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As flood waters recede More racist gov't atrocities exposed

By LeiLani Dowell

The ravages of capitalism continue to be exposed in the aftermath of Katrina, as even more stories highlighting the official hostility and neglect toward the poor and people of color of the region—before, during and after the hurricane—are brought to worldwide attention.

Two paramedics from California trapped in New Orleans by the storm after attending a conference there wrote a gripping account of their experiences that appeared first in Socialist Worker, circulated widely on the Internet, and eventually was picked up by other media.

Lorrie Beth Slonsky and Larry Bradshaw reported how, for several days, they and a large group of people, mostly African Americans, tried to survive and find a way out of the city. They watched food spoil in a locked Walgreen's store as police, who could have opened it up to distribute food and water to the increasingly desperate population, instead drove away "looters."

After being denied entrance to the Superdome and the Convention Center, the group decided to camp near the police command headquarters. But a police commander came across the street and told them to "walk to the Pontchartrain Expressway and cross the greater New Orleans Bridge where the police had buses lined up to take us out of the City. The crowd cheered and began

to move. We called everyone back and explained to the commander that there had been lots of misinformation and wrong information and was he sure that there were buses waiting for us. The commander turned to the crowd and stated emphatically, 'I swear to you that the buses are there.'

The group began attracting others, including the elderly, people with small children and the disabled, as they marched the two to three miles to the freeway and up the steep incline to the bridge.

But then "armed Gretna sheriffs formed a line across the foot of the bridge. Before we were close enough to speak, they began firing their weapons over our heads." The group had to retreat, back to the flooded city.

In finally reporting on this story, the Sept. 10 New York Times said, in racist terms, that police agencies in the suburbs to the south of New Orleans were "so fearful" of evacuees that they "sealed a crucial bridge over the Mississippi River and turned back hundreds of desperate evacuees."

A Love Canal-type landfill

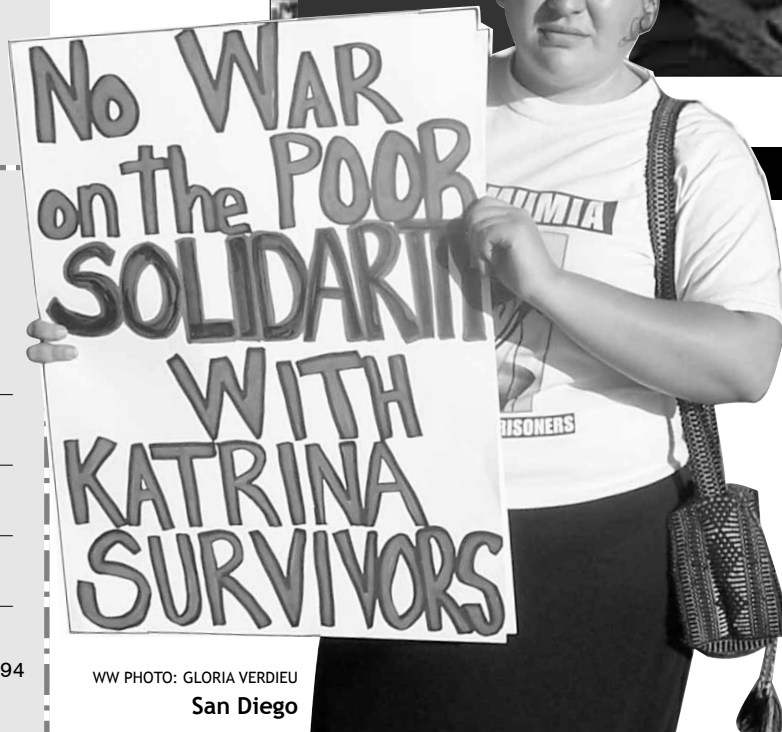
In addition, the consequences of the neglect of the poor and people of color in the region before the hurricane continue to come to light. An article in the Sept. 12 issue of the magazine

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Buffalo, N.Y.

WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITIE



WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU San Diego

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Last minute efforts to try to save Frances Newton

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Sept. 14—As we go to press, the State of Texas has carried out the horrific execution of Frances Newton, totally ignoring the national and international campaign to save her life. Responsibility for this modern-day lynching also rests with the Supreme Court, which turned down her appeal for a new trial.



Frances Newton's mother, Iva Jewel Nelms, left, and Shelia Green at protest outside Huntsville, Texas, prison on Sept. 14.

Sept. 13—A state founded on land stolen from the people of Mexico, and one that condoned the enslavement of African people, is hours from committing another racist crime: the legal lynching of Frances Newton.

Despite having an infamously incompetent attorney appointed to "defend" her, and despite having the discredited Houston Police Crime Lab analyze the evidence in the case, and despite an admission on camera by Harris County Assistant District Attorney Roe Wilson that another gun had been found at the crime scene—something denied by the DA and the cops for 18 years—Frances Elaine Newton may become the first Black woman legally executed in Texas since an enslaved African woman named Lucy was hung in Galveston in 1853.

Ever since Newton found her husband and two children murdered in their home on April 7, 1987, she has adamantly proclaimed her innocence.

Newton's attorney was Ron Mock, who became notorious for not putting up any defense at all. When Mock was Shaka Sankofa's attorney, he actually slept during part of the trial, making it easier for the state to execute this young African American on June 22, 2000.

Today, U.S. Congressperson Shelia Jackson Lee (D-Texas) held a media conference here asking Texas Gov. Rick Perry to stop Newton's execution.

Even the Austin American Statesman, the daily paper in the Texas capital, today editorialized, "We've said it before, but it's worth repeating: Race, ethnicity, income and geog-

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Somerville 5 case spotlights racist oppression

By Phebe Eckfeldt
Somerville, Mass.

The Somerville 5 are young Black men ranging from 15 to 18 years old. These students at Somerville High School went out on the night of April 20, 2005, to enjoy a carnival in Medford, Mass. But the night turned into one of horror that changed their lives forever. They reported that they were beaten, arrested and psychologically traumatized by Medford police and then charged with assaulting the cops.

Medford police claim the youths were harassing customers in a store. But the clerk on duty that night has stated that there was no disturbance. Other witnesses agree.

Like the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast, the case of the Somerville 5 illustrates in a vivid and horrifying way that Black people—and Latin@, Asian, Native and Arab people—are oppressed and super-exploited nations colonized within the boundaries of the U.S. Their stories starkly expose the institutional racism and inequalities built into capitalism—who lives and who dies, who is expendable and who is not.

Racist profiling and police brutality, which Black people face on a daily basis, are weapons of the state machinery wielded to keep people of color repressed, intimidated, in fear and always in the midst of a potential frame-up.

Somerville 5 supporters argue that the unprovoked police attack on the five youth is now being covered up by police, the courts, the Middlesex district attorney, local media and education officials who have criminalized and marginalized the young men.

All five were immediately suspended from school indefinitely and are no longer allowed to attend classes, go to school functions, see their peers or participate in sports programs.

The Committee to Defend the Somerville 5 was formed

shortly after their arrests to support the youth. The committee includes African American Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner, the Rev. William Dickerson from the Greater Love Tabernacle Church, members of the NAACP, Nation of Islam, Massachusetts Association of Minority Law Enforcement Officers, Women's Fightback Network and the International Action Center.

The committee has put pressure on the previous superintendent of schools to reinstate the five students. The group has picketed, met with school officials, held media conferences, written letters of support and carried out a phone/fax campaign in which hundreds of people have contacted the superintendent to demand reinstatement.

Despite this, the previous superintendent, and now newly appointed Superintendent Anthony Pierantozzi, have refused to reinstate three of the students: Calvin Belfon, Isiah Anderson and Marquis Anderson.

The committee's work has so far won reinstatement of two of the five students—Cassius Belfon and Earl Guerra—after their charges were reduced from felonies to misdemeanors.

In a letter supporting reinstatement of the Somerville 5, the ACLU wrote to Pierantozzi, "The criminal charges did not grow out of an incident involving other students, and the incident did not take place on or near the school and did not involve a school event. ... Moreover, in considering the effect on the school, it would be unfair to disregard both the substantial support which these students have received from their peers and from their teachers at the high school and their unblemished records of conduct."

The Somerville 5 need help with legal expenses. Please send donations to International Action Center/Somerville 5, 284 Amory St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. Checks should be made payable to Calvin Belfon, Sr. □



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WW CALENDAR

DETROIT

Sat., Sept. 17

Hear a socialist analysis of the crisis in the South in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the flooding of New Orleans, and the criminal racist response of the U.S. government. Dinner at 5 p.m. \$5 donation/\$2 unemployed. At 5920 Second Ave. For info (313) 831-0750.

LOS ANGELES

Tue., Sept. 27

Film: "Poison Dust," a documentary on the U.S. use and the effects of depleted uranium in the Gulf War. Meet the director, Sue Harris. Sponsored by International Action Center. 7 p.m. Ay 5274 W. Pico Blvd. #203. For info (323) 936-7266.

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SAN DIEGO

Sun., Sept. 25

Film: "Poison Dust," a documentary on the U.S. use and the effects of depleted uranium in the Gulf War. Meet the director, Sue Harris. Sponsored by International Action Center. 2 p.m. At San Diego downtown Central Library, 820 East Street, 3rd Floor Auditorium. For info (619) 692-4422

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TROOPS OUT NOW COALITION says: 'New Orleans is an anti-war issue'

By Deirdre Griswold
New York

When Hurricane Katrina hit, anti-war groups were gearing up for a major national demonstration in Washington. Within days, it was clear that the people of the Gulf, particularly in New Orleans, had become the latest victims of a government that will spend hundreds of billions on an imperialist war while slashing funds for human needs at home.

The Troops Out Now Coalition here, which had a conference planned for Sept. 10 to make a final push for the national protest two weeks later, immediately broadened the focus of its meeting. The war had come home, and this coalition, which encompasses many Black and Latin@ organizations as well as labor militants and anti-war activists, was deeply involved in relaying the demands of the besieged people of New Orleans to the anti-war movement as a whole.

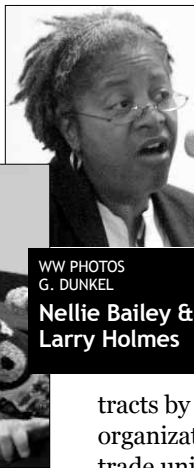
Highlights of the conference were an eyewitness report from Teresa Gutierrez, who had returned that morning from Louisiana; a summary by Nellie Bailey of the Harlem Tenants Council of the apocalyptic problems that New York would face in the event of a similar disaster; and the presentation of a people's program by Larry Holmes on behalf of one of the con-

ference workshops, which drew on demands drawn up by independent community groups in New Orleans.

Gutierrez and Johnnie Stevens of TONC had interviewed many survivors of the hurricane, in both Houston and Louisiana. She charged that, based on what the delegation had heard, the government had made a decision to "let the tragedy happen," and she challenged the anti-war movement and all progressive forces to extend the greatest solidarity to the displaced people of the area. (See Gutierrez's report in this issue of WW.)

Bailey presented to the conference a detailed report prepared by Black Workers for Infrastructure Revitalization on the deterioration of New York City's water, electric and sewage systems that make it "another New Orleans in the making."

Although experts have said that \$90 billion needs to be invested in the city's infrastructure to make it safe, little is being done. Meanwhile, half the men in Harlem can't get work and the military are trying to lure the youth with false promises of jobs and education.



WW PHOTOS
G. DUNKEL
Nellie Bailey &
Larry Holmes

What can the movement do about this increasingly critical situation?

Larry Holmes of TONC brought to the conference a program for action based on demands generated by meetings of grassroots leaders in the Gulf area. These include:

- **Stop the real looters;** freeze the awarding of Katrina reconstruction contracts by FEMA until local community organizations, leaders, activists and trade unionists have made public their ideas and plans.
- **Local people must control the \$52 billion reconstruction fund** for New Orleans and the Gulf Coast—not Halliburton and President Bush's rich friends.
- **Stop the execution of Frances Newton.** If the State of Texas executes Frances Newton (making her the first Black woman to be executed in Texas since 1853) in the wake of Katrina, this legal lynching would be a continuation of the brutal war of racist repression against the Black population of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.
- **End the military occupation of New Orleans**—no forced evacuations.

