

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!



MARCH 22, 2007

VOL. 49, NO. 11

50¢

Week-long, round-the-clock encampment Anti-war activists tell Congress: Bring the troops home now!

By LeiLani Dowell
Washington, D.C.

March 13—A determined group of activists began arriving here yesterday from across the East Coast and Midwest and immediately began putting up tents, scaffolding, a stage, banners, generators and other materials needed for the “Encampment to Stop the War”—a week-long, round-the-clock sit-in directly in front of the Capitol Building.

One sentence on the flyer for the encampment, organized by the Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC), sums up the sentiment of participants in the mobilization: “It’s time to move from protest to resistance.”

Representatives from various struggles, including labor and immigrant rights, HIV/AIDS, women’s rights, students and youth, and the anti-war movement have all converged to step up the offensive against the war makers in Congress, the White House and the Pentagon.

Mel Stevens, an AIDS activist for the past 13 years, told Workers World newspaper why he was at the encampment: “I think the word that comes to mind is hemorrhage. ... There’s just obscene amounts of money, billions of dollars, that are being taken away from health care in the United States to fund an illegal and preemptive war. The monies could easily go for AIDS awareness, for AIDS treatment, to raise people’s consciousness, to let the young people know that AIDS is still around.”

Day One yesterday featured a kickoff rally and media conference that included singer-songwriter Anne Feeney, as well

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WW statement Marching together on the Pentagon

Workers World is marching side-by-side with you on March 17. The people of Iraq—fighting back heroically and indefatigably against the most high-tech, powerful military machine in history—and peoples resisting U.S. imperialism all over the world will take heart in seeing our numbers marching on the Pentagon to demand “U.S. out of Iraq!”

We are also camped out together in the shadow of the congressional Capitol Building March 12-19 with activists who’ve traveled from around the country. As congressional politicians from both parties of big business—Democrats and Republicans—deliberate on adding \$124.1 billion in “supplemental” war spending on top of a 2007 Pentagon budget that may hit \$555 billion, a peoples’ encampment outside Congress is demanding “Not one penny more for this war; bring the troops home now!”

Workers World is also in the streets, in support of demonstrations and civil disobedience with youth and students in the forefront—from New York to San Francisco March 18-19 to protest the U.S. war drive. As the anti-war movement goes from protest to resistance, you’ll find us there.

To all these powerful demands, we add “Stop the war at home!”

Imperialist war is a continuation of capitalist politics by other means, facilitating ruthless exploitation and super-exploitation in order to squeeze every drop of profit from the sweat and blood of workers and oppressed peoples.

The commander in chief and his brass are giving the orders for overt and covert military and economic warfare—against Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Iran, North

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At Cancha de Ferro stadium:

Chávez 2, Bush 0



Buenos Aires, Argentina, March 9.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

By John Catalinotto
Buenos Aires, Argentina

George Bush has been touring Latin American countries this March with two goals in mind: keep the continent divided and keep it subservient to U.S. imperialist interests.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has also been visiting his neighbors. His goals are the opposite: to unite the countries of Latin America and to encourage and support the continent’s independence from U.S. imperialism.

This March 9 the two presidents were faced off on opposite sides of the river

separating Argentina and Uruguay. Bush had just arrived in Uruguay, where he was driven in a well-armed limousine caravan, protected from a strong demonstration protesting the visit. Chávez, after signing a treaty with Argentine President Néstor Kirchner for the cooperation of the

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Bring the troops home now!

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as representatives from TONC, Code Pink, DC Anti-War Network, After Downing Street, FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Later that evening, a demonstration organized by the DC Anti-War Network protested the annual convention of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. [See accompanying article, page 3.]

The Roll Call—the newspaper of Capitol Hill read daily by lobbyists, congresspeople and other politicians—featured a full-color picture in its March 13 edition of Walter Williams, a Troops Out Now Coalition activist, putting up a huge banner that will remain in front of the Capitol until the beginning of next week. The banner reads: “Congress, the world is watching—CUT OFF WAR FUNDS.”

Spirits remained high on Day Two. Activists were present from Washington, D.C.; New York; New Jersey; Raleigh, N.C.; Boston; Richmond, Va.; Detroit; Maine; and even from as far away as San Diego and Los Angeles, Calif. More are expected to arrive in the coming days as March 17—the fourth anniversary of the war and the date of a march on the Pentagon called by the ANSWER Coalition—draws near.

A morning meeting today provided a forum to discuss the politics of the day and the goals of the encampment. Encampment participants stressed that Congress already knows and knew from the beginning that the war in Iraq is not only illegal and unjust, but that it is a colonial occupation. Therefore, activist participants expressed the need to expose the Democratic Party as a war party itself that is part and parcel of the war machine.

A TONC statement promoting the encampment explains the Democratic Party’s newest attempt to appease the anti-war constituents that voted them into office, while still funding the war: “Democratic Party leaders propose to begin withdrawing troops in a year to 18 months. Over the last 18 months, more than 1,200 U.S. soldiers have been killed, and about seven times that many wounded and maimed. ... A year or 18 more months of war is a death sentence for untold numbers of soldiers and an even greater number of Iraqis.” An even more insidious facet of this “withdrawal” legislation is that it gives the right for the president to waive any part of an established timetable at any time.

Participants discussed how the capitalist media would like to downplay the movement against the war in the

streets by focusing exclusively on the debate on war funding in Congress. But with no illusions about Congress’ desire to continue the war by supporting its funding, one main goal of the encampment is to take the opposition for the war funding into the streets.

These lively discussions were repeated to passersby, many of whom enthusiastically visited the encampment, took pictures in front of the banners and thanked participants for their presence.

The next few days will be filled with activity for encampment participants.

On March 14, a delegation of women, organized by the Women’s Fightback Network, will caravan from the encampment to the Iraqi embassy to demand the release of three Iraqi women from prisons in Baghdad. The women were imprisoned with their young children and sentenced to death by hanging because of their alleged participation in the resistance to the U.S. occupation. While their executions were stayed after a wave of international protest, the women and their children remain in prison awaiting an appeals trial.

A forum that evening will address the continuing escalation of threats by U.S. imperialism against Iran.

On March 15, activists from the encampment will support a media conference called by the National May 1st Movement for Worker and Immigrant Rights to announce upcoming plans for the Great American Boycott II to take place on May 1.

In addition, a caravan of veterans and military families will protest the deplorable conditions and treatment of wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Medical Center, the Pentagon’s flagship military hospital.

On March 16, a youth and student action will occur, as well as a fundraiser featuring vocalist Pam Parker to help pay for the encampment.

On March 17, the encampment will swell the ranks of protesters from across the United States who will be converging on the Pentagon to say, “Stop the War Machine!”

Activists intend to continue camping out in front of the Capitol until the war funding has been voted on, which is expected to occur in the following week. For more information on the encampment, visit encampmenttostopthewar.blogspot.com.

Email: ldowell@workers.org



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Vol. 49, No. 11 • March 22, 2007
Closing date: Feb. 28, 2007

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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 55 W. 17 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Phone: (212) 627-2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$25; foreign and institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Send an e-mail message to WWnews-subscribe@workersworld.net. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

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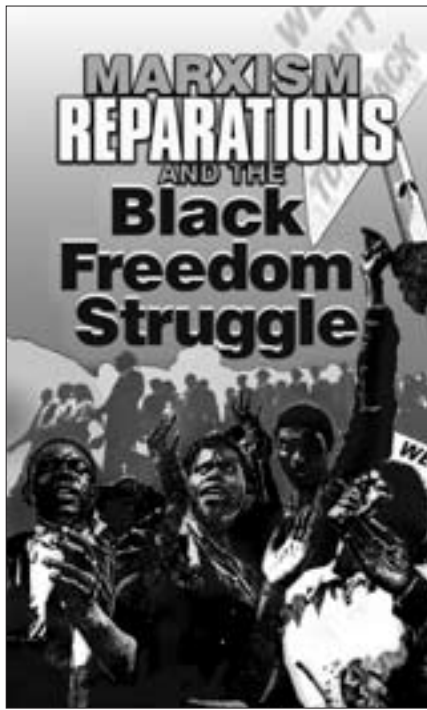
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Activists picket pro-Israel banquet



Determined demonstrators lined Mt. Vernon Place in Washington, D.C., on March 12 to demand no U.S. aid to Israel in protest of the "Gala Banquet" of the 2007 American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). This event featured Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Vice-President Dick Cheney showing continued bi-partisan imperialist support for the brutal genocidal occupation of Palestine. Chants targeted President Bush and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, calling out that "Occupation is a crime from Iraq to Palestine."

Anti-Zionist Orthodox Jews held banners condemning AIPAC as a danger for Jews.
—Report and photo by Cheryl LaBash

To protest Iraqi deaths



WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

Round the clock anti-war vigil

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

When the number of U.S. deaths in the war against Iraq hit 1,000, the Northeast Ohio Antiwar Coalition held a vigil with 1,000 candles. The scenario was repeated when the death toll reached 2,000 and again when it came to 3,000. When the latest report on Iraqi casualties showed a staggering 655,000 lives lost, NOAC knew it needed to engage in a dramatic demonstration of grief and anger.

After discussing various ideas, including a 655,000-foot walk from Cleveland to Columbus, the coalition reached consen-

sus: It would sponsor a round-the-clock vigil for eight days and 14 hours—one second for every Iraqi death.

At 5 a.m. on March 8, despite temperatures in the teens, members of the coalition began their marathon protest at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument on downtown's Public Square. A 24-hour presence is being maintained, thanks to the participation of over 20 local organizations, each of which is taking one or more time slots.

At 9 p.m. on March 15 the vigil will disassemble. Twenty-four hours later many of the participants will board buses for Washington to march on the Pentagon on March 17. □

PITTSBURGH

Activists 'barricade the war machine'

By Martha Grevatt

"Shut down the war machine" is a good, popular, militant slogan—but it's easier said than done. On March 2, however, the Pittsburgh Organizing Group successfully halted operations for the day at the National Robotics Engineering Center, described as "a largely Pentagon-funded venture of Carnegie Mellon University that has become a world leader in warfare robotics."

