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# At world's largest hog factory Immigrant workers lead wildcat strike

## Solidarity is key to reinstating fired workers

By the Raleigh, N.C., FIST (Fight Imperialism Stand Together) branch  
Tar Heel, N.C.

Five hundred workers walked off the job here at Smithfield Packing Nov. 16 in response to the recent firing of 75 immigrant workers, many of whom support efforts to unionize the plant. The next day, the plant was shut down again when over 1,000 workers, including many African Americans, walked out.

After the two-day walkout, Smithfield Packing bosses agreed to workers' demands to halt the wholesale firings, and to reconsider their implementation of immigration policies in the plant. For the first time, the company also agreed to meet with a group of workers elected by the workers themselves to further negotiate about plant issues and employee concerns. That meeting will take place Nov. 21.

Workers have been struggling for 12 years to bring a union to the world's biggest hog processing plant, located in a poor, rural region of eastern North Carolina.

North Carolina is a "right to work"—that is, officially anti-union—state. The work force is the second least unionized in the country. There is a fast growing new Latin@ population.

Against this background, Smithfield Packing has spent millions of dollars in a campaign to intimidate the workers and keep the union out.

When the United Food and Commercial Workers initiated an organizing campaign at Smithfield in 1994, the work force was mostly African American. Now, it is at least 65 percent Latin@, about 30 percent African American, with the rest white and Native workers.

The company has used racism, fear and other intimidation

tactics to keep the union out. In the 1997 election, Smithfield was found guilty of violating over 40 federal labor laws. But the bosses tied up the court decision in appeals for eight years.

As detailed in a 2005 Human Rights Watch report titled "Blood, Sweat, and Tears," Smithfield workers have been maimed, injured and killed as a result of the working conditions in the plant. Union supporters and organizers have been wrongfully imprisoned and beaten by Smithfield's private police force.

### Janitors win in Houston

5

Over the past several months, support for the union has grown. This, coupled with the company's loss of its last appeal of the National Labor Relations Board decision, has encouraged the workers who say they feel they are close to winning a historic victory and a contract.

In the weeks leading up to the walkout the company fired 75 Latin@ workers claiming their Social Security paperwork could not be verified. Some of these workers had been at the plant for two to three years. In an interview at Smithfield, one worker said the workers believed the company was using the paperwork claim as an excuse to fire union supporters.

New immigrant workers are realizing their power. On May Day 2006 thousands of Smithfield workers and their families united behind the immigrant-rights struggle. The May Day demonstrations around the country showed that this community has power and that unity behind the immigrant-rights struggle and the struggle for worker justice can move the overall working-class struggle forward.

The campaign for Justice at Smithfield continues. It will not end until the workers win a contract and union recognition. □

## As Day of Mourning nears

### Forum on Indigenous-immigrant solidarity

7



Speakers and organizers at Boston meeting. Discussion focused on ties between Indigenous peoples and today's immigrants.

WW PHOTO: STEVE GILLIS

## Recalling 'Solidarity Sam'

# Workers World fought gay oppression before Stonewall

By Leslie Feinberg

Years before the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion, the leadership of Workers World Party understood the need to fight oppression as a many-headed hydra.

I joined Workers World Party (WWP) in Buffalo, N.Y., in 1973, drawn to its ranks by my rage at the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the bloody CIA-orchestrated counter-revolution in Chile. The first person in the branch leadership that I "came out" to as transgender in late 1973—Jeanette Merrill—listened to me very intently. She responded, "I don't know much about your oppression, but I know oppression when I hear it."

My comrades in the Buffalo branch quickly made discussion and understanding about my oppression an important part of branch work. They demonstrated to me that comradeship is different than friendship or family. It is a powerful relationship among people who unite on a solid platform of political principles and who fight against each other's oppression as though it were their own.

In reaching out to me, some of the older members told me anecdotes about how Sam Marcy—who had founded our political and ideological tendency—had developed their understanding and sensitivity to all forms of oppression, including sexuality and gender expression. While no one could recall the exact dates, these examples ranged from the mid-1950s to the very early 1960s, long before Stonewall.

In one example, Marcy, at that time living in Buffalo as branch organizer, called an immediate halt when a young man sashayed around the office, mocking a feminine male to elicit laughter—something that was and is still quite common in the U.S. generally.

### Marcy said firmly, "Stop!"

Marcy, as a former labor organizer, certainly understood on a deep level that "An injury to one is an injury to all." However, another incident shows the depth of political and historical understanding that Sam Marcy brought to every aspect of social life.

When someone who attended a Party forum made a disparaging remark about drag shows held at a nearby bar, Marcy interrupted him, arguing that this form of expression was a carryover from pre-class society. Before his death, I asked Marcy how he knew that. He replied that he had come across what is today referred to as transgender in his readings about ancient cooperative societies.

Jeanette Merrill recalls that when Sam Marcy first heard that meetings at the Mattachine Society in Buffalo were being menaced by reactionaries, he sent Party members to the society's office at Main and Utica, telling them, "It's very important for you to go in solidarity." Merrill says she and her comrade and life partner, Ed Merrill, a steel union shop steward, attended.

"We walked up there on a Sunday evening—we didn't have a car. I can't remember all the details, but I can

remember how everyone there greeted us and thanked us for coming. We stayed very late."

### Whole Party fought gay oppression

Bob McCubbin, a gay man who met WWP in the fall of 1960 and is today a Party leader on the West Coast, remembers hearing the news about the opening salvo of the Stonewall Uprising in 1969. "I later heard that a comrade in New York had commented, upon hearing this news item, that 'A new front against U.S. imperialism has opened.'"

Members of Workers World took part in the following nights of the Stonewall Rebellion in Greenwich Village.

As a militant gay liberation movement emerged after the uprising, Workers World Party and its youth group—Youth Against War & Fascism (YAWF)—demonstrated solidarity on every front in the struggle against sexual oppression.

And it wasn't just the lesbian and gay, bi and trans members who took part in these struggles. Party members of all sexualities took part in the struggle to "Smash gay oppression!"

Workers World newspaper carried articles about lesbian and gay resistance.

YAWF took part in a 1970 demonstration at the Tombs prison in Manhattan in support of Richard Harris—a gay member of the Inmates Liberation Front of the Young Lords Party.

McCubbin says that, while organizing in San Francisco a year after Stonewall, "I combined my gay liberation activities with Party work in the anti-war movement and the struggle for Black liberation."

He recalls, "The banner we opened at a big rally for Angela Davis—where we also

raised the need to support her co-defendant, Ruchell Magee—was signed Gay Liberation Front, but it looked suspiciously like a Youth Against War & Fascism banner. And it was greeted with some consternation on the part of the rally's organizers."

McCubbin describes the spring 1971 anti-war march in San Francisco as "the biggest of the semi-annual West Coast mobilizations during those years."

"My friends and I carried banners in the march and managed to get out close to 5,000 copies of Workers World newspaper during the rally."

The large Chican@ contingent had been insensitively placed at the end of the march. The political high point of the event, McCubbin explained, "was when the Chican@s marched into the stadium where the rally was being held and surged through the huge crowd right up to and onto the rally platform, where they stood triumphantly waving Chican@ banners and flags.

"One of the leaders of this action was my gay friend Arturo Rodríguez, who subsequently wrote an article for Workers World explaining the reason for the action."

*Next: Internal development of WWP's organizational, political and historical contribution to the struggle for sexual liberation.*

*E-mail: lfeinberg@workers.org*



Lavender & Red focuses on the relationship over more than a century between the liberation of oppressed sexualities, genders and sexes, and the communist movement. You can read the entire, ongoing Workers World newspaper series by Leslie Feinberg online at [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org).

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# 'Stop the War' campaign shakes up Michigan

By Workers World Detroit bureau

A Green Party "Stop the War" slate of multi-national candidates emerged in Michigan to carry out a dynamic election campaign around the state in protest against the war in Iraq, as well as the war being waged on working people inside the United States. Activists with the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI), including members of Workers World Party, formed an alliance with the Green Party of Michigan (GPMI) to put forward the slate that, collectively, garnered hundreds of thousands of votes from working people.

David Sole, a longtime leader of Workers World Party and MECAWI organizer, was the Stop the War Slate candidate for U.S. senator. Sole waged an aggressive effort around the state to expose the true character of the Democratic incumbent candidate, Debbie Stabenow, who ultimately won reelection.

Sole's campaign emphasized that Stabenow, while posturing as anti-war, had voted for every Senate appropriations bill funding the Iraq war. She had also supported the racist, anti-immigrant fence along the Mexican border, the "torture" bill, the anti-worker bankruptcy overhaul, and the Patriot Act.

In contrast, Sole called for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, U.S. reparations to Lebanon and Palestine for its role in backing of Israeli wars there, immediate rights and citizenship for all immigrant workers, and re-direction of money wasted on war to fund jobs and health care, education, housing and other human needs.

Sole took his anti-war, pro-human-needs message directly to the people, with meetings in over 13 cities and towns, including several in conservative northern Michigan.

Sole's campaign went with sound cars and literature distributions into the Latin@ and Arab communities in Detroit and surrounding areas, where activists reported a positive response. Strong anti-war ads were placed in newspapers in those communities as well as in dozens of newspapers around Michigan.

The Michigan Citizen, a weekly African-American community newspaper, officially endorsed Sole in an Oct. 22 editorial. The Western Michigan University newspaper, the Herald, also endorsed Sole in an Oct. 2 editorial.

Other progressive and student newspapers and radio stations, as well as some cable TV stations, gave coverage to the Sole for Senate campaign, including a front page article in the Michigan Citizen, and an article in the Metro Times—a free weekly in the metro Detroit area.

But the corporate-owned media refused to cover Sole's campaign or the campaign of other Green Party candidates, despite dozens of press releases on every major issue sent by Sole's campaign to statewide media outlets. Sole and others were also excluded from candidate debates to which only the Republican and Democratic candidates were invited.

Despite these obstacles, the Sole for U.S. Senate campaign resonated with many workers and poor people as well as students around Michigan. And some in the progressive movement supported and promoted Sole's candidacy, such as well-known Chicana community leader and immigrant rights activist Elena Herrada.

## Rejecting the "Republicrats"

Two Stop the War Slate candidates did receive major media coverage—after the elections were over. Kyle McBee, a young

activist in his early twenties who works several jobs to survive, was candidate for 13th District State Senate in Oakland County. McBee was the subject of a venomous press attack blaming the Stop the War Slate candidates for "stealing votes" from the Democrats. (Detroit News and Free Press)

McBee and Lloyd Clarke, a retired UAW activist and candidate for 32nd District State Senate in Saginaw and Gratiot Counties, each received more votes than the difference in votes between the Democratic and Republican candidates. This tipped control of the State Senate to the Republicans.

McBee's opponents were reactionary Republican John Pappageorge, who eked out an 800-vote victory, and Democrat Andy Levin, scion of the Michigan Levin political machine. Both candidates spent almost \$2 million on the race. Levin waged an opportunistic and reactionary campaign against immigrant workers.

Clarke, a former auto worker, received 2.5 percent of the vote in his district, well over the 520 votes, or one-half percentage point, that elected the Republican candidate. Clarke ran an active campaign, placing over 5,600 hanger cards on mailboxes throughout rural Saginaw and Gratiot counties.

## Anti-war, pro human needs

All Stop the War Slate candidates used the campaign to take an anti-war, pro-human-needs message to the people during this months-long campaign. Several candidates made support of the Palestinian struggle a focus of their campaigns.

