. He used the trial to denounce the war and the ruling class. He was put in jail. But that May Day demonstration was the beginning of the end of German imperialism's war effort. It gave confidence to the workers that it was pos-

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WW PHOTOS: ARTURO J. PÉREZ SAAD
Ray Ramos, an Iraq War veteran exposed to DU, speaks to the Queens, N.Y. audience.

Anti-war video on DU reaches wider audience

**Special to Workers World
Queens, N.Y.**

A multinational audience of anti-war, community and union activists gathered April 19 at All Saints' Episcopal Church in Sunnyside for the Queens, N.Y., screening of "Poison DUst," a new documentary about U.S. radioactive weapons made with depleted uranium (DU).

The standing-room-only event was sponsored by Sunnyside Woodside Peace, the DU Education Project of the International Action Center, the West Queens Greens and the New York Area Million Worker March.

"Poison DUst" combines interviews with veterans, their families and nuclear experts with historical footage to paint a horrific picture of the U.S. military's nuclear legacy and its devastating impact on GIs, civilians and their children—a legacy that continues today through the Pentagon's use of toxic, radioactive DU weapons in Iraq.

Discussion after the screening featured People's Video Network videographer Sue Harris, editor of "Poison DUst," and Ray Ramos, an Iraq War veteran from Springfield Gardens in Queens who was exposed to DU and was interviewed in the film.

Ramos spoke eloquently about the toll DU has taken on his health and the brick wall he and other Iraq vets ran up against trying to get testing and treatment from

the U.S. military for their DU-related health problems.

The audience was clearly moved and motivated by the event and its anti-war message. Many viewers lined up afterward to purchase copies of "Poison DUst" on DVD to show at schools, churches, house meetings and other community gatherings in Queens—New York City's largest borough geographically and the most ethnically diverse county in the U.S.

Media coverage of the event on WBAI-Pacific radio and in the Queens Chronicle and Queens Tribune newspapers, which both reach tens of thousands of readers boroughwide, helped spread the film's message to a larger audience.

Also on the program was Chris Silvera, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Local 808 in Long Island City, president of the Teamsters National Black Caucus and a leader of the New York Area Million Worker March.

Silvera announced plans for a May Day Rally at Union Square in Manhattan on May 1 at 1 pm. "We want to reclaim May Day as a workers' day," Silvera said. The rally will demand "Jobs, Not War—Bring the Troops Home NOW." It is co-sponsored by the New York Area Million Worker March and the Troops Out Now Coalition.

For information on the May Day Rally or to order a copy of "Poison DUst," call (212) 633-6646. □

Colorado State University

Watchdogs fail to silence leftist transgender activist

By LeiLani Dowell and Larry Hales
Fort Collins, Colo.

In the battle against sexual and other forms of violence against women, speaking out is a primary weapon. Take Back the Night rallies and marches have been held internationally since 1973 to bring just such attention to that violence. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), in the United States someone is sexually assaulted every 2.5 minutes.

However, when Leslie Feinberg, a transgender activist, writer, and leader in Workers World Party, was invited by the Campus Feminist Alliance of Colorado State University (CSU) to keynote the school's Take Back the Night rally, the CSU attempted to silence this survivor of violence by demanding a contract that would have made Feinberg legally and financially responsible for any injuries or damages at the event. In addition, the contract required \$1 million liability insurance.

Feinberg was told that in order to waive the insurance, she'd have to vet her speech to CSU officials. She refused all those terms.

Colorado is the site of a number of attacks on lesbian, gay, bi and trans people over the years, including a vicious mocking of Matthew Shepard by fraternities at Colorado State University while Shepard lay dying from a horrific anti-gay beating. Such contract language would have opened up the possibility of right-wing attacks for which Feinberg would be

held responsible.

Although ruling-class views dominate all branches of corporate media, an attack on the voices of those least often heard is being made on campuses across the country. At the same time, a right-wing mobilization is attempting to legislate acceptance of racist, bigoted, and anti-immigrant language and actions under the rubric of "free speech."

At Colorado State University, this attack has recently culminated with the resignation of Professor Ward Churchill as head of the Ethnic Studies Department, as well as the forced signing of loyalty oaths—first enacted during the "Red Scare" of the 1920s—by professors.

A statement released by Feinberg reads in part, "As a result [of CSU's demands], they have threatened to silence a speaker who is transgender, lesbian, feminist, a survivor of sexual/gender violence, a union activist, and a left-wing organizer. ... It is no accident that this suppression of progressive and left-wing voices coincides with greater student/labor unity, anti-war organizing, counter-recruitment against the Pentagon representatives on campuses, preparations to mount a struggle against the impending military draft, and organizing against racist, sexist and anti-LGBT threats on campus."

The importance of this struggle would not be lost by the progressive community. Feinberg's statement received hundreds of responses of support from across the country and as far away as Australia, Canada,

Hawaii and Italy. An organization in Boulder offered to pay for Feinberg's travel expenses—which had been denied by the campus administration. Hundreds more messages of support continue to pour in.

On April 21, demonstrators stood at the entrance to Old Towne Square in Fort Collins, Colo., opening up the rally in anticipation of the women marchers. The women could be heard from blocks away, and a steady din of car horns could be heard alongside the marchers. Numbering over two hundred, they carried signs and marched behind a "Take Back the Night" banner. They marched past dorms on campus chanting, "Hey hey/ho ho/rape and violence have got to go" and then marched through the streets of downtown chanting: "We have the power/we have the right/the streets are ours/take back the night."

Feinberg gave the main address and stressed that, "Uniting, as we are here tonight, is the first step in overcoming fear. And, by coming together, we see that what we've endured is not our own indi-

vidual problem, no matter how many people have tried to put the burden of guilt on us in an attempt to 'blame the victim.' This widespread violence driven by bigotry is a social problem that requires a large-scale, collective solution."

Feinberg spoke about how many try to put violence against women outside of any context, but that speaking out to end violence against women is part of a deepening political struggle to end all forms of bigotry. This violence permeates societies, and can be tied to the development of private property and class distinctions, which goes hand in hand with the demise of matriarchal society and the subjugation of women.

Feinberg also spoke about violence against gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people and the right-wing attacks against people in these communities, hand in hand with the racist attacks against people of color and immigrants, and tied these struggles to the struggle of the Iraqi people to throw off the yoke of occupation and oppression.

Feinberg said, "The fist of the rapist is violence, and the fist of the person fighting for their life is self-defense. The imperialist occupation of Iraq and theft of its wealth is violence, and the fist of the insurgent movement—supported by the women and men of Iraq to oust the colonizers—is self-defense and self-determination." The militant speech moved many, and students vowed to continue to open the dialog Feinberg started. □

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Series on Lesbian, gay, bi, trans struggle history by Leslie Feinberg.

Read the last 32 segments online at workers.org. And get a subscription to read the rest in upcoming issues of *Workers World*!

REVIVE MAY DAY INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

Unite with working & poor people all over the world

JOBS NOT WAR
Bring the troops home now
SOLIDARITY MAKES US STRONGER

The Million Worker March Movement, the Troops Out Now Coalition and other progressive groups are calling for a May Day rally and march in Union Square on May 1.