The POG web site relayed the following account:

"Two actions were organized for the purpose of creating a barricade. The first was a non-publicized effort by four affinity groups to barricade the main entrances through the use of lockboxes (long pipes through which people's hands are locked together), u-locks, and a tripod. These groups deployed at 5 a.m., before police were on the scene. This action

alone blocked all vehicular access to NREC and severely disrupted the possibility of pedestrian traffic.

"The second piece of the action was a publicly announced 7:30 a.m. march from Friendship Park to NREC, which also intended to barricade the facility. As expected, a large number of police were deployed at various locations to ensure the march would not be able to successfully create a barricade.

"The point of the unannounced action was to occupy and hold the space we wanted before the police arrived. The march was intended to bring more people to an ongoing barricade and leave open the possibility of a second attempt if the first was quickly removed.



"Thirty-four people blockaded the main entrances to the facility in the largest act of civil disobedience/direct action in Pittsburgh since the war began. Having brought in members of Homeland Security one week before the action to train police on how to remove us, it still took the police over five hours to get 15 protesters out of the street, three hours after the police and paramedics actually began trying to cut people out."

The protesters "unlocked and dismounted around noon after learning that we had successfully shut the facility down for the day, seven hours after we arrived."

14 activists arrested

In a statement to reporters, a clearly defensive CMU insisted that the barricade did not completely succeed in shutting them down. Telecommuting allowed "nearly everyone" to do some work.

"But they missed the point of this action entirely," according to a report on the POG web site. "What we said we'd do, and did in fact do, was barricade the NREC facility as a tangible act of resistance against the war."

"It is our responsibility to start to put ourselves on the line to end this war and start to take our world back," stated Tom Nomad, a Cleveland antiwar activist who was arrested. □



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Teamsters help host Int'l Women's Day event

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
New York

"Women united will never be defeated!" This was the rousing call to an evening celebration of women's organizing and resistance on March 8, International Women's Day, in Queens, New York. The event was co-sponsored by the Million Worker March Movement and the May 1st Coalition for Immigrant Rights, and hosted by Teamsters Local 808 and Chris Silvera, president of the Teamsters National Black Caucus.

MWMM leader Brenda Stokely chaired the panel discussion. She emphasized building unity, including between women and men, saying, "Here we can find the commonality of our oppression, and the commonality of our resistance."

Speakers highlighted women's courageous role in struggles for the survival of their communities, especially when targeted by forces of racist government repression. Christine Gaven-Luthann of the New York Solidarity Coalition for Katrina/Rita Survivors, a former resident of Gulfport, Miss., spoke movingly of how she drew strength from her life experience as a woman fighting against injustice in her home state, and fights now for justice for survivors seeking housing, jobs, child care and other services. Some sources estimate that 80 percent of Katrina/Rita survivors are women. ("Gender Divide," Chicago Tribune, Sept. 14, 2005)

Longtime organizer Iyalua Ferguson represented the Malcolm X Commemoration Committee and the Jericho Movement, a national campaign to "gain recognition and amnesty for all political prisoners in the United States." She called powerfully on participants to remember political prisoners, but especially that evening to honor women political prisoners who have resisted, empowered and protected their families, people



Top photo, left to right: Iyalua Ferguson, Christine Gaven-Luthann, Teresa Gutierrez & Charlene Morales. Portrait of Malcolm X on the wall. Right photo, left to right: Brenda Stokely, Neneh James & Chryse Glackin.

and communities from ongoing government persecution.

She named two former members of the Black Panther Party: Assata Shakur, now in sanctuary in Cuba, and Safiya Bukhari, a political prisoner who helped found Jericho, now deceased. Ferguson also paid homage to the four still-incarcerated women of the Move Nine—Debbie, Janet, Janine and Jasmine Africa—as well as the late Merle Africa and others.

Ferguson presented the current case of the Panther 8, former and current political prisoners and former members of the Black Panther Party recently re-arrested on trumped-up charges from the 1970s. She urged the struggle to free them as especially relevant to women, "as our community and family ties are broken over and over by this persecution."

Young hip-hop activist Neneh James detailed the creative work of the Grassroots Artist Movement in building leadership opportunities and providing health care and work alternatives for young people.

In their capacity as waged workers, women increasingly play a central role worldwide in the survival and thriving of

their communities. Charlene Morales from Filipinos for Rights and Empowerment and BAYAN documented the dramatic contribution of Filipino women by noting that "the economic burden of the Philippines rests on the backs of immigrant workers, 70 percent of whom are women" who remit wages back to their home country.

Teresa Gutierrez, a leader in the May 1st Coalition, spoke to the special vulnerabilities women face as workers, citing the recent U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement raid in New Bedford, Mass. Of the 350 immigrant workers seized, most are women from Guatemala and El Salvador; many of their children were left stranded with no adult provider.

Gutierrez said, "Whole generations worldwide are being uprooted for no other reason than the U.S. economic policies are forcing them from their homes." She emphasized the growing women's leadership in the immigrant-rights struggle. "On May 1st this year we are resisting and fighting back!"

The growing leadership of women in worker struggles was also a theme



in remarks by Chryse Glackin of the MWMM, who said: "Women are not the auxiliary to the working class. We are the working class."

Pointing out that U.S. women's wages are increasing in relation to men's wages, but only because men's wages are falling, Glackin succinctly reminded the audience of the fragile nature of worker gains under capitalism, saying, "We are still fighting for the eight-hour work day."

She noted that socialist countries like the USSR in its short span achieved far more for women—including universal child and health care—than capitalism will ever be able or willing to do.

Local 808 men provided "bread and roses" for the evening, including flowers for participants and a delicious meal.

The evening also sparked plans for a historic 2008 International Working Women's Day to celebrate working-class women's lives and resistance. MWMM leader Brenda Stokely closed by saying: "We have a history of struggle. We are going to stand shoulder to shoulder, sisters and brothers, and we are going to fight and win." □

Chrysler sale threatens more job losses in auto

By Martha Grevatt

This past Valentine's Day, when Chrysler workers should have been relaxing with their companions, some 80,000 pairs of eyes were glued to the TV or the Internet. They were waiting for DaimlerChrysler (DCX) to announce how many of their jobs would be cut, and where.

In what workers termed the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, the bosses announced cuts of a whopping 13,000 jobs in the United States and Canada. With 5,500 of these cuts in Michigan, this constituted a racist attack on Black auto workers.

Last fall DCX insisted that the Chrysler Group was not for sale. Yet on Valentine's Day DCX management said it wasn't ruling out any options.

Now the bombshell has hit the papers: Chrysler is for sale.

Possible suitors include General Motors—whose management recently cut 35,000 jobs, insisting that GM was poor and impoverished. The GM bosses got workers to take a pay cut by crying about the high price of health care, which they claimed cost them \$1,500 per vehicle. Yet the concessions were worth \$2,000 per vehicle by GM's own figures. \$2,000 minus \$1,500 means that GM management gains \$500 for each vehicle sold.

That's enough to allow them to go shopping for acquisitions.

Another ominous scenario for the workers is that Chrysler will be bought by one or more private equity firms.

What is "private equity"? The term has not been explained to the workers whose

jobs are on the chopping block. An article in Business Week defined it as "giant pools of capital just waiting to pounce on takeover targets."

In a discussion on public television, Andrew Ross Sorkin of the New York Times elaborated: "Well, you know, a private equity firm actually is a polite term for what we used to call LBO firms, or leveraged buyout firms, in the 1980s. ... [They] take money from pension funds, wealthy individuals. They put it in a pot, and then they leverage it, so then they take out effectively a mortgage on it. So they may take \$100, and they may get a \$900 mortgage from the bank, and then they go and buy a company. They buy that company, they turn it around, hopefully for them, in a couple of years, fix it up. They may strip the company down. Sometimes they—a lot of people lose jobs. ... And then they sell the company. And that's pretty much what private equity is today."

Adding to the discussion, private-equity expert Colin Blaydon said: "They are now coming together, in what they're calling clubs, and groups of them are now bidding for these companies. So they've got more money that they've been able to raise, that the pension funds have largely given them, more debt to put on the deal. And these clubs have gone elephant hunting, because the big companies out there are the ones that are probably today among the most attractive targets for them to take over and take private."

Chrysler salespeople have wined and dined several potential New-York-based members of a buyout "club," including

the Wall Street firm Blackstone Group. Blackstone has stakes in over 100 companies ranging from real estate to pickles. With annual revenues of over \$85 billion, these investors are the majority shareholders in TRW automotive holdings. Blackstone CEO Stephen Schwartzman, dubbed by Fortune magazine "the King of Wall Street," is notoriously extravagant. The day before the Valentine's Day Massacre he spent millions of dollars on his 60th birthday party, which featured a private concert by Rod Stewart.

Another firm shopping for a car company is Cerberus. According to the Detroit News, Cerberus Capital "has been an increasingly aggressive player in the auto sector, with former Ford Motor Co. executive David Thursfield spearheading its auto investment activities. Last year, the firm agreed to buy a 51-percent stake in GM's highly profitable finance business. Cerberus is also leading a group of investors attempting to buy bankrupt parts supplier Delphi Corp."

Top Cerberus executives include former Treasury Secretary John Snow and former Vice President Dan Quayle. In Greek mythology, Cerberus was the guard-dog of the underworld, usually depicted with three but sometimes 50 heads, with snakes for its tail and mane. Cerberus CEO Steve Feinberg has brushed aside suggestions that the firm change its name to something gentler.

The third contender to emerge is Centerbridge, founded less than two years ago by former Blackstone Director Mark Gallogly and Jeffrey Aronson. Joining

them in a meeting with Chrysler CEO Tom LaSorda was Stephen Girsky, formerly an auto analyst with Morgan Stanley and a special adviser to GM Chair and CEO Rick Wagoner.