Kevin Carey, a laid-off substitute teacher, laid out a program for equal school funding in Michigan, unlike the apartheid-style funding system now in place. Carey also walked the picket lines with striking Detroit school teachers.

Michael Merriweather, a Wayne State student and candidate for WSU Board of Governors, traveled around the state calling for a new kind of education—"an honest view of history from those who lived it ... a focus on women, minorities and working class people ... whose social struggles provide inspiring models for social changes in the present."

Kristen Hamel, candidate for state representative on Detroit's East Side,

## Ohio voters robbed again

# Injured workers' benefits sabotaged

By Martha Grevatt  
Cleveland

In 2004 the massive disenfranchisement of African-American working class voters was worldwide front page news. Ohio Secretary of State Ken Blackwell—who just suffered a crushing defeat in his bid for governor—gained national notoriety for his role in securing the Bush victory.

In 2006 the working class was again disenfranchised, but this time there was almost no coverage in Ohio and none whatsoever outside the state.

On Nov. 7, voters in Ohio passed State Issues 2 and 5 and rejected Issues 3 and 4. Issue 2 raises the state minimum wage to \$6.85 an hour. Issues 3 and 4 were deceptively worded constitutional amendments, backed by the gambling and tobacco industries respectively. Issue 5 protects workers and the public from the ravages of second-hand smoke.

The obvious question for anyone who knows how to count, though, is what hap-

## Vote results for the Green Party Michigan Stop the War Slate candidates

CANDIDATE	OFFICE	VOTES
David Sole	U.S. Senator	23,925
Kristen Hamel	State Rep., District 1 NE Detroit, Harper Woods, & Grosse Pointes	652
Kyle McBee	State Senate, District 13 Oakland County	3,118
Lloyd Clarke	State Senate, District 32 Saginaw & Gratiot Counties	2,326
Kevin Carey	State Board of Education	73,578
Lauren Elizabeth Spencer	MSU Board of Trustees	112,798
Michael Merriweather	WSU Board of Governors	70,895

## Results for other Green Party Michigan candidates

CANDIDATE	OFFICE	VOTES
Douglas Campbell	Governor	20,016
Lynn Meadows	Secretary of State	69,970
Jacob Woods	State Board of Education	60,637
Margaret Guttschall	WSU Board of Governors	91,499
Fred Vitale	State Rep., District 3 Detroit	350
Derek Grigsby	State Rep., 7th District Detroit	605
Richard Kuszmar	State Senate, District 9	1,300
Bill Opalicky	State Senate, District 14	1,312
Ken Mathenia	U.S. Congress, District 5 Flint	2,293

took part in a debate that was televised repeatedly on cable stations in the Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods, also part of her district. Hamel, a longtime member of Workers World Party, articulated a program for turning around the economic disaster faced by workers and the poor in Michigan, and called for using the state's share of money going to the Pentagon to fund a massive jobs program instead. Hamel called for a moratorium on foreclosures, evictions, utility shut offs, plant closings and layoffs.

By far the largest vote-getter for the Stop the War slate, coming in fifth in a field of 9 candidates including two Democrats and two Republicans, was Lauren Elizabeth Spencer. A 19-year-old Michigan State University sophomore, Spencer ran for a slot on the Michigan State University Board of Trustees. Spencer waged a bold campaign throughout the state and

was endorsed by Between the Lines, Michigan's weekly newspaper for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, as well as the State News, the MSU newspaper.

Spencer also received the endorsement, as did the entire anti-war slate, of Leslie Feinberg, internationally known author and LGBT leader, with whom Spencer shared a platform in meetings in Detroit and East Lansing. Feinberg used an October speaking tour in Michigan to rally against the Iraq war and for the Stop the War Slate candidates and program.

For more information on the Stop the War Slate campaign on the GPMI ticket, you can still visit the beautiful Web site, designed by MECAWI activist Michael Johnson, at [www.stopthewarslate.org](http://www.stopthewarslate.org). The U.S. Library of Congress will archive the web pages of the 2006 David Sole for U.S. Senate campaign. □

pened to Issue 1? This ballot measure was to allow voters to reject Senate Bill 7, passed by the state legislature and signed by outgoing Governor Bob Taft last April. This bill was a vicious attack on injured workers, eliminating or reducing a number of benefits under the state workers compensation system.

Given the facts, most workers would vote to protect those benefits that they might one day need. The huge support for Issues 2 and 5 shows the working class voting to uphold its economic interests. Yet the votes on Issue 1 will not even be counted.

This court ruling is the latest chapter in a conspiracy to rob workers, first of their benefits and then of their democratic right to vote to keep those benefits.

The push to roll back state workers compensation benefits—which were already inadequate and sometimes took years of legal battles to collect—dates back to 1997, when Ohio legislators passed a series of benefit cuts. Immediately, the United

Auto Workers launched a petition drive to place Issue 1 on the ballot. Despite massive corporate funding of the opposition, along with confusing ballot language, the bill failed miserably. Labor out-mobilized capital.

Shouldn't that have been the end of it? Majority rules, right? Yet the bill passed in Columbus this year is almost identical to that rejected by the voters eight years ago.

What happened in the interim period is that funds set aside to help workers hurt on the job were stolen in a series of scandals involving privatization of claims processing, arbitrary reductions of employer premiums and bogus investment schemes.

The most famous scandal, and a contributing factor in Republican losses in Ohio, has become known as "Coingate." Some \$50 million in BWC funds were turned over to rare-coin dealer Tom Noe, ostensibly as an investment. Noe has been quoted referring to the fund as "an ATM." On Nov. 13 a jury found Noe guilty of one

*Continued on page 4*



**Good vibrations**

Alcoa workers fight for health care. At left, Martha Grevatt.

## Alcoa strikers fight forced overtime

By Martha Grevatt  
Cleveland

Necessity is the mother of invention. Ancient human beings invented the wheel; the modern working class invented the tool that keeps the wheel from turning. The strike at 16 Goodyear tire plants in the U.S. and Canada has entered its sixth week. On Nov. 7, UAW Local 1050 struck the Cleveland works of Alcoa, interrupting production of aluminum wheels for cars, trucks, motorcycles, and planes.

"The thing is, don't mess with the pensioners."

"They want us to work 19 days straight, then only two days off."

"And the point system is ridiculous."

These were the thoughts those on the picket line shared with this reporter. Alcoa bosses want retirees to pay \$3,000 per year towards health-care expenses, according to the union. Mandatory overtime is another central issue. In some departments, workers are putting in 12-hour days and six- or seven-day weeks, with no right of refusal of the overtime.

The "point system" refers to a barbaric attendance policy, under which five unexcused absences in a one-year period would result in an automatic firing. Virtually all absences are unexcused, including illness, car trouble, and obligatory court appearances. "If your house burns down, too bad," a worker explained. In justifying this harsh policy, the company generated statistics that implied a high rate of

absenteeism. The figures were skewed, however, by including everything from being sent home by the plant physician to pre-excused paid vacations.

Strikers are unwilling to make concessions to a company that last year made \$1.9 billion in profit. In the first three quarters of this year the Cleveland works made more profit for Alcoa than in any previous one-year period in company history. Alcoa is paying top dollar to nonunion employees from other plants to work during the strike. "It's corporate greed," said the strikers, one after another.

Production is way down. The strikers explained that if the forge hammer was running "you would hear it and feel it out here." No such vibrations were felt, only the good vibrations of strong union solidarity. □

## Injured workers' benefits sabotaged

*Continued from page 3*

count of engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, two counts of theft, four counts of tampering with records, four counts of money laundering and 18 counts of forgery. A prominent Republican backer, Noe is already facing jail time for an illegal fundraising scheme in which he gave his own money to friends for them to donate to the Bush campaign. This way he bought "Pioneer" status for having "raised" over \$100,000.

In another scandal, former Bureau of Workers' Compensation (BWC) Chief Financial Officer Terry Gasper pled guilty to taking bribes from two financial brokers who are currently on trial for bribery. A third scheme involves prominent Democrats as well as Republicans.

### 2.5 million workers lose pay

How would the BWC recoup those losses? Humanitarian considerations aside, the most obvious choice would be to take it from those who need it most, injured workers. Every year, some 2.5 million workers in the U.S. lose pay due to workplace injuries. They can hardly afford benefit cuts.

Senate Bill 7, among other things, reduced lump sums for workers who lose an arm and a hand, reduced the

number of weekly payments for workers forced to take a lower paying job, eliminated final settlement payments to family members when workers die, and stripped away the right to collect workers compensation for psychological injuries.

The last point particularly hurts people of color, women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers, who often face debilitating stress from brutal harassment and bigotry on the job.

### UAW mobilizes against bosses

Once again the UAW took on the nearly impossible task of reversing this assault at the polls. Having two months to collect 193,000 signatures of registered voters, an army of volunteers swung into action across the state.

They took on the challenge of an additional requirement—that petitions contain signatures from at least 3 percent of those voting in the last general election from at least 44 of Ohio's 88 counties. They chased voters down in the most sparsely populated rural counties. Wherever volunteers went, most workers were eager to sign. On June 29 the union delivered close to 225,000 signatures to Blackwell's office in Columbus.

Initially, the state ruled that the campaign was 73,000 signatures short. Challenges had that 73,000 reduced to closer to 40,000. This time only 10 days were allowed to make up the shortfall. In September over 100,000 additional signatures were turned in, yet the state claimed a majority was invalid, that petitioners were still 13,000 signatures short, and the issue would be kept off the ballot!

Volunteer petitioners became volunteer detectives, painstakingly comparing disqualified signatures with the records at county boards of elections.

Countless examples were found of bona fide registered voters who were wrongly identified as not being registered. Others were eliminated by a state regulation that disqualifies actual registered voters if they are registered at a different address—even with a state-wide issue and even if they move within the same city ward. These voters are allowed to fill out a change-of-address form at the polls and submit a provisional ballot. Why can't their signature count on a petition?

(It was the Workers World Party 1988 election campaign that filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of this gross disenfranchisement. The judge refused to rule one way or the other, allowing the restric-

*Continued on page 5*

## ON THE PICKET LINE

BY SUE DAVIS

### NWA mechanics end strike

The mechanics, cleaners and custodians of Northwest Airlines announced Nov. 6 that they had accepted a settlement ending their 444-day strike. The workers went on strike Aug. 20, 2005, rather than sign a contract drastically cutting their jobs and salaries. The deal allows the workers to accept layoff status and receive one week of pay per year of service up to five weeks. Those workers may bid on technician positions in the future. Those who wish to leave NWA will receive one week of pay per year of service up to a maximum of ten weeks. A press release issued by the Aircraft Mechanics union about the settlement concluded: "While we did not stop Northwest, we did stand and fight for what was just and right. There is no shame in fighting and losing—there is only shame in failing to have the courage to defend yourself and your coworkers."

### Boston nurses vote to strike

Over 95 percent of the registered nurses at Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston voted Nov. 13 to strike if negotiations do not produce a satisfactory contract by Nov. 27. The major issues are competitive wages, sick time and disability benefits, protection of newly licensed nurses and union rights. Management is offering the nurses a 3 percent raise each year of the two-year contract, while the nurses want a 5 percent raise to make their wages comparable to other area hospitals. According to financial records filed with the state, BWH's profits increased by nearly 120 percent to more than \$93 million in 2005 and by another \$65.8 million through the third quarter of 2006. Management wants to cut nurses' sick time to pay for the raises, while refusing to provide short-term disability benefits, the nurses' top priority going into negotiations. The nurses also want to limit responsibilities imposed on new nurses, which is a major cause of high turnover. The Massachusetts Nurses Association is also fighting for contract language to ensure that all nurses will be represented by the union. This challenges the recent National Labor Relations Board ruling that nurses with minimal supervisory duties are not eligible for union representation. At a Nov. 14 press conference, the MNA chair at BWH, Barbara Norton, held up a stack of more than 100 official reports filed in the last two months that "document instances at this hospital when the staffing conditions and the patient assignments forced upon nurses threatened the safety of patients. This is why we are here today."