Reclaiming May Day reflects a growing consensus that the movement can only move forward by fully uniting the anti-war movement with the workers' movement and with those communities which suffer the most from war, cutbacks, poverty and repression.

The empire has demonstrated that if allowed it will rule the world by military force, and pit worker against worker on a global scale in its quest for profits. Our challenge is to work harder and act more boldly in linking our struggle against the war abroad to our struggle against the war at home.

Ordinary working people aren't turned off by talk about Colombia, Cuba, Haiti, Iran, North Korea, Palestine or Venezuela. Workers think about the world a great deal—the problem is that they get misinformation from the mainstream media.

Whether our struggle is against union busting and the "Walmartization" of workers' wages; or unemployment (and underemployment), especially in the Black and Latin@ communities; or the drive to dismantle Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, public education and subsidized housing—let's bring back May Day and turn it into a clarion call for a new level of unity.

We cannot depend on the system's elections, its politicians, or any other force but the united power of working and poor people all over the world to accomplish this urgent task.

May Day is about solidarity, standing together. May Day is about uniting against all that imperialism would employ to divide us. May Day is about reaffirming that the future belongs to the majority of the people in the world and not a handful of billion-

aires. May Day belongs to the working class.

The Million Worker March Movement (MWMM) set the reclaiming of May Day 2005 as one of its principal goals at a meeting of regional representatives the day after its historic Oct. 17, 2004, rally. The Troops Out Now Coalition, which organized the March 19 march from Harlem to Central Park, has joined MWMM's call. One of the reasons that the March 19 demonstration began in Harlem was to say: the struggle against the war in Iraq is also the struggle against the war at home.

International Workers' Day grew out of the struggle of working people in this country more than 100 years ago for an 8-hour work day with a full day's pay.

The system has sought to bury the history of May Day in this country. The government sought to silence and crush radicals and radical ideas in the labor movement, particularly during the infamous "witch hunt" period of the 1950s and in response to the progressive and revolutionary movements of the 1960s. Their war on radicals, and radical ideas like international solidarity, continues today.

Our interest in reviving May Day does not come from nostalgia for times past, but from the need to nurture a higher political consciousness about how important solidarity and political independence are to the strength of our movement.

We don't need to have a million workers in Union Square on May Day 2005—enough of us can be there to help set the direction for the movement.

—NYC Million Worker March Movement and the Troops Out Now coalition

Endorsers of May Day include:

NYC Labor Against the War; Int'l Action Center; Nat'l Immigrant Solidarity Network; Artists & Activists United for Peace; Brenda Stokely, Pres., DC 1707 AFSCME; NYC Council Member Charles Barron; Chris Silvera, Sec. Treas. of Local 808 IBT, Chairperson of Nat'l Black Teamsters Caucus; Pam Africa, Int'l Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; NYC AIDS Housing Network; NY Coalition to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal; NJ Solidarity—Activists for the Liberation of Palestine; Harlem Tenants Council; Korea Truth Commission; NISPOP—Network in Solidarity with the People of the Philippines; Haiti Support Network; Queers For Peace & Justice; NY Committee to Free the Cuban 5; NY Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines; Al-Awda NY, Palestine Right to Return Coalition; BAYAN-USA; Workers World Party; Homeless Action for Necessary Development; DAMAYAN Migrant Workers Assoc.; Int'l Socialist Organization; FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; Jersey City Peace Movement; Monterey County Peace Coalition; New England Human Rights Organization for Haiti; People's Solidarity for Social Progress; Iraq Solidarity Campaign (UK); No Draft No War; Boston Stonewall Warriors; Women's Fightback Network, Boston; Central NJ Coalition for Peace & Justice; Casa Freehold; Baltimore All Peoples Congress; People Judge Bush; Movement in Motion; SNAFU—Support Network for an Armed Forces Union; Steve Gillis, Pres., USWA Local 8751 Boston School Bus Union.

END THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ, STOP ENDLESS WAR

We demand jobs at decent wages, health care, housing, & education for all

Solidarity with immigrant workers—we will not be divided

Hands off Social Security

UNITE AGAINST RACISM & POLITICAL REPRESSION

Stop the reinstatement of the draft

Solidarity with women, with lesbian, gay, bisexual & trans people

Solidarity with the peoples of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean

Excerpted from a call by the coalition organizing the May Day rally at Union Square in New York. Go to www.troopsoutnow.org to read the call in its entirety.

Remember Abu-Ghraib and Guantanamo

Human rights abuser? It's not Cuba

By Teresa Gutierrez

By now the entire world knows of the extreme abuse and torture carried out by the U.S. in prisons at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and in Abu-Ghraib, Iraq.

Nevertheless, the United Nations Human Rights Commission at its 61st meeting once again bowed down to imperialist pressure. It proceeded to put on trial not the U.S.—rightly called “the greatest purveyor of violence” by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—but instead the righteous Cuban Revolution.

The UN Human Rights Commission on April 21 rejected Cuba’s call for a probe into the U.S. mistreatment and abuse of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay by a vote of 22 against, 8 for and 23 abstentions. China, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Guatemala, Malaysia, Sudan and Mexico supported Cuba’s call.

In response, the head of the U.S. delegation, former Sen. Rudy Boschwitz, said that he welcomed the vote and claimed that the U.S. is a “leader in human rights.”

The U.S. government prevents human-rights officials from getting free access to

the naval base in Guantanamo and many other sites where it is holding unnamed political detainees as “enemy combatants.”

Abusers defame the abused

On April 15, the UNHRC in Geneva passed a U.S.-sponsored resolution mandating that a UN representative investigate alleged human rights abuses in Cuba.

The European Union members all voted against Cuba in a solid imperialist bloc with Washington. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque described as “disgraceful” the votes of Ukraine and Mexico in favor of the U.S.

The Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations detailed in a statement the anti-Cuba climate in the commission, calling it a result of U.S. bullying.

Cuban ambassadors had been instructed to call on European foreign ministries prior to the vote to ask for co-sponsorship of the resolution to investigate abuses at Guantanamo.

Several countries refused to even receive the Cuban ambassadors. Others intentionally scheduled the meetings for after the date of the vote on the resolution.

In no case, states the ministry, did Cuba receive a positive response. “What our diplomats received were only evasive answers—at times courteous, at times disdainful and even, many times with shame.”

Cuba doubles minimum wage!

It is a crime that the only country ever to have dropped an atomic bomb on another can bully so many nations to line up against Cuba on the spurious issue of human rights.

U.S. imperialism occupies Iraq, tortures people at Guantanamo, lays off workers in the U.S. and provides no health care for millions. Cuba invades no one and is building a much more equitable society that provides jobs, free health care and education for everyone.

Despite the longest blockade in U.S. history and countless hostile U.S. actions, the Cuban Revolution continues to carry out programs in support of the people.

Around the same time as the criminal vote at the UNHRC, President Fidel Castro announced that the government planned to double the minimum wage in Cuba.

On May 1, workers earning about 100 Cuban pesos a month will see their wages rise to 225 pesos. With health care and education free, food subsidized and housing costing no more than 5 percent of a worker’s income, this means an improvement in the quality of life.