• **Let human rights observers** into New Orleans.

• **The right of return for all the people** who have been forced from their cities and towns. Katrina must not be turned into an excuse for ethnic cleansing and gentrification.

• **Accept the 1,100 medical doctors** offered by Cuba and the resources Venezuela has offered.

• **Pay the prevailing wage.** Congress and the president must rescind the waiver of the Davis-Bacon Act.

• **Extended unemployment benefits,** back pay and a guaranteed job for all workers displaced by Katrina.

• **The establishment of an international commission of inquiry** into the U.S. government's response to Katrina.

• **Money for Katrina recovery** and human needs—not war. Bring the troops home now!

Holmes stressed that TONC would continue to consult with community organizations in the Gulf area as they further elaborate their demands. The Troops Out Now Coalition is urging other coalitions also organizing for the Sept. 24 rally in Washington to support these demands and feature leaders from New Orleans on the platform. □

Camp Caseys, Nat'l Day of Outrage slam war in Iraq

The anguished cries of those who have lost relatives and friends in Iraq grew louder in early September as Camp Caseys continued to spring up across the country.

Opposition to the reactionary Bush administration could also be seen in coordinated actions Sept. 12 in scores of cities and small towns as the Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC) and the International Action Center organized a National Day of Outrage around the slogan "Money for hurricane relief, not for war in Iraq!"

Here are some highlights:

NEW YORK CITY As pickets marched outside the Jacob Javits Federal Building in downtown Manhattan Sept. 12, City Council member Charles Barron, housing rights organizer Nellie Bailey, residents of New Orleans and Larry Holmes of the Troops Out Now Coalition told the crowd that money now earmarked for the war on Iraq must be used instead to rebuild housing for the poor of the Gulf Coast, that the government's response to Katrina exposed its racism and classism, and that the people of the region must participate in all decisions regarding how government funds are spent and the region is rebuilt.

SAN DIEGO, CALIF. Motorists coming home from work on Sept. 12 slowed down at a main intersection to read a banner proclaiming "No war on the poor! Solidarity with the Katrina survivors," then took TONC leaflets on the upcoming Sept. 24 united anti-war demonstration. Some spontaneously offered donations to help the hurricane victims. Five hundred copies of Workers World newspaper were also given out.

BUFFALO, N.Y. The National Day of Outrage drew hundreds of people and was sponsored locally by the International

Action Center. The all-day event also dovetailed with the arrival of the Cindy Sheehan Bring Them Home Now Bus Tour.

ROCHESTER, N.Y. Many leaflets were handed out in downtown Rochester on Sept. 7 by the International Action Center. Their banner saying "Money for hurricane relief, NOT war in Iraq" was seen on local television.

DETROIT: Two hundred people gathered on Sept. 10 in Grand Circus Park to greet military families from Camp Casey in Crawford, Texas. For 20 days around the clock Detroit anti-war activists have occupied the downtown site with their own Camp Casey. In the photo, Michigan military parents join the touring families and speak out against the war. Second from the right is Apolonia Rosas holding a picture of her son, Ricardo Rosas, who was killed in the Iraq War. She is joined by Lila Lipscomb, whose son also was killed in Iraq. The women are comforted by the Rev. Edwin Rowe of Detroit's Central United Methodist Church.



DETROIT

WW PHOTO: DAVE SOLE



OHIO: Half a dozen events in Cleveland, Akron and Oberlin brought hundreds to packed halls to greet the Camp Casey delegation as it passed through Ohio. Audiences were moved to tears by speakers, including an Ohio mother of a 19-year-old Marine serving in Iraq; Bill Mitchell of Gold Star Families for Peace, whose son died the same day as Cindy Sheehan's son; recently returned veteran Hart Viges, who is now haunted by the atrocities U.S. troops were ordered to commit; and others who have lost loved ones or who have family members still in Iraq. Little over a month has passed since 22 Ohio Marines were killed within a space of two days. Rosemary Palmer, mother of one of them, welcomed the Camp Casey delegation.



WW PHOTOS: JOHN CATALINOTTO

LOS ANGELES: At one of the busiest intersections in Los Angeles on Sept. 12—the Westwood Federal Building—activists chanted and held aloft picket signs that read: "Victims survive Katrina—but die of racism," and "Money for flood states, not war." The action was organized by the International Action Center.

Speakers at the event demanded that the government stop the execution of Frances Newton and made the connection between the racist genocide of neglect in New Orleans to the racist murder planned against Newton.

John Catalinotto in New York, Bob McCubbin in San Diego, Ellie Dorritie in Buffalo, Lydia Bayoneta in Rochester, David Sole in Detroit, Martha Grevatt in Cleveland and John Parker in Los Angeles contributed to this article.

—Deirdre Griswold



ROCHESTER

WW PHOTO: BEVERLY HIESTAND

ON THE PICKETLINE

Solidarity builds against Northwest union busting

The United Auto Workers union donated \$880,000 to striking Northwest Airlines mechanics and cleaners on Sept. 13. Northwest Airlines had previously announced "permanent replacements" would be hired on that day.

Recognizing the threat to all workers, UAW President Ron Gettelfinger said, "Northwest Airlines behavior toward AMFA is blatant union-busting and an insult ..."

—By Cheryl LaBash

61 arrested at hotel sit-in

What's a good way to celebrate Labor Day? Get arrested fighting for labor's cause. That's what 61 union members and sympathizers did Sept. 5 when they staged a sit-in at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in San Francisco.

The arrestees were part of a larger demonstration calling for a new contract for hotel service workers at 14 hotels. The 4,300 dishwashers, room cleaners, servers, cooks, bellhops, receptionists and other workers have gone a year without a contract since they were locked out by the hotel chains. The hotels had to abandon the lockout after seven and a half weeks.

Mike Casey, the president of Local 2 of UNITE HERE!—the union representing Bay Area service employees—was one of those arrested. Casey noted some recent progress when managers of the Westin St. Francis signaled their willingness to accept an August 2006 expiration date for any new contract. In addition to wages and health benefits, the expiration date has been a major issue.

The 2006 expiration date would match that of hotel contracts in New York, Chicago, Toronto, Monterey and other cities, and significantly enhance the local union's clout with national chains.

John Marks, who heads the city's Convention and Visitors Bureau, told the Chronicle that the union-initiated hotel boycott has led to the cancellation of more than 78,000 night reservations and direct losses to the hotels of about \$47 million.

Parking attendants strike in Pittsburgh

When they weren't able to negotiate a contract that met their needs, 230 parking lot workers in Pittsburgh went on strike Sept. 7. Members of Teamsters Local 926 are demanding higher wages and pensions, no hike in health care costs and no work rule changes.

Marc Dreves, business agent for the local, blasted the parking companies. "Their union-busting tactics have not changed," he said. "This city was built on labor. The greed is just unbelievable. We'll be [striking] as long as it takes."

City Council members threw their support behind the strikers on Sept. 7, unanimously approving a nonbinding resolution backing the union.

Union signing up Cingular workers

All this summer the Communications Workers have led a card-check organizing drive to recruit former AT&T Wireless workers who have become Cingular Wireless workers after a recent buyout. Before Labor Day, CWA had succeeded in signing up 4,100 customer service reps and analysts around the country.

Since then, 2,000 more have signed up: 455 in the state of Virginia; 444 in Portland, Ore.; and 1,134 in Oklahoma City.

The major issues that led the unorganized workers to join the union are all too familiar: the high cost of health care, pay protection, working conditions and job security.

—By Sue Davis

Profiting from pain

Corporate gold-diggers head to Gulf region

By Milt Neidenberg

The corporate gold-diggers are looking South. To New Orleans, through the Gulf ports of Mississippi, Alabama, Texas and Florida, they are stampeding, big and small, smelling quick profits. They seek to capitalize on death and destruction, and on the human tragedy inflicted on the poor and oppressed population by a hurricane and a government locked into a military-industrial empire.

With only the clothes on their backs, tens of thousands of families have been forcefully uprooted from their birthplaces and dispersed throughout the country by racist military directives. The Gulf Coast populations—those that are left—are under martial law. Seventy thousand armed troops have prepared the way for the familiar faces of industry: the profiteers, the plunderers of Iraq.

The flood waters are receding and the money pot is overflowing. Hundreds of millions in no-bid contracts have already been allotted to cronies directly connected to the Pentagon and Homeland Security. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is under the jurisdiction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is under Homeland Security. The two work hand in hand with the Pentagon in dispensing lucrative contracts.

This core of anti-worker, anti-union, racist and sexist bureaucrats will control a \$62 billion appropriation, only the first down-payment on a \$200 billion reconstruction fund.

Even before the Superdome and the Convention Center concentration camps of death and disease were emptied, FEMA announced the awarding of contracts to Bechtel National of San Francisco; Fluor of Aliso Viejo, Calif.; and the division of Halliburton called Kellogg, Brown & Root.

Halliburton was Dick Cheney's paymaster when he was the company's chairperson before becoming George Bush's vice president. Cheney has millions of dollars from Halliburton accumulating in escrow, awaiting his retirement from government.

Other primary contractors that have received no-bid contracts from FEMA are the Shaw Group, based in Baton Rouge, and CH2M HILL of Denver.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reported the agency had received calls from 6,300 contrac-

tors begging to get in on the bonanza. The five primary corporations have already been assured they can pay substandard wages, meaning there will be kickbacks, personal and political. Corruption will be as pervasive as the smell of death and destruction that hovers over the Gulf Region.

Racist suspension of Davis-Bacon

On the day FEMA handed out no-bid contracts, President Bush by executive order suspended the Davis-Bacon Act, a 1931 Depression-era wage floor that has led to higher wages on all federal contracts with employers. The suspension was a racist, immigrant-bashing decision to further victimize the survivors by cutting labor costs and increasing profits. Sixty-seven percent of the New Orleans population was Black; the city had 145,000 Mexicans and 150,000 Hondurans. One out of four in the city lived below the poverty level.

The Davis-Bacon Act was passed two years after the 1929 stock market crash, which resulted in a 25 percent unemployment rate. Unemployed councils, led by communists, socialists and class-conscious workers, Black and white, organized and fought back.

Militant marches and protests forced Congress—Democrats and Republicans—to enact many progressive laws similar to Davis-Bacon. The Act mandated the Secretary of Labor to set a prevailing wage for all federally financed/assisted construction projects. By establishing a local wage standard that contractors had to pay workers on public projects, the law made it illegal for employers to slash wages in order to bid low on federal contracts. The 1930s unemployed were unskilled and at the mercy of profiteering contractors, but Davis-Bacon outlawed the "Walmartization" of labor.

When President Bush suspended this

progressive law for Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida, Wall Street's reaction was quick and predictable. The no-bid contracts, the Davis-Bacon suspension, and a drop in oil below \$70 a barrel, combined to push the stock market up 141 points.

There was an immediate response to the suspension of Davis-Bacon from AFL-CIO leaders, who called it legal looting, allowing contractors to pay substandard wages for the dangerous jobs of cleanup and reconstruction.

A Sept. 10 New York Times editorial called it "A Shameful Proclamation."

"If Mr. Bush does not rescind his proclamation voluntarily," the editorial said, "Congress should pass a law forcing him to do so."

The strategy here is to point the labor movement and especially the Democratic Party in the direction of hopeless lobbying and legislative activity, thus preparing the workers for the 2006 election. This dead-end policy has the support of the AFL-CIO.

The Change to Win Coalition, which split from the AFL-CIO, attacked "the inadequate response of the federal government," to the hurricane, but to date has not issued a statement on the suspension of Davis-Bacon and its political ramifications.

Katrina and the aftermath have exposed the criminal behavior of the government and torn away its democratic façade. The class character of the imperialist system, which serves the wealthy one percent, has once again been revealed.