### Mass. FedEx workers vote to join Teamsters

The Teamsters finally broke through FedEx's anti-union stance when a small group of home delivery drivers in Wilmington, Mass., voted to join Local 25 in Boston, according to a Nov. 17 Teamsters press release. These are the first workers in the FedEx Home Delivery system, a subsidiary of FedEx Ground, to win union representation. The National Labor Relations Board has ruled seven times since 1988 that FedEx Ground and Home Delivery drivers are not independent contractors and are eligible to join unions. Way to go Teamsters!

### Don't let Cintas fire immigrant workers!

The Cintas Corporation, which makes uniforms and various commercial cleaning products, is threatening the jobs of immigrant workers by implementing a new Department of Homeland Security proposal. The proposal—which is not yet a law—encourages employers to fire workers who are not able to correct Social Security number mismatches or verify that they are authorized to work in the United States. Currently, Cintas workers in California, Illinois, Connecticut, Minnesota and Wisconsin face termination. UNITE HERE, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and many civil rights organizations are protesting this regulation, which promotes anti-immigrant workplace discrimination, harassment and intimidation. UNITE HERE has launched a campaign to stop this policy before it's adopted by other employers. To sign a petition, go to [www.uniformjustice.org](http://www.uniformjustice.org). □

# Where has New Orleans' housing monies gone?

By Larry Hales

It appears that as time passes by, as the U.S. imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan blunder on, and as many people continue on with their daily lives, fooled into thinking that this or any administration in U.S. capitalist society cares about workers and the poor, the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath recedes into the back of the collective mind.

According to the Institute for Southern Studies' Gulf Coast Reconstruction Watch, nearly 300,000 people from New Orleans alone have not been able to return. More than a year after the storm hit, hundreds of thousands along the Gulf Coast are still displaced. Some 80,000 along the Gulf Coast remain housed in FEMA trailers.

After thousands, many of them poor and Black, were left to die, billions of dollars were supposedly allocated to rebuild New Orleans, and millions more collected through private donors.

While monthly rents were greatly inflated, beyond the reach of many pre-storm residents, and as public housing units as well as private homes were demolished or being slated for demolition, many people in New Orleans had nowhere to which to return.

Of the billions of dollars allocated to rebuild homes, a lot of it has gone or is going to corporations, or being siphoned off by officials at every level.

The Road Home program, created by Gov. Kathleen Blanco, the Louisiana Recovery Authority and the Office of Community Development with the state legislature's approval, was supposed to channel \$7.5 billion to those who needed it.

It was to be the largest housing recovery program in history, providing grants

of up to \$150,000 to cover uninsured losses for homeowners.

From the very outset, the program was a problem for workers and the poor in the area—to say the very least. The Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund says the program is “a fraud and an attempt for developers to permanently displace working-class and poor New Orleanians.”

Furthermore, it “prevents those with modest means from rebuilding because the maximum grant of \$150,000 is based on the pre-Katrina value of one's home ... minus any insurance proceeds ... minus any FEMA grants ... minus penalties for not having flood insurance ... minus penalties for moving out of the state if the homeowner sells her/his property; thus leaving homeowners with not enough funds to rebuild.”

Of the more than 100,000 homes that were damaged or destroyed, only 27 families have received any assistance. Gov. Blanco says that, already, nearly 1,500 should have received assistance.

Almost 500 days have passed since Hurricane Katrina hit. So even if 1,500 families had received assistance instead of 27, it would not be much progress.

And this is merely the tip of the iceberg. As many people are becoming aware, much of the billions of dollars in federal monies not delivered to those who need it appears to be getting siphoned off to corporations. According to the Gulf Coast Reconstruction Watch, ICF International is to receive \$756 million over a three-year period. ICF International is a corporate management company that, a year ago, had revenue totaling \$177 million.

What's more, Entergy New Orleans was given \$200 million by the state of Louisiana, through federal Community Development Block Grant monies fun-



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

A condemned home in New Orleans. Over 100,000 were condemned or destroyed. Only 27 families have received assistance.

neled through the Road Home program. Entergy is a private utility company. It received this money as a bailout.

The company was claiming bankruptcy and was given corporate welfare, though its parent company Entergy Inc. reported \$777 million in net cash flow for third quarter 2006.

While millions of dollars meant for homeowners to rebuild are being pilfered, no money was set aside for renters. And half of all New Orleanians rented.

Some 5,100 public-housing units in New Orleans are set for demolition. For the Gulf Coast Reconstruction Watch, law professor Bill Quigley of Loyola University in New Orleans writes: “U.S. Housing and Urban Development, which has taken over the local Housing Authority of New Orleans, is seeking millions in hurricane relief tax credits to demolish over 5,000 apartments. Since Katrina, HUD and HANO have barred thousands of families from returning to their apartments. All the renters are African American, most are mothers and grandmothers. Some are elderly and disabled. Private apartments are out of the question as rent in the New

Orleans area is up nearly 80 percent over last year.

“These apartments are safe and could have already been repaired, but almost all the maintenance workers were fired. A professor from MIT recently inspected the apartments and declared they are structurally sound and in better shape than most of the rest of the housing in New Orleans.”

The fight for New Orleans continues. It is a fight of self-determination for oppressed nations. The same struggle is taking place around the country, as gentrification grows and the poor are pushed out of their communities to the edges of metropolitan areas.

Cops, landlords and “neighborhood watch” groups are being utilized to terrorize the poor, workers and people of color so that developers can steal land and build condominiums and shopping outlets for the rich.

The difference in New Orleans is that the local ruling class of bankers and landlords used a hurricane to finish the job, on top of the storm of great poverty and degradation. □

# Birth-control foe to head family-planning office

By Kathy Durkin

In yet another outrageous attack on women's basic rights, the Bush administration has named Dr. Eric Keroack, a fierce opponent of reproductive rights, to be the deputy assistant secretary for population affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services. This would install him as leader of the office that runs government-funded teen pregnancy, family planning and abstinence-only programs.

National women's and pro-choice organizations have decried this nomination and called for massive pressure on the

administration to stop it.

This appointment would give the anti-birth-control Keroack enormous power over federally funded family planning programs and their financing. It does not even require congressional confirmation. It is yet another offering to Bush's ultra-right allies.

Keroack is from the religious-based ultra-right sector, which played a big role in getting Bush elected president. Although an obstetrician-gynecologist, who is sworn to “do no harm,” Keroack has a long history of railing against abortion rights, birth control, and sex education, all crucial to women's reproductive health.

He is the “medical director” of an organization called “A Woman's Concern,” which runs six bogus “crisis pregnancy counseling” facilities in Massachusetts whose aim is to stop abortions and contraception. Its Web site says that promotion of “birth control is demeaning to women, degrading of human sexuality and adverse to human health and happiness.” (www.naral.org) Its fraudulent allegations even claim that birth control use increases unplanned pregnancies and abortion rates.

The doctor is also a member of the Medical Advisory Council of the Abstinence Clearinghouse, a key supplier of abstinence-only education, which also attacks birth-control use. In this capacity, he preaches abstinence-only to women and young people, and is known to verbally assail women's sexuality in his speeches. (Feminist Daily News Wire, Nov. 17)

This appointment is also a major attack on poor women. Whoever holds this office supervises the allocation of Title X funding under the Public Health Service Act. This is \$283 million in annual grants “designed to provide access to contraceptive supplies and information to all who all who want and need them, with priority given to low-income persons.” (Washington Post, Nov. 17)

The program sustains 4,600 family planning clinics that assist 5 million low-income and uninsured women each year; a disproportionately high number are women of color. Free or low-cost services are provided. These include birth-control supplies, information and counseling, pregnancy care, physical examinations and cancer and HIV screenings.

The Department of Health and Human Services reports that it is the only federal program whose single aim is to provide family planning and reproductive health care. The Title X funding is crucial to the delivery of these services to those who need them the most.

It is clear that with this appointment the Bush gang intends to undermine family planning programs, and, in fact, will stop at nothing to eradicate women's fundamental rights and reproductive health.

This administration has shown it will continue unabated to push through its ultra-right agenda despite the overwhelming sentiment of the people of the United States who support contraception and abortion rights and availability—vital cor-

nerstones of women's rights and health care. Once again, the Bush gang has demonstrated that it will continue the vicious assault on these rights in an all-out campaign to overturn them.

But as the victory against the right-wing abortion ban in South Dakota shows, the mass struggle can stay the hand of the virulent right-wing attacks on women's rights.

## BULLETIN

### Victorious Houston janitors: 'Si se puede'

A month-long strike led by mostly Latin@ janitors against five major cleaning corporations in Houston, Tex., ended Nov. 20. A majority of the 5,300 janitors involved were making only \$20 a day in wages based on a four-hour work day. According to the Associated Press, “Under today's agreement, the SEIU janitors will get a 50.5-percent pay raise over the two-year contract. Next Jan. 1, pay will increase to \$6.25 an hour, a 21-percent increase over the current wage of \$5.15 an hour. That will go up to \$7.25 an hour on Jan. 1, 2008, and \$7.75 on Jan. 1, 2009.” The workers will receive health care benefits beginning on Jan. 1, 2009. People view this contract as a major victory. It is their first city-wide union contract since these workers formed the union in November 2005. *Workers World will write more on this important development in a future issue.*

## Injured benefits

Continued from page 4  
tion to remain to this day.)

Legal challenges to the state's position led to an initial court ruling to place Issue 1 on the ballot; hence both absentee printed ballots and touch screen ballots had Issue 1. The state appealed, however, and a higher court reversed the lower court, and then the Ohio Supreme Court refused to hear the matter. Therefore, the votes on Issue 1 will never be counted, despite all the rhetoric since 2004 about making every vote count.

Is this democracy in action or democracy inaction? Whether it's being imposed at gunpoint around the world or through crass maneuvers here in Ohio, Marx had it right when he called it what it is: the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. □



Boston, Nov. 15. News conferencees prepare to carry out independent investigation.

WW PHOTO

# Community, unions launch investigation of worker's death

Special to Workers World  
Boston

The Committee for Justice for Hector Rivas—a powerful coalition of unions, community organizations, City Council members of color and families of victims of job-related accidents—held a news conference Nov. 15 to demand an independent investigation of Rivas' death last spring.

Rivas, a Boston school-bus mechanic and member of United Auto Workers Local 1596, was found overcome by carbon monoxide in the driver's seat of a service van on March 9. Rivas had been helping to jump-start buses with a gasoline-powered generator installed in the back of the van. Without sufficient ventilation in the van, Rivas was exposed to 11 times the "permissible level" of the poisonous gas.

"Hector did not die March 9," said Tony Hernandez, organizer, Painters and Allied Trades District 35, at the conference. "He was dying slowly for more than two years. This is a criminal case. We have hundreds of thousands of workers across the country dying slowly, every day."