Whether these firms lock horns in a bidding war or form a buyers "club"—or if GM walks away with the loot—workers will most likely read or hear about it after it's a done deal. Meanwhile those who ran the company into the ground are set for life: 2006 salaries for DCX CEO Dieter Zetsche and Chrysler Group CEO Tom LaSorda were \$6.7 million and \$3.16 million respectively.

What all these multi-headed beasts have in common is that they are part of the capitalist system, with its built-in tendency to cut jobs and concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands. This goes for GM, DCX, Blackstone, Centerbridge and Cerberus.

In mythology, the 12th and final task for Hercules was to capture Cerberus with his bare hands in order to secure his release from bondage. But Hercules' brute strength was nothing compared to the muscle of the modern working class. In 1937 the 44-day occupation of GM was followed by a powerful 31-day sit-down at Chrysler. Next, by seizing hold of this corporate beast, the working class can accomplish its own Herculean task—to free all who toil from the bondage of wage slavery and restructure society to put people before profits and guarantee every worker the right to a job.

Martha Grevatt is an auto worker and an elected trustee of UAW Local 122.

Colo. farm owners replace immigrant labor with 'chain gangs'

By Larry Hales
Denver

Colorado legislators passed some of the most restrictive immigration laws in the country following the massive mobilizations for immigrant rights in late March and on International Workers Day, May 1, 2006. One of the laws, H.R. 1023, denies all who have no documentation, that is, all undocumented workers and their families, any "non-emergency" public benefits.

In the wake of these repressive laws and a series of workplace raids, farm owners in Southern and Eastern Colorado are having difficulty finding workers to plant and harvest crops. Last year many crops spoiled in the fields and the agricultural industry across the country suffered major losses.

The Colorado farm owners' answer to this crisis in the agricultural industry is to find even more exploitable labor than immigrant workers—prison labor.

Private companies, now numbering 135, began using prison labor in the 1970s. Microsoft, McDonalds, TWA, IBM, Victoria's Secret, AT&T and Toys R Us are just some of the companies that use prisoners to cheaply produce products or provide services. While the rate of pay may vary from state to state, the constant is that the great majority of the money that the companies pay goes to the state in which the prisoners are incarcerated.

For instance, in California prisoners receive the "minimum wage" on paper, but the state takes 80 percent for state restitution, anti-drug campaigns, victim's rights organizations and a prisoner "trust fund." (prisonactivist.org)

The state of Colorado already employs prison labor for everything from agriculture, which includes running a fishery, dairy farm and harvesting grapes, to making furniture and firefighting, according to the website of Colorado Correctional Industries.

State Rep. Dorothy Butcher said, "The reason this [program] started is to make sure the agricultural industry wouldn't go out of business." The new pilot program will be run through the Department of

Corrections and will contract with more than a dozen farms in the state to use prisoners to pick melons, onions and peppers for 60 cents an hour,

Butcher makes no pretense that the program is "providing useful skills" to prisoners or "breaking the monotony" of prison life, which are all false arguments that some use to justify using prisoners as slave labor.

This latest announcement illustrates the connection between the struggle of the working class in this country and abroad. Many of the jobs prisoners are being made to do were or still are being done either by immigrant workers here or are being shipped overseas to countries where capital can pay workers lower wages.

The U.S. already has over 25 percent of the world's prison population, of which 45 percent are Black, nearly 20 percent are Latin@ and the vast majority are poor.

'Declare economic disaster!'

Detroit activist confronts gov

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

"What would you do if you were me?" Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm asked the audience at a Detroit-area town hall meeting Mar. 6. "How would you fix the economy?"

Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice organizer Jerry Goldberg immediately stood up and answered: "Why don't you use your emergency powers that exist under Michigan law—specifically MCL 10.31, 10. 85, and 30.401—to declare a state of economic disaster and take emergency measures to halt foreclosures, evictions and utility shutoffs, to impose a moratorium, a halt on utility shutoffs, evictions and foreclosures?"

Goldberg stressed that "the biggest impact is on the poor and working people of Michigan who are facing record fore-

More than 2 million are incarcerated in prisons and jails and millions more are on parole.

The component of the prison-industrial complex that is prison labor is booming along with the entire business of criminalizing the oppressed, workers and the poor. The prison industry is one of the fastest growing in the country. Over 100,000 of the more than 2 million prisoners in this country are in facilities run by private companies, the largest of which are the Correction Corporation of America and Wackenhut.

The relationship between prison officials, private companies and private prison companies has grown increasingly intimate since the late 1970s and early 1980s. At the same time white middle class families are moving back into city centers, while police are heavily occupying communities of color. Already, because rac-

ism is endemic to U.S. capitalist society, the lack of jobs and resources for the poor and especially for people of color is making young Black men and women society's pariahs.

Now that governments at the state, local and federal levels are also making it a crime to be undocumented, and the number of poor and desperately poor is at a 32-year high, the prison population can only be expected to grow.

As long as this society provides basic necessities only if they can be sold for a profit, the multinational working class and progressives must fight any prison or jail expansion or use of prisoners for labor. The ultimate enemies are not those offered few options for survival, but those who steal all labor power and turn basic needs for survival into commodities to be sold back to the masses at a profit. □

closures, 50-percent poverty in Detroit, 47,000 households losing their water in Detroit alone."

He concluded: "Such a moratorium existed during the last depression. It was declared constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court and Michigan Supreme Court."

Granholm failed to give a real answer, as she likewise ignored other direct questions from the audience.

Participants approached Goldberg after the broadcast for more information on the campaign for a moratorium. Goldberg's remarks were replayed on WWJ Radio and Channel 7 News, and covered in both Detroit newspapers.

Goldberg told Workers World: "Besides platitudes about 'Michigan's promising future' and 'moving Michigan forward' by imposing a 2-percent sales tax on things like haircuts and movies and giving more tax breaks to big business, the

governor has not put forward a single idea to help relieve the suffering of the workers and oppressed in Michigan caused by the downturn in auto and the mass dismantling of the auto work force and the UAW.

"Granholm kept repeating how there is no money in the state budget, but in fact working families in Michigan have paid \$10 billion for the Iraq war so far. It doesn't cost anything to declare an emergency and put a moratorium on utility shutoffs and foreclosures.

"MECAWI has a workable program for ending the economic devastation in Michigan for workers and the poor. A moratorium on layoffs and foreclosures will give relief to the people and allow a breathing space for workers to get involved in the anti-war struggle, to get that money back for our state."

For more information on this mass struggle, contact: info@mecawi.org. □

The Flint sit-down strike:

One battle in a larger class war

By Martha Grevatt

The Great Sit-Down Strike, in which auto workers in Flint, Mich., occupied General Motors plants for 44 days, is rich with anecdotes that make for great storytelling. An historian, however, cannot simply tell stories, but must place those stories in a historical context. While the sit-down itself was extraordinary, it was one episode of a larger class war.

The upsurge of the 1930s included workers of every race and nationality. They were young and old, women and men, immigrant and born here. An early battle was the 1933 strike in St. Louis of 1,400 nut shellers, who were primarily African-American women demanding pay equity and a reversal of recent pay cuts—demands they won. Mexican textile workers organized in San Antonio and Los Angeles; farm workers organized the Filipino Labor Union and the Confederation of Farmers and Workers (CCO for its initials in Spanish). Black and white sharecroppers formed the Southern Tenants Farmers Union. In 1934, some 400,000 textile workers

struck from Maine to Alabama, but the strike was brutally crushed.

In 1935 union membership had suffered a dramatic decline, a response to state repression and betrayals by the craft-based American Federation of Labor. Dominated by white, male, skilled workers born in the U.S., the AFL had ignored pleas by the NAACP to fight racist discrimination. In contrast, in 1936-37 the multinational Congress of Industrial Organizations grew to nearly three million members.

The huge wave of copycat sit-downs following the Flint showdown involved at least half a million workers from all walks of life. Some 477 sit-downs are recorded for 1937, a tenfold increase over 1936, and there were many unrecorded "quickies." There were many more in auto, including a 31-day sit-down at Chrysler, but the largest number, 80, was in the multinational and female-dominated textile industry. Workers in hospitals, restaurants, department stores, cigar factories and bakeries, and even prisoner-workers sat down. "Sitting down," a Detroit News

reporter remarked, "has replaced baseball as the national pastime."

Over 4,700 strikes occurred that year. Many labor leaders also worked with and helped form civil rights organizations of the oppressed, including the National Negro Congress, Committee for the Protection of Filipino Rights, American Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born, and El Congreso de los Pueblos de Habla Español (Congress of Spanish-speaking People).

Fearing for its very existence, Capital lashed out on all fronts, including the ideological front. KKK propaganda cried out that the "CIO wants whites and blacks on the same level" while the Daughters of the American Revolution and the American Legion denounced unions as a communist plot.

Masquerading as labor's champion, the radio priest Father Charles Coughlin formed the National Union for Social Justice. He made scathing speeches against capitalism, but foamed at the mouth with hatred of Jews and communism. An early Roosevelt supporter, he later denounced the president as a tool of both Jewish

bankers and the Soviet Union.

While people of color were not the principal target of his speeches, Coughlin supported the presidential campaign of the racist governor of Louisiana, Huey Long, blaming his murder on "the New York Jew machine." He voiced solidarity with Hitler and Mussolini, eventually giving speeches that were word for word translations of the writings of Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels.

Despite the priest's anti-capitalist rhetoric, the super-rich auto plant owner Henry Ford funded Coughlin's reprinting of the anti-Semitic tract "The Protocols of Zion."

A minority faction in the UAW—the faction that opposed the CIO and favored the AFL—built a relationship with the Michigan cleric (now called "the father of hate radio"). After he eventually denounced sit-down strikes, it was hard for Coughlin to maintain influence among autoworkers.