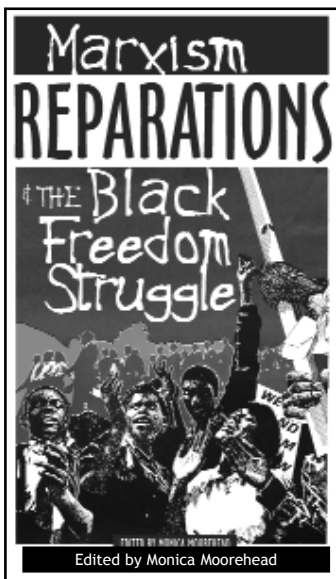
There is an awakening from below, particularly from Black labor unionists, the oppressed communities and low-paid multi-national service workers, driven down by the blows of "Corporate America" and the Bush administration. Across the U.S., the laboring masses are fired up over the racist treatment of their sisters and brothers in the Gulf region. There is a growing awareness of the need for a regroupment of mass organizations—the many movements opposed to U.S. imperialist policies of plunder and profit for the ruling class. New leaders will arise from this amalgam of organizations.

The Million Worker March Movement has proposed a class-wide independent regroupment of forces, united on the basis of class solidarity, to fight against war, racism, national/sexual oppression and poverty.

The events in the Gulf region have added urgency to fulfilling this vision. □



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD



Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

- ◆ Racism, national oppression & the right to self-determination *Larry Holmes*
- ◆ Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery *Sam Marcy*
- ◆ Reparations & Black Liberation *Monica Moorehead*
- ◆ Harriet Tubman: woman warrior *Mumia Abu-Jamal (Guest Commentary)*
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- ◆ Alabama's Black Belt: Legacy of slavery, sharecropping & segregation *By Consuela Lee (Guest commentary)*
- ◆ Black farmers demand justice *Monica Moorehead*
- ◆ Greetings from Mumia Abu-Jamal to the 3rd UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia & Related Intolerance
- ◆ Nigerian women take over Chevron Texaco *Monica Moorehead*
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IMMIGRANTS and the Gulf Coast atrocity

By Teresa Gutierrez

No one may ever know just how many immigrants died as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

Because so many immigrants in the Gulf Coast region are undocumented, it is an impossible task under the capitalist system to locate, count or help them.

The Mexican government said on Sept. 3 that as many as 100,000 Mexicans, most undocumented, were affected by the hurricane. Consuls from Honduras and El Salvador estimate another 200,000 migrants from Central America were in the area.

There were also immigrants from Jamaica, other parts of the Caribbean, Vietnam and several African countries.

Making it even more difficult to document or come to the aid of immigrants, the State Department did not allow consular officials into the area, citing security concerns. This was part of the climate of repression and occupation, instead of

compassion and aid, that the Bush administration was orchestrating.

Immigrants have not been coming into shelters or Red Cross centers, for fear of deportation or arrest. Because the undocumented live in terror, the catastrophe will only serve to send them further underground.

News reports state that some undocumented Latin@ workers are sneaking into shelters at night and then slipping out in the morning so they won't be noticed.

The Salvadoran consulate reports that, of 9,600 Salvadorans living in the region, only 40 were reported to have gone to shelters.

Four immigrants are known to have died. The three Mexicans and a Honduran living together decided to stay in their trailer during the storm. They were asphyxiated by a faulty generator after the storm had passed.

Others are reported to be staying in flooded homes and apartments because they do not want to leave their belongings,

knowing they are not eligible for any federal aid. Most are low-wage earners and will find it extremely difficult to start life all over again.

In Mississippi, many immigrants have worked in the state's poultry industry, where conditions are atrocious and the pay is rock bottom. Most are now without a job; 10 of Mississippi's 14 poultry processing centers are shut down. About 50,000 Latin@s are estimated to live in the state, but these are conservative government figures.

Spanish-speaking immigrants have told the media that announcements about the impending hurricane were made in English. One woman said, "By the time we realized what was happening, we didn't have time to buy extra food or go somewhere else." She added that, after the storm hit, she and others couldn't understand the advisories on the radio telling people where to go for water, generators or ice.

Immigrants living on the Gulf Coast and

across the country need the solidarity of the progressive and anti-war movement, of labor and human rights activists, now more than ever. Many missing since Aug. 29 may forever remain nameless and faceless.

The crimes of government officials that led to this unparalleled disaster, especially for Black and Latin@ people, must be fully exposed and those responsible held to account.

An immigrant from Guatemala who had been evacuated from Louisiana met a delegation from the Troops Out Now Coalition at a truck stop between Houston and New Orleans on Sept. 7. He embraced this writer, who is Latina, and Johnnie Stevens, who is African American, and told us: "Blacks and Latinos, we must be united now more than ever. Bush let that levee fail to kill people like us. We have to be together like never before."

Surely, only the solidarity of the multinational working class fighting for our interests can bring justice to the people of the Gulf Coast. □

Houston resistance to Minutemen

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

The anti-immigrant militia known as the Minutemen have announced they will arrive here in October, armed, to "monitor" day-labor sites for immigrant workers around the city. These racists will be met by the organized resistance of people who believe that every worker has the right to a job.

A new organization made up of organized labor, student groups and other progressive organizations has been formed and is actively organizing. The Immigrant Coalition Against Vigilantes and Intolerance and for Respect and Compassion (ICAVIRC) is developing teams to monitor the Minutemen at the day-labor sites and planning a community march and rally.

The group is also working to get the

Houston City Council to order the police to stop harassing the day laborers at the sites. The Houston police have begun heavy surveillance of day-labor sites, photographing the workers in an attempt to intimidate them.

ICAVIRC is also organizing day laborers—who themselves held a recent town hall meeting here.

The coalition is mainly Latin@s, including long-time activists, as well as organizations of Chicano students who are taking part in their first political struggle.

Since the Minutemen have begun organizing in Houston, the president of the Goliad chapter near the U.S./Mexico border—himself a Chicano—resigned because of the racism of the group. In Houston the Minutemen are offering a \$50 discount on membership to their group if a person already has a concealed-gun permit. □



PHOTO: WORKPLACE PROJECT

Outside the American Legion Hall in Babylon, N.Y. on Sept 10.

LONG ISLAND, N.Y.

Protesters outnumber Minutemen

By Heather Cottin
Long Island, N.Y.

"Minutemen, racist, KKK, fascists out of the USA!" chanted a crowd of more than 100 protesters outside the American Legion Hall in Babylon, N.Y., on Sept. 10. The local Immigrant Rights Committee of the Troops Out Now Coalition organized the demonstration with several Long Island activist groups.

Anti-fascist organizations from New Jersey and from New York City came out to castigate the Legionnaires for inviting Minutemen founder Chris Simcox to Suffolk County. Simcox is organizing vigilantes to keep immigrants from crossing the border.

In Babylon, the local reactionaries who attended were far outnumbered by their opponents. Students skateboarding at the high school across the street joined the mostly youthful and multi-national protesters. Together they chanted, "No human being is illegal!" and "El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido" (the people united will never be defeated).

The right wingers screamed homopho-

bic and racist epithets at demonstrators. When one Legionnaire asked, "Where are your American flags?" an African American demonstrator responded, "Where are your people of color?"

When Simcox arrived, he scuttled inside where he was joined by the local founder of Farmingville's anti-immigrant group called "Sachem Quality of Life," Margaret Bianculli-Dyber; Yonkers Mayor John Spencer, who supports "secure borders"; and a local businessman who wants to start a Minutemen group in Suffolk County. John Clark, a member of both California Citizens for Immigration Reform and the American Immigration Control Foundation, was present. So was Ron Bass, a New Jersey organizer for the ultra-right United Patriots of America. Bass is trying to bring the Minuteman Project to the Garden State.

The Minutemen chose Long Island to launch their neo-Nazi campaign against immigrants because recent arrests, police harassment, evictions and official sanctions against Mexican day laborers residing in Farmingdale have encouraged reactionaries to believe that a Minuteman presence could be established in the area. □

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'We must turn things around'

Johnnie Stevens, an organizer for the Million Worker March, reported the following to Workers World newspaper about his travels in Texas and Louisiana from Sept. 4-12.

On the days that Teresa Gutierrez and I were touring Texas and Louisiana, in Houston, Baton Rouge, Covington and the eight-hour ride trying to get into Algiers, there was roadblocks by military police. But there was no CBS, no CNN, no NBC, no ABC—there was no cameras, no crews; there wasn't no bourgeois media trying to go in and film what was going on. Because the media is handling it like Iraq or Somalia.

For you to have a million people being evacuated, and so many people killed, and no aid coming in for days, and no coverage of this—the media don't want to show it. This is a demand from the Bush administration and from the State Department, so people could not see, the world can't see, what happened in New Orleans. There can't be no greater nightmare that what happened there with the storm and people being separated. Headlines and articles are scripted by the Bush administration.

This is the level of neglect that we saw and heard. One Mexican doctor said, "I really want to go in and help." They had people who were tree cutters who asked to come in and couldn't. They was all told they wasn't needed. And Teresa and I saw miles of trees all over the place, and dead



Johnnie Stevens

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

animals all over the place, and this could have helped.

We met a man at the Houston airport who was Somalian. He actually worked at the rental car agency. He said he knew the neglect that the Black community faced in Houston because of the invasion and neglect of what happened in Somalia under the Clinton administration in 1991. He offered solidarity.

As of Sept. 13, we heard that dead bodies was sitting in Algiers and they're being marked with an "X" on their head and being left there, so the neglect is continuing as of today.

The word on the streets

On the route from Baton Rouge, we met a Honduran man, which is one of the

largest Latin@ populations in New Orleans. The Haitian community in New Orleans was large too, probably the third-largest community in the U.S. that sends remittances back to Haiti.

We got to do some interviews with persons from a transgender organization who was collecting supplies at a gay club in Houston who actually said they weren't giving it to the Red Cross and said that they were going down and delivering the things themselves. They packed a car to take things to people—transgender, gay and straight alike.

One of the persons worked in the hospital in the trauma department when you first bring people in, so this person has been a volunteer at the Houston convention center where many evacuees are.

The other thing that's noteworthy at the convention center was that on 9/11 there was a Muslim Center here—a newly formed ad hoc coalition of 20 organizations—that did volunteering there that day. The Muslims know what it feels like to have a tragedy.

Also in Houston there was work, mobilizations, going on to stop the state of Texas from executing Frances Newton—who is a Black woman—on Sept. 14. We were handing out leaflets about Sept. 12 actions in over 100 cities that actually had a prominent box about Frances Newton. The community and the evacuees at the convention center has been reading our leaflets about that and they were outraged

that the execution wasn't stayed.

Also we interviewed Alice Walker. She spoke of the continuing racism in the United States.

I met a gentleman who was a former longshore worker, a retiree. His wife and daughter was in another place. He told me that his insurance company would not pay for property they lost. The insurance companies are already beginning to deny the class character of the hurricane and saying it was a flood and they don't pay for floods. In his words these were the biggest looters in the world.

By contrast, when me and Teresa was coming from trying to get in to visit Algiers, one of the roadblocks diverted us into another parish named La Place. It's a predominantly white parish. We witnessed a white flight of probably thousands lined up in the eight hours we were criss-crossing highways. You could say it might have been tens of thousands. And they were being escorted out like a white flight with helicopters and military convoys. This was the day before they were talking about the mandatory evacuation.

Town meeting

We were getting ready for a meeting that was called by Minister Louis Farrakhan on Sept. 11 at the Power Center in Houston. This was a meeting that Minister Farrakhan invited Black leaders around the country to, from the Millions More March, lead-

Continued on page 11

'Like a bomb was dropped in the region'

Following are excerpts from a talk by Teresa Gutierrez, a national organizer for the Troops Out Now Coalition, to an anti-war conference in New York City on Sept. 10.

I've traveled to many places in Latin America, and to Iraq, but I have to say that the few days that Johnnie Stevens and I spent in Texas and Louisiana as part of the Troops Out Now Coalition and International Action Center delegation were probably the most profound and life-changing experiences I've had.

So I want to put my comments within the context of a challenge to the anti-war movement and progressives and activists, not only in this room but across the country, to take what we have to say here today and get the message out to the millions of people around this country who will need the analysis and perspective.

We don't want to give the impression that this is a definitive report from the Troops Out Now Coalition. And in fact when we set out to conduct a lot of interviews via video, we found that it was a little bit insensitive to pick up the camera every single time. We were not journalists. It was important to document, of course, but that wasn't what we were there for.