Boston contracts First Student Inc. to

administer all business related to maintaining and operating school buses. Despite two years of complaints by the mechanics, First Student refused to spend the paltry \$70 dollars to ventilate the service trucks.

On April 18, another mechanic, Miguel Camacho, was injured when an illegally modified airlift struck him.

Pledging both local and international union support, UAW Local 1596 President Don Boehner declared: "When one of us dies, we want recognition in the papers. Not because we want fame or attention in our death, but because a light needs to be shed on the issues that caused the death. We are concerned about our workers, school bus drivers, the children, and all the drivers in the city."

City Councilor Charles Yancey said that the city and the media employ a racist double standard when the death involves

someone from communities of color. "I will say that racism is involved in this case," said Yancey.

The major corporate media boycotted the news conference. News conference participants agreed that the boycott confirmed that racism is a defining issue in this case.

Reporters for two community newspapers, La Semana and The Bulletin, attended the news conference. La Semana, a Spanish-language paper serving the Latin@ community, carried full coverage and three pictures, including one on the front page.

## Independent investigation launched

News conference participants went on to cement a broad coalition. It includes the Rivas and Camacho families, the UAW, Painters District 35, the Boston school bus drivers union United Steel Workers Local 8751, Bishop Filipe Teixeira, the Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee, Voices of Liberation, the Women's Fightback Network, the Mass. Coalition on Occupational Safety and Health, student and community activists, and "Team

Unity"—the city's Councilors of Color, who are Chuck Turner, Felix Arroyo, Charles Yancey and Sam Yoon.

Turner said: "We are supporting a call for the independent investigation. It is imperative that we link the death of Hector Rivas with the current problems and failures of the city's school buses."

Later that day, Team Unity introduced to the City Council a resolution concerning the Rivas and Camacho cases specifically and school bus safety generally. The resolution called for a comprehensive review of the bus fleet and a hearing on school-bus safety on Dec. 4 at 6 p.m. at City Hall. The resolution passed unanimously.

Already, the Committee for Justice's actions have sent ripples of fear through First Student Inc. and the city. An inspection of all buses is now under way. A source involved in this inspection has reported that already 100 buses have failed, sending First Student into a frenzied effort to obtain sufficient buses. Mechanics have stated that First Student is failing to fully repair known vehicle troubles and has downgraded preventive maintenance to cut costs.

At the news conference, the committee

## Responses to attacks on Mumia Abu-Jamal

The following letter was sent on Nov. 16.

Dear friends:

Recently some Philadelphia politicians contacted officials in France demanding that Paris revoke Mumia Abu-Jamal's honorary citizenship. The letter, sent by a lawyer in France who is not even licensed to practice law in that country, contained misrepresentations and outright lies. It is a fraud.

Attached are letters that Mumia and I, as his lead attorney, sent on November 7 to both the Mayor of Paris and the City Council of Paris. In three decades of specializing in defending people facing the death penalty, I have not seen a case in which the authorities want so desperately to kill a client. Officials know that as long as Mumia is alive he will continue being outspoken against governmental wrongs. They are trying to silence the pen and voice of this great journalist by killing him. We must not let that happen.

Your concern and support is appreciated.

With best wishes,

Robert R. Bryan

Law Offices of Robert R. Bryan

2088 Union Street, Suite 4

San Francisco, California 94123

Lead counsel for Mumia Abu-Jamal

Go to [www.millions4mumia.org](http://www.millions4mumia.org) to download letters from Abu-Jamal and Bryan.



Above, Pam Africa blows out Birthday candles. Right, Africa in the middle of her family.



## 'Warrior, unifier, diplomat'

# Pam Africa honored at 60th birthday bash

Hundreds of activists from the New York region and other areas of the United States gathered at Salem United Methodist Church in Harlem Nov. 18 to celebrate the 60th birthday of the leader of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, MOVE member Pam Africa.

The standing-room-only crowd listened to moving accolades from many activists who have worked with Pam Africa, especially around the struggle to free death-row political prisoner Abu-Jamal since 1982.

Included on the program were several generations of the back-to-nature, communal MOVE organization who since the late 1970s have suffered racist repression, including killings and incarceration, at the hands of the Philadelphia police and federal government.

Those who paid tribute to Pam Africa included Elombe Brath, Ramona Africa, New York City Councilmember Charles Barron, Suzanne Ross, Monica Moorehead, Viola Plummer, Alton Maddox, Panama Alba, Lynne Stewart, Brenda Stokely, Rosemary Mealy, Steve

Bloom, Herman Ferguson, Iyalua Ferguson, Ray LaForest and Sally O'Brien.

Audio birthday greetings from Abu-Jamal and former political prisoner Fred Hampton Jr. were played. Cultural presentations were provided by the Welfare Poets, Ngoma, Louis Reyes-Rivera and Seeds of Wisdom, the MOVE youth group.

The moderators of the program were Camille Yarborough, cultural artist, and Orié Ross, MOVE supporter and member of the New York Free Mumia Coalition, which sponsored the event. —Report and photos by Monica Moorehead

stated its position that the city and School Department must not be permitted to evade their responsibility for these tragedies. Many critical questions need answers. For example, the company's cutbacks led to removing Rivas' partner so that he was working alone that fateful morning. Who ordered the cutback? All responsible parties must be held accountable for failing to provide safe working conditions such as properly ventilated work areas.

After the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's investigation earlier this year, OSHA charged First Student Inc. with 11 accounts of safety violations and one count of willful negligence leading to death. First Student Inc. has contested all counts. Many believe the OSHA fines represent only a slap on the wrist. Since its investigation was limited to First Student, OSHA had no authority to address the city's accountability.

Speakers noted that this fact alone highlights the need for an independent investigation led by the family, the unions and the community, an investigation free from interference from those responsible for the problem.

"We must examine Rivas' death within the larger context," said Councilor Sam Yoon. "What is the political issue of the year? Immigration. Immigrants do the 3 D's—difficult, dirty, and dangerous work. They have become the scapegoat for all of America's problems. These jobs will always be here. The face of this work is changing. We must recognize this change. Hector Rivas' life must be recognized in that change."

The loss of Hector Rivas' life has exposed issues such as racism, labor rights, environmental racism and corporate greed. "We are working people," said Dorotea Manuela of New Mission High School. "We don't have a lot of money. First Student Inc. and the city have money and lawyers. All we have is our muscle. But we will stand up united to fight. Not another death! Not another injury!"

*Sara Mokuria, Cassandra Clark Mazariegos and Steve Kirschbaum contributed to this report.*

## BOSTON MEETING

# The struggle for Indigenous sovereignty and immigrant rights

By Peter Cook  
Boston

A multinational crowd packed the Boston Workers World office on Nov. 18 for a meeting on the struggle for Indigenous sovereignty and human rights. This important meeting was held at a crucial time, less than a week before the 37th National Day of Mourning in Plymouth and only two weeks before the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day rally and march on Dec. 1.

The featured speaker was Mahtowin Munro, co-leader of United American Indians of New England (UAINE). Denouncing the racist vigilante Minutemen as well as the proposed wall of death along the border with Mexico, Mahtowin gave a detailed overview of the history of immigration in North America, starting with the first and only truly illegal immigrants—the Europeans who started their invasion in 1492. [Read article below.]

Robert Traynham of USWA 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers, chaired the meeting. Traynham recalled the system of segregation and Ku Klux Klan attacks that he experienced growing up as an African-American in West Virginia.

Clemencia Lee, a leader of the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee and a member of the Boston Teachers Union, provided an update on the organizing for the Dec. 1 action. She focused on the successful street outreach that had taken place earlier in the day, where young people they met on the street were excited about taking part in a day honoring Rosa Parks.

Lee also announced that two of Rosa Park's nieces have accepted an invitation to come to Boston to speak at Dec. 1 and to tour local schools, churches and visit com-

munity organizations.

Four Salvadorans working at Harvard University, who are members of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, told of their determination to fight against the unjust and racist plans to lay them off. The workers, animal technicians at Harvard's Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology (MVB), discussed the long history of racism at Harvard University.

Latin@ workers make up approximately 70 percent of the animal technician staff and are routinely denied opportunities for advancement and training. Management told these workers that even though they have seniority, they will lose their jobs because of automation and insufficient proficiency in English.

Latin@ workers have been subjected to the most vile forms of racism, ranging from a prohibition on the use of Spanish at the workplace to segregated meetings and functions. Recently, a white manager sprayed household cleaner on the food of some of the Latin@ workers claiming she did not like the smell.

Sara Mokuria, representing the Committee for Justice for Hector Rivas, gave an update on this important struggle for safe working conditions. She announced that, as a result of the hard work of the committee, some members of the Boston City Council have called for a public hearing on Dec. 4 to look into the death of Héctor Rivas as well as the overall safety of the Boston School Bus fleet. [Read Rivas article on page 6.]

Agustín Herrera of Voices of Liberation, a radical youth organization, spoke about the struggle for immigrant rights. Herrera mentioned that 3,600 immigrants have died in the desert near San Diego since the

start of "Operation Gatekeeper" in 1994. Herrera pointed out that youth are dying in the streets of Boston as a result of the same system that oppresses and exploits undocumented immigrants.

An educator, Herrera spoke of the way that the education system is used to facilitate oppression by not teaching the true history of the U.S. Herrera called for everyone to do everything possible to support the struggle in Oaxaca, Mexico. He closed by stating, "No Justice, no peace; there is no justice on stolen land."

Moonanum James, co-leader of United American Indians of New England (UAINE), gave a spirited and well-received overview of the history of the National Day of Mourning (NDOM).

### National Day of Mourning

James spoke of how in 1970 his father, Wamsutta Frank James, was asked to give a speech at a state-sponsored banquet commemorating the 350th anniversary of the landing of the pilgrims. When the organizers read his speech, which gave the true history of the pilgrims, they immediately disinvited him. Instead, Wamsutta Frank James spoke in front of several hundred Native Americans and their supporters in Plymouth, Mass., at the first NDOM (the full text of the speech can be found at [www.uaine.org](http://www.uaine.org)).

Moonanum James related various NDOM stories, ranging from the burying of "Plymouth rock" to the 1997 police attack on the march in which 25 people were arrested. James stated that once again this year's NDOM will be dedicated to Leonard Peltier, the Native-American leader who has been unjustly imprisoned since 1976. □

## Native activist supports today's immigrants

The featured speaker at the Nov. 18 Boston meeting (see accompanying article) was Mahtowin Munro, co-leader of United American Indians of New England. Mahtowin focused her remarks on the immigrant rights struggle from a North American Native perspective.

Denouncing the racist vigilante "Minutemen" as well as the proposed wall of death along the border with Mexico, Mahtowin stated, "As Indigenous peoples, we have no borders."

Mahtowin gave a detailed overview of the history of immigration in North America, starting with the first and only truly illegal immigrants—the Europeans who started their invasion in 1492. These European immigrants were guilty of carrying out some of the most vicious and brutal acts of genocide against the Native population. This history, however, has been conveniently left out of the history books.

She pointed out that undocumented workers forced to leave their birth countries to search for a better life are fleeing the poverty and repression caused by policies of the imperialist U.S. government, such as NAFTA and CAFTA. These trade agreements, which allow U.S. agribusiness free access to their markets, have decimated the local economies throughout Central and South America.

Mahtowin explained how the U.S. stole land from Mexico as a result of the "Mexican-American" war of 1848. "The 'Mexican Cession' is a historical name for the region of the present-day southwestern



Bobby Traynham and Mahtowin Munro.