Fortunately, the UAW leaders refused to be swayed by bigotry and built a multinational union that by the end of the

Continued on page 6

NEW BEDFORD, MASS

Immigrants fight back after roundups

By Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston

Hundreds of heavily armored federal, state and local police raided the Michael Bianco factory in New Bedford, Mass., on March 6 and arrested 361 mostly Guatemalan and El Salvadoran women. The workers' crime: having immigrated to the United States to try to support their families.

The workers were targeted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement after a 10-month investigation. (Boston Globe, March 7)

In a horrific scene that played out on the sweatshop floor, women without immigration papers were forcibly separated to one side of the room and quickly hauled off to Fort Devens, 40 miles away. From there hundreds were flown to detention centers in Texas and Florida. Children and families were left with the nightmare of not knowing where their loved ones are, or how they are.

At least 140 of the workers' children were left without one or more parents, according to a Massachusetts Department of Social Service regional director at a hastily called emergency meeting at the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center

on March 8. An 18-month-old baby was brought to a local New Bedford Emergency Room with pneumonia.

The entire Massachusetts political establishment—from New Bedford Mayor Scott Lang to Gov. Deval Patrick, U.S. Reps. William Delahunt and Barney Frank, and U.S. Sens. John Kerry and Ted Kennedy—has expressed great “dismay” at the raid and had their photographs taken with local immigrant families. They have publicly promised investigations. The factory's production of army backpacks, contracted for \$83 million by the Pentagon, was produced by the low-paid labor of the women who have been imprisoned. There is only speculation on whether production will go ahead.

A local New Bedford official told one activist that there are many other factories in New Bedford exploiting immigrant workers the same way as the Bianco factory.

Despite the horror of the raid and the fear of further detentions by those without papers, hundreds of affected family members crowded the basement of St. Anthony of Guadalupe church in New Bedford. There they organized their own support and resistance, including everything from food to legal assistance.

Children and adults picking up supplies on March 11. A delegation from Women's Fightback Network and Troops Out Now Coalition brought supplies for immigrant families.



WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Picket lines at federal buildings housing ICE offices have been called for the week of March 13-17 by the Boston Mayday Coalition as well as groups in Providence, R.I. (See www.iacomboston.org for more info.)

On March 11, a delegation from Boston's Women's Fightback Network and the Troops Out Now Coalition delivered a shipment of material aid—baby formula, baby food and diapers—to local organizers and community in New Bedford. A leader from the National May 1st Organizing Committee, Bishop Felipe Teixeira, joined the group to distribute desperately needed supplies.

Teixeira told Workers World: “Yesterday when I came to New Bedford I thought that this must have been what it was like in Nazi Germany when they came for the Jews. These people came here fleeing their countries which have been exploited by U.S. imperialist policies. They came here looking for a better life and they have been terrorized.”

On March 12, leaders of the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean

Communities, Massachusetts chapter, is holding a news conference at Boston City Hall to demand “of the president and the Congress an immediate moratorium on raids, detentions and deportations until a comprehensive immigration reform is approved by Congress,” in the light of the New Bedford raids.

“NALACC is a national alliance comprised of 80 organizations led by immigrants from Latin American and the Caribbean who work in the United States to improve the quality of life of their communities,” the group explained.

On March 13, a group of Mayan workers and representatives from the organization Maya K'iche will speak in Boston at Trinity Church from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. about the impact of the raid on their community in New Bedford, to gain support and to join with the overall movement for immigrant and worker rights.

Dozens of immigrant- and worker-rights activists will speak at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., at 1 p.m. on March 15 to announce upcoming plans for the “Great American Boycott II” to take place this coming May 1—International Workers Day.

Go to www.iacomboston.org to read a statement in support of these immigrant workers.

BRONX, N.Y.

Fire kills 10 Malian immigrants

By G. Dunkel
New York

Nine children and one adult died from a fire in a wooden house in the Bronx late March 7.

While driving in Harlem, taxi driver Mamadou Soumare got a frantic call from his wife Mariam about the fire. He arrived home in time to see his wife and four children perish.

Neighbors who saw the flames roaring through the house shouted to a woman at the window: “Throw your children out! Throw them!” Neighbors Edward Soto and David Todd managed to catch one child in the dark. They couldn't catch the other child, but she did survive. The

woman then jumped and survived with a broken leg.

Moussa Magassa, who owns the building, is a vice-president of the Association of Malians Abroad. He is reported to be extremely well known in his community as a generous, caring man. He lost his wife and five of their children in the fire.

All 22 people living in the building were members of the Malian community in New York. Mali is an extremely poor, desert country in West Africa.

Billionaire New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg left the morning of March 8 for a trip to Miami.

When the minister of Malians abroad announced that the Malian government was going to send a delegation to New

York to console the survivors and provide assistance, Bloomberg cut his trip short.

The fire was front-page news in New York for several days.

New York City Fire Department officials quickly and publicly blamed the tragedy on mistakes by the victims: no working smoke alarms, open doors and a rickety space heater.

The media overall ignored a report in the March 9 Daily News that the Building Department had denied the owner a permit to spend \$60,000 to put in sprinklers and a metal staircase that would have given people much more time to escape and perhaps even controlled the fire.

The media are also ignoring the fact that there are thousands of buildings in New York, built in the early 20th century, that have the same design flaws that led to these 10 deaths—no fire escape and a wooden staircase that lets a fire sweep through the building. These firetrap buildings are officially legal.

The climate of fear generated by repression against immigrants, particularly the undocumented, makes residents reluctant to report problems. A call for help can bring the police, and possibly immigration agents, posing a risk to families and livelihoods.

West Africans in New York also remember Amadou Diallo, a Guinean street peddler, gunned down by the cops, and Ousmane Zongo, a drum maker, killed in his storage locker when he ran away from an undercover cop who was brandishing a gun.

The media have reflected the terrible grief of the Malian families and community. But holding the survivors responsible for this tragedy protects the city and landlords from being held accountable for their role in this tragedy. □

Speak-out against anti-immigrant raids

Detroiters spoke out against the anti-immigrant raids and began preparing for May Day 2007 in a meeting at St. Peter's Episcopal Church on March 10. Featured speaker, Pastor Walter Coleman from Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago, brought greetings from Elvira Arellano, a courageous woman who, with her son, Saulito, has become the public face of the workers being terrorized by raids and deportation. Detroit Councilmember JoAnn Watson and Minister Dawud Muhammad, Detroit representative of Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, supported the rights of undocumented workers. Latinos United of Michigan (LUUM), Centro Obrero de Detroit and the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange sponsored the meeting.

—Cheryl LaBash



Rosendo Delgado and Elena Herrada from Latinos Unidos/United de Michigan at speak-out.

WW PHOTO: CHERYL LA BASH

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAY DAY 2007

An appeal to anti-war activists (especially youth & students)
The struggle for immigrant workers' rights needs you

Dear sisters and brothers,

The struggle for immigrant workers' rights needs your active participation and solidarity. Remember May 1, 2006? Millions of immigrant workers from coast to coast walked off their jobs and rallied in just about every major city to demand full rights for undocumented workers.

The same thing is planned for May 1, or "May Day" 2007. Many of you who are reading this appeal probably have a good idea of why it's important for you as anti-war activists to be involved in the movement for immigrant workers' rights. Even so it's worth reviewing just a little.

To begin with, while we march against the war in Iraq, it's absolutely critical that we march against the war on the people right here at home. The level of institutional racism on the part of the capitalist system and government that resulted in massive death and continued suffering in New Orleans is part of a "war at home." So are the police murders of 23-year-old Sean Bell in New York City and 92-year-old Kathryn Johnston in Atlanta several months ago.

When it comes to the government anti-immigrant raids that go on daily, calling it a war is no metaphor. No other word could describe it more accurately. Thousands of immigrant workers have been arrested over the past year alone. On the morning of March 6, an army of hundreds of heavily armed Immigration and Customs Enforcement and FBI agents raided a leather factory in New Bedford, Mass., arresting and terrorizing 350 workers, many of them women whose children were suddenly left stranded.

It's time that we UNITE and show by our actions that we are as angry about these raids as we are about the war in Iraq. When we do that, we are truly connecting the struggles against the war abroad and the war at home.

The main weapon that the government and the capitalist media are using to try to deter more people of all nationalities and races from demanding an end to these raids is anti-immigrant racism.

When immigrants rally for their rights, and you look out at many of the big immigrant rights rallies and see a tremendous sea of people—including, however, very few people who are either white, or whom you usually might see at a big anti-war march—that's a sign that the divide and conquer with racism strategy is being used. On May Day 2007, it is up to us to make sure that the anti-war movement shows up to stand side by side, shoulder to shoulder, with immigrant workers against these terrorist raids.

Another point is that it's so important that immigrant workers have chosen May Day as the day to boycott work and rally for their rights across the country. May Day is the day the workers in every part of the world rally and march to show their solidarity with the struggle of all workers everywhere.

Even though May Day was born in the working class struggles of the 19th century right here in the U.S., up until recently May Day has not been widely observed in this country. But all of that's changing, in large part because immigrant workers are bringing May Day back to the U.S., along with its message of worldwide working-class unity and militancy and anti-racist, anti-imperialist and anti-war solidarity.

The anti-war movement must get behind May Day 2007 and build for it with the same passion and energy that we put into anti-war marches. If we do that, we will not only be solidarizing ourselves with immigrant workers, we will be helping to revive worldwide working-class solidarity in the country where it is most needed.

Anti-war movement—all out for May Day '07!

Signed by, LeiLani Dowell, **Fight Imperialism-Stand Together (FIST)*

Teresa Gutierrez, **May 1 Coalition, New York City*

Larry Holmes, **Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC)*

John Parker, **March 25 Coalition, Los Angeles*

** For identification purposes only*

STOP the **RAIDS**
& DEPORTATIONS!

• **Legalization for all immigrants now!**

• Prevailing U.S. wages for cross border Mexican drivers!

• **Protection of all workers' rights!**

• Economic & social justice for Katrina survivors!

• **Money for human needs, not war!**

• Close inhumane detention centers!