Earlier in the month, Castro announced that single mothers, disabled people and others receiving state support would also get a raise in pay. To conserve energy and protect the environment, every household will now receive an electric rice cooker, a development that was enthusiastically welcomed by the Federation of Cuban Women.

Part of the reason why the economy is currently in a stronger position and can raise wages is because of a recent increase in trade relations with Venezuela on a fair basis.

These positive measures are carried out despite an increase in U.S. threats. But as the tenacity and courage of the Cuban 5 political prisoners in the U.S. demonstrates, the strength of the Cuban Revolution is so deep and so firm it can stand the test of time. □

Gov’t threatens unionists traveling to Cuba

By Cheryl LaBash

When the Bush administration crows about freedom, it is not freedom for workers. That’s what union members from UAW, SEIU, AFSCME, UNITE and the Teamsters, as well as community leaders and peace activists, found out as they prepared to attend the Fourth Hemispheric Conference Against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in Havana, Cuba, to be held April 27 to 30.

Just two weeks before departure, the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange received a “cease and desist” letter from the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. Treasury Department. The order specifically prohibited travel to attend the conference against the FTAA.

An emergency response network is forming. Bail/legal fund pledges and contributions are needed. The call for support was distributed to the April 27 Cuba Action Day, a day of mass lobbying in Washington, D.C., to start the defense movement before the group returns to the U.S.

Every worker has a stake in this struggle. The U.S. government and the Bush administration are trying to impose the FTAA on all the countries of the Americas.

The FTAA demands privatization of natural resources, industries and social services such as energy, water, roads, education and health care.

From Mexico to Brazil, from Argentina to Venezuela, workers, Indigenous peoples and rural poor are fighting for the right to live like human beings. Cities across the United States—like Detroit, where the US/Cuba Labor Exchange is based—are struggling against the same false free-market privatization “solutions.”

Today corporations can move freely from one country to another, transferring capital, technology and jobs at lightning speed, yet the workers from the U.S. who

are affected by globalization are prohibited from traveling to Cuba to talk with other workers.

Of course, as anyone who has visited Cuba knows, the entire world travels there. Only the U.S. government tries to bully and intimidate its citizens into not seeing Cuba with their own eyes.

Before 1959, when Havana was a playground for rich, white Americans, anyone from the U.S. who had the money could go there and play in the casinos and beaches. Today, when Cuba is universally recognized for its accomplishments in health care and education, Washington has declared it off-limits. The exploiters must

try to conceal the gains that are made when workers, not banks, corporations and profit margins, determine the goals and priorities of society.

For exercising their constitutional and human rights, the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange travelers are threatened with “criminal and/or civil penalty proceeding.” The letter says that “Criminal penalties for the violation range up to 10 years in prison and \$250,000 in individual fines. OFAC may impose civil penalties at \$65,000 per violation.”

Human and constitutional rights can’t exist on paper alone. To be real, rights must be exercised. In this spirit, the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange continues to encourage international discussion, exchange and solidarity between workers in Cuba and the United States.

Labor Exchange travelers say they will continue to see for themselves the realities faced by workers in other countries, publish their findings and demand that the U.S. government grant entry to Cuban union leaders whose visa applications are routinely denied. Cuban musicians, educators and scientists are also refused U.S. visas, all because they will not denounce their socialist homeland.

It is noteworthy that the U.S. government has no qualms about admitting convicted and self-admitted terrorists, as it is now doing with Luis Posada Carriles. Orlando Bosch, Pedro Remón, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo and Guillermo Novo Sampol, all of whom have been convicted of terrorist acts leading to death, are also allowed to freely walk the streets of the U.S.

The U.S. Congress has repeatedly voted against enforcing regulations banning travel to Cuba, but these amendments have been undemocratically removed from the final legislation as a condition for the president’s signature. On April 26 and 27, people of all walks of life gathered in Washington, D.C., for Cuba Solidarity Day to discuss with their representatives and senators ending the trade and travel ban.

The time to end the blockade of Cuba is now. In the words of the great African-American abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, without struggle there is no progress. □

Forum discusses Lebanon upheaval

By Maggie Vascassenno
Los Angeles

Joyce Chediac, a Lebanese-American journalist and activist, spoke to a diverse audience at an International Action Center forum in Los Angeles April 22 on “Upheaval in Lebanon—what U.S. progressives need to know.”

Chediac characterized the “democratic opposition” in Lebanon as bourgeois. The so-called grass-roots protests that the U.S. government and media exalts were fomented and organized by wealthy capitalist forces. Chediac told of an instance of a Lebanese woman coaching her Sri Lankan maid to chant in Arabic at the protests. The example helped illustrate the class character of the protests.

The largest demonstrations in Lebanon, not covered with the same enthusiasm by the U.S. media, have been against U.S. and Israeli intervention and have shown appreciation for Syria’s role there.

The group Hizbollah—who it is, who it represents and what are its contributions—was a major part of the discussion. Chediac described how this “Party of God” is a broad-based mass movement and is



Joyce Chediac

PHOTO: MINJOK-TONGSHIN

carrying out a progressive program for the poor and disenfranchised of Lebanon. This explains why it is a target of the U.S. and its corporate media.

The U.S. war in Iraq, the potential for unity against U.S. imperialism among the Arab countries, particularly between Syria and Lebanon, was a focus of discussion after Chediac’s presentation. Audience members from Congo, Korea, Iran and Brazil enriched the discussion, comparing the role of U.S. imperialism in their countries with the role of the U.S. in Lebanon and the Middle East. □

See CUBA for yourself

Don't lose it, use it! Exercise your right to travel and associate with the people of Cuba. Join the Travel Challenge July 2005 with the Venceremos Brigade, Pastors for Peace and the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange.

To support the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange when they return, join the emergency response network by sending email to laborexchange@aol.com. Include your contact information, what you can do to help, where you live and best phone number to reach you if the government creates an emergency. Send bail/legal fund pledges or contributions to Justice for Cuba Coalition, PO Box 39188, Redford, MI 48239. □

Uprising deposes Bush ally in Ecuador

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Following over a week of mass demonstrations, the Ecuadorian Congress on April 20 removed from office President Lucio Gutiérrez, who had once called himself “the closest ally of Bush in Latin America.”

Gutiérrez had won the 2002 presidential elections in Ecuador, defeating billionaire President Alvaro Noboa with the strong backing of the dispossessed peasants and workers, particularly the Indigenous population. The people were tired of a succession of corrupt administrations that ignored the people’s needs. When he took office in January 2003, Gutiérrez promised to fight against corruption and on behalf of the poor, who represent more than 60 percent of Ecuador’s 12.5 million people.

An army colonel, Gutiérrez had won the sympathy of the masses on Jan. 21, 2000, when he, together with Indigenous groups and a sector of the military, had attempted a coup against right-wing President Jamil Mahuad.

His pledge of “total dedication to the service of the most dispossessed” vanished, however, soon after he took office. His alliance with leftist organizations and the largest and most powerful Indigenous

group, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE), which had been his strongest supporters, broke just a few months later.

Gutiérrez turned his back on the masses, winning their contempt when he aligned himself with the imperialists. Loyal to his statement that he was a Bush ally, he spent the next 27 months signing a series of pacts on behalf of U.S.-based transnational corporations, turning into a dedicated partner of the IMF and the World Bank.