United States ceded to the U.S. by Mexico in 1848 under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, following the Mexican-American War. The cession of this territory from Mexico was a condition for the end of the war, as U.S. troops occupied Mexico City and Mexico risked being completely annexed by the U.S. Under great duress, Mexico was forced to accept the offer."

She continued, "The region of the 1848 Mexican Cession includes all of the present-day states of California, Nevada, and Utah, as well as portions of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming. This was in addition to Texas, which the U.S. had already claimed in its Texas Annexation of 1845."

Mahtowin concluded, "So we see that the U.S. literally stole millions of acres of land from the Mexican people, then established arbitrary borders such as the Rio Grande, and now hunts down those who dare to cross those borders."

Mahtowin discussed how, despite repression and the ongoing attacks, the immigrant community rose up this past spring in a magnificent display of resistance as millions of immigrants and their supporters took to the streets in cities across the U.S. in solidarity with the struggle of undocumented workers and to denounce attempts to criminalize them.

The notion of "illegal aliens," Mahtowin explained, "is an invention of the racist

U.S. ruling class. The dominant powers for centuries codified Indigenous, African, Chinese and other people as essentially not 'American.' The revolting use of the word 'illegal' as a noun is a linguistic way of dehumanizing people and reducing individuals to their alleged infractions against the law."

Mahtowin described how capitalism requires undocumented workers to keep the economy running but, in order to manipulate this reserve army of labor, the bosses drive immigrants further underground so they can be super-exploited.

Mahtowin closed her talk by calling for unity among the different struggles, noting that such unity must be based on "respect for the right to self-determination of all oppressed nations. ... We cannot subordinate the fight against racism to any other struggle."

"The things we seek—such as self-determination and sovereignty for the oppressed, an end to killer cops, racism and war and the oppression of LGBT [lesbian/gay/bi/trans] people, full rights for disabled people, jobs and education—can never be fully realized under capitalism, a system that is centered around exploiting people and resources and making a profit," stated Mahtowin.

Mahtowin concluded by demanding that Leonard Peltier, Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners be freed immediately.

*Summarized by Peter Cook. Read full speech by Mahtowin Munro at [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org).*

# Youth, community confront recruiting station

By Ben Carroll  
Chapel Hill, N.C.

Over 70 youth, students, and community members marched and rallied Nov. 15 against the first U.S. Army recruiting station to open in Chapel Hill, N.C.

Anti-war and counter-recruitment activists marched two miles from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's campus to the new recruiting station at 1502 E. Franklin St., led by a banner which read, "Army recruiters out." UNC-Chapel Hill Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was the primary organizer of the demonstration.

The rally outside the station consisted of speeches by members of FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) and SDS, as well as representatives from Feminist Students United and NC Choices, a Quaker group which advocates choices for young people after high school other than the military. Speakers focused on topics such as sexual violence in the military, the ongoing occupation of Iraq, and cuts in funding for educational opportunities. Speakers highlighted the fact that over a third of women in the

military report experiencing sexual assault and that reports have been filed against over 100 recruiters for sexually assaulting and harassing young women.

In response to the youth and community demonstration, the military mobilized eight World War II and Korean War veterans, dressed in uniforms and military decorations. They continually harassed demonstrators, yelling racist, anti-gay and sexist slurs at speakers and protestors alike. While the veterans' appearance at the demonstration was unexpected, the protestors were unfazed and organizers called the rally "an unconditional success."

This recruiting station will be the target of a continuing fight from youth and student activists, who vow to end the targeting of youths in their community, especially poor youths and youths of color. "We won't allow the military to come into our community and practice the same deceptive and racist tactics they have practiced for so long in other communities," said FIST member Peter Gilbert. "This struggle is just beginning and we won't stop until military recruiters leave our town." □

## Dec. 1 call to action

# Board of Education: 'Recognize our rights!'

By Mia Cruz  
New York

The New York City Board of Education (BOE) has been the key factor in the mis-education occurring in the city's public and charter schools. Thanks to the curricula approved by Joel Klein, students learn how "White colonists helped Africa" and how "Hezbollah was involved in 9/11." This kind of misinformation has led to hate toward and discrimination against certain cultures.

If the teachers are trained to teach this false history, then the students are taught to believe it. One of the rights in the New York City students' Bill of Rights, written by the Urban Youth Collaborative (UYC) Student Union, states that we students should be taught about the history and diversity of the schools' student populations. This means Black students learning about Black history, but true history, not white colonial lies. Any person of color knows that white colonists never helped the people of Africa—they tortured, raped and murdered them.

Joel Klein also implemented school safety laws which make cell phones and iPods "contraband" in school buildings. He's implemented "roving scanners." This not only enforces the 'electronics ban' but also inhibits a learning environment.

We have a right, as students, to study in a safe and nonthreatening environment, according to the student Bill of Rights. This right directly counters the roving scanners policy by the BOE. Roving scanners is a recent manifestation of 'school security' which had security officers showing up one morning, without informing the student body or parents, with metal detectors and handcuffs on the belts of every officer. This violates the Bill of Rights in another way, infringing on the right to have students and parents involved in the school's decision making process.

We students are fed up with the violation of our rights, privacy, security and confiscation of our personal items. We

are calling for students, parents, teachers and advocates to come out and demand student rights, including protection for all small schools and better equipment and trained school security officers for larger schools. No longer should students feel like prisoners at a place of learning.

### Come out on Dec. 1

Dec. 1 is Rosa Parks Day. This marks the 51st anniversary of Parks' courageous arrest for refusing to give up her seat on a segregated Montgomery, Ala., bus. Before her, many young women were arrested for the same reason. Even though Mrs. Parks was the one to make headlines, it was the youth who inspired this courageous act.

Last year in October, students of color in France realized the racism of their society and rose up. This only came after the death of other youth of color. This uprising made headline news because the youth are powerful in numbers. Youth put a stop to business as usual in France. And for one day, we need to put a stop to business as usual in New York City!

Dec. 1 is a day of commemoration and a day of strike. It is a day of impunity. This is so we can take off, celebrate and stand up for our civil rights without the harassment of being marked absent. We need to stand up for our rights as the civil rights movement and the students and youth of France so courageously did in the past.

We will gather at the northern end of Cadman Plaza, Brooklyn, at 11:30 am. We will march across the Brooklyn Bridge, and we will tell the Board of Education how it feels to have our student rights violated! They need to know what happens to us when the BOE picks a school to scan and allows students to be harassed, physically, sexually and mentally. No school, no work, no shopping on Dec. 1!!!

The writer is an organizer with FIST-Fight Imperialism, Stand Together, youth and student group. For more information about FIST, e-mail [fist@workers.org](mailto:fist@workers.org). To contact the writer, e-mail [poweractivist@yahoo.com](mailto:poweractivist@yahoo.com).



PHOTO: AL VIOLA  
Protestors outside  
Ft. Benning, Ga.

# 22,000 protest at gates of U.S. torture school

By Dianne Mathiowetz  
Ft. Benning, Ga.

The annual protest at the gates of Fort Benning in Columbus, Ga., demanding the closing of the School of the Americas (SOA—now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security and Cooperation) drew record numbers and displayed the growing participation of young people from all across the country.

Among the many memorable and emotional elements of the multi-day event: survivors of torture at the hands of SOA graduates speaking of their brutal treatment; the sight of 1,000 grandmothers wearing white kerchiefs in the tradition of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo of Argentina, who stood with pictures of their "disappeared" children demanding accountability from their government; 117

U.S. veterans marching towards the gates of Fort Benning on the early morning of Nov. 19; the impact of thousand of voices intoning "presente" after the calling out of names of victims murdered by SOA-trained soldiers; and the magical appeal of giant puppets, dozens of drummers, and stilt walkers combined with contagious music and song from dozens of musicians.

As of Nov. 20, some 16 people, including three of the grandmothers, had entered onto base property and were arrested. They face up to six months in federal prison.

As evidence that the struggle to shut down the SOA is expanding, similar protests were held this weekend in Argentina, Ecuador, Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia, El Salvador, Colombia, Canada, Ireland and in the U.S.

For additional information, go to [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org); 117

# How GIs organized in Iraq against the war



From left, anti-war Iraq War veterans Garrett Reppenhagen, Jeff Englehart and Joe Hatcher, Nov. 17.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

By John Catalinotto  
New York

U.S. Army veterans of both wars against Iraq and from the Vietnam War period and supporters of resistance inside the U.S. military filled the Judson Memorial Church here on the evening of Nov. 17 to hear an update on current military resistance.

Featured speakers were Garrett Reppenhagen, Jeff Englehart and Joe Hatcher, who were stationed with the First Infantry Division in Diyala Province in Iraq during 2004-2005 and spoke out, while there, against the war and occupation. Now members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), the three took turns describing the difficult atmosphere for dissent. "We had the sense of overwhelming power over our heads," said Reppenhagen, "which made it hard to openly resist. We couldn't go to the latrine without our sergeant knowing about it."

"There was no 'behind the lines' and no sidelines," said Englehart. "We were at very small bases and under the constant scrutiny of commanders. We felt our main role as dissenters was to bear witness to the American people. Our big campaign was pasting the sticker, 'Bush lies, who dies?' all over the base. The commanders would

take down the stickers that were up front. But when we put them in the corners and on the latrine doors, the soldiers would quietly let them stay."

The veterans are now speaking out at anti-war rallies and strengthening the morale of the growing number of people who protest occupation. What they showed was that even two years ago military dissent was possible in the U.S. Army, even in Iraq itself.

Also at the meeting, Tod Ensign of Citizen Soldier announced that A Different Drummer, a gathering place for GIs to discuss their attitude toward the continuing war, had recently been established in Watertown, N.Y., near Camp Drum, based on the model of the coffee-houses that anti-war forces set up near military bases during the war against Vietnam.

Tom Barton, editor of the Web-based daily newspaper GI Special, chaired part of the meeting and reported that increased mail to his site showed a growing opposition to the war within the military.

The general tone of the meeting was that the Republican defeat at the polls will not of itself end the war and that increased action in the streets and especially in the barracks will be needed. □



## On anniversary of Mexican revolution

# Peoples movement inaugurates its own president

By LeiLani Dowell

On Nov. 20, the 96th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, Mexican President Vicente Fox decided to cancel the traditional parade held that day. However, the people of Mexico, infused with the spirit of resistance that the anniversary commemorates, continued their struggle against oppression.

In Mexico City, a people's inauguration was held to swear in Andrés Manuel López Obrador as Mexico's legitimate president. This was a mass rejection of right-wing, pro-U.S. Felipe Calderón, who is to be sworn in on Dec. 1 despite massive protest of a corrupt and fraudulent election last July 2. The Associated Press reports that thousands were gathering on the morning of Nov. 20 to participate in the inauguration.

The AP quoted López Obrador as saying, "Nobody wants violence in our country, but there are people who give grounds

for violence. There are a lot of people who say that, after July 2 the path of electoral politics is no longer viable." (Nov. 20)

The Narco News Bulletin reports that in Chiapas, thousands of Indigenous residents successfully blocked all major roads and highways in the state on Nov. 20, standing in silent formation across the roads or highways in solidarity with the struggle of the people of the state of Oaxaca. The blockades and other business closures in honor of the strike left the streets "uncharacteristically quiet" on a national holiday that usually involves much traffic to the tourist sites in the area. (Nov. 20)

Protests have continued in Oaxaca, demanding the resignation of Ulises Ruiz and the withdrawal of the Federal Preventive Police (PFP), which have been occupying the central plaza of the city of Oaxaca and brutalizing protestors.