So I want to just give you a flavor of some of the interviews and the discussions. The discussions can't even begin to reflect the horrors and the turmoil that was sweeping the area.

I compared the tragedy of what happened there to some of my experiences in Latin America. It felt in some ways the same as when the U.S. dropped bombs in Panama, and in some ways it actually felt worse. This is obviously an anti-war issue because indeed a bomb was dropped in the region. It was not an actual bomb, but it was a bomb of negligence that has resulted in catastrophic conditions.

There are many homeless people who know exactly what we're talking about.



Teresa Gutierrez

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Imagine that you have a roof over your head, and you have running water to bathe, wash your hair, brush your teeth. The home may be poor or not, maybe it's a nice house, maybe it's not, maybe it's an apartment or you live in a housing project. But you have something; there's a community.

And then all of a sudden, almost overnight, that is lost. The natural disaster of the hurricane was bad enough—but it was intensified because of the neglect, and because of the damage to the environment.

What was not natural is that money was stolen from the levee for other priorities and that caused the break. What was not natural was how the government handled the crisis. It was an evacuation that if you had a credit card, a car and money to buy gas, you could do so. But if you didn't, then you had what you see now.

The government made a decision from the highest levels to the lowest levels to let that tragedy happen. And so the folks that we talked to, in addition to being stunned for losing their homes, are also stunned because there's a feeling that: Why were the buses waiting outside the region? Why weren't the buses coming in to pick us up?

Imagine then, this was one of the most

shocking and moving things about all the interviews and all the people that we talked to. This feeling of: Could it really be that the government wanted us to die?

Some people were very conscious and very understanding of the role of the government historically. Others were not. So it was a very shocking experience. I'm not a psychologist, but I can guarantee you that every single person from this tragedy is going to need some major support, psychologically.

There was the story of a man who, as he was swimming away from his house, kept hearing this "thump, thump, thump." And he turned around and the thump was the body of someone who was floating into the second floor window of his house. And you know that this man will live forever with that "thump, thump, thump" in his head.

He goes to the Superdome in New Orleans and he sees the repression and that the National Guard was obviously not there to help people. He saw two youth, who were trying to break the soda water machine so they could get drinks out, shot to death right there. He said he heard a baby in a stroller crying and crying, and then it stopped crying and the little baby was dead.

These were just some of the shocks, and knowing that the government was allowing this.

Occupation, militarization of area

When we drove from Houston to New Orleans, there were caravans and caravans of military trucks.

And on a lot of the trucks, there were chalk messages written by the soldiers. One of them said, "We're going to kick butt in Louisiana." Another: "My mom told me not to hit women, but Katrina is one woman I'm going to beat." This is the kind of occupying, military mentality that they have.

When we went to the [Houston] Astrodome, everyone was, like I said, terrorized.

In shock.

People told us these kinds of things. A bus came in to pick up only women to take them to another state. And the women, everyone, were saying, "Why only the women?" And the people were kind of afraid. So they refused to go in that bus.

We talked to a young man who lost his mother. He doesn't know why, because they showed up in the same area. But later they brought him to Houston and took his mother to Alabama.

That's one of the many, many, many examples. That measly, piddly \$2,000 that people are supposed to get—the ones that do get it—will probably go for a lot of people just to get their families back together.

A woman told us that they brought her to the Astrodome but she has a lot of family in Baton Rouge. So in the bus she and several people were begging the military driver to please stop [in Baton Rouge]. And any other kind of system, a more humane, not profit-driven system, would have, yes, stopped the bus.

Another family drove several hours to come pick up their loved ones, evacuees, at the Astrodome and they arrived 15 minutes or half an hour before the so-called curfew at 11 p.m. And the guard told them, "Well everybody goes to bed at 11:00. You'll have to come back in the morning."

And one of the volunteers who told us about this said, "Are you kidding? There's 25,000 people there—all the lights are on. People don't go to sleep."

So it meant that the family had to pay for a motel that night, if they had the money. Or if they didn't, they had to sleep in their car.

Again an example of the repressive character of this occupation of the people who have gone through such horror in recent days.

When they were giving out the \$2,000

Continued on page 10

Spawn of a racist compromise

The history of the Insurrection Act

By Deirdre Griswold

Just two days after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, President George W. Bush began demanding that Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco yield to him the command over any National Guard troops sent to the area, according to reports in the leading establishment newspapers.

Bush wanted to invoke the Insurrection Act, which would have allowed him to take control over all armed forces deployed, including Louisiana's National Guard troops. But under the terms of the act, he had to get the assent of the legislature or the governor of the state. The legislature was not in session and Blanco refused.

The governor kept calling on the federal government to send in all the assistance it could muster. Mayor Ray Nagin of New Orleans repeatedly sent out an SOS as the situation became increasingly desperate for tens of thousands of people in the Superdome, the Convention Center, and on the elevated highways and bridges of the city.

But no significant aid came for days—no buses or boats to move people out of the city, no food or water or temporary shelter. Civilian volunteer medical and emergency workers were being turned back from the city, even as the most vulnerable people were beginning to die. A pressure cooker situation was developing.

And as the anger rose, it became the excuse for not providing relief. It was too “dangerous” to go in. The area had to be “secured” by troops first. The Black people of New Orleans—who made up the vast majority of those unable to evacuate—were being treated as “the enemy,” not as desperate survivors.

George Bush has not yet invoked the Insurrection Act, but his administration is still discussing how to make it easier for the federal government to override local authorities in the future. (Los Angeles Times, Sept. 11)

Racism and states' rights

It is a bitter irony that the same racist political forces who made “state's rights” their mantra when federal law called for desegregation of the schools and public facilities, and again when various laws were passed by Congress protecting workers and the environment, are now trying to find a way to bypass the authority of the states in order to enhance the ability of the president to use armed force against the people.

Reviewing the past use of the Insurrection Act is like a walk through the racist and anti-worker history of this country. It was designed to plug a perceived hole in the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, and has been strengthened since then by the addition of various provisions when the ruling powers felt that mass anger over conditions could reach the boiling point.

The Posse Comitatus Act was itself the product of a racist compromise between the Northern capitalists, whose fortunes came from the exploitation of wage labor, and the Southern former slave owners whose “right” to enslave Black people had been taken away by the Civil War—but whose control over the land and wealth of the South remained intact even after that enormously bloody conflict.

After the war, Union troops remained in the South to prevent the defeated slave-owning class from reestablishing its reign of racist terror. In this period of Reconstruction, Black people for the first time had the rights of citizens. They elected representatives to several state legislatures

and to the U.S. Congress. Black and white Abolitionists went South to help set up schools for Black children where none had existed before.

Social progress was made, but the federal government's promise of “40 acres and a mule” for every family was never realized; most of the rich plantation land remained in the hands of the former slave owners. Without agrarian reform, the landless Black sharecroppers were doomed to remain in abject poverty, even if they had obtained political rights.

But even these rights were undercut when, in the Compromise of 1877, Washington agreed to pull its troops out of the South. This left the door wide open for the Southern ruling class to reimpose an iron dictatorship over the Black masses, which they did through both legal and extra-legal terror, like the Ku Klux Klan and the lynch mob.

The legal basis for the withdrawal of the Northern troops was to be the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, which said, in part: “From and after passage of this act it shall not be lawful to employ any part of the Army of the United States, as a posse comitatus, or otherwise, for the purpose of executing the laws, except in such cases and under such circumstances as such

employment of said force may be expressly authorized by the Constitution or by act of Congress.”

The exception clause above led to the Insurrection Act, which has been modified and broadened over the years. It has been the legal excuse for some of the most flagrant attacks on workers and oppressed people in the U.S. by the federal government since the end of Reconstruction, including the assault on the Bonus Marchers in 1932, President Harry S. Truman's use of federal troops against striking railroad workers in 1946, the 1973 intervention of federal troops against the American Indian Movement at Wounded Knee, and the suppression of the Los Angeles rebellion in 1992.

The Bonus Marchers were World War I veterans seeking payment of a bonus that had been promised them. It was the depths of the Depression. They set up an unarmed encampment in Washington, D.C., that quickly grew to 20,000 veterans. The Army, under the command of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, forcibly dispersed them with bayonets and burned the camp down. One veteran was shot to death and dozens injured.

More recently, the act was invoked in 1992 by George H.W. Bush, father of

today's president. A verdict had just come down in the case of the beating of Rodney King, an African American motorist, by Los Angeles police. The brutal attack had been caught on videotape. After national outrage, four officers were charged with assault, but the case was moved to Simi Valley, outside the city, where a jury was selected with no African Americans on it. When they let the cops walk free, the Black community of L.A. erupted in fury. The rebellion overwhelmed the LAPD, and Bush sent in thousands of troops to put it down.

Today, U.S. society is more polarized than ever. The number of millionaires and billionaires has grown even as millions more workers get less than a living wage, have no health care or other benefits and are mired in debt. On top of all this, they are being forced to participate in a cruel war that benefits no one but the oil companies and the military-industrial complex.

The preoccupation of the capitalist class, however, is not with alleviating the appalling conditions but with trying to crush any resistance.

A rebellion against these social conditions is long overdue—and the ruling class knows it. □

Hurricane Katrina, national oppression & self-determination

Following are excerpts from “Hurricane Katrina: The Black Nation's 9/11!,” a Sept. 5 article written by Saladin Muhammad. Muhammad is the chairperson of Black Workers for Justice in Raleigh, N.C., and a co-convenor of the Million Worker March Movement in the South. Go to workers.org to read the statement in its entirety.

The magnitude of the destruction and human suffering caused by Hurricane Katrina to the people and communities of the Gulf Coast Region, while not the result of an act of “terror,” is directly a result of a profit-driven system of capitalist exploitation reinforced by the national oppression of African American people in the U.S. South, a region where the majority of Black people live and where the conditions of oppression, poverty and underdevelopment are most concentrated.

The movement in the Gulf Coast Region has major concerns that require the organization, politics and leadership of the African American liberation movement as a central component to help unite a broad, multi-national, multi-racial and international campaign for social justice and reconstruction.

The dispersed masses from the region have to be organized and reconnected by a representative body that acts as a kind of provisional government to deal with questions regarding the future of their communities, the blatant neglect of the U.S. government in placing them in imminent danger, the failure of the government to have a planned and speedy evacuation, the denial of the government to allow aid from other countries and the use of the police and National Guard as military occupation forces, among other concerns.

Some of the demands that must be included in this movement include:

- **The right to return** of the people of the Gulf Coast Region;
- **Open up area military bases** for no-cost temporary housing to begin moving survivors back into the region;
- **Extended unemployment** and emergency financial relief based on a living wage until people are returned to their homes and jobs;
- **A People's Referendum** on all decisions affecting the politics and residential issues of the Gulf Coast survivors;
- **Establish a public workers' program** funded by the federal government and the big corporations to rebuild New Orleans and the affected Gulf Coast Region,
- **Employ the survivors at a living wage** as required by the Davis-Bacon Act to work on cleanup and reconstruction of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, with the right to organize unions;
- **That major contracts** for cleanup and reconstruction of the New Orleans Black and working class communities be allocated to Black contractors;
- **That the U.S. immediately allow other countries** to provide aid to the survivors;
- **That the United Nations conduct an investigation** into the circumstances surrounding the Katrina disaster to determine if the U.S. is guilty of human rights violations;
- **That everyone suffering** property damage and destruction, dislocation, death and illness, including emotional and psychological, receive reparations from the U.S. government as victims of a racist act of placing people and communities in imminent danger because they are Black and poor;
- **Issue a massive bankruptcy executive order** for Gulf Coast survivors forgoing all debt of property lost or destroyed by the disaster;
- **Cut the U.S. military budget** and reallocate finances to deal with state and local programs to address social and environmental needs which threaten the lives, safety, health and communities of African American and other working class populations;
- **End the wars and occupation** in the Middle East, bring the U.S. troops home now;
- **The immediate impeachment of George Bush** for his role in the U.S. government in placing people's lives in imminent danger and thereby committing crimes against humanity. □



At UN summit

Solidarity with Cuba, Venezuela

By John Catalinotto
New York

With the world summit coming to the United Nations here, government leaders of many countries will be in New York. This includes some of the heroes of the world's workers and oppressed peoples and also some of the worst criminals. There will be both greetings and protests.