He even put into practice the “Plan Topo” (Mole), an attempt to help oil and electricity transnationals steal those resources from the Ecuadorian people. Ecuador is the second-largest oil producer in Latin America, after Venezuela.

The straw that broke the camel’s back was his packing the Supreme Court with his own allies. These judges then pardoned hated ex-President Abdala Bucaram, who had been forced out of office for corruption and appropriating state money and who was in exile in Panama. The masses, both from the poorest sectors to the middle class, joined in continuous mobilizations in Quito, Ecuador’s capital, and in many other regions of the country.

Demanding, “Lucio out,” from the ear-

liest of eight days of demonstrations, people surrounded the presidential palace. Ignoring the presence of the poorest Ecuadorians, Gutiérrez baited the demonstrators as “outlaws in Mercedes Benz.” People then started calling themselves “outlaws” (forajidos) and coordinated actions through Radio Luna, an alternative and progressive radio station.

People would call the station through cell phones to announce the place and time of mobilizations. The demonstrators, among them children and seniors, were met by violence from the repressive forces of the police and army, who used teargas steadily for hours. By the end, two people had been killed and hundreds injured.

Along with what was seen as a spontaneous uprising against corruption, there was also the participation of organizations and social movements from a wide range of ideologies, from social democracy to the Indigenous organizations. Luis Macas, president of CONAIE, stated: “We are fighting and will continue indefinitely until they all [the corrupt government] leave. We need to construct new institutions among us all, Mestizos, Blacks and Indigenous. The fundamental axis to reconstruct this country is to recover dignity and sovereignty, because at this moment this is being violated by the exis-

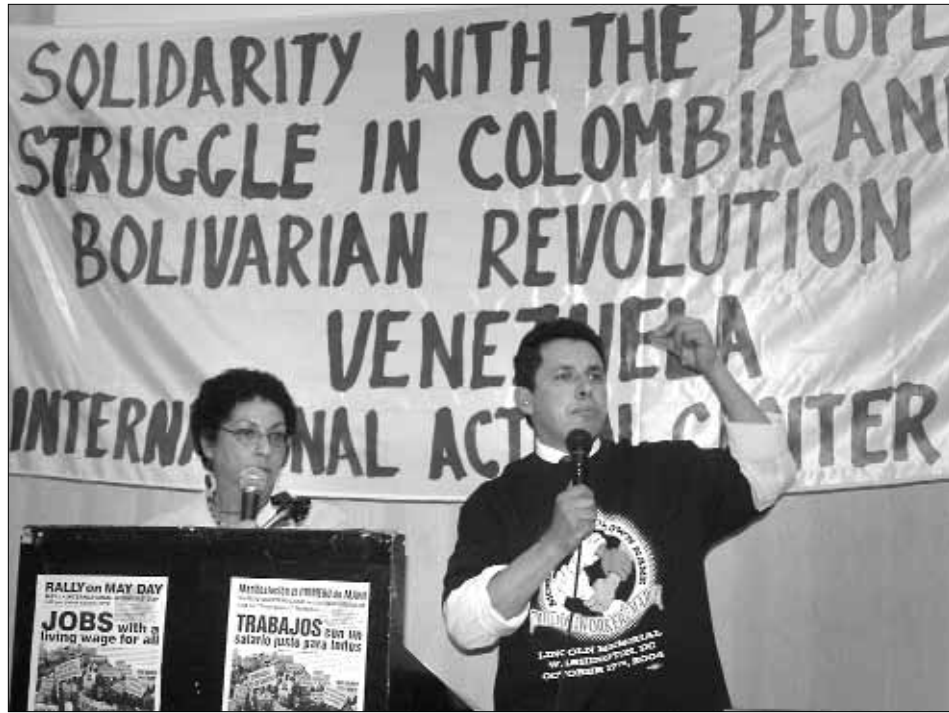
tence of Plan Colombia and the Free Trade Agreement that the executioner [Gutiérrez] wants to sign.”

Gutiérrez was removed from office by the Ecuadorian Congress on April 20. He had received U.S. Ambassador Kristie Kenney’s backing until it became clear that the demonstrations, instead of diminishing, were turning more militant as they confronted state violence. Then Kenney met with Gutiérrez and the Armed Forces. Soon afterwards the military publicly announced that they were withdrawing their support for the president. Gutiérrez then fled to Brazil, where he had requested asylum.

The OAS, a body at the service of Washington, has questioned the “legitimacy” of Gutiérrez’s removal and will be sending a team to Ecuador to “investigate” the action and determine if it conforms with the constitution. Ironically, the same entity never questioned the illegal kidnapping of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez during the brief April 2002 coup attempt.

Alfredo Palacio, Gutiérrez’s vice president, has been sworn in as president of Ecuador. His next steps will be watched worldwide, but more closely by Ecuadorans, who are unlikely to be satisfied with just a change of names. They are ready to continue the mobilizations. □

Colombia’s workers, Venezuela’s revolution



WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN
From left, the IAC’s Berta Joubert-Ceci and SINALTRAINAL’s Gerardo Cajamarca.

By Frank Neisser
Boston

An enthusiastic, militant crowd heard a strong program here in solidarity with the people’s struggles in Colombia and Venezuela on April 23. The meeting, at the union hall of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, USWA Local 8751, was co-chaired by Jorge Marin of the Martin Luther King Bolivarian Circle and Berta Joubert-Ceci of the International Action Center.

The featured speaker of the evening was Gerardo Cajamarca, a leader of the SINALTRAINAL union in Colombia that is at the forefront of the struggle of Coca-Cola workers there and the international Boycott Killer Coke campaign. A City Council member from 1999-2003 in the Municipality of Facatativa, Cundinamarca, he was elected with the support of the popular sectors, unions and social movements that struggle for better living conditions.

Cajamarca is in the United States with

his family as a political refugee due to threats he and his family faced in Colombia from paramilitaries because of his work as a human rights defender and community leader.

Cajamarca showed the crowd moving photos of trade union leaders in Colombia assassinated by the death squads of the Uribe government. The killings have escalated in recent months. In the world, nine out of every 10 trade union leaders assassinated over the last year were Colombian.

Steve Gillis, president of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, had just come back from the Third International Conference in Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. He described a moving meeting with paper workers who, with the support of their revolutionary government, have occupied and taken over their factory after having been locked out by their bosses. Gillis conveyed the excitement of seeing first-hand an ongoing rev-

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Workers taking control in Venezuela



Continued from page 1

inates the public sector. However, even among workers covered by private sector collective agreements, it represents 50.3 percent compared to 45.2 percent for the CTV. Overall, the UNT has 600,000 members to the CTV’s 300,000.

The UNT has been at the forefront as workers exercise their rights under Venezuela’s new constitution to form parallel unions to replace the

Venezuelan Labor Minister Maria Crisina Iglesias (wearing MWM shirt), with delegates from Boston School Bus Drivers Union and interpreter.

WW PHOTO: BETSEY PIETTE

old corporate unionism. This constitution contains many provisions that guarantee workers’ rights. An English version is available at www.vheadline.com.