At least 30 "disappearances" of protestors have occurred since the arrival of the federal police. El Universal reports on the

case of René Trujillo Martínez, a program announcer for Radio Universal—the radio station of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO), which is the organization that has been leading the fight against repression in Oaxaca since May.

On Nov. 7, Trujillo and two of his friends were abducted from Trujillo's home, held in a warehouse, questioned and tortured with electric shocks, needles under their fingernails, strangulation and beatings for three days. They were then forced to take pictures with guns, taken to the federal Attorney General's Office in Oaxaca, and charged with possession of illegal firearms. (Nov. 20)

The most recent protests have focused on the documented sexual assaults and harassment against the women of Oaxaca by members of the PFP. Nancy Davies reports that on Nov. 19 more than two hundred people encircled the PFP, holding up mirrors "so they could see themselves as they really are." (narconews.com,

Nov. 20) On Nov. 20 a demonstration of the Oaxaca's Coordination of Women was suppressed by police forces who threw piquín chili dissolved in water in the faces of the protestors. (Prensa Latina, Nov. 20.)

A Constitutive Congress of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca has been formed, and met on the weekend of Nov. 10-12 to define its own constitution, and elect a State Council. The Congress announced, "In spite of the climate of repression that flourishes around the movement of the peoples of Oaxaca, it's necessary not to stop, but to move ahead in the attainment of our objectives and toward solution to the demands of the Oaxaca peoples." The State Council announced their upcoming events, including a State Forum of the Indigenous People on Nov. 28-29 and participation in the national movement against the presidential inauguration of Felipe Calderón on Dec. 1. (narconews.com) □

# Conference builds solidarity with Venezuela

By Robert Dobrow  
St. Paul, Minn.

Activists gathered here Nov. 17-19 to show solidarity with the people of Venezuela and opposition to U.S. intervention in that country. Some 100 activists met at Macalester College, two weeks before the Dec. 3 presidential elections in Venezuela.

Those attending, many from Latin America solidarity groups both in the United States and abroad, participated in a weekend of cultural events, speeches, workshops and strategizing about how to raise the issue of Venezuela in the progressive movement.

A recent poll by the U.S.-based Evans/McDonough Co. showed President Hugo Chávez with a 22-point advantage over his leading rival. (AP, Nov. 7)

Nevertheless, speakers at the conference warned that the U.S.-backed opposition is "ready to declare election fraud" on the day after the election. They charged that Washington has channeled millions of dollars to right-wing opposition parties by way of "aid" to organizations like the U.S. Agency for International Development and

the National Endowment for Democracy.

Dr. Nelson Pineda, Venezuela's deputy ambassador to the Organization of American States, and Adina Bastidas, vice president of Venezuela from 2000-2002 and current executive director of the Inter-American Development Bank for Venezuela and Panama, took part in the conference.

Bastidas said that to understand the Venezuelan Revolution it's necessary to see it "in the context of the neo-liberal model being imposed on the people of the world." She said that the revolutionary struggle "has its roots in Venezuelan land. It's not imported."

Bastidas, who was the first woman vice president in Venezuela, cited many examples of the progress achieved in the past six years. She announced that UNICEF has now declared Venezuela free of illiteracy.

"We worked with a Cuban project," said Bastidas, "recognized by UNICEF. And they have given us our 'certificate of freedom from illiteracy.' We achieved a millennium goal that was set for 2015; and we achieved it in 2005."

She also cited remarkable health-care achievements. Now, she said, as a

result of the Barrio Adentro (Inside the Neighborhood) program, in any neighborhood in Venezuela "there is a building where a doctor is available 24 hours a day."

Jesus "Chucho" Garcia, founder of the Afro-Venezuelan Network, told the conference that Venezuela has delivered 100 million barrels of petrol to the most impoverished communities in the United States. Venezuela has also provided free eye surgery to poor people in Chicago under an eye-care program that flies patients to Venezuela for cataract operations.

"That's solidarity," said Garcia. "Contrast this to how the U.S. gives 'foreign aid' in order to promote counter-revolution."

Audrey Thayer, a member of the White Earth Reservation and community organizer, connected the Venezuelan struggle with the aspirations of oppressed people in the United States.

She described the oppressive conditions for Native peoples in northern Minnesota, who face epidemic rates of incarceration, poverty and suicide. "I go to two to three funerals of young people every week," she said. But she cited Venezuela's example as a beacon of hope and moved the partici-

pants to applause when she said, "I want to thank Venezuela so very much."

Jorge Veloz of the Afro-Venezuelan Network focused on the issue of racism and the role of indigenous peoples in the Bolivarian revolutionary process.

In the new Constitution, he said, "All the rights of the indigenous people are recognized. In order to re-found the Republic, we had to include and recognize all sectors of the country which had been excluded."

Veloz continued: "Never before in Venezuela have the most excluded groupings had as much participation as they have today. In public discourse, the themes of racism and discrimination are ever present. This is what's at stake on Dec. 3—all these advances of social inclusion."

The weekend event was organized by the newly formed Venezuela Solidarity Conference. The group plans to celebrate an election victory and congratulate the reelected President Hugo Chávez with another meeting, on Dec. 4, at Macalester College, that will feature a live connection from Venezuela.

Readers can go to [www.venezuelasolidarityconference.org](http://www.venezuelasolidarityconference.org) for more information about the conference. □

## Congo election

# Kabila defeats millionaire with ties to Mobutu

By G. Dunkel

After the official results of Congo's election were announced Nov. 15, supporters of victorious candidate Joseph Kabila danced in the streets and waved big posters with his photo. One of them told French television, "It's joy! Joy! At this victory."

Kabila got 58 percent of the vote to 42 percent for his rival, Jean-Pierre Bemba. Two television networks that supported Bemba announced he was going to use every means legally possible to challenge the vote and the Catholic archbishop of Kinshasa denounced electoral "fraud." But the people's reaction showed otherwise.

This election was the first after a terrible war that raged from 1997 to 2002 and led to some 2 million to 4 million deaths. Bemba, described in the media as a former "rebel" leader, is the son of a wealthy business owner who shuttled back and forth

between the Congo and its former colonial master, Belgium. Like his father, Bemba was close to the former dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko.

The small European country of Belgium became prosperous in the 19th century largely through its intense exploitation of the people of the Congo, millions of whom died under Belgian rule.

Kabila is the son of a different kind of rebel leader. His father was an opponent of Mobutu who became leader of the Congo after Mobutu was overthrown.

Bemba has a few thousand soldiers in Kinshasa. The European Union has about 2,500 heavily armed troops in and around the capital of the Congo, backed by 17,000 or so U.N. troops. At this point, the EU says it will suppress any attempt to overturn the elections. The ability of European and U.S. companies to exploit the tremendous wealth of the Congo requires political stability.

Kabila has allies like Angola, which has troops in Kinshasa and could quickly move in more. He is also the current president, was a former military commander and has significant support in the Congolese Army.

Beyond all the calculations of military force and political support lies the weariness of the Congolese people.

Even NGOs from imperialist countries that presume to have the last word on human rights have raised the issue of the role of foreign companies in stoking the civil war. Three years ago, a joint statement by a dozen major human rights groups charged that multinational corporations had developed "elite networks" of key political, military and business elites to plunder the Congo's natural resources. (Jim Lobe, "Global Businesses Profit from Congo War, Groups Charge," OneWorld U.S., Oct. 28, 2003)

A U.N. Panel of Experts in an October

2002 report had named 85 companies, including eight from the U.S., that bought key natural resources from parties engaged in fighting in Congo. While a terribly poor country, Congo has vast mineral wealth that could fund its development if its resources were not stolen by exploiting multinationals that give virtually no compensation to the central government.

Kabila will have to face big challenges. It is common for families in Kinshasa and other large cities in the Congo to eat every other day because they don't have enough money to buy food every day. The Congo lacks the means to provide public services, from water to health, from education to garbage collection.

The treasury is empty and the foreign companies that are operating in the country generally smuggle their products out to avoid paying taxes and export duties.

The elections were just a small step in solving the Congo's vast problems. □



# The only way

Who can fail to enjoy the sacking of war hawk Rumsfeld or Bush's squirming body language on his recent Asian trip? It does one's heart good to know that these supreme war criminals have to pay some price—albeit so very small—for the terrible destruction they have wreaked on the world.

But behind these very public figures lies a vast network of interlocking institutions and a class of people whose prestige, fortune and power all emanate from the cozy relationship between government and the privately owned businesses that profit hugely from imperialist expansion and from militarism itself.

Take, for example, the Lockheed Martin Corp. It is the largest arms producer in the world. In 2003 alone, the year the U.S. invaded Iraq, this company got \$22 billion in Pentagon contracts. Its stock price tripled between 2000 and 2004. By 2005, with two wars going strong in Iraq and Afghanistan, Lockheed had a backlog of orders from the Pentagon worth \$75 billion.

Former Lockheed executives and lobbyists hold key policy positions in the government—especially when it comes to deciding where to send troops and jet fighters next and how much to spend on military procurement.

Bush's national security adviser, Stephen J. Hadley, is one of them. He

heads the National Security Council, which describes itself as the president's "principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters." Hadley has been in and out of government and private business for decades. He represented Lockheed at the giant D.C. law firm of Shea and Gardner before joining the Bush administration.

E.C. Aldridge Jr. now sits on Lockheed's board of directors. Earlier, when he was head of the Pentagon's weapons procurement program, Aldridge signed the contracts with Lockheed to build the F-22, the world's most expensive airplane.

A former vice president of Lockheed, Bruce Jackson, headed a group called the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq that had free access to top government officials in pushing for the war—all in the name of "democracy" and "freedom," of course.

"Conflict of interest" laws are supposed to protect the public from the kinds of backroom deals that favor politically connected corporate interests. Obviously, these laws are a joke. The truth is that the capitalist government itself represents an enormous conflict of interest, since it speaks in the name of the people—essentially, the working class—while consistently doing the bidding of the moneyed class. Corruption is endemic.

Ending predatory wars of domination once and for all means getting rid of capitalism. There is no other way. □

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## Iraq doublecross

# Dems dodge demands to bring troops home

By Deirdre Griswold

There will be no neat end to the bloody mess in Iraq. That's the message from Washington these days—from both sides of the aisle.

President George W. Bush on Nov. 17 took the occasion of a visit to Vietnam to draw this incredible "lesson" from that earlier imperialist bloodbath and debacle: "We'll succeed unless we quit."

Despite daily proof that the resistance in Iraq can run circles around the regime set up by the U.S. and Britain, the politicians are talking about sending more troops there.

It all began with the arrogant ambitions of the Bush clique to seize the time and win undisputed world domination in the post-Soviet era. The neocons around the president convinced the U.S. foreign policy establishment in both parties that the risk of unleashing the dogs of war was well worth it. The prize was the Middle East—full of oil and a steppingstone to Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

Those in Congress and the military/intelligence structure who had to give their blessings to aggression didn't resist. They accepted all the lying justifications for the invasion of Iraq, even when they knew better. Their training, as enthusiastic promoters of the right of U.S. corporations to go anywhere in the world to suck out the wealth, trumped whatever doubts they might have had about the Iraqi people accepting a neocolonial regime.

Now, 44 months later, all but a handful of diehards—like Bush—are admitting that the occupation is a disaster. Henry Kissinger, Nixon's main adviser on Vietnam and a long-time Rockefeller protégé, finally said in an interview broadcast Nov. 19 on BBC that a U.S. military victory in Iraq is "no longer possible." He had earlier told journalist Bob Woodward, "Victory is the only viable exit strategy."