Come Out for the Great American Boycott II
No shopping, no work, no school, no economic activity

La lucha por los derechos de l@s inmigrantes y de la mujer: *Dos luchas entrelazadas*

Por Minnie Bruce Pratt

Dos luchas históricas se entrelazan en el mes de marzo: la lucha por los derechos de l@s inmigrantes y por los derechos de las mujeres internacionalmente.

El 8 de marzo es el Día Internacional de la Mujer (DIM). Comenzó como un día para incluir en la lucha de clases a las mujeres obreras, pobres y de nacionalidades oprimidas. Y a la vez proporcionó un día para que las mujeres afirmaran su liberación al igual que la de sus compañeros, y otros miembros de la comunidad.

La simiente para una celebración formal del DIM comenzó en 1907 durante la Conferencia Internacional de Mujeres Socialistas. Esta fue organizada por la socialista alemana, Clara Zetkin. Entre las participantes estuvo la camarada bolchevique, Alexandra Kollontai. El llamado al día internacional para las mujeres surgió de Zetkin en 1910 durante la Segunda Conferencia de Mujeres Socialistas en Copenhague y l@s socialistas europe@s comenzaron a celebrar el DIM en 1911. (www.marxists.org)

En 1917, en el Día Internacional de la Mujer, miles de mujeres trabajadoras de la costura salieron de sus trabajos en Petrogrado, y se unieron a los obreros, aumentando la cifra de manifestantes a decenas de miles proveyendo así la chispa que encendió la Revolución Rusa. (www.cwluherstory.com)

En los Estados Unidos, una huelga millitante de mujeres inmigrantes en la industria de textiles en la Ciudad de Nueva York el 8 de marzo de 1857 pudo haber inspirado a las mujeres comunistas para tomar ese día como la fecha oficial del DIM.

‘Pan y rosas’

Ese día en el 1857, los soldados le dispararon a las trabajadoras textiles mientras ellas estaban manifestándose demandando una semana de trabajo más corta en la Ciudad de Nueva York.

El 8 de marzo de 1908, decenas de miles de mujeres de la industria textil llenaron las calles de Nueva York “para protestar contra el trabajo infantil, las malas condiciones en los talleres y exigir el derecho al voto de la mujer.” (www.holtlaborlibrary.org)

Estas mujeres obreras eran de muchos

países. En 1911 en la huelga “Pan y Rosas” en Lowell, Massachusetts, las obreras habían venido de 24 naciones diferentes y hablaban en más de 40 idiomas.

El 75 por ciento de todas las obreras de fábrica en 1920 eran recientes inmigrantes o de la primera generación inmigrante. (“American Women in the Progressive Era”: 1993)

Los peligros que ellas enfrentaron eran gigantescos.

En 1911 cuando un fuego comenzó en el taller Triangle Shirtwaist en Manhattan, 146 mujeres jóvenes perecieron. La mayoría de las víctimas tenía entre 13 y 25 años de edad y eran también inmigrantes recientes.

Mujeres líderes en la lucha de inmigrantes

Hoy, mujeres y hombres inmigrantes indocumentados enfrentan trabajos extremadamente peligrosos, largas horas y salarios de explotación además de la falta de beneficios de salud y cuidado infantil.

Las trabajadoras indocumentadas también enfrentan amenazas de violación sexual o violencia doméstica y hasta la deportación si reportaran los abusos.

Tal como las obreras en la Ciudad de Nueva York que se resistieron en las famosas acciones del “Levantamiento de 20.000” en 1910, las mujeres de hoy están proveyendo un liderazgo en el desarrollo de la lucha por los derechos de l@s inmigrantes que recobró vida el año pasado en los Estados Unidos.

Estas mujeres traen consigo las tradiciones de resistencia y lucha de sus países, dando a la lucha de clases aquí una nueva vitalidad y experiencia al igual que nuevas tácticas y estrategias.

El 28 de marzo del año pasado otro “levantamiento de 20.000” tomó lugar cuando ese mismo número de estudiantes salió de sus aulas en por lo menos 70 escuelas de enseñanza superior en el Sur de California para protestar contra las leyes contra-inmigrante propuestas por el Senado de los Estados Unidos.

Una de ellas fue Rosalina García, una estudiante de escuela secundaria de Santa Ana, California, que enfrentó a la policía que tenía pistolas, armas Taser y máscaras. La policía, dijo ella, era particularmente hostil frente

a las mujeres. Sin embargo, dijo, “nunca me daré por vencida”. (www.uprisingradio.org)

El torrente de millones de inmigrantes y trabajador@s indocumentad@s producido por la organización de la Coalición del 25 de Marzo siguió manifestándose en las calles por meses a través de los EEUU, y las mujeres proporcionaron un liderazgo clave.

El pasado mes de mayo Evelina Molina ayudó a convocar 40.000 personas a las calles de Santa Rosa en el norte de California, usando sus habilidades como radiodifusora y productora de la estación de radio pública de habla hispana, KBBF y su conocimiento de la historia de la sindicalización de los trabajadores de la agricultura.

Y en noviembre pasado, en Carolina del Norte, dos trabajadoras latinas lideraron a más de mil compañer@s de trabajo latin@s y african@american@s en un paro en la planta más grande del mundo de procesamiento de carne de cerdo. Estaban protestando la campaña represiva contra l@s trabajador@s documentad@s e indocumentad@s por el Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas de Estados Unidos (ICE por las siglas en inglés), acciones que tenían la intención de intimidar a l@s organizador@s sindicales. (www.fistyouth.blogspot.com)

Elvira Arellano, de 31 años de edad, fundadora de La Familia Unida Latina, sigue con su lucha de más de seis meses en contra de su deportación desde su lugar de santuario en una iglesia en Chicago. Siendo madre de un hijo nacido en los EEUU, ella ha destacado la opresión especial y la resistencia de las mujeres trabajadoras inmigrantes, diciendo, “Lucho para que la gente indocumentada sea respetada”.

‘El lugar de la mujer está en la lucha’

Teresa Cervas, coordinadora en el Sur de California de la organización progresista filipina BAYAN-USA, comenta, “L@s filipin@s son la exportación número uno de nuestro país, forzad@s a salir de nuestra patria y mudarnos a otros países para trabajar y lograr estabilidad económica”.

Las Filipinas envían más enfermer@s a los EEUU que cualquier otro país. De los miles que salen cada año, la mayoría abrumadora son mujeres.

Afiliado a BAYAN, el grupo “Babae” (Mujer) organiza para lograr “los derechos y el bienestar de las mujeres filipinas de diferentes generaciones en los Estados Unidos” Su lema es: “¡Somos personas, no somos ilegales! ¡El lugar de la mujer está en la lucha!”

En el Sur de los Estados Unidos, l@s organizador@s están estableciendo la conexión entre el derecho de l@s inmigrantes a quedarse en este país y el derecho de l@s sobrevivientes del huracán Katrina, principalmente african@american@s, a volver a sus casas. (Asociación de Derechos Inmigrantes de Mississippi)

Tanto l@s que nacieron en la región de la Costa del Golfo y l@s que inmigraron allá se refieren a los principios de la ONU sobre el desplazamiento doméstico para condenar a los EEUU por rehusar proporcionar cosas básicas como alimentos, agua potable y refugio durante y después de los huracanes Katrina y Rita. Se están denominando Personas Internamente Desplazadas. (www.peopleshurricane.org)

Se ha estimado que hasta un 80 por ciento de l@s sobrevivientes de Katrina son mujeres de color. (Chicago Tribune del 14 de septiembre del 2006)

En el centro de la lucha contra la catástrofe hecha por el gobierno luego de los huracanes, están las mujeres africanamericanas de la Costa del Golfo, como Dyan French Cole, también conocida como Mama D, una líder por mucho tiempo en su comunidad.

Desde su casa en el Séptimo Distrito (Seventh Ward), ella y la “Patrulla del Alma” proporcionan comida gratis a sus vecin@s, ayudan a limpiar sus casas, luchan para prevenir que las viviendas sean demolidas y luchan por el derecho de los seres humanos a tener una casa de la cual no serán sacados por las fuerzas del dinero y del poder. (www.aas.duke.edu/katrina) □



PARIS



HEMPSTEAD, NY



SAN DIEGO



SOUTH AFRICA



NEW YORK

Filipinos gear up for May 1, 2007

By Berna Ellorin
for BAYAN USA

This May 1, Filipino immigrants and U.S.-born Filipinos will be among the communities fully engaged in mobilization for pro-legalization legislation and genuine comprehensive immigration reform. Forced labor migration, its human costs and the exploitation of migrant workers in labor-hosting countries remains a deep mass issue for Filipinos around the world. The significance of May 1 in a history of transnational organizing for nationalism and democracy in the Philippines will unfold once again.

Migrants and migration are valued and an integral part of Philippine culture, at the base of which lies a semi-feudal and semi-colonial economic and political system. The Philippines, once a direct colony of the U.S. born out of the first U.S. war of aggression overseas—the Philippine-American War of 1898—has an economic and political system that has been manipulated, remodeled and set to serve the economic and political interests of U.S. monopoly capitalism and its worldwide agents of globalization.

In this context, the Philippines is one of the three largest labor-sending countries in the world. At least 3,000 Filipinos are exported from the Philippines every single day. It is the country with the largest percentage of its native population living abroad, somewhere over 10 percent. Today over 10 million Filipino workers toil in over 182 countries around the world. Approximately four million Filipinos live in the United States—the third largest immigrant community in the world's largest labor-hosting country. Over 60,000 Filipinos enter the United States every year. Most take up work as domestic workers, nannies, care-givers, service workers, entertainers, nurses and

teachers. Many Filipino women are trafficked through the sex trade, or migrate as mail-order brides.

In 2005 alone, Filipinos in the U.S. contributed \$6 billion out of the \$11 billion U.S. dollars remitted to the Philippine government through overseas labor. This massive exodus of workers is administered and supported by the Philippine government's Labor Export Policy [LEP], a comprehensive and government-facilitated overseas employment and remittance program established by the U.S.-backed Marcos dictatorship in 1974, during the height of martial law in the Philippines.