The UNT has pushed for regular, open elections and supports workers’ co-management or self-management in workplaces. With an increased say over what gets raised at the bargaining table, the new unions have excited workers about their prospects for improving working conditions, wages and benefits.

The UNT has adopted the slogans “No to globalization, yes to worker-management” and “Workers of the world, unite.” They are clearly taking the struggle beyond the economic confines of traditional trade unionism, from a fight merely to improve wages, benefits and working conditions to one prepared to challenge capitalist control over these conditions.

The massive popular demonstrations that turned back an attempted coup in

2002 opened the floodgates for revolutionary change and swept the working class of Venezuela onto center stage. They face many problems. The forces of counter revolution, while temporarily set back, nevertheless remain poised in the wings to re-emerge.

The workers, however, are making it clear that they will not be satisfied with a simple change in plant management here or workers’ control over a plant there. They want workers’ control over the state; they want socialism. They know that in the struggle ahead they have nothing to lose but their chains.

Piette participated in the Third World Gathering in Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution April 13-17 in Caracas and attended a conference workshop in the state of Carabobo at which workers analyzed their co-management of several workplaces. Next: an account of that workshop.



Akbar & the generals

Two important verdicts announced within one day of each other in mid-April expose the class injustice of the Pentagon’s legal machinery regarding the horrific war and occupation of Iraq.

A military jury found Army Sgt. Hasan Akbar guilty of premeditated and attempted murder at Fort Bragg, N.C. An African-American Muslim, Akbar attacked his army camp in Kuwait on March 23, 2003, as his unit was preparing to invade Iraq. Two officers were killed and over a dozen wounded.

Meanwhile, in Washington, D.C., a secret high-level Army investigation exonerated four top Pentagon officers from responsibility for the racist, heinous abuse and torture of Iraqi detainees during the infamous Abu Ghraib prison scandal in 2004. One was Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the senior commanding officer in Iraq from June 2003 to June 2004.

Sgt. Akbar said he carried out the attack because he feared that U.S. troops would kill Muslims. His fears were prophetic. Defense attorneys claimed that Akbar was mentally ill when he carried out the attack, while the prosecution stated that Akbar consciously wanted to create “maximum carnage” with his actions.

Akbar could now receive the death penalty. This is the first trial of a soldier accused of killing his “superior” officers since the end of the Vietnam War. As that war dragged on for many years, there were countless incidences of “fragging”—that is, GIs rolling fragmentation grenades into their officers’ tents during that unjust imperialist aggression, which took the lives of over 50,000 GIs and millions of Vietnamese and ended in a U.S. military defeat 30 years ago.

Regarding Abu Ghraib, who could ever

forget the sickening images of Iraqi detainees being forced to pose naked and piled on top of each other while their U.S. torturers stood nearby smiling for the cameras? Or the photo of a hooded Iraqi prisoner standing on a chair with his wired arms hoisted?

It’s true that courts-martial found several low-ranking U.S. guards guilty of this inhumane treatment. Some are in prison or have been dishonorably discharged. As the verdict shows, however, far from taking responsibility for their command, those in charge let these guards be scapegoats for the tone the command set while ordering the criminal occupation of a sovereign country. In cold blood, those top officers encouraged the tortures that the U.S. military carries out with the same sadistic gusto not just in Iraq but also in Afghanistan and Guantanamo.

Akbar’s action, however impulsive, was a reaction against an illegal war for empire. He knew from the beginning that he was sent not to liberate Iraqis but to conquer and kill them, and he rebelled.

It is now two years later. Over 1,500 GIs and 100,000 Iraqis are dead. The Iraqi resistance is more determined than ever to kick the imperialists out of their homeland. Akbar’s action, which his military attorneys tried to explain as “insanity,” now seems much more in tune with reality, more connected to the massive resistance of Iraqis, to the resistance of numerous young people here who no longer enlist and to that of war-weary GIs who refuse to return to duty in Iraq.

To a majority of the world’s people, the Bush administration that plotted the war and lied to carry it out, the top Pentagon generals who planned it, and those Army officers who were cleared are the real criminals, not Hasan Akbar. □

Saigon liberated

‘Vietnam belongs to the workers.’ That was the Workers World front-page headline following the liberation of Saigon—that electric moment on the morning of April 30, 1975, when a tank carrying the liberation soldiers crashed through the front gates of the Saigon presidential palace, and the remaining occupants of the U.S. Embassy scampered onto military helicopters to flee the Vietnamese people.

It was the first thoroughgoing military defeat for the U.S. imperialists. And it was at the hands of a country whose industrial development had been retarded by a century of first French and then U.S. imperialist rule. The organization of the Vietnamese communists, the skillful diplomacy of the Vietnamese statespeople and the almost unbelievable heroism of the Vietnamese people had brought to its knees the most powerful imperialist power.

This was all personified by the legendary Vietnamese national and communist leader, Ho Chi Minh, who led the liberation struggle of the Vietnamese for decades but unfortunately died before seeing a free Vietnam. “Uncle Ho” was a hero not only to his own people but to anti-imperialists all over the world, who had been inspired by the Vietnamese struggle to devote their own lives to the liberation of humanity.

U.S. imperialism, vindictive after such a decisive defeat, did its best to punish the Vietnamese population and rob them of the fruits of their victory. The new revolutionary government of a now united Socialist Republic of Vietnam administered a devas-

tated economy. Millions of people had been displaced, the landscape was poisoned by defoliants like Agent Orange and littered with land mines.

Nixon’s promise of aid—really it should have been war reparations—was all taken back. Instead the U.S. imposed an economic embargo that lasted 20 years. Millions of Vietnamese had died, hundreds of thousands more were still missing in action, yet the U.S. used the excuse of several hundred U.S. MIAs to go back on all the Paris agreements and deny aid.

Imperialist spite could make the Vietnamese suffer, but it could do nothing to erase the impact of the Vietnamese victory on the world. When the 9/11 attacks took place, Pentagon generals and imperialist strategists were still speculating that this—26 years after their defeat in Saigon—would finally end the so-called Vietnam Syndrome. The term referred to the increased consciousness among U.S. youth that they shouldn’t risk life and limb for the multinational corporations. And even today, Iraqi resistance fighters, when asked if they can defeat the U.S. occupation, say, “The Vietnamese did—we can too.”

Vietnamese are now demanding compensation for the Agent Orange damages. They are building the strong united country that Ho Chi Minh dreamed of. The TV specials this week will report on the “fall” of Saigon. It fell into the hands of its workers, and just in time to celebrate May Day 1975 without the presence of U.S. imperialism. □

Getting out the truth isn’t cheap

Change is coming. That’s what this May Day is all about. A movement is rising from below against war, racism and the anti-worker offensive. But where do you hear the truth about it?

Workers World has been reporting on and analyzing the profound changes in world capitalism that are ushering in a new era of working-class struggle. We have had unique coverage of developments in the anti-war movement, the rise of Black labor militants and the Million Worker March, the struggle for immigrant rights, the fight against repression and the death penalty, the women’s and lesbian, gay, bi and trans movements—and we reveal what they all have in common with the workers’ struggle for dignity, economic security and political power.