Leaders of the two popular revolutionary countries of the hemisphere, socialist Cuba and Bolivarian Venezuela, plan to

speak to the progressive movement in New York.

On Saturday, Sept. 17, at 6 p.m., the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the U.S. invites people to a special forum with President Hugo Chávez and community and religious leaders on issues of poverty and justice in the globalized world.

The meeting will be at the Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew United Methodist, 263 W. 86th St., between Broadway and West End Ave.

On Monday, Sept. 19, at 7:30 p.m., there

will be a welcome for Ricardo Alarcón, the Cuban National Assembly president, and for Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque, at the Church of the Intercession, W. 155th Street and Broadway, in Harlem, N.Y. Doors open at 6 p.m.

Attendance is by invitation only and is being organized through those groups that have shown solidarity with revolutionary Cuba or Bolivarian Venezuela, or both.

Chávez has been a particular target of U.S. imperialism in the recent period, including a public assassination threat by

Pat Robertson, the racist fundamentalist with close ties to the Bush administration. Cuba is a perpetual target of U.S. imperialism, especially coming from the ever narrower circle of counter-revolutionary Cuban terrorists centered in Miami.

Many New Yorkers are hoping that, despite these security problems, they will have the opportunity to hear the voices of and greet the leaders of the two countries in this hemisphere that have expressed the hopes of humanity. For more information, contact the International Action Center at (212) 633-6646. □

UN report on the 'Third World' in the U.S

By Fred Goldstein

At the very moment that the profound racism and class oppression in the U.S. has been highlighted by the disastrous toll on the poor, largely African-American population of the Gulf Coast, the United Nations has issued a report about racism and poverty affecting the U.S. health-care system.

The highly prestigious UN report has singled out the U.S. health-care system as being fraught with such inequality that sections of the population are at health-care levels comparable to that of countries suffering from the long-term effects of colonialism.

The U.S. leads the world in health-care spending on a per capita basis. But "U.S. public health indicators are marred by deep inequalities linked to income, health insurance coverage, race, ethnicity, geography and—critically—access to care," said the 2005 annual UN Human Development Report (HDR).

The Indian state of Kerala "has an urban infant death rate lower than that for African Americans in Washington, D.C." And Malaysia, like India a country long ruled and kept in a state of underdevelopment by British colonialism, with an average income one quarter that here, "has achieved the same infant death rate as the United States," according to the HDR.

Although the U.S. is the richest nation on earth, "infant mortality trends are especially troublesome," continues the report. "Since 2000, a half century of sustained decline of infant death rates slowed and then reversed. The infant

mortality rate in the U.S. is now higher than for many other industrial countries."

Racism is a major feature of the inequality in health care. "African American mothers are twice as likely to give birth to a low birth weight baby. Their children are twice as likely to die before their first birthday."

The lack of health-care coverage is cited as a major cause of the declining health of the population. Over 45 million were uninsured in 2000, one in six of the non-elderly population. And racism deeply affects health-care coverage. "Hispanic Americans are more than twice as likely to be uninsured as white Americans and 21 percent of African Americans have no health insurance," according to the report.

"One study finds that eliminating the gap in health care between African Americans and white Americans would save nearly 85,000 lives a year."

Poverty and lack of health care for all races and nationalities kills. "The Institute of Medicine estimates that 18,000 Americans die prematurely each year solely because they lack health insurance." Many of the uninsured have no place to go for vitally needed health care. And when they are admitted to hospitals, they are far more likely to die.

The high-tech revolution in healthcare is out of reach for millions of poor workers and oppressed people.

The study of deterioration of health care in the U.S. is only the tip of the iceberg. Declining health care as a social indicator linked to poverty, race and nationality is not isolated from other basic conditions of life among the people. Those with no health care or poor coverage generally

have low incomes and live from paycheck to paycheck; have poor housing; lack social services; are pushed into the poorest neighborhoods; suffer the most police brutality; are most likely to be in prison; and are disproportionately African American and Latino, including many, many immigrant workers, documented and undocumented.

The findings of the UNHDR are consistent with the racist oppression of Black people during the destruction of Hurricane Katrina and the overwhelming toll it took on the African American population of New Orleans and the entire Gulf Coast. It is estimated that 130,000 families had no cars in New Orleans. The likelihood is that families that cannot afford a car cannot afford health insurance. They lived in the poorest neighborhoods, with

the highest poverty rates. Many of those 130,000 families who were on the roofs in the Lower Ninth Ward and other poor Black neighborhoods probably were reflected in the UN statistics about lack of health care in the U.S.

They are not isolated, either. Look in any urban center, from St. Louis to Pittsburgh, New York to Los Angeles, and the same so-called "Third World" conditions, that is, neocolonial conditions, exist for African Americans, Latinos and other nationalities.

The vast majority of the people in these neighborhoods are workers, employed or unemployed. The suffering revealed by Katrina and documented by the UN report points in the direction of renewed struggle against racism, national oppression and class exploitation. □

Frances Newton

Continued from page 2

ography are all factors in the imposition of death sentences. As long as Texas has a death penalty, capital defendants should have access to competent legal counsel. Newton didn't get that. For that reason, she should be spared."

In the week leading up to Newton's scheduled execution, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark joined Michael Greco, president of the American Bar Association; entertainer and activist Dick Gregory; and Amnesty International in asking that Newton be given a stay and a review of new evidence.

On Sept. 12, the Committee to Free Frances Newton joined with anti-war activists outside the Houston Astrodome to participate in the National Day of Outrage about the Katrina tragedy.

Hundreds of people from New Orleans passed by. Many stopped to read fliers and

some joined in the protest.

Two young people who had lost everything in the hurricane, Thea Elder and Nicholas Miller, leafleted and spoke on the microphone for three hours.

The Committee to Free Frances Newton, along with the National Black United Front, Houston Chapter; the New Black Panther Party for Self Defense; the University of Houston NAACP; KPFT-Pacifica Radio in Houston; and many other organizations and individuals have worked around the clock for months to stop this execution.

Many new activists have been drawn into supporting Newton.

In the final hours, there are plans for civil disobedience at the governor's office in Austin and a protest in Huntsville outside of the death house. There will be protests in every major Texas city if the execution is carried out. □

Solidarity with Haitian people

A Haitian organization supporting victims of the repression in Haiti has issued a call for renewed protests in many cities of the world on Sept. 30, the anniversary of the first U.S.-sponsored coup that ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991.

The call, issued by the September 30 Foundation (Fondasyon Trant Septanm, in Creole), is being supported by Haitians and other sympathizers in the United States.

The current regime in Haiti was installed by a U.S.-backed coup on Feb. 29, 2004, and has been supported by the U.S., France and Canada, with United Nations approval. It has continued its assault on the poor majority of Haitians, targeting leaders and supporters of Aristide.

According to the call, the action taken could be a "march, rally, public meeting,

vigil, house meeting or civil disobedience—whatever you are able to do"—in support of the following demands:

- Stop the serial killings and massacres of the poor, in one popular neighborhood after another, by UN troops, Haitian National Police and paramilitary mercenaries under police control.
- Restore the democratically-elected government of President Aristide.
- Free Father Jean-Juste, So' Anne, Prime Minister Yvon Neptune—and ALL the political prisoners.
- End the brutal U.S./UN occupation; restore Haiti's sovereignty; respect the will of the Haitian people.

Contact the Sept. 30th Organizing Committee at (510) 847-8657 or sub@sonic.net for more details.

—John Catalinotto

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL ON HAITI

Opening session Friday,
September 23, 2005
from 7 to 10 p.m.



George Washington University
Elliott School of International Affairs
1957 E Street NW, Washington, DC

UN troops shot to death Sonia Romelus, 22, and her sons Nelson, 1, and Stanley, 4, in their home on July 6 in Cité Solon. Now the killers will be judged.



Special tickets available from the Haiti Support Network and the IAC 212-633-6646

Sharp debate breaks out at Iran forum

Special to Workers World
White Plains, N.Y.

A lively and important political debate broke out over the question of Iran and U.S. imperialism at a forum here on Sept. 10, when the main speaker—who was expected to oppose U.S. war moves against Iran—instead opened up an attack on the Iranian government.

The sponsors of the meeting, the American-Iranian Friendship Committee and the Engage Program of United Memorial Methodist Church, were expecting the featured speaker—Morteza Mohit—to expose the aggressive intentions of Washington towards Iran. In particular, it was hoped that he would deliver a strong defense of the Tehran government's battle to keep Iran's independence and assert its right to develop nuclear technology.

These expectations were based upon the fact that Mohit, a writer and researcher, was imprisoned for several years under the Shah. He also claims to be a Marxist and has translated some works of Karl Marx into Farsi. And indeed, his lecture began with a sharp, general historical critique of imperialism.

But to the surprise of the audience and the sponsors, he ended his exposé of the U.S. government's aggressive policies towards Iran with the year 1953—when a CIA coup overthrew the elected nationalist government of Mohammed Mossadegh and installed the repressive regime of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, and U.S. oil companies took over Iranian oil.

Mohit then launched into a one-sided and sharp criticism of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who led the anti-imperialist revolution that overthrew the shah. He dwelt on the well-known reactionary aspects of the Khomeini regime, such as the suppression of the left, but neglected to mention the unbridled hostility of Washington to the anti-imperialist intransigence of the Islamic Republic. He even claimed that the U.S. government wanted Khomeini to rule because it knew he would attack the left.

Mohit then spoke in critical tones about the government of the recently elected president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He

dismissed the "axis of evil" designation of Iran by President Bush and the "nuclear conflict" as "not serious" and a cover for "Iran working with the U.S. government in Iraq." He alluded to unspecified "behind the scenes maneuvers" and unsubstantiated, undocumented and unpublicized "protocols" regarding Iraq allegedly signed by Iran and then-Secretary of State Colin Powell.

The title of the forum was "U.S. Foreign Policy: the Case of Iran," but the event was becoming a forum to condemn the internal conduct and character of the Iranian government. There was no mention of Washington's campaign to destroy the Khomeini government or of the looming foreign policy crisis flowing from Washington's determination to deny Iran the right to develop nuclear technology.

Early in the discussion period, Ardeshir Ommani, head of the American-Iranian Friendship Committee, took the floor. He acknowledged that "Iran is not a bourgeois democratic government. But," he said, "Iran must be judged in the context of world affairs. Iran is one of the most independent governments in the world. In terms of trade, in terms of capital investment and in military terms the Iranian government resists imperialism."

Ommani charged that alluding to so-called "behind the scenes" agreements is insufficient information. And even if there were agreements, he continued, "Iran has every right to make agreements to protect itself when it is surrounded by 35 military bases."

He asked Mohit: "Does Iran as a country, as a people, as an entity in existence for 2,000 years, have the right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes—not merely the Islamic Republic, but Iran as a nation?" Mohit never answered the question.

On the question of the Khomeini regime, Ommani asked Mohit: "What about the people of Iran? Millions of people supported Khomeini. We as communists could support his struggle against imperialism but we could not support him. But [his victory] was the result of historical circumstances. We cannot blame Khomeini because the people did not support us."

As the discussion proceeded, Mohit called the Iranian elections "totally corrupted" despite the overwhelming landslide victory of Ahmadinejad over former President Akbar Hasemi Rafsanjani—a wealthy conservative turned pro-IMF "free market" advocate of opening Iran up to privatization and transnational corporations.

When an ally of Mohit's in the audience called the Iranian government "fascist," Ommani took the floor again to point out the dangers of such slander. "Fascism," Ommani asserted, "has a specific meaning which does not apply to the Iranian government. This was just invective, calling Ahmadinejad a bad guy."

"How did the Iraq War get set up by U.S. imperialism?" Ommani asked. "First the U.S. demonized the regime, calling it dictatorial and comparing it to fascism. Next they declared the elections of Saddam invalid and not the expression of any popular support. And then they created a campaign against weapons of mass destruction and said that Iraq was a threat. These are precisely the charges that Washington is making now against the government of Iran."