Resistance to U.S. and British troops keeps growing and the pain of those in the middle of the firestorm is unbearable.

Sitting at their kitchen tables or tossing at night, millions of people in the U.S. and Iraq are wondering the same thing: When will the troops go home? Which will come first—news about a change in Washington's policy, or the dreaded notification that a friend or relative has become a casualty?

Their hopes were raised before the U.S. midterm elections, when the media made it seem that the vote would decide this question. It was often referred to as a referendum on the war.

The anti-war vote happened. The Republicans lost their majority in both houses of Congress. Bush quickly fired Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld—which he had planned to do since summer, according to insiders.

As further proof that the war is what sunk the Republican Party in the election, the neocons began blaming Bush for the Iraq disaster.

Kenneth Adelman, once a Bush team insider who predicted that the conquest of Iraq would be a "cakewalk," now disavows the war. Paul Wolfowitz, formerly Rumsfeld's top assistant and co-author of the original document laying out the neocons' vision of a "New American Century," recently told an audience at the National Press Club, when asked about Iraq, "That's not my problem." Wolfowitz now heads the World Bank, to the dismay of the world.

But with all this, no commitment has come from the Democratic Party leaders to press for an end to the occupation and the withdrawal of troops.

Suddenly, the talk from both capitalist parties is about how to strengthen the Iraqi regime created by the U.S. occupation, so that at some unspecified later date U.S. troop levels can be drawn down.

On the Republican side, Sen. John

## ON THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF MUMIA ABU-JAMAL'S ARREST



24 years on death row is an injustice

## Be in Philadelphia Sat., Dec. 9

11:30 am Gather @ City Hall

12 pm March to AFSC, 15<sup>th</sup> & Cherry St. for rally

Bring your banners, placards & noisemakers on Dec. 9

Endorsers include: International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, NY Free Mumia Coalition, Harlem Tenants Council, International Action Center, Patrice Lumumba Coalition, IFCO/Pastors for Peace, Iglesia San Romero/UCC, Campaign to End the Death Penalty, FIST - Fight Imperialism, Stand Together youth group and others

For more information on the march & rally, leaflets & posters in Philadelphia: call ICFFMAJ at 215-476-8812. For leaflets/posters and NY bus information: Call NYFMC hotline at 212-330-8029 or go to [freemumia.com](http://freemumia.com). Call IAC at 212-633-6646 or go to [millions4mumia.org](http://millions4mumia.org). NYC bus will leave the IAC, 55 W. 17 St. at 8:30 am and the main Post Office, 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. & 32<sup>nd</sup> St. at 9 am for Phila.

Why is it important for the movement to be in Philadelphia on Dec. 9?

■ Mumia's legal appeal, which proves that he did not get a fair trial, is being reviewed before the highest court under the U.S. Supreme Court; oral arguments will be held in the next few months.

■ The City Council of Philadelphia and the State of Pennsylvania Senate & Assembly passed resolutions this past May insisting that France withdraw the naming of a street after Mumia, and that Mumia no longer has any right to appeal, in direct contradiction of his being granted the right to do so before the Third circuit Court of Appeals.

■ Remember the executions of Shaka Sankofa, Stanley Tookie Williams, Hasan Shakur, Frances Newton and others. Let's act now to organize to save Mumia's life before it is too late.

■ Mumia is a national and international leader in the fight against war, racism and all forms of repression and exploitation. A serious threat on Mumia's life is a serious attack on all of our struggles.

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners!

"We couldn't save Malcolm, but we can save Mumia"

—ASSATA SHAKUR, 1995

To hear Mumia's audio columns, go to [prisonradio.org](http://prisonradio.org)

McCain and now Kissinger may admit that Iraq has become a quagmire, but they oppose a withdrawal. Kissinger hopes to get Syria and Iran to join Iraq in a regional conference that would supposedly bring “stability” to the region.

Democratic Party leaders like Sen. Harry Reid, Sen. Nancy Pelosi and Rep. Steny Hoyer say the U.S. can’t just “cut and run.” They champion the view that the U.S.—meaning the ruling class—has the right to construct a regime in Iraq friendly to its interests.

This is nothing but unvarnished imperialism and doesn’t sound much different from what Bush has been saying.

The Democratic Party leaders prevented John Murtha, a long-time militarist who nevertheless proposed setting a timetable for withdrawal, from becoming the new House majority leader.

Even retired military figures like Lt. Gen. William E. Odom, appointed by Ronald Reagan to be director of the National Security Agency from 1985 to 1988 and now an analyst with the conservative Hudson Institute, are doves compared to the Democratic leaders. Odom calls openly for total withdrawal with no preconditions and says, “Cut and run must be the first step in Iraq.”

### On the ground, destruction and defeat

Meanwhile, as the paralysis continues in Washington, popular anger against the war continues around the world.

Even with Bush standing by his side, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia on Nov. 20 called for a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. He had to. Tens of thousands of angry Indonesians across the vast archipelago had been demonstrating against Bush’s visit for days.

The news from the fighting in Iraq was infuriating, tragic and revealing.

News began getting out about a U.S. Army tank attack on Nov. 13 that had killed scores of civilians in Ramadi, capital of Al-Anbar province. Doctors, eyewitnesses and local police told reporters for Inter Press Service that 35 people were buried the following day after “a funeral procession which closely resembled an angry demonstration.”

“We heard the bombing and we thought it was the usual fighting between resistance fighters and the Americans, but we soon realized it was bombing by large cannons,” 60-year-old Haji Jassim explained to IPS at the burial. “We weren’t allowed by the Americans to reach the destroyed houses to try to rescue those who were buried, so certainly many of them bled to death.”

Ramadi “has often been the scene of large-scale U.S. military operations and their inherent forms of collective punishment,” explained IPS. “Last June, thousands of residents were forced from their homes due to military operations.”

The article added that: “The scene at the hospital was tragic as doctors confirmed the reason of death for many as severe bleeding that had gone on for several hours. Most of the doctors were unwilling to discuss too many details for fear of U.S. military reprisals.”

A few days later, however, the fears in the U.S. military command that it has lost control of the situation on the ground were realized when a large supply convoy of 25 trucks crossed into southern Iraq from Kuwait and stopped at what appeared to be an Iraqi government checkpoint. It wasn’t.

Armed men dressed in police uniforms seized 19 of the trucks and a security vehicle. Four U.S. contractors and one Austrian were taken hostage. Nine Asian drivers in the seized trucks were later released.

An Iraqi resistance group took credit for the spectacular heist, the largest since the war began. □

## PALESTINE:

# Human chain stops air attack on leaders’ homes

By Leslie Feinberg

Israeli troop and tank fire, helicopter gunship and warplane attacks, raining death and destruction on Gaza and the West Bank, are galvanizing Palestinian resistance.

In a dramatic new tactic, Palestinians in Gaza successfully blocked the Israeli military from carrying out its now all too familiar terror campaign of aerial bombardment of homes. Hundreds of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip united across the political spectrum in two mobilizations that forced the Israeli Air Force to suspend air strikes on homes in the early hours of Nov. 19.

The Israeli military had ordered occupants of two homes in Gaza to evacuate as Air Force planes headed toward the residences to fire missiles at the houses. One was the home of Mohammedweil Baroud, described as a leader of the Popular Resistance Committees, located in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya. The other was the home of Mohammed Nawajah, described as a Hamas leader, in the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza.

Local mosques, Palestinian radio and television stations broadcast a call to defend the homes. Many hundreds responded. They barricaded themselves inside the homes, ringed the buildings in a human chain, climbed atop the roofs and scaled the balconies.

The mobilizations reportedly brought together members of Hamas, Fatah and the Popular Resistance Committees. Witnesses described large crowds ringed the homes chanting together, in one voice, against the United States and Israel, vowing to die rather than surrender.

Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, of Hamas, went to Jabalya refugee camp on Nov. 19 to help protect Nawajah’s home. As the prime minister climbed to the roof, he told reporters: “We are so proud of this national stand. It’s the first step toward protecting our homes, the homes of our children.”

He characterized the protest as a message to the United Nations Security Council. There, on Nov. 11, U.S. imperialism had exercised its veto power to torpedo an Arab-backed resolution condemning Israel’s middle-of-the-night massacre of residents of a Beit Hanoun neighborhood three days earlier.

The popular response to defend homes against air attack on Nov. 19 recalls the 1,500 unarmed Palestinian women who took serious casualties on Nov. 3 as they answered a broadcast call to march on Zionist troops in order to free Palestinian men militarily surrounded in a mosque in Beit Hanoun. In doing so, they led resistance to Tel Aviv’s high-tech military offensive in Gaza.

### Resistance burns like fire

Spokespeople for militant Palestinian groups who took responsibility for rocket volleys into a Zionist settlement of Sderot on Nov. 15 stated that the salvos—which claimed the first Israeli casualty from a Qassam rocket in a year—were to avenge the Nov. 8 slaughter in Beit Hanoun. One of the rockets seriously injured the security officer guarding Israeli Defense Minister Amir Peretz’s house.

Palestinians defied heightened Israeli military repression and poured into the streets of Ramallah on Nov. 15, the second anniversary of the death of President

Yasser Arafat and the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Palestinian Independence Day.

And on Nov. 17, hundreds of Palestinians and their Israeli and international supporters tried to tear down part of the Apartheid Wall, erected by the Israeli military, which cuts across villagers’ land in the West Bank village of Bil’in, west of Ramallah. Troops fired concussion grenades and rubber bullets, which hit five Palestinian protesters taking part in the weekly demonstrations against the annexation wall.

Israeli members of the group Anarchists Against the Fence surprised occupation troops on Nov. 18 and took over their tanks and bulldozers at military checkpoints in the Gaza Strip. The activists climbed atop the tanks and unfurled banners. They said their aim was to “[s]top the war machine, as citizens in whose name the army operates.” (Haaretz.com, Nov. 19)

### ‘Break the economic blockade!’

As Palestinian resistance burns, it is igniting the call for solidarity among Arab and Islamic populations in the Middle East and around the world.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Mahmoud al-Zahar reported of his Nov. 16 meeting with Ali Larijani, head of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council: “Until now Iran has given more than \$120 million to the Palestinian government. They have said that they will provide us with more financial aid.”

This aid challenges the economic boycott against the popularly elected government of Hamas led by U.S. finance capital. The U.S. and European imperialists have blocked hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to the Palestinian Authority and Israel has refused to release millions more in collected tax revenues, as a weapon to punish the population for electing Hamas and to engineer a “regime change.”

Twenty-six of the 57 members of the pan-Islamic Organization of the Islamic Conference voted on Nov. 18 in the Saudi city of Jeddah to “break the blockade.”

The day after Washington shot down the UN Security Council resolution denouncing Israel, as rage at U.S. imperialism’s blatant role as the power behind Tel Aviv spread throughout the Arab and Islamic world, the Arab League met in Cairo, Egypt, and voted to rescind the financial blockade.

### Washington behind Tel Aviv

In the days after the United States provided political cover by blocking any censure of Tel Aviv in the Security Council, Tel Aviv continued to ratchet up its five-month-long military siege in Gaza. Israeli military war planes bombed the Gaza Strip in a Nov. 15-17 blitzkrieg, lighting up the night sky as missiles detonated on homes below. (Prensa Latina, Nov. 18)

On Nov. 18, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly—156 to seven, with six abstentions—to accuse Israel of using “indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force” in Gaza. The United States, Australia and Israel voted against the measure.