We’re up against a huge, monolithic propaganda machine controlled by billionaires. Plus, the Bush administration suppresses embarrassing news about its vile war in Iraq—even to the point of shooting journalists!

But through our print edition and the Internet, we are reaching a growing audience of activists and truth-seekers.

WW makes clear its commitment to fighting for socialism as the only system that can end exploitation and imperialist war—and workers are listening.

You can help spread the word and support our work by donating to our Spring Fund Drive. We will be raising \$60,000. (We’ll do it again in the fall.) Every dollar goes to the production and distribution of Workers World newspaper. Make a generous one-time donation, or become a member of our Supporter Program and contribute every month.

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The time is right

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sible to break the war-time repression.

More and more, resistance spread to the soldiers. By 1918 they were throwing down their arms and refusing to fight. There were mutinies in the navy. Soldiers and workers poured into Berlin and other cities and ended the war by driving the Hohenzollern rulers off the throne.

Similar rebellions of the worker-soldiers shook the French army. By May Day, 1917, there were massive anti-war demonstrations in Italy, Scotland, and of course in revolutionary Russia.

In fact, the rebellion of the German soldiers was stimulated further by V.I. Lenin’s policy on the Russian front of telling both the Russian and German workers that their enemies were at home. This strategic slogan by Lenin was translated into life when the Russian working class and peasantry overthrew and made their socialist revolution. And that is how World War I ended.

The working class in Germany had a mass political party and experience

of political and class organization. They were betrayed by their Social Democratic Party leadership, which supported the German government in the war. But revolutionary elements like Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg emerged to reestablish genuine working-class resistance and leadership.

Disarm the Pentagon’s nuclear warriors!

Today, everything is on a different scale.

The Bush administration and the ruling class as a whole have expansionary plans to conquer new territories. The more desperate they become, the more dangerous and adventurist they become. Of particular concern is the prospect of the nuclear ambitions of the Bush administration.

Right now workers in this country, youths who thought they had joined the military for an education or a job opportunity, are being sent to kill and be killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The ordeal is so traumatic that the Pentagon is running out of troops. Its recruiters are searching the schools and neighborhoods for poor working-

Interview with Yoomi Jeong

Tour of U.S. set to honor Korea's Gwangju uprising

On April 24, Workers World managing editor Monica Moorehead interviewed Yoomi Jeong, deputy secretary-general of the Korea Truth Commission, regarding the 25th anniversary of the Gwangju (Kwangju) People's Uprising in South Korea and an upcoming U.S. tour commemorating this historic event.

Workers World: In May 1980 the Gwangju uprising occurred in South Korea, a significant event that people here have little knowledge of. Could you inform our readers about this uprising and its background?

Yoomi Jeong: In 1979, a civilian government was installed after the assassination of Gen. Park Chung Hee, who had ruled with an iron fist for two decades. However, a coup d'état led by Gen. Chun Doo-hwan toppled this interim government and declared martial law on May 17, 1980, to suppress demonstrations around the country that opposed his coup d'état.

On May 18, at the Chonnam National University in Gwangju, the armed forces responded violently, using bayonets and tear gas against innocent students who protested the closing down of their campus and Chun's coup. After the incident, students and citizens of Gwangju rallied downtown and held an even larger demonstration, which was met by indiscriminate gunfire from the military.

The military's brutal crackdown on students and citizens brought rage from the people. By May 21, some 300,000 people joined the protest against Chun's power. Weapons depots and police stations were captured by civilian militias. The citizens' army was formed to beat back the armed forces.

With all routes leading in and out of the city blocked by the military, the city effectively became a commune and a citizens' committee was formed to maintain order and negotiate with the government. Order was well-maintained, but negotiations

failed. On May 27, special forces and army troops from five divisions were inserted and initiated a massacre resulting in thousands of casualties.

During the course of Chun's dictatorship, government officials claimed the uprising was a communist rebellion. But after the Korean people ended military rule in 1987, the uprising received proper recognition as an effort to restore democracy against dictatorship. The government made a formal apology for the massacre and a national cemetery was established for the martyrs.

The two former South Korean Presidents, Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, stood trial on charges of treason, mutiny and corruption in 1996. Chun was sentenced to death and Roh to 22-and-a-half years in prison. They received clemency a few years later.

WW: What is the connection between this uprising and what is happening today on the Korean peninsula?

YJ: Throughout the Gwangju Peoples' Uprising, the South Korean people learned about the other side of the U.S. Most South Koreans, including progressives, at that time had a favorable view of the U.S., especially on Jimmy Carter's incorporation of "human rights" in its foreign policy. South Koreans believed that the U.S. might exert its influence in the SK military dictatorship to lessen the government's oppression against its own people.

However, through declassified White House documents from around the time of Gwangju People's Uprising, we learned that in order to contain "communist instigated citizen rebels in Gwangju," which was a completely false assumption, the U.S. considered dispatching its troops to quell the uprising.

Again what we are most worried about is that in order to accomplish its agenda, pushed by a certain spectrum of the U.S. political establishment, the U.S. will use whatever means necessary to accomplish

its goal—even if it is based on a wrong premise or sinister ideology.

We think the U.S. agenda in Korea is totally against the will of the Korean people and that is what we want to relate to the U.S. and Canadian peace movements—to end Washington's aggressive policy against the Korean people.

WW: There will be a U.S. tour in May with some of the participants of the Gwangju People's Uprising. What are some of the political goals of the tour?

YJ: In addition to remembering the historic legacy of the Gwangju People's Uprising against the South Korean military dictatorship and its impact on the present development of the civilian society, we plan to discuss the current nuclear crisis and the prospect of peace on the Korean peninsula.

Under the Bush administration, the neo-cons' objective on North Korea has been one of a regime change. In his State of the Union address on Jan. 29, 2002, Bush called North Korea, along with Iran, Iraq and Syria the "axis of evil," accusing these countries as "regimes that sponsor terror."

In its 2001 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), the Bush administration listed North Korea and several other nations as targets for its preemptive use of nuclear weapons, claiming contravening of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which the U.S. is a member of.

Instead of bilateral diplomatic negotiations to resolve over 50 years of confrontation in the Korean peninsula—the 1953 armistice agreement is still intact!—and despite North Korea's numerous initiatives to conclude it with a peace treaty, the Bush administration chose to deal with the situation with its typical "bullying" tactic. Most recently, Condoleezza Rice at her Senate confirmation hearing called North Korea an "outpost of tyranny."

All Koreans in the north and south are worried that to accomplish the U.S. agenda in East Asia—namely, to streng-



Yoomi Jeong

then and continue its military presence via rearmament and reorganization of its military to contain China's rise—North Korea will be used as a scapegoat and an excuse to increase U.S. defense spending, especially on so-called missile defense.

Over 3 million civilians were killed during the 1950-1953 Korean War and we cannot allow another war.

We hope to address these critical issues surrounding the Korean peninsula and forge international support and solidarity to stop the Bush war drive against the Korean people.

WW: Can you provide more details of the tour?

YJ: The tour was initiated by Korean American activists who saw the political importance of commemorating and celebrating the 25th Anniversary of Gwangju People's Uprising. Soon it was joined by U.S. and Canadian peace and justice movements, academics, civil and grassroots organizations.