From the post-Marcos regimes until today's Arroyo administration, the LEP has remained the Philippine government's number one answer to the country's basic problems of plunging debt, joblessness and the landlessness in the countryside. Thanks to the LEP, Filipinos with professional and critical social service training are now forever reared from childhood by their own government to serve their country best by leaving it. This has turned the culture of out-migration and would-be out-migration into a dominant factor in Philippine society.

In the context of the Philippine movement, the recognition and the practice of decisively organizing our overseas Filipino compatriots, an overwhelming majority of whom are low-wage to no-wage migrant workers, along the lines of the national democratic movement with a socialist perspective, became apparent in the 1970's, when the drain of professional Filipinos to the advanced monopoly capitalist nations of the so-called First World increased considerably.

The national democratic movement, at the center of which remains the BAYAN alliance, formed Migrante International, now the largest overseas alliance of Filipino



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Berna Ellorin

organizations in the world. Migrante has historically galvanized the nation to take up the rights and welfare of overseas Filipino workers, spurred by the execution of Filipino maid Flor Contemplacion by the Singapore government, the sexual and physical abuse of Filipino domestic worker Sarah Balabagan in the United Arab Emirates, and the kidnapping and beheading threats against Angelo De La Cruz, a truck driver based in Iraq.

The Filipino migrant rights movement, rooted in national democratic principles, has been a mover of massive and nationwide mobilizations that eventually led to tactical people's victories such as the withdrawal of Philippine troops in Iraq.

The situation of Filipino and other migrants in the United States, the country whose government serves as the engine for imperialist globalization throughout the world, was no exception as a pressure point when the U.S. Congress passed exploitative and repressive legislation against the basic human rights of migrating peoples back in 2005 and 2006.

May 1, 2006, the culmination of a

national mobilization that spring, was supported by millions of Filipinos in the Philippines pressuring the Arroyo government to take a stand against repressive U.S. legislation targeting those who provide the backbone to the dilapidated and pillaged Filipino economy. It is a fact that without the intake of remittances of Filipinos overseas, the Philippine government would crumble in a matter of days. The result is a globalized, slave-based economy where the peoples of the so-called Third World are forced, rather than choosing to migrate, as a basic survivalist measure.

This May 1, 2007, Filipinos throughout the U.S. will be continuing the transnational movement for migrant and labor rights. Many under the umbrella of BAYAN USA and Migrante International are integrated into national coalition work for May 1, 2007. The end result will surely serve as a much anticipated peak of mass movement pressure, not only pushing back the U.S. legislature, but the Arroyo government itself. □

CHICAGO



DENVER



LOS ANGELES



NEW YORK



NYC MAY DAY 2006



LA IMPORTANCIA DEL PRIMERO DE MAYO 2007

Un llamado a l@s activistas contra la guerra (especialmente a l@s jóvenes y estudiantes)

La lucha por los Derechos de l@s trabajador@s inmigrantes les necesita

Estimadas compañeras y compañeros:

La lucha por los derechos de l@s trabajador@s inmigrantes necesita su activa participación y solidaridad. ¿Se recuerdan del Primero de Mayo del 2006? Millones de trabajador@s inmigrantes a través del país dejaron sus trabajos y se reunieron en casi cada ciudad principal para exigir derechos integrales para l@s trabajador@s indocumentad@s.

Lo mismo se planea para el Primero de Mayo del 2007. Much@s de ustedes que están leyendo este llamado probablemente tienen una buena idea del porqué es importante que usted como activista contra la guerra se involucre en el movimiento por los derechos de l@s trabajador@s inmigrantes. Sin embargo, merece la pena revisarlo.

Comenzando, mientras marchamos contra la guerra en Irak, es absolutamente crítico que marchemos además contra la guerra al pueblo en este mismo país.

El nivel de racismo institucional del sistema y del gobierno capitalista que implicó muertes masivas y un continuado sufrimiento en Nueva Orleans, es parte de una "guerra contra el pueblo de los EEUU". También son los asesinatos hace varios meses a manos de la policía, de Sean Bell en la Ciudad de Nueva York y de Kathryn Jonson, una anciana de 92 años.

Cuando hablamos de las redadas diarias del gobierno contra l@s inmigrantes, llamarlas guerra no es una metáfora. Ninguna otra palabra podía describirla más exactamente. Millares de trabajador@s inmigrantes han sido arrestad@s sólo el último año. En la madrugada del 6 de marzo, un ejército armado de centenares de agentes de la Migra y el FBI hizo una redada en una fábrica de cuero en New Bedford de Massachusetts, arrestando y aterrorizando a 350 trabajador@s, la mayoría de ell@s mujeres quienes se vieron obligadas a dejar sol@s a sus hij@s. Es tiempo que nos UNAMOS y mostremos con nuestras acciones que nos enfurecen estas redadas tanto como la guerra en Irak. Cuando hagamos eso, estaremos conectando verdaderamente las luchas contra la guerra en el exterior y la guerra aquí.

El arma principal que el gobierno y los medios de comunicación capitalista están utilizando para intentar disuadir al pueblo de diferentes nacionalidades y razas de exigir fin a estas redadas, es el racismo contra l@s inmigrantes.

Cuando l@s inmigrantes se manifiestan públicamente demandando sus derechos y usted mira a su alrededor durante estas masivas manifestaciones y ve un enorme mar de gente que incluye, sin embargo, a muy pocas personas que son blanc@s o que usted pueda reconocer de las marchas contra la guerra—esa es una muestra de que la estrategia de dividir y conquistar con el racismo está teniendo éxito. El Primero de Mayo del 2007, está de nuestra parte que el movimiento en contra de la guerra respalde codo a codo, hombro con hombro, a l@s trabajador@s inmigrantes en contra de estas redadas terroristas.

Otro punto importante es que l@s trabajador@s inmigrantes han escogido el Primero de Mayo como el día para boicotear el trabajo y manifestarse por sus derechos a través del país. El Primero de Mayo es el día en que l@s trabajador@s alrededor del mundo se reúnen y marchan para demostrar su solidaridad con la lucha de tod@s l@s trabajador@s del mundo.

Aunque el Día Internacional de l@s Trabajador@s nació aquí en EEUU durante las luchas de la clase obrera del siglo diecinueve, no fue sino hasta hace poco tiempo que el Primero de Mayo se ha observado extensamente en este

país. Pero todo eso está cambiando, en gran parte porque l@s trabajador@s inmigrantes están trayendo el Primero de Mayo de nuevo a los EEUU junto con su mensaje de unidad y militancia internacional de clase y su solidaridad anti-racista, antiimperialista y anti-guerra.

El movimiento anti-guerra debe respaldar el Primero de Mayo 2007 y movilizarse con la misma pasión y energía que ponemos en las marchas anti-guerra. Si hacemos eso, no solamente nos solidarizamos con l@s trabajador@s inmigrantes, sino que ayudaremos a reestablecer la solidaridad mundial con la clase obrera en el país donde más se necesita.

¡Movimiento anti-guerra — vamos tod@s al Primero de Mayo '07!

Anti-war movement—all out for May Day '07!

Signed by, LeiLani Dowell, *Fight Imperialism-Stand Together (FIST)

Teresa Gutierrez, *May 1 Coalition, New York City

Larry Holmes, *Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC)

John Parker, *March 25 Coalition, Los Angeles

* For identification purposes only

ALTO

¡'LEGALIZACIÓN' PARA TODOS!

¡Salarios predominantes a los troqueros mexicanos que cruzan la frontera!

¡Protección a todos los derechos de los trabajadores!

¡Justicia económica y social para los sobrevivientes de Katrina!

¡Dinero para las necesidades humanas, no a la guerra!

¡Cierre de los inhumanos centros de detención!

a las **REDADAS**
y las **DEPORTACIONES**

Participa en el Segundo Gran Boicot Americano**No compres, no trabajes, no asistas a la escuela, no a la actividad**

Bush visits Colombia as death-squad regime is exposed

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Colombia receives the most U.S. military aid outside the war-torn Middle East and Afghanistan. Colombia also leads in union leaders assassinated, along with mass displacement of peasants, Afro-Colombians and Indigenous peoples, and massacres and arbitrary detentions—all with almost complete impunity for those who commit these crimes.

The criminals are mostly paramilitaries or death squads that have increasingly been exposed as collaborators of many pro-President Álvaro Uribe politicians, Congress members and Colombian elite.

In the weeks before U.S. President George W. Bush's whirlwind tour of five Latin American countries, there were significant developments in Colombia. Eight members of Congress were arrested and jailed for their connections to deadly paramilitaries. Among the arrested are the brother and father of former Foreign Relations Minister Consuelo Araújo, who had been forced to resign by public pressure.

Most significant, Jorge Noriega, Uribe's head of the secret police or DAS, is among them. Noriega has been accused of giving a list of union leaders' names to the paramilitaries. Some whose names are on that list were eventually murdered.

The president himself is accused by opposition politicians and many human-rights and social organizations of allowing these crimes and also of having ties with paramilitaries.

Two years ago, in a much publicized and televised ceremony, Uribe started what was called the "demobilization" of the AUC, the United Self Defense Units of Colombia, better known as paramilitaries. Hundreds appeared to lay down their weapons. Yet what was proclaimed as "pacification" turned out to be a mere reorganization of these criminal forces.

Now they are calling themselves Black Eagles, or the "new generation" of paramilitaries that have been extremely active throughout the country.

On Feb. 10, in the offices of the Confederation of Unions (CUT) in Bucaramanga, a note signed by the Black Eagles was delivered. The note threatened the Coca Cola and Nestlé union SINALTRAINAL and its leaders. In a written statement, SINALTRAINAL points out: "This threat comes after the claim by Vice President Francisco Santos on radio Caracol News of Dec. 12, 2006, in reference to the attorney general's investigation into Colombian football clubs, that 'there are campaigns to malign Coca-Cola and Nestlé as well as other private corporations led by sectors of the extreme radical left, infiltrated in trade unions, that are generating absolutely absurd campaigns against the corporations.'"