Ommani charged that "Marxist language is being used here as a cover to argue the very line that U.S. imperialism is promoting in order to prepare for a war against Iran."

Mohit again ignored Ommani's charges and referred to the time of "the great democratic election" when Mohammed Khatami, the reformer, won. "At that time," said Mohit, "the prestige and respect for Iran went way up in the world. So much, that President Clinton had to say nice things about Iran and Madeleine Albright apologized for the 1953 coup."

Fred Goldstein, a leader of Workers World Party, asked from the audience: "Prestige with whom? With U.S. imperialism?"

Goldstein pointed out, "Cuba is one of the most respected governments in the world for all its accomplishments and its ability to survive 90 miles from the doorstep of the U.S. But that respect is among the masses of people of the world. And it has not brought Washington one inch closer to Cuba. With the Khatami election,

Washington thought they saw a weak spot and they tried to move in. The maneuver failed."

'Get imperialism off their backs!'

Mohit consistently referred in negative terms to Islamic forces such as Hamas and Hezbollah, both of which get aid from Iran. He criticized Iran for strengthening their "terrorist" side as opposed to their "social" activities.

Goldstein concluded, "The truth is that U.S. imperialism, working with the Saudi monarch and other reactionary forces in the Middle East and Central Asia, spent billions of dollars and turned the CIA loose in the region to exterminate the communists and the left. The destruction of the Afghanistan Revolution, which first gave women rights and tried to help the poor, is a prime example.

"Bourgeois nationalism, in countries like Egypt and Algeria, has completely failed to help the masses and has fallen under the domination of imperialism. But the struggle against imperialism continues and in this region of the world, Islamic forces have filled the vacuum in many instances. It is up to the people of the region to decide their own internal destiny, but they must be able to do it free from the intervention of imperialism. Our job is to get the U.S. government off their backs."

Ellie Ommani, who was chairing the meeting, displayed a full-page newspaper ad in the New York MetroNews published by right-wing media mogul Rupert Murdoch. The ad for a demonstration against the Iranian United Nations delegation that is arriving in New York this week had a picture of a mushroom cloud and talked of Iran's "nuclear terrorism." The demonstration is sponsored by monarchists who want the shah back and by the People's Mujahadeen, which has become a pawn of the CIA. Someone in the audience asked aloud: "I wonder who paid for such an expensive ad?"

The meeting ended on an up note with loud applause as Ellie Ommani called for "unity in our determination to fight to get the U.S. government off the back of the Iranian government and allow it to function in freedom and independence." □

Conference goals change

Demand right of Iraqi resistance to speak

By John Catalinotto

Italian and international organizers of a scheduled October conference in solidarity with the Iraqi resistance have changed the character of the event as Italian authorities continue to refuse visas for invited Iraqi representatives. It is now expected to gather broader participation from others in the anti-war movement who are demanding the right of the Iraqi opposition to speak in Europe to the world.

Now planned as a one-day event in Rome on Oct. 2, the conference will also express the anger of a growing number of Italians at the subservient role of the Silvio Berlusconi government and of Rome in general to U.S. imperialism.

The Free Iraq Committee had originally scheduled the event for Oct. 1-2 in Chianciano, Italy, near Siena, and expected it to be similar to others held earlier in Paris and Berlin: a gathering of anti-imperialist intellectuals and organizers with some Iraqi representatives

who could speak with authority.

To the organizers' surprise and delight, a significant number of Iraqi spokespeople were willing and able to accept their invitation. They are leaders of Iraqi political organizations that support the resistance but are operating legally in Iraq as opponents of the U.S. puppet government.

These Iraqis include Sheikh Jawad al-Khalesi, leader of the Iraqi National Foundation Congress; Ayatollah Sheikh Ahmed al-Baghdadi; Salah al-Mukhtar, former Iraqi ambassador to India and Vietnam; Sheikh Hassan al-Zangani, international spokesperson of the movement led by Muqtada al-Sadr and former editor of the paper Hawza, closed by the occupation authorities; Mohammad Faris, Iraqi Patriotic Communist Party; and Ibrahim al-Kubaysi, brother of the kidnapped secretary of the Iraqi Patriotic Alliance.

With such a prestigious and diverse group from Iraq, the conference itself could contribute to the struggle to liberate Iraq. It would give a platform to the Iraqi

resistance, which is still in the process of forming a united liberation front.

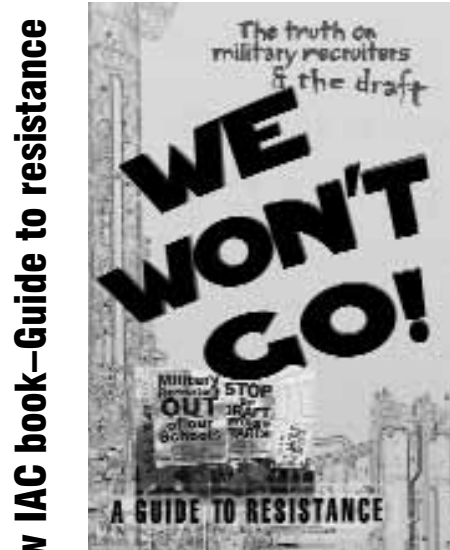
However, Washington intervened with an arrogant letter from 44 right-wing U.S. Congress members ordering the Italian government to stop the conference and repress its organizers. The Italian Foreign Ministry reversed an earlier favorable decision by Italy's Baghdad embassy and refused visas to the Iraqis.

Despite a hunger strike begun Aug. 31 by seven supporters of the Free Iraq Committee outside the Foreign Ministry in Rome and growing support by a broader sector of the Italian anti-war movement, the government continues to refuse visas. The hunger strike continued as of Sept. 12 and some of the participants were having health problems.

The committee still hopes to get a visa for Haj Ali al-Qaysi, the Iraqi known worldwide because of photographs showing him hooded in Abu-Ghraib prison.

At the Sept. 10 meeting, the organizers decided that since the Berlusconi regime had trampled on democratic rights by

refusing visas to the Iraqis, the conference should change to a one-day protest conference in Rome. It will now demand the Iraqis' right to be heard and will include Italian progressives who have protested the refusal of visas. □



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The Senate and the real John Roberts

There's a saying that if something looks like a duck, walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it probably IS a duck.

John Roberts, George Bush's nominee for Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, has argued right-wing causes on just about every significant social and economic issue in this country over the last two decades. He has written right-wing, reactionary legal position papers and argued right-wing, reactionary legal cases for right-wing, reactionary administrations. He has made right-wing, reactionary decisions as a federal judge. A quick check of the websites of the women's movement, the civil rights movement and the labor movement will show his uninterrupted record of reaction.

The chances are — he is a right-wing reactionary!

This is the real issue that is being finessed and watered down in the charade called Senate confirmation hearings in Washington.

His record begins in 1980, when he was a law clerk for his racist mentor, Justice William Rehnquist, and opposed affirmative action. It goes all the way up until July 2005, when he ruled in favor of Donald Rumsfeld that the Geneva Conventions were null and void for prisoners at Guantánamo and upheld military tribunals there.

In between he argued in favor of weakening desegregation laws and the Voting Rights Act, opposed affirmative action, and argued to increase police powers and reduce prisoners' rights.

He opposed Roe vs. Wade and abortion-related counseling. He defended Operation Rescue's right to terrorize women's health care clinics.

He argued for religion in public schools, opposed environmentalist opposition to handing over thousands of acres of public land to mining companies, and voted to curtail the Endangered Species Act.

Roberts argued to protect corporations from expanding workers' benefits and defended the right of the National Mining Association to blow the tops off mountains in West Virginia. He defended Fox Television and Rupert Murdoch against charges of monopoly.

He defended anti-union criminal contempt fines against striking miners. He argued that workers with carpal tunnel syndrome were not protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

With such a horrendous record, the hearings in the Senate should be quite simple. If this were not a club of millionaires, the exposures and questions would be straight forward. Roberts

would be charged as anti-woman, racist, anti-labor, anti-environment and a tool of big business.

But instead the hearings are loaded with legal terminology, citations of court cases and loads of Latin legalese. It takes a great deal of legal and political background to comprehend what is really going on in the Senate. Mostly it is a carefully staged debate, after which everyone in both parties expects that Roberts will be confirmed.

The hearings are being conducted by millionaires on the Senate Judiciary Committee, most of whom are lawyers and are about as far away from the workers and the oppressed as the moon. They allow Roberts to not answer questions. They let him plead in case after case involving his reactionary writings, arguments or rulings that he was just working for an administration or a client. This is equivalent to the argument that every low-level indicted war criminal makes: "I was just following orders."

Roberts enthusiastically carried out those orders and perfected the reactionary missions assigned him by Reagan, Bush I, Bush II and his corporate clients. He is fully responsible for the suffering and denial of rights caused by his participation in reactionary decisions.

Most of the politicians in both parties are happy because Roberts gave them an out. Knowing that Roe vs. Wade would be an important part of the battle to come, he immediately declared himself in favor of the right to privacy. If he was signaling to the ruling class that he would not overturn Roe vs. Wade, he made himself a more acceptable tool of reaction. To directly overrule the legal right to abortion might cause a social explosion. To implement his anti-abortion views all he has to do is to continue to erode the right with rulings on parental consent, restriction of government funding, etc., and uphold numerous state statutes that chip away at reproductive rights for women.

But regardless of Roberts's right-wing intentions, the Supreme Court is not likely to determine the fate of society in the coming period. The exposure of the naked racism and disregard of the masses of people affected by the Gulf hurricane—combined with the growth in poverty, the decline in income, the gathering momentum of a monumental health care crisis, increasing opposition to the costly occupation in Iraq, and the general decline of the conditions of the workers and oppressed—all point in the direction of a coming upsurge of struggle. This struggle is what will determine the future, not reactionary Supreme Court judges. □

Gaza's beaches

The last of the Israeli occupying army has left Gaza for the first time in 38 years. Even in leaving it was impossible for the Israelis to camouflage the insidious character of this colonial occupation. The very joy of the Palestinians in having gotten rid of them exposed it.

Hundreds of Palestinian children rushed to the beaches of the Mediterranean with their families. Those youngsters, who may have lived only a mile from the shore in hot and crowded refugee camps, had never been in the water before. The seaside had been an exclusive resort for the Israeli settlers.

Ariel Sharon made sure in his last acts in Gaza that the world would remember he was the war criminal responsible for the massacres at Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon during the 1982 Israeli occupation. He ordered the comfortable homes of the Israeli settlers bulldozed.

He wouldn't consider leaving a few buildings standing to make up for the thousands of Palestinian homes the Israel state has destroyed as it kept finding new destructive uses for the bulldozer. But he spared the synagogues, forcing the Palestinian Authority to bear the onus of tearing them down.

Gaza still has no connection to the occupied West Bank. Its sea and air space is controlled by Israel.

But the reaction of the Palestinian people shows that even a very partial victory is sweet—and it was hard won. With all its shortcomings, the Gaza pullout is proof that the Palestinian Intifada, or uprising, was not in vain and that a determined people can push back their oppressors even when the military odds seem totally stacked against them.

Long live Palestine! □

Mattachine red-baited



By Leslie Feinberg

The communist leaders of the Mattachine organization were red-baited soon after they publicly defended Dale Jennings, one of the founding members of the group, against anti-gay police entrapment charges.

Read the rest of Part 47, and the entire Lavender & Red Workers World newspaper series, online at www.workers.org.

Next: Left wing loses battle for Mattachine.

'Like a bomb dropped in the region'

Continued from page 6

pittance on Sept. 9, folks were lined up and somehow there was some disorder—folks got angry, impatient. And so they shut down the volunteer center, got everybody out and wouldn't let any volunteers go in. Forty-eight people, because of supposedly acting out, they didn't want to stand in line, or whatever, were taken to jail. Another act of inhuman behavior. I mean how the hell are you supposed to act after days of starving, not having water?

Again, in another system, you would be patient, you would organize the work, you would understand this frustration. Instead they haul you off to the Houston jail.