The International Action Center, Korea Truth Commission and many other national and local anti-war/for-peace groups endorsed the tour and they are organizing the speaking tour on behalf of Gwangju activists and for all Korean people. We are grateful and inspired by this generous international solidarity. Tour information and other resources can be found on www.koreatruth.org. □

Colombia's workers

Continued from page 9

olutionary process that is consciously moving toward socialism and putting the resources in the hands of the people.

Jorge Marin and Berta Joubert-Ceci, who also had been on the delegation to the Venezuelan conference, spoke of the solidarity of delegations from around the world. Joubert-Ceci described the Bolivarian history of Colombia and Venezuela, which had originally been one country.

Roxbury City Councilor Chuck Turner called for taking the example of the Venezuelan revolution to raise the level of fighting back right here at home. He projected weekly or daily actions, in the spirit of Martin Luther King's Poor Peoples Campaign, demanding economic justice here at home.

Dario Zapata of the Permanent Committee for Colombian Peace spoke of the struggle of democratic forces in Colombia against the Uribe government.

The event was rounded out by Rhode Island Colombian activist Elvira Bustamante, who explained the Free Trade Area of the Americas and how it destroys the livelihood of people in Latin America as well as the sovereignty of countries subordinated to the dictates of the IMF and the World Bank.

In a subsequent meeting with a small group of dedicated activists, Cajamarca was enthused to hear about the struggle of maintenance workers at the Bromley Heath Housing Project, who attended the meeting, as well as the Million Worker March Movement. He looked forward to raising the issue of Colombia at the May Day demonstration in New York City and to building broader actions on the 120th anniversary of May Day in 2006. □

to revive May Day

class youth who are denied a future in civilian life because of capitalist greed, low pay or no job at all.

Being strapped for troops, the temptation to develop and use tactical nuclear weapons to overcome the need for soldiers grows stronger.

Tactical nuclear weapons, combined with the already-existing 10,000 nuclear warheads, constitute a grave danger to the world. Such nuclear terror by Washington compels every country in the world that is in the cross-hairs of U.S. imperialism to try to develop a nuclear deterrent just for self-defense and survival. Every day the threat of a nuclear-armed Pentagon and its nuclear-armed proxy in Israel—with its estimated 200 nuclear weapons—continues. All independent nations, such as Iran and North Korea, are under pressure to develop nuclear weapons.

For decades it was only the Soviet Union's possession of nuclear weapons that kept the Pentagon from using them. The only time nuclear weapons were ever used was by the U.S. in 1945 in Japan—and that was before the Soviet Union had the bomb.

Henry Kissinger, as a representative of the Nixon administration, threatened the

Vietnamese numerous times with nuclear attack during the Paris peace talks to end that war.

During the Korean War of 1950-1953, Gen. Douglas MacArthur wanted to use the atom bomb against Chinese forces that were assisting the Koreans in pushing back the U.S.-led invasion of their country.

After the retreat of the Gorbachev regime and the collapse of the USSR, the Soviet Union was no longer a military and nuclear deterrent to U.S. ambitions. This opened the way for Washington to make war on Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq—twice.

For decades the USSR had advocated complete and unconditional destruction of all nuclear weapons. The U.S. simply ignored this, year after year, while it built up its nuclear arsenal and forced a deadly and costly arms race.

The only road to stopping nuclear war is to disarm the Pentagon.

And the example the German workers gave in World War I, as well as that of the Russian workers who finished the revolutionary process by overthrowing capitalism, is clearly the only historically possible road to genuine disarmament of imperialism, which is war-like in its nature

because of its insatiable greed for profit.

Preparations for future wars are bankrupting the U.S. treasury. And it is the workers and oppressed peoples who are being made to pay to make up the shortfall.

Capitalist industrialists are racing each other to build more and more factories, offices and housing, all with the anticipation of great profits. But those profits depend more and more upon lowering wages, cutting benefits, setting up sweatshops at home and abroad. Every form of oppression is increasing. The ruling class attacks on workers here are creating the very conditions that gave rise to the rebellion of the German working class.

The working class in the U.S. is a long way from where the working class was in Germany in 1916-1918. But the longest journey begins with a single step.

No one knows how long the journey of the workers and the oppressed in this country will be. The growing oppression, exploitation and imperialist war are bound to accelerate this process and shorten that journey.

But the struggle to revive May Day as a day of international working-class solidarity is a definite attempt to take that first step. □

Venezolan@s declaran que la Revolución Bolivariana avanza

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci
Caracas, Venezuela

Delegaciones internacionales en visita por Venezuela para el Tercer Encuentro de Solidaridad con la Revolución Bolivariana del 13 al 17 de abril tuvieron la oportunidad de ver por sí mismas cómo l@s obrer@s están participando en la transformación de este país.

Este evento conmemora el fallido golpe que se dio en abril del año 2002, cuando el Presidente Hugo Chávez fue secuestrado por la oligarquía bajo instrucciones y colaboración de Washington. Por miles bajó el pueblo marchando desde las lomas y vecindades hasta el Palacio Presidencial—una ola sin fin de rabia y determinación para liberar a su presidente.

Ell@s lo devolvieron a su oficina en menos de 48 horas, con la ayuda del sector progresista del ejército.

Se puede ver claramente que este compromiso con la Revolución Bolivariana, la cual finalmente ha incluido al pueblo y ha elevado su nivel de vida y su dignidad, es hoy aún más firme.

La reunión del año pasado ilustró la firme determinación de Chávez para elevar la calidad de vida del pueblo, en particular de la de los más pobres, por medio de Misiones especiales, o proyectos alternativos de salud, educación y empleo.

La Revolución se encuentra en una encrucijada crítica

La reunión de ese año tiene un significado excepcional. La revolución se encuentra en una encrucijada crítica. Esta ha incrementado tremendamente su base de apoyo, habiendo sido ratificada por nueve procesos electorales. También ha sobrevivido innumerables campañas de desestabilización dirigidas por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, tanto dentro del país como mundialmente por medio de campañas hostiles de los medios de comunicación.

La hora ha llegado cuando el avance del proceso ha llegado a una confrontación directa con la burguesía venezolana y con las relaciones de propiedad que apoyan sus enormes privilegios.

Las contradicciones son tan agudas que solo existen dos posibles opciones: dar paso atrás o seguir hacia delante. El dinamismo de la revolución no permite quedarse estática.

Desde que lograron su meta de liberar a Chávez, las masas han aprendido mucho en poco tiempo. Su conciencia política ha avanzado al reconocer su poder. ¿Cómo podrían retroceder?

El camino hacia delante ya ha sido definido por el mismo Chávez: la Revolución Bolivariana tomará el camino glorioso hacia el Socialismo. Él anunció esto por primera vez en una conferencia de prensa en enero durante el Foro Social Mundial en Brasil y desde entonces lo ha repetido muchas veces.

Chávez anunció el 13 de abril durante la apertura del evento de este año en el Teatro Teresa Carreño que, “Después de muchas reflexiones y leer y releer sobre el mundo, me he convertido en socialista.” Esto se recibió con mucho calor por l@s



FOTO: BETSEY PIETTE

Frantz Mendes (centro) y Steve Gillis (derecha) del Local 8751 del sindicato USWA, con trabajador@s venezolan@s.

obrer@s venezolan@s, estudiantes, oficiales del gobierno y visitantes internacionales, juzgando por el aplauso prolongado que siguió a esta declaración.