This SINALTRAINAL statement exposes the Colombian government's loyalty to the U.S. transnational corporations. It also shows the criminal irresponsibility of a government that instead of protecting its people puts them in peril. The Colombian president and vice president both know full well that these types of accusations are a message to the paramilitary forces to target the victims.

Uribe himself has accused Carlos Lozano, the editor of the Communist magazine *Voz*, of having ties with the guerrilla FARC-EP, and Gustavo Petro, senator of the opposition Party Alternative Democratic Pole, PDA, of being a "terrorist in business suit." Uribe's response to

the exposure of the paramilitary ties of Congress members and his intelligence chief, all members of pro-Uribe parties and organizations, has been to provoke more violence against the social progressive movement.

Two days after Uribe's statement, a death threat was sent to dozens of social, labor, student and alternative media organizations by the new paramilitary grouping the Black Eagles. Petro's brother was also threatened. Two members of the PDA were killed under unclear circumstances.

Paramilitaries have threatened to kill Sen. Petro, since he has been instrumental in disclosing these ties. He visited Washington, D.C., the week of March 5 in an effort to expose the grave situation of his country. Here he met with non-governmental organizations and representatives of several members of Congress to alert them to the danger Colombians are facing, particularly now that the Free Trade Agreement between Colombia and the United States is being discussed.

In a March 7 news conference, Petro laid out the objectives of his visit. First was to propose the renegotiation of Plan Colombia, which currently transfers to Bogota \$700 million per year mainly for military purposes. Conceived during the presidency of Bill Clinton supposedly to eradicate drugs, this plan has provided Colombia around \$4 billion. The money has been mainly used, under U.S. oversight, to fight the armed revolutionary movement and to fumigate large land areas, risking the lives and health of thousands of peasants. It is a de facto war plan against the people of Colombia.

Petro instead proposed a Plan Colombia for the victims of the paramilitary and state violence. He said that the power of the paramilitaries resides in their close association with a significant sector of the Colombian state, including the judiciary, which has allowed the crimes to go unpunished. "Ten percent of the legislators make laws in the morning and in the evening order massacres. As a program to counter drugs, Plan Colombia has failed," Petro said.

Another Petro objective was to renegotiate the FTA, which has been signed by Bush and Uribe but awaits confirmation in both the U.S. and Colombian Congresses. Petro referred to this agreement as one that benefits the paramilitaries whose financial base is narcotraffic. He explained, for example, that the agricultural chapter in the FTA will hurt 90 percent of small farmers and 15 million peasants who produce grains and other food harvests. Since the production that the FTA will benefit—like wood, rubber and African palm—need extensive capital, large areas of land and several years to produce, only the "narcoparamilitaries," who are also wealthy large landowners, would be the big winners.

As Bush's six-hour visit to Colombia to support the scandal-surrounded Uribe attests, the U.S. government not only ignores the state's genocidal war and repressive actions against the social movements, but aids this war at all levels. The White House dweller's visit to Bogota took place amid a gigantic display of the state's repressive forces: 21,000 police and other national armies, helicopters, sharpshooters in roofs, water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gases.

The "security" operation lasted for almost a week before Bush's arrival. It included extensive raids. Nevertheless, anti-Bush forces held demonstrations in several Colombian cities to repudiate his

visit. In Bogota, the police refused permits for demonstrations, yet thousands of people, mostly youths, courageously took to the streets where they were met by harsh repression from the police. At the end, according to Nikzor, a human-rights organization, more than 400 people had been detained.

The U.S. government not only allows violent repression and genocide in Colombia through the states' forces and paramilitaries, whose joint actions have been widely exposed, but was itself the initiator of paramilitarism after World

War II. (www.HRW.org)

This U.S. war against the Colombian people should be high on the agenda of all the anti-imperialist and anti-war forces in the United States, for it is a war to destroy the progressive organizations and leaders and secure Colombia as a U.S. proxy to wage war against those Latin American countries moving further to the left.

Next: The role of the United States in Colombian paramilitarism, paramilitaries against Venezuela, interview with Iván Cepeda, son of assassinated Patriotic Union member. □

At Cancha de Ferro stadium: Chávez 2, Bush 0

Continued from page 1

two countries' energy companies, spoke to a public meeting of 40,000 people in the Cancha de Ferro soccer field in Buenos Aires.

As the work day in the Argentine capital ended, residents from Buenos Aires and its working-class suburbs began to pour into the stadium. Coming in chartered buses, by public transport and on foot, they represented the dozens of political and nationalist left parties, from the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo to the unions and community organizations that make up the anti-imperialist majority of Argentines, along with visitors and immigrants from Paraguay, Chile and Uruguay—there were many Uruguayan flags—plus at least two anti-imperialists from the United States.

Even from the middle-class apartment house behind the stadium, people had hung a Brazilian and other national flags to show their solidarity with the pro-Chávez, anti-Bush demonstration.

When Chávez began to speak sometime after 8 p.m., it was obvious the people were with him, and he with them. Every upbeat phrase was cheered, from any reference to Fidel Castro, Cuba or the Argentine-born Che Guevara to the heroes of the Latin American independence struggle, from Simón Bolívar to Don Jose de San Martín of Argentina.

But nothing aroused more noise—both cheers and whistles depending on the statement—than Chávez' ironic comments about the U.S. president. "He doesn't even smell of sulfur anymore," said Chávez, alluding to his own comments last fall at the United Nations, "but he has the smell of a political corpse, who will soon disappear into cosmic dust."

The Venezuelan president and most others in the stadium were quite aware of Bush's weakened position and waning popularity back in the U.S., where political polls put his approval rating at under 30 percent. Chávez spelled out how Bush had failed to provide for the victims of Hurricane Katrina and left tens of millions without health care.

"If he really wanted social justice in the world, he should do something, instead of just talking," said the Venezuelan. "He should order the U.S. troops out of Iraq and use the vast sums of money from the war to end hunger and death throughout the world.

"Outside the United States," Chávez added, "Bush's popularity rating is probably negative," to more laughs and cheers from the crowd.

Someone must have unwisely written into Bush's talks a message involv-

ing Simón Bolívar. He made the error of claiming that both he and his South American partners were "sons of Simón Bolívar and George Washington."

Chávez stopped short of calling Bush "a son of a ...," but the audience finished it for him. The Venezuelan president launched into a history lesson contrasting the slave owning George Washington, who founded the country destined to impose its rule on the Americas, with the great South American liberator, Simón Bolívar.

But his message to the audience was also that the unity of the nations and the peoples of Latin America "is absolutely essential for their liberation." While Chávez spelled out later that a 21st century liberation movement meant also a struggle for socialism, he made it clear that he also included those political leaders—like Kirchner—who were not attempting to move toward socialism but were striving for some political and economic independence from the colossus of the North.

The Latin American countries presently aligned against imperialism include Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and now Ecuador, and on some levels Argentina and to a lesser degree, Brazil. While Brazil's President Luis Ignacio "Lula" da Silva signed an agreement with Bush dealing with the joint development of ethanol fuels, he has so far refused to use Brazil as a military and economic bulwark against governments in the region that Washington considers its enemies.

Bush brought only a small "carrot" to offer the region. Much of what he offered—a medical ship run by the U.S. Navy and scholarships to study in the U.S., English lessons and home construction—the Cubans and Venezuelans have offered for years in greater amounts, on better terms and with more solidarity.

Bush's tour includes Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico. In every country on the list and some others, thousands took to the streets to denounce his visit. In Colombia, where youths burned U.S. flags in defiance of the death-squad regime, and in Brazil, where tens of thousands marched on Paulista Avenue in São Paulo, police attacked demonstrators, but couldn't stop the actions. Tens of thousands also protested in the Zocalo, in downtown Mexico City. In Guatemala, a Mayan group plans to spiritually fumigate a religious site following Bush's planned stop there.

If the masses perceive a world leader—and with good reason—as an arrogant war criminal, that leader had better be powerful and generous if s/he expects to gain points. Bush is politically weak and came almost empty-handed. Chávez 2, Bush 0. □

'Before Night Falls'

Hollywood projected Cuba as 'police state' for gays

By Leslie Feinberg

Hollywood turned up the volume on charges that Cuba was a "penal colony" for homosexual males with its release of "Before Night Falls" in August 2000.

The movie was based on a memoir by the late anti-communist Cuban homosexual writer Reinaldo Arenas, who emigrated to the United States in 1980. A decade later Arenas committed suicide in a dilapidated Hells Kitchen apartment in Manhattan, the capital of capital. Impoverished and dying as a result of AIDS, he had no health insurance and could not afford high medical costs of care—rights enjoyed by every Cuban under the Revolution in his homeland.

Since the early days of the 1959 Revolution, the CIA had trolled for grievances about the Revolution—real, manufactured or exaggerated.

"Before Night Falls" is the pinnacle of this propaganda campaign, by virtue of having the most capital invested in its production, its cast and distribution network; the publicity generated for its release; and the accolades and awards that gave it the imprimatur of "truth." Interspersed snippets of actual archival footage from the early days of the Revolution and snippets of newsreel of Fidel Castro's speeches aim to lend the film the appearance of historical authenticity.

As the movie begins, the cameras pan across what is actually rural Mexico, the backdrop for Arenas' childhood in Cuba. The reality of agricultural plantation enslavement is nowhere to be seen. Instead, the voiceover narrates that the author's childhood was "splendor," adding that "it was absolute poverty but also absolute freedom ..."

Projected onto movie screens, "Before Night Falls" becomes an imperialist-era sequel to "Gone with the Wind."

In both reactionary propaganda films, bygone epochs of white-supremacist plantation slavery—which shackled African and Indigenous peoples—are nostalgically revived, revised and romanticized. In both films, the armies that break the manacles of slavery for profit are cast as the bad guys.