The resolution—softened in tone from the one Washington shot down in the Security Council—“deeply deplored” the Israeli military offensive, and called for an immediate end to the operation and a pull-out of Tel Aviv’s troops. It was a symbolic vote since it is a non-binding resolution. Unfortunately it also called on Palestine to stop fighting back.



The Arab League brought the non-binding resolution to the General Assembly a week after international anger built—particularly in the Arab and Islamic world—against Washington’s strong-arm backing of Israel, underscored by the UN Security Council veto.

Palestinian Ambassador Riyad Mansour characterized Washington’s veto after the massacre in Beit Hanoun as sending Tel Aviv the message “that it can continue to commit crimes and acts of outright aggression with impunity.” And that’s just what Israel did—from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank.

### Reign of state terror

These are just some of the actions of the Israeli military, the boot heel of occupation on historic Palestine.

Israelis stormed into the West Bank town of Betonia, west of Ramallah, on Nov. 14 and imposed a military curfew on the city of Tulkatem. Witnesses saw Palestinians suffocated by gas canisters that troops fired at houses. (Wafa, Palestine News Agency, Nov. 16)

The next day, troops invaded the village of Doura and Al-Fawwar Refugee Camp in the southern Hebron District and kidnapped two women. Both were bound, blindfolded and taken away. Their whereabouts are unknown. They leave behind 13 children, collectively.

The two women are now among the more than 10,500 Palestinian women and men, children and youth abducted and held by the Israelis.

Hundreds of Zionist troops invaded the northern part of Tulkarem city in the northern West Bank on Nov. 16 with more than 30 military vehicles. They reportedly opened heavy fire inside the campus of the city’s Open University, forcing some students to leave and detaining other youth and school workers.

Israeli occupation forces there also stormed houses, assaulted civilians and laid siege to the home of Muhammad Zaitawi, who is described as the deputy leader of the Al-Aqsa Brigades. Zaitawi, who held out for seven hours, was then abducted by troops. Palestinian journalists on the scene reported being attacked by troops, who confiscated notes from their coverage. (Ma’an News Agency, Nov. 16)

The next day, Israeli troops kidnapped 22 Palestinian women, men and youths from the West Bank cities of Nablus, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Qalqilya.

On Nov. 19, Israeli military aircraft fired on a car on a crowded Gaza City street, killing an elderly passerby and wounding nine people, including four teenagers.

Israeli troops guarded Israeli settlers as they attacked Palestinian children and adults in Hebron with rifles, clubs and rocks. The fascists also damaged the fresh water tanks and power transmitter. Palestinians say the settlers want to expand their land base.

The same day, two Palestinian children, aged 7 and 12, were wounded by Israeli gunfire as they sat at their desks in an elementary school in the northern Gaza Strip, according to UN officials. □

## Crece las protestas contra la 'Escuela de Asesinos'

Por Dianne Mathiowetz  
Atlanta, Georgia

Mientras aumenta el ímpetu para cerrar la infame escuela de entrenamiento para soldados latinoamericanos conocida como la Escuela de las Américas, (EA), rebautizada con el nombre del Instituto del Hemisferio Occidental para la Seguridad y la Cooperación (IHOSC) en el 2001, la administración de Bush quedadamente ha dado pasos para expandir la cifra de países elegibles para participar en el programa.

En el año 2002, el Congreso pasó una legislación que prohibiría el entrenamiento militar a países que no eximiran a los soldados estadounidenses de la posibilidad de enfrentar juicios por crímenes de guerra. Sin embargo, ahora que vari@s candidat@s progresistas han obtenido la presidencia por toda América Latina, Estados Unidos ha ignorado estaley que la Secretaria del Estado, Condoleezza Rice describe como "haciéndonos daños a nosotros mismos".

Por décadas, el entrenamiento de estas fuerzas militares ha provisto a los intereses políticos y económicos estadounidenses, de aliados fieles en la lucha para suprimir la resistencia popular a la explotación y la pobreza en América Latina.

Con vista a tratar de re-obtener la influencia en el ejército y prevenir el éxito de la resistencia popular, el 2 de octubre la administración de Bush le quitó esa prohibición a 21 países, 11 de éstos parte de América Latina o del Caribe.

Unos 60.000 soldados de combate y oficiales han sido entrenados por el Pentágono

desde el establecimiento de este programa en 1946. Movidada en 1984 de Panamá al Fuerte Benning en Columbus, Georgia en los Estados Unidos, a la EA se le conoce más como la "Escuela de los Asesinos." Sus graduados consistentemente están entre los más famosos asesinos responsables de masacres y torturas y dictadores en las sangrientas páginas de agitación social en docenas de países desde Colombia a Haití, hasta El Salvador y Chile.

Sindicalistas, defensor@s de derechos humanos, líderes campesin@s, maestr@s, poetas, estudiantes, personas religiosas y decenas de miles de otr@s civiles, much@s de comunidades indígenas, han sufrido muerte, violaciones, torturas y exilio a manos de soldados entrenados en la EA.

El 16 de noviembre de 1989, seis padres jesuitas, el ama de llaves y su hija adolescente fueron sacad@s de sus camas a media noche y brutalmente asesinad@s por un grupo de soldados salvadoreños entrenados por la EA. Otras atrocidades cometidas por graduados de la EA en esa misma década incluyen la muerte del Arzobispo Oscar Romero mientras daba misa en la Catedral en San Salvador, muchas masacres de gran escala en las villas rurales y la violación y el asesinato de cuatro monjas.

El año siguiente, en el 1990, el Padre Roy Bourgeois, un sacerdote Maryknoll veterano de la Guerra de Vietnam que había sido testigo de la miseria y la represión mientras trabajaba como misionero católico en Bolivia y El Salvador, encabezó un peque-

ño grupo de manifestantes que fueron a la entrada del Fuerte Benning, demandando que la Escuela de las Américas sea cerrada y que EEUU termine su política de establecer gobiernos títeres en Latinoamérica.

Ya para el 2005, el número de lo que actualmente es un evento de varios días de educación, desobediencia civil, protesta, celebración y recuerdo solemne de todas las víctimas de la EA, había crecido a 19.000 personas que venían desde todas las partes del país, con una participación numerosa de jóvenes de escuelas secundaria y de colegios.

A través de los años, decenas de personas han "cruzado la línea", trayendo su mensaje de justicia y paz hasta la misma base y han sido condenad@s a meses en cárceles federales por haber "traspasado" el terreno de la base militar.

En la protesta del 2000, miles de personas literalmente desafiaron las órdenes de retirarse y entraron en la base, confundiendo a los militares, y a la policía local que no tenían la capacidad para arrestar o detener a tod@s.

Luego del 11 de septiembre de 2001, la entrada al Fuerte Benning fue cerrada con barricadas levantadas y coronadas con alambre de púas. Sobrevolaban helicópteros y cientos de policías rodearon la multitud, a la que no pudieron silenciar su demanda de cerrar la EA.

Fuera de ello, la guerra contra Irak y Afganistán, las revelaciones de torturas en Guantánamo y Abu Ghraib, la ocupación brutal de Palestina y del Sur del Líbano por Israel/EEUU y otras cuestiones similares,

han reforzado las cifras de participantes y la resolución de la protesta en el Fuerte Benning, por lo que l@s organizador@s esperan la asistencia de más de 20.000 personas este año.

En el 2004, el presidente Hugo Chávez de Venezuela anunció que su país no iba a enviar sus soldados para ser entrenados en los "derechos humanos y la democracia al estilo de los EEUU". Este año, los gobiernos de Argentina y Uruguay hicieron anuncios semejantes.

El país que actualmente tiene la cantidad más grande de sus fuerzas militares aprendiendo tácticas de contrainsurgencia, control antimotín, técnicas de francotiradores, y guerra de alta tecnología es Colombia, donde una guerra civil de 40 años enfrenta a la oligarquía apoyada por las enormes empresas multinacionales y el gobierno de los EEUU, contra l@s trabajador@s, l@s pobres y l@s indígenas.

Una vez más, los graduados de la EA han sido identificados como los responsables de masacres recientes, torturas y la "desaparición" de miles de hombres, mujeres y niños.

Este año por primera vez, manifestaciones simultáneas y vigiliass se van a llevar a cabo del 17-19 de noviembre en Buenos Aires, Argentina; Manta, Ecuador; Santiago, Chile; Bogotá, Colombia; Fuerte Huachuca, Arizona; y en Davis, California, entre otros lugares.

Para más información sobre (Vigilantes de la EA) SOAWatch y sus esfuerzos para cerrar a la Escuela de las Américas, visite a [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org).

## La elección en el Congo y el gran capital

Por G. Dunkel

El ganador en la segunda ronda de votación para presidente en el Congo el

29 de octubre, está planeada para ser anunciada el 19 de noviembre. La disputa sobre la votación ha resultado en violencia entre las milicias leales al presidente actual Joseph Kabila y las leales a Jean-Pierre Bemba, su adversario.

El conflicto más reciente en Kinshasa el 11 de noviembre fue, según dijo un reportero radial francés, que morteros pesados y ametralladoras rodearon la residencia de Bemba. Algunas de las 18.000 tropas de la ONU en el Congo y 2.200 tropas de la Unión Europea (EUFOR) en Kinshasa se metieron para "terminar" el conflicto.

Después de la primera ronda de votación en agosto, las fuerzas leales a Kabila y a Bemba se pelearon por algunos días en Kinshasa hasta que "los guardias de la paz" de la ONU impusieron una tregua.

La demora en contar los votos refleja la desintegración de la infraestructura del Congo debida a los siglos de dominación colonial y neo-colonial. Tiene menos de 300 millas de caminos pavimentados en un país del tamaño de Europa Occidental y a menudo tomó días para que los votos llegaran a una estación central de conteo.

Según resultados parciales extraofi-

ciales, Kabila ha ganado el 60 por ciento de los votos contados y Bemba un 40 por ciento. La ONU y la comunidad financiera internacional están esperando que esta elección termine las guerras civiles en el Congo, las cuáles han resultado en 2 a 4 millones de muertes desde 1997 a 2002. Pero no es el salvar las vidas de personas lo que les interesa verdaderamente.

Según un reporte de Prensa Asociada que recibió amplia diseminación, "El reto más grande que se enfrenta el primer gobierno elegido en casi 50 años es traer orden al caótico sector minero cuya riqueza ha provocado una guerra regional que mató a millones de personas."

Los financieros del gran capital dicen que el Congo tiene recursos mineros que valen \$300 mil millones que podrían ser explotados durante los próximos 25 años. Ellos esperan que el resultado de la elección traiga la estabilidad política necesaria para abrir el camino para que ellos puedan más fácilmente explo-

tar esta riqueza que pertenece al pueblo congolés.

Bemba y Kabila hicieron sus campañas alrededor del mismo programa — mejorar las vidas del pueblo congolés, terminar su devastadora falta de desarrollo económico, de educación y de salud.

Lo que les distingue son sus historiales personales. Bemba y su familia se hicie-

ron multimillonarios bajo el régimen de Mobutu Sese Seko, quién fue mantenido en el poder por el imperialismo estadounidense y el francés desde 1965 hasta su muerte en 1997. La familia de Kabila vivió en el oriente del Congo y en el exilio porque el padre de Joseph Kabila, Laurent Kabila, fue uno de los líderes de la lucha contra Mobutu. □