Esta declaración que cerró la ceremonia de inauguración, era precedida por la frase “y por si esto no fuera poco...” enumerando Chávez los muchos adelantos de la Revolución, avances que ponen nervioso al gobierno estadounidense y a sus corporaciones, en particular a las compañías petroleras.

Listos para defender la revolución

Los avances mencionados fueron muchos. Entre estos está la activación de la Reserva Militar de 200.000 miembros compuesta por mujeres y hombres de todas las edades para defender la patria. Esta será aumentada a 2 millones en los próximos meses. Venezuela sabe que es uno de los blancos en la mira del Pentágono y por eso está preparando la reserva en todos los rincones del país—desde la región del Apure donde los reservistas patrullan a caballo hasta los pueblos indígenas en la selva amazónica. Como dijo Chávez, “La Revolución está avanzando, y conforme avanza, también avanzan las amenazas.”

Chávez habló extensamente sobre la cuestión del petróleo. Venezuela tiene las reservas petroleras más grandes del mundo, dijo, y son éstas el interés principal de los Estados Unidos. El petróleo hoy está siendo manejado por la revolución para beneficio y ventaja del pueblo y no para las ganancias de las compañías petroleras de los Estados Unidos, como era durante gobiernos anteriores. Las compañías extranjeras finalmente están pagando sus impuestos. El robo del petróleo y sus derivados no será permitido más en Venezuela.

Las compañías pagaban una cifra irrisoria por el alquiler de la tierra que ocupaban, solo unos centavos por hectárea al año. Las regalías eran tan bajas como el uno por ciento por el petróleo crudo pesado. Esto se ha subido hasta el 16 por ciento, y bajo una nueva ley, se aumentó a un 30 por ciento con la posibilidad de que suba aún más. Una investigación por el gobierno bolivariano descubrió que las empresas extranjeras no estaban pagando ningún alquiler por la tierra. Ahora este robo va a terminar.

Chávez también habló sobre las relaciones comerciales con otros países. Venezuela le suministrará a la Argentina, un país cercano, petróleo por primera vez en 100 años. Le suplirá 8 millones de barriles de combustible al año a cambio no de dinero, sino de vacas preñadas, equipo médico nuclear para el tratamiento de cáncer y maquinarias agrícolas.

“Acuerdos similares han sido establecidos con Cuba, Jamaica, Uruguay, Paraguay y muchos otros países del Caribe y Centroamérica”, dijo Chávez. “Ahora tenemos un acuerdo estratégico con China, para suministrarle petróleo, y con India”.

Explicó que Venezuela, junto a Brasil, “fundará Petroamérica, una agrupación de empresas petroleras; y pronto nacerá Petrocaribe en la región caribeña”.

También mencionó la nueva iniciativa de Telesur, una red de televisión basada en Caracas y en otros países suramericanos. Venezuela también está proponiendo un “Banco del Sur” para “romper las cadenas opresivas del imperialismo económico del FMI y del Banco Mundial”.

No es necesario destacar que la CIA está operando 24 horas al día para destruir la revolución. Sin embargo, la voluntad política de las masas está progresando a pesar de ello.

La democracia participativa y protagónica, piedra clave de la revolución venezolana, fue palpable en las sesiones donde participó una delegación de seis personas organizada por el Centro de Acción Internacional (IAC por las siglas en inglés) de los EEUU. Los participantes eran Steve Gillis y Frantz Mendes, presidente y vice-presidente, respectivamente, del sindicato de conductores de autobuses escolares de Boston; Julie Fry, de ‘Luchemos Contra el Imperialismo, Unámonos’ (FIST por las siglas en inglés); Lourdes Bela del Círculo Bolivariano Alberto Lovera; Betsey Piette y esta escritora de la sección de Filadelfia del IAC.

Trabajador@s están apoderándose de fábricas

Est@s delegad@s asistieron a tres de las ocho mesas de trabajo celebradas durante el Encuentro. Las mesas trataron los temas “Campesinos enfrentando el desafío de hacer irreversible la reforma agraria,” “El papel jugado por los trabajadores en la gerencia de empresas”, “La

educación en la transformación social y la construcción del proyecto ético del sujeto humano”. Betsey Piette asistió a la sesión sobre el papel de l@s trabajador@s.

Ella dijo que más de 500 trabajador@s venezolan@s asistieron al taller que duró dos días y medio, el cual se enfocó en la co-gestión bolivariana y los modelos económicos alternativos. Con ellos se reunieron delegados de otros países latinoamericanos, canadienses y de los EEUU. El programa fue organizado y facilitado por la Unión Nacional de Trabajadores de Venezuela (UNT).

Entre los participantes estaban el jefe de la UNT; representantes de la Fuerza Bolivariana de Trabajadores; el presidente del sindicato de los trabajadores de Invepal; la ministra de trabajo de Venezuela; sindicalistas del sector de transporte; representantes cubanos; y representantes de luchas laborales en Brasil y Argentina. Entre los que asistieron estaban trabajadores de la industria del petróleo, del aluminio, del transporte, de la educación y de la industria eléctrica.

El director nacional de la UNT y un representante de Invepal describieron la lucha de tres años de los trabajadores para impedir el cierre de la fábrica de papel por medio del desarrollo de un sindicato, la ocupación de la fábrica, y finalmente apoderándose de la facilidad con apoyo gubernamental en enero del 2005. Los trabajadores van a reabrir la fábrica a fines de este mes, produciendo libros para el uso del programa de alfabetización de Venezuela.

Un ejemplo alternativo de co-gestión en la planta eléctrica CADAPE también fue presentado. La facilidad incluye un área de recreación para l@s trabajador@s y sus familias y una cafetería cooperativa. L@s participantes de la conferencia pudieron visitar CADAPE y también la planta de Invepal.

Repetidamente, l@s participantes de la conferencia enfatizaban que irrespectivamente del modelo empleado, la lucha por el control de los trabajadores en Venezuela no debe estar limitada al sector público o a la toma de poder de las industrias quebradas abandonadas por los dueños capitalistas.

L@s oradores recibieron aplausos resonantes cuando dijeron que la co-gestión no es que l@s trabajador@s venezolan@s se vuelvan “accionistas dueños de capital”, sino que terminen las relaciones capitalistas de propiedad y las reemplacen con el control de la industria por l@s trabajador@s a través del socialismo.

Steve Gillis, presidente del Local 8751 del sindicato USWA, el sindicato de conductores de autobuses escolares de Boston, presentó camisetas de la Marcha del Millón de Trabajador@s y mensajes de solidaridad para l@s trabajador@s venezolan@s.

Gillis denunció la crítica que hizo Condoleezza Rice a Chávez quien dijo que el presidente venezolano era el líder de una “revolución fallida”. “El capitalismo es el sistema fallido”, notó Gillis, “porque se ha demostrado incapaz de satisfacer las necesidades más básicas de la gente pobre y trabajadora”. □