Movement can push this back

I want to mention when we were in Lafayette we stopped at this truck stop and were handing out fliers for Sept. 12. One of the people turned out to be a Latino and he had lost everything in New Orleans. And when he saw me and Johnnie together, he came up to us and he was hugging Johnnie, saying, "Black and Latino—we have to be together. Bush ordered that levy to fall because he wanted to kill the Black and Latin communities. We've got to stand together."

We hardly saw any Latinos. It may never be known how many undocumented workers died as a result of that hurricane. Because of the way that they live. We don't know their names.

We have heard that the immigration officers were sending INS officers to the Louisiana-Mississippi region and you know that they are not going there to help the undocumented or immigrants. They're going there to find the ones they can find and they'll probably be deported.

We should turn the Sept. 16 events that were called to protest the Minutemen into events in solidarity with the Black community, because of the racism of this tragedy towards the immigrants of the Gulf Coast and towards all oppressed immigrants.

We arrived in Camp Casey—as you know Camp Casey is the people's Sheehan movement. And they were doing great work. And so many of the people at Camp Casey,

anti-war activists who were all white, most of them were so sure what this was all about. And there was all this discussion that it was an ethnic cleansing, about the redevelopment is going to be to push out the poor and Black community of New Orleans. They were very clear and very angry.

So we left around 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday morning on what should have been a trip of an hour and a half to get to Algiers, La. By 6 p.m. that evening we were still not able to arrive.

The main problem was the troops at the major stations. They would just close all the streets and when we would ask for directions they were like, well the hell with you, just get going, and start picking up their guns. It was that kind of climate. So it took us forever and finally we couldn't get through. You couldn't make a phone call. You couldn't get phone calls.

What I want to close up with is that when we were in the car for all those hours, nothing was said on the radio stations about how the U.S. government had allowed the Black community, the poor community, the immigrant community of this region to be wiped out overnight.

And so it's the challenge of the anti-war and progressive movement, of all of us who think the way we do, to never get the issue off the front pages. To make sure that we document the truth about what really happened there. That we find all the folks who want to struggle.

Because what is happening right here today is like what happened in the Trail of Tears of the Native American population. That kind of displacement.

But this is not the 1800s. This is 2005 and the level of consciousness of the movement can push this back. Can expose what is really happening in New Orleans and Louisiana today. And this should be the beginning of the decline of this government and this system that has allowed this tragedy to happen. And we have to make this the number one task of the movement: never to forget what happened in Louisiana and the Gulf Coast.

We must never forget and allow the government to be off the hook. □

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Guantánamo prisoners on hunger strike

By John Catalinotto

As many as 200 of the 505 prisoners being held at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo are in their fifth week of a hunger strike. They pledge to keep it up until either they win a change in conditions at the prison or they die.

The strike first received publicity when the British daily newspaper, *The Guardian*, published an article Sept. 9 from a report by the British human rights lawyer, Clive Stafford Smith, based on statements from the prisoners.

These statements, written Aug. 11, were not declassified by the U.S. government

until Sept. 7. They reveal that the prisoners are starving themselves to protest conditions at the camp, mistreatment by the prison authorities and desecration of the Koran by U.S. guards.

Smith, who represents 40 prisoners at the camp, says 200 prisoners are involved. The Pentagon first said there were 76, then 89, and the latest report in the Sept. 13 *Washington Post* is that 128 prisoners have been on hunger strike. Smith called the situation “desperate” and thinks some of his clients are likely to die.

Smith told the media, “The American military doesn’t want anyone to know about this.”

Major Jeffrey J. Weir, a Guantánamo spokesperson, told the *Post* that of the 18 detainees hospitalized, 13 were being force-fed through nasal tubes and five were being given intravenous hydration.

Hunger striker Binyam Mohammed said in his statement: “I do not plan to stop until I either die or we are respected.” Having grown up in London and being familiar with British politics toward the Irish liberation struggle, Mohammed added: “People will definitely die. Bobby Sands petitioned the British government to stop the illegitimate internment of Irishmen without trial. He had the courage of his convictions and he starved

himself to death. Nobody should believe for one moment that my brothers here have less courage.”

Bobby Sands died on May 5, 1981, after 66 days of a hunger strike.

None of the prisoners at Guantánamo has faced a trial nor even been charged with specific crimes. These prisoners have been held for three and a half years now.

A hunger strike begun earlier this summer ended when the prison administration pledged to observe the Geneva Conventions. Prisoners believe they were double-crossed and resumed their hunger strike on Aug. 11. □

More racist gov’t atrocities exposed

Continued from page 1

Solid Waste and Recycling tells of a “Love Canal-type landfill submerged in New Orleans.”

The area, called the Agriculture Street Landfill, is an example of environmental racism: “The ASL is situated on a 95-acre site in New Orleans Parish, Louisiana. ... Houses and buildings ... were constructed in later years directly atop parts of the landfill. Residents report unusual cancers and health problems and have lobbied for years to be relocated away from the old contaminated site, which contains not only municipal garbage, but buried industrial wastes. ... The site was routinely sprayed with DDT in the 1940s and 50s and, in 1962, 300,000 cubic yards of excess fill were removed from ASL because of ongoing subsurface fires.” The article says a few years ago the site was fenced in and covered with clean soil.

Now concern is raised about the potential of leaching to neighboring areas—because this area is “situated right in the middle of a huge area of three-foot flooding. ... It’s not outlandish to consider the possibility that toxic waste from the landfill may mix with floodwaters and spread far beyond the old landfill site.”

In contrast to the four days it took the government to organize food drops for the survivors in New Orleans, the Sept. 11

Hattiesburg American newspaper reports that the White House prioritized restoring power to a fuel pipeline in Mississippi, northeast of New Orleans and far from the Gulf Coast, in the immediate hours after Katrina struck.

According to the paper, “[The] order—to restart two power substations in Collins that serve Colonial Pipeline Co.—delayed efforts by at least 24 hours to restore power to two rural hospitals and a number of water systems in the Pine Belt.”

The manager of Southern Pines Electric Power Association reportedly received no less than two calls from Vice President Dick Cheney’s office stressing the importance of restoring power to the pipeline immediately.

Armed camp protects the rich

Meanwhile, the occupation of the Gulf region by troops, police—and now mercenaries—continues. The *Guardian* of Sept. 12 reports, “New Orleans has turned into an armed camp, patrolled by thousands of local, state and federal law enforcement officers, as well as 70,000 national guard troops and active-duty soldiers now based in the region.”

In addition, mercenaries from private companies, including Blackwater and ISI, have been employed in the hundreds by the wealthy elite of New Orleans to guard

their property.

The *Guardian* interviewed Yovi, an Israeli mercenary who is working in the region for ISI, who said, “God watches out for the rich people, I guess.”

If the events before, during and in the aftermath of the hurricane prove anything, it’s that capitalism watches out for the rich people, to the absolute suffering and devastation of the poor and oppressed.

And while these elite are having their homes guarded, they are busy creating their own plans for the reconstruction of the area with full support of the government—plans that do not include the poor and oppressed. The Sept. 8 *Wall Street Journal* tells, “Despite the disaster that has overwhelmed New Orleans, the city’s monied, mostly white elite is hanging on and maneuvering to play a role in the recovery when the floodwaters of Katrina are gone.”

The article describes a meeting, to be held the next day, of business leaders to “map out a future for the city.”

James Reiss, a descendant of an old-line Uptown family, told the *Journal*, “Those who want to see this city rebuilt want to see it done in a completely different way: demographically, geographically and politically. I’m not just speaking for myself here. The way we’ve been living is

not going to happen again, or we’re out.”

Dovetailing with this is an editorial in the *Washington Post* by Joel Garreau called “A Sad Truth: Cities Aren’t Forever.”

Garreau says, “What the city of New Orleans is really up against ... is the set of economic, historic, social, technological and geological forces that have shaped fixed settlements for 8,000 years. Its necessity is no longer obvious to many stakeholders with the money to rebuild it. ... If the impetus does not come from them, where will it come from?”

But the impetus for reconstruction—and how it should be done—is coming from the poor and oppressed communities in the Gulf as well, who continue to fight back.

In a radio segment entitled “New Orleans Population Has the Right of Return,” Glen Ford, co-publisher of the *Black Commentator*, said, “The rights of [the people of New Orleans] cannot be privatized, or church-ed-out, or Salvation-Armyed out. All help is appreciated but we must also focus on rights—the right to not be permanently displaced by depraved government policies or the corporate greed that will certainly try to swallow New Orleans whole.”

Activists around the world have pledged their solidarity to people of the Gulf region and their demands for justice. □

‘We must turn things around’

Continued from page 6

ers such as Clarence Thomas from the Million Worker March Movement, and Chris Silvera of the National Black Teamsters.

This was a town meeting to hear accounts from people of New Orleans who were victims of Hurricane Katrina who were housed in Houston.

The Millions More March organized buses from the Astrodome and the George R. Brown Convention Center to bring evacuees in to give their accounts. The *Houston Chronicle* said it was 700 people.

The mikes were lined up at both sides to get accounts of the tragedy and the suffering that was happening. There were testimonies from those who were saying that the Red Cross wasn’t helping them.

One woman said that she took 48 people into her house—three relatives and 45 other people that was in the house and couldn’t get any help from the Red Cross. One evacuee reminded us that FEMA and the Red Cross wasn’t giving out \$2,000 debit cards—which wasn’t enough anyways—but was giving UP TO \$2,000. So some were getting \$300 or \$400.

One woman gave an account of her family being on the roof waving to the military helicopters in New Orleans and being passed by constantly. People were saying that they wasn’t stealing, they were only taking from the stores what was needed.

And a lot of evacuees gave account of some of their children was in Iraq and that money should be used here.

An evacuee mother said her son was transgender and was attacked for this and raped in one of the centers—the convention center in Houston. One girl also got raped at the center and the guards was right outside.

Erykah Badu thanked the evacuees for sharing their stories and saying that New Orleans brought the face of racism in the U.S. But we will gather and we will build a better New Orleans ourself.

The Minister Louis Farrakhan also thanked the evacuees and the city of Houston for coming out and asked could he speak and be pardoned because he had to go to another townhouse meeting in

Baton Rouge and later in five rural towns in Mississippi in which Black mayors of those towns said they had not received any help from FEMA or the Red Cross.

He made a statement that the Red Cross and FEMA were criminals and that the community will have to make them open up their books. And he said that the victims and organizations should actually be a part of paying immediate attention to the crisis at hand and of the group that be rebuilding the Gulf states.

He made a sharp analogy to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, that so many lives is lost and that that money should be rerouted and not only spent on the Gulf Coast, but spent on the many poor in the United States.

The New Black Panther Party was commended by Minister Robert Muhammad, who is the Southwest regional coordinator of the Nation of Islam, for going into Algiers and New Orleans and bringing people out. He went on to raise Frances Newton as a part of the crisis, where Black

people were oppressed farther.

I just think myself that it’s a people’s movement that has arisen out of this crisis and that we should rush ahead to form commissions to actually investigate the Bush administration, FEMA and the Red Cross. And so we could have the level of organization to actually intervene right now because in the case of Algiers, they’re really up against military occupation.

I think what people should know, like what’s happening in the Algiers community, which is that a lot of people there are refusing to leave. A lot of people that we interviewed was saying that they wanted to return to New Orleans, young and old.

We should call for a solidarity movement around Algiers, which has taken the lead and the responsibility to actually care for people and bring attention to the world—the firsthand activism that the bourgeois media is not getting out.

The question of the war in Iraq should be tied to this because it’s the same level of greed as we saw—the money taken away from the levees was actually being sent to Iraq. So this is anti-war, labor and a people’s struggle and we could turn things around. We must turn things around. □

MANDO OBRERO

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Racismo y pobreza en el delta

Por Larry Hales

Lo que dolorosamente es obvio sobre el huracán Katrina no es que el huracán en sí tuviera tendencias extraordinarias, sino que aparte de la categoría de la tormenta, la pérdida masiva de vidas pudo haberse evitado.

Fue demasiado tarde cuando el gobierno local, estatal y federal proporcionó algunas medidas; no movilizó la Guardia Nacional, no utilizó los muchos barcos y autobuses municipales — algunos que ahora están bajo el agua — para trasladar a la población fuera de la ciudad. Ningún avión fue empleado para transportar gente fuera del peligro antes de que el Aeropuerto Louis Armstrong fuera cerrado el 27 de agosto, dos días antes de que el huracán azotara a la ciudad.

No es que el huracán no destruyera muchas otras partes de la Costa del Golfo. Algunos pueblos en Mississippi están ahora virtualmente desaparecidos. Sin embargo, lo que ocurrió en Nueva Orleans revela la realidad de la vida bajo el sistema capitalista: que no importa las grandes riquezas de la sociedad de los EEUU y el hecho de que l@s trabajador@s y l@s pobres creen tales riquezas, la mayoría está abandonada y

tiene que defenderse por sí sola en los momentos de crisis.

Muchos artículos se han escrito diciendo que la ciudad no podía aguantar una tormenta de más fuerza que la de una categoría 3. Sin embargo, los esfuerzos para restablecer los pantanos costeros fueron rechazados y desgraciadamente financiados con menos de lo necesario por miles de millones de dólares; solo llegaron \$375 millones de los \$14 mil millones que se necesitaban. Los diques debilitados no fueron reforzados. Un 44 por ciento del presupuesto del Cuerpo de Ingenieros de Nueva Orleans fue recortado y otros \$30 millones eliminados de los fondos para el control de inundaciones.

Combinado con el hecho de que la Guardia Nacional tenía una porción grande de sus tropas en la guerra en Irak, incluyendo a miembros del Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército los cuales se necesitaban para trabajar en los diques, las metas verdaderas de la clase capitalista y la administración de Bush salen a relucir con una claridad sorprendente. Es más importante para ellos reforzar su ocupación de Irak para robar las reservas petroleras del pueblo iraquí, que el proteger la población de Nueva Orleans de

una tormenta que hace años se había anunciado que iba a arrasarse a esta región.

Sin posibilidad de transporte, la gente fue forzada a formar colas en el estadio deportivo de Nueva Orleans, el Superdome, donde fue registrada e informada que iba a necesitar sus propios suministros de agua y comida. A miles les fue negado el acceso y enviad@s a escuelas o de vuelta a sus casas.

El huracán Katrina reveló la anarquía del sistema capitalista, especialmente durante momentos de gran crisis, y el racismo y la insensibilidad de la administración de Bush. Nadie va a olvidar que Bush se quedó en vacaciones mientras la tormenta de categoría 5 agitaba el Golfo. Tampoco se va a olvidar como altos oficiales como por ejemplo el jefe de la Agencia Federal del Manejo de Emergencias, Michael Brown culparon a las mismas víctimas de la tormenta.

Raza y clase, factores subyacentes

La población de la Costa del Golfo de México es mayormente Africana Americana. Por lo tanto, una gran parte de la región azotada por el huracán era predominantemente negra junto a la blanca pobre. El ingreso promedio por cápita es de \$24.650 anual, el más bajo de todos los esta-

dos. De los 50 estados, Luisiana es el número 42 en ingresos, con \$27.581, y Alabama número 40 con \$27.795, comparados a un promedio nacional de \$32.937. Los tres estados tienen tasas de pobreza más altas que el promedio nacional.

El racismo es inherente al sistema capitalista y el legado de racismo en Nueva Orleans ha resultado en una ciudad donde la población mayormente Africana Americana se encuentra mal preparada. Much@s de l@s residentes son desesperadamente pobres; desproporcionadamente desemplead@s, subemplead@s, o encarcelad@s; sin hogar y con un sistema docente por debajo de los estándares del resto del país. Los empleos disponibles son mayormente con bajos salarios, en el sector de servicios.

Más de un 27 por ciento de la población de Nueva Orleans vive debajo del nivel de pobreza. Un 67 por ciento de la población es negra, y es esta población la gran mayoría de l@s pobres, ell@s son l@s que se quedan atrás en todos los aspectos de la vida. Las casas donde residen l@s African@s American@s son mayormente residenciales viejos y dilapidados en las partes más bajas de la ciudad.

Otro hecho sorprendente es que más de una tercera parte de la población Africana Americana carece de automóviles particulares. La gobernadora Kathleen Blanco y el alcalde Ray Nagin decretaron que aqell@s con la posibilidad de irse de la ciudad debían hacerlo antes de la llegada de la tormenta. Pero la población negra pobre no tuvo la posibilidad de huir por su pobreza o por enfermedad.

Después del huracán, l@s negr@s a través del país se han enfurecido por la absoluta negligencia criminal de parte de todos niveles del gobierno. Las imágenes de l@s pobres, mayormente negr@s, l@s de tercera edad y l@s niñ@s siendo ignorad@s, muriendo lentamente de hambre y deshidratación, han sido grabadas firmemente en la mente del pueblo. Esto puede conducir a dudas en las mentes de muchas personas sobre las intenciones del gobierno, pero las estadísticas no mienten.

Por décadas, la clase dominante local de Nueva Orleans ha segregado de nuevo a la población de la ciudad, destrozando las viviendas de la gente de bajos ingresos, para abrir paso a casas lujosas y súper tiendas costosas en las partes de la ciudad más elevadas en relación al nivel del mar.

La responsabilidad por esta conspiración pertenece a los capitalistas y lo mismo está ocurriendo a través del país. Pero en Nueva Orleans, ha sido revelado trágicamente por el huracán Katrina para que todo el mundo lo vea. Y con la destrucción y la horrible tarea de recuperar los miles de cadáveres viene la noticia de que la tasa de desempleo se espera que suba a un 25 por ciento. ¿Puede empeorar aún más la situación?

Es por esto que el llamado para que regresen las tropas a casa debe ser repetido con más fuerza — para poner fin al sufrimiento y al asesinato del pueblo iraquí, para poner fin a la pérdida de vidas de los muchos pobres y oprimidos absorbidos por la maquinaria de guerra a través del reclutamiento forzado creado por la pobreza y la falta de trabajos, y ahora para que los fondos consumidos por las guerras imperialistas en Irak y Afganistán puedan ser utilizados para la reconstrucción de la Costa del Golfo de México y de Nueva Orleans.

La tasa de un 25 por ciento de desempleo no tiene por qué ocurrir. No ocurriría si los fondos necesarios fueran dispuestos y a l@s poblador@s de la Costa del Golfo les fuera permitido reconstruir bajo sus propias condiciones y en sus propios intereses. □

El escándalo de los diques

Por Minnie Bruce Pratt

Las autoridades de Louisiana dicen que posiblemente 10,000 personas han muerto en el estado como resultado del huracán Katrina.

La evidencia acumulada muestra que la tragedia humana y la devastación en Nueva Orleans es el resultado directo de la guerra estadounidense en Irak.

El periódico local Times Picayune advirtió en nueve artículos entre 2004 y 2005, que millones de dólares para controlar inundaciones y aliviar el daño de huracanes habían sido desviados hacia la guerra, diciendo sobre el desastre amenazador que “Es un asunto de cuándo, no de si (ocurriría)”

El presidente George W. Bush, enfrenado al aumento del costo de la guerra en Irak a principios de 2004, recomendó que se cortara el presupuesto de ingeniería en el Lago Pontchartrain en más del 80 por ciento. La ruptura en los diques de Nueva Orleans dejó que el agua de Pontchartrain inundara la ciudad.

Durante la última década, el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército ha trabajado para implementar el Proyecto de Control de las Inundaciones Urbanas del Sureste de Louisiana (SELA), autorizado por el Congreso en 1995.

Pero cuando Katrina golpeó a la región, proyectos en el monto de \$250 millones no habían sido terminados. Uno que un contratista estaba apurándose por terminar fue en el Canal de la Calle 17, el lugar de la ruptura más grave en los diques. (Editor and Publisher, 29 de agosto)

Walter Maestri, director de manejo de emergencias para la Parroquia Jefferson, dijo en 2004: “Parece que el dinero ha sido mudado en el presupuesto del presidente para pagar por la seguridad de la patria y la guerra en Irak, y yo supongo que ese es el precio que tenemos que pagar. Nadie por aquí está feliz de que no se puedan terminar de arreglar los diques, y estamos haciendo todo lo que podamos para demostrar que esto es una cuestión de seguridad para nosotros.” (Times Picayune, 8 de junio)

En 2004, durante un ejercicio de pronóstico, oficiales federales, de Louisiana y de Nueva Orleans, vieron cómo en el “Huracán Pam”, un plan ficticio, se producía casi toda la tragedia que está ocurriendo ahora.

Pero los oficiales abandonaron los planes de preparación para el desastre actual a causa de los recortes del presupuesto.

Por eso aquell@s familiarizad@s con la situación miraron con incredulidad cuando Bush dijo el 2 de septiembre en el programa “Buenos días América”: “Yo no creo que nadie anticipó la ruptura de los diques.”

Agencias del gobierno habían estado bien enteradas de la posibilidad de fallos en los diques y del terrible costo de vidas que se produciría.

El racismo y la guerra contra los pobres

Brian Wolshon, un profesor de ingeniería de la Universidad del Estado de Louisiana y un consultor para la planificación de evacuación, dijo que por lo menos 100.000 personas en Nueva Orleans habían sido identificadas como personas con “movilidad mínima”—l@s de tercera edad, l@s enferm@s, y las personas pobres sin carros. En las sesiones para planear las medidas a tomar en caso de un desastre, “poca atención” fue prestada a lo que le pasara a estas personas si acaso ocurriera un huracán o una inundación. Cuando se mencionaba la cuestión de las necesidades de estas personas él dijo que, “la respuesta era frecuentemente el silencio.” (New York Times, 2 de septiembre)

La gente no blanca compone el 70 por ciento de la población de Nueva Orleans — y el 28 por ciento vive bajo el nivel de pobreza. (Black Commentator). Éstas fueron las personas abandonadas a la muerte y a la devastación por las autoridades.

Este racismo y el descuido criminal hacia la gente pobre hace recordar la inundación devastadora de 1927, cuando los diques se rompieron a lo largo del Río Mississippi después de una primavera de lluvias torrenciales. En el sur segregado, las personas negras fueron “rescatadas” — y luego confi-

nadas en campamentos de trabajo, forzadas a trabajar en destacamentos pequeños para reparar las propiedades de los dueños blancos. Algun@s fueron matados a balazos por rehusar ser re-esclavizad@s. (Pete Daniel, “Deep’N As It Come: The 1927 Mississippi River Flood”)

Mientras Nueva Orleans estaba amenazada, las autoridades locales, estatales y federales acordaron que el Cuerpo de Ingenieros del Ejército debía dinamitar los diques en la parte baja de la ciudad donde vivía la población rural y más pobre. Aunque fue prometida una compensación, muy poca gente deliberadamente inundada recibió un centavo. (Judd Slivka, “Another Flood that Stunned America,” U.S. News Online, 2 de septiembre)

El “Financial Times” de Londres reportó sobre el desastre de este año bajo el titular: “La política de Bush ha incapacitado la respuesta al desastre”. Pero esta política, incluyendo la guerra en Irak, es un resultado directo de la búsqueda de ganancias del capitalismo. Los pantanos dragados por los especuladores de bienes raíces y rendidos inútiles como barreras contra las tempestades, y el aumento del calor global y del nivel de los océanos — son consecuencia del negocio desenfrenado y rapaz de las grandes corporaciones.

Con planificación y voluntad política, las tierras de la Costa del Golfo podían haber estado protegidas. A causa del calor global, los holandeses — quienes son expertos en impedir inundaciones — han estado invirtiendo desde hace mucho tiempo unos \$10 a \$25 mil millones en “defensa del mar”. Ellos están mejorando todos sus “diques, rompeolas y otras medidas para impedir inundaciones”. (Christian Science Monitor, 4 de septiembre, 2001)

Pero la voluntad política de ambos Republicanos y Demócratas en los Estados Unidos refuerza sólo el sistema de explotación capitalista. Una respuesta diferente puede venir de una fuerza que se levante contra el sistema — una fuerza que viene de la gente que ha perdido mucho y que tiene mucho por ganar en un cambio de sistema. □