Pre-Revolution: exploitation, not freedom

Viewers of "Before Night Falls" are left with the overall impression that the U.S.-backed Batista regime actually offered greater "freedom."

In an October 2001 movie review about "Before Night Falls," entitled "Gays in Cuba, from the Hollywood School of Falsification," Leonardo Hechavarría and Marcel Hatch took on this fiction. (www.walterlippman.com)

Hechavarría's biography describes him as a Cuban citizen, a translator and interpreter, and states that "he is a passionate advocate of the Revolution and works for increased acceptance of lesbians and gays in his homeland." Marcel Hatch is identified as a typographer, "a veteran gay rights activist and Cuba defender."

In their review, Hechavarría and Hatch wrote: "Before the 1959 Revolution, life for lesbians and gays was one of extreme isolation and repression, enforced by civil law, augmented by Catholic dogma. Patriarchal attitudes made lesbians invisible. If discovered, they'd often suffer sexual abuse, disgrace in the community and job loss.

"Havana's gay male underground—some 200,000—was a purgatory of prostitution to American tourists, domestic



Free the Cuban Five— Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández and René González.

servitude and constant threats of violence and blackmail. The closet was the operative image. Survival often meant engaging in fake heterosexual marriage, or banishment to the gay slum."

For more analysis of "Before Night Falls," also see "The Sexual Politics of Reinaldo Arenas: Fact, Fiction and the Real Record of the Cuban Revolution," by Jon Hillson, at www.blythe.org.

Researchers Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich concluded about life for the homosexual/transgender urban work force in pre-Revolutionary Cuba, "If legal sanctions and official harassment were rare, this tolerance was due less to social acceptance than to overriding considerations of profit and the economic interests of the underworld that dominated the Cuban political apparatus."

But the misery of urban sexual enslavement in brothels, casinos, domestic work and drug networking is nowhere to be seen in "Before Night Falls." Neither is the apparatus of the Batista dictatorship's police, secret agents and army.

Workers' state, not bosses' state

"Before Night Falls" is the blockbuster of the propagandistic charges that the Cuban Revolution ushered in a "police state," similar to fascist Nazi Germany and the bloody 1973 counter-revolution in Chile.

These vilifications purposely confused the difference between a workers' state and a bosses' state. Understanding the class character of the Cuban workers' state is very important for those who seek their own liberation today.

Cuba was a newly developing workers' state—which had to literally battle overt and covert military onslaught and economic strangulation by U.S. imperialism. At the same time the Revolution had to fight the legacy of racist, sexist and anti-homosexual/transgender indoctrination by patriarchal colonialism, capitalism and imperialism.

In contrast, the state machineries of the exploiting classes—and the church hierarchies that serve them—have always relied on repressive terror, and deepening and strengthening homophobia and transphobia, in order to conquer and rule.

For example, the Spanish colonial state in Cuba enslaved the Indigenous population on the island, castrated those it con-

sidered "sodomites," and forced them to eat their own testicles coated with dirt. ("Los Negros Curros," 1986)

In order to save German capitalism, a wing of industrialists and bankers bankrolled the fascists who forced tens of thousands of gays and lesbians to wear the pink triangle in slave labor and extermination camps.

Víctor Hugo Robles wrote of Chile—where the mass of workers and peasants were not armed against the 1973 CIA-backed counter-revolutionary—that, "Perhaps the most forgotten are the many transvestites who were executed

during the days immediately following the coup." ("History in the Making: The Homosexual Liberation Movement in Chile")

In the imperialist United States, homosexuality and sex/gender variance were so viciously criminalized and punished by state repression that a mass political movement arose to resist it. Despite widespread struggle, same-sex love remained illegal in the United States until 2003. Currently, at least 65 percent of transwomen and 29 percent of transmen are estimated to have been imprisoned at some point

in their life in the United States. (Critical Resistance)

And today it is U.S. imperialism that has set up concentration camps—from Abu Ghraib to Guantánamo—where anti-gay and anti-trans rape and humiliation are incorporated into the science of torture.

The state of former slaves

The Cuban workers' state, like the armies of Bolívar and Toussaint L'Overture, is an armed liberation struggle of the oppressed up against the Goliath force of the oppressor state.

An estimated 20,000 Cubans died in two years of battling the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship—up against bombs, aircraft and artillery. The Revolution disarmed the Batista regime's army and secret police networks.

However, simply dismantling the bosses' apparatus of dictatorship did not create a new mechanism to defend the island from counter-revolution and invasion. Imperialism soon cinched an economic noose around the island, its Pentagon a constant threat.

A new state had to be built, from the ground up. It took a mass mobilization of

the population to defend the gains of the Revolution. The National Revolutionary Militia and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution organized the entire population into a network against CIA-organized subterfuge and sabotage.

This block-by-block watchfulness, combined with old, deep prejudice against same-sex liaisons, made life uncomfortable for some Cuban male homosexuals. While they had experienced extreme isolation and alienation in the sexual exploitation industry, they had also found refuge in urban anonymity and privately-owned casinos, bars and other meeting places.

However, unlike its portrayal in "Before Night Falls," the Cuban workers' state was not a repressive apparatus. Rather, it had the task of defending 11 million Cubans from re-enslavement by U.S. finance capital. The Cuban Revolution could not have survived a day, let alone a half century, without organizing and mobilizing the population to defend its independence from imperialism.

The Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and the Cuban popular militias—which armed millions of women as well as men—are the protective might of a formerly enslaved population against enraged former plantation owners, bankers, industrialists and syndicate bosses.

Arming the Cuban population of workers—rural and urban—made it possible to defeat the invasion at Playa Girón (the Bay of Pigs). At the same time, this defense allowed the Revolution to boot out the U.S. sugar plantation owners and gave the land back to those who tilled it. It allowed the Revolution to oust U.S. industrialists and bankers, and crime syndicate bosses who ran the lucrative brothel, gambling and drug networks. The Revolution could begin deconstructing the white supremacist and patriarchal systems that hadn't allowed Cubans of African descent to set foot on the beaches, and had kept women in servitude.

This was a workers' state.

'Dispute this fable with facts'

Calling for an end to Hollywood's blockade of Cuba, Hechavarría and Hatch stress about "Before Night Falls": "[I]n a queer cinematographic twist, it erases the achievements of Cuban toilers, women, people of color, and indeed gays, who've made stupendous advances since 1959.

"The end of hunger, homelessness, illiteracy, high infant mortality, and foreign domination of the island are of course undeniable—all fruits of the Revolution."

After the Revolution, "advances for women in general were naturally extended to lesbians, and many became among the most ardent defenders of the Revolution. On the other hand, a significant minority of gay men left Cuba. Some joined the counter-revolutionary expatriates in Miami or were blackmailed into doing so. Ironically, the U.S., which was busy flushing out and jailing its homosexuals during the McCarthy period, welcomed Cuban gays as part of its overall campaign to destabilize the island." (walterlippmann.com)

Hechavarría and Hatch added: "It was Clinton/Bush-inspired destiny that a hot button pushing, gay-themed anti-Cuba melodrama would be released. The persistent myth, promulgated chiefly by right-wing Cuban-Americans (most of whom are hyper-homophobes), that homosexuality is illegal in Cuba, that gays and lesbians are banned from the Communist Party,

Continued on page 13



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. Stop and get a subscription while you're there!

NEW YORK CITY

Cuban speaks on revolutionary gains of women

In the spirit of the socialist origins of International Women's Day, Alicia González of the Federation of Cuban Women (Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, FMC) spoke at the Workers World Party IWD commemoration meeting March 9 at the Solidarity Center in New York City.

González presented a thrilling look at women's roles in Cuba, describing changes over the years as "the revolution within the revolution." Women now make up 47 percent of Cuba's Supreme Court, 60 percent of the judicial sector and 70 percent of the health sector, which includes doctors. Women receive 18 weeks of maternity leave at 100 percent of their salary, and a year's leave is available to either parent with a salary at 60 percent. Abortions are free on request, there is equal pay for comparable work, and the country plans all educational curricula with gender equity in mind.

Following González's remarks, there was a lively question and answer session, moderated by the evening's chair, LeiLani Dowell, Workers World managing editor and leader of F.I.S.T. (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together).

An audience member originally from Angola spoke of Cuba as the home in her heart because of Cuba's heroic contributions to Angola's struggle for independence. Alicia González responded, "This was done to repay our debt to our African ancestors and to honor them."

In response to a question about recent U.S. media reports on Cuba's possible legalization of same-sex unions, the Cuban speaker noted that a statement by Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba's National Assembly, showed "the political will existed" for that possibility. Alarcón had said, "We have to redefine the concept of marriage. Socialism should be a society that does not exclude anybody." (USA Today, Feb. 22)

In a pledge of unconditional solidarity from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people for the Cuban

Revolution, Workers World editor and transgender lesbian activist Leslie Feinberg presented González with a framed plaque of the worldwide Internet initiative of Rainbow Solidarity to Free the Cuban Five.

RainbowSolidarityendorsements are in from 45 countries and all 50 U.S. states, with signers supporting demands to "Free the Five, defend Cuba's right to self-determination and sovereignty, lift the blockade and stop U.S.-instigated terror attacks" on the revolutionary nation. The appeal is available in 15 languages at freethefive.org or freethefiveny.org.

—Minnie Bruce Pratt

PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO



Alicia Gonzalez holds up Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five poster presented by Leslie Feinberg.

FIST youth plan travel challenge to Cuba

By Julie Fry

Activists from the youth organization known as FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together—plan to travel to Cuba this summer. The trip will coincide with the dates of both the Venceremos Brigade and the IFCO/Pastors for Peace annual travel challenges to Cuba. FIST activists intend to cross the U.S. border at the end of the trip together with these groups to protest the illegal U.S. blockade of Cuba.

Members of FIST are planning this trip to show solidarity with the Cuban people, who have suffered under the brutal U.S. blockade for almost 50 years. FIST is also traveling to Cuba to show support for the Cuban Five, political prisoners who continue to languish in U.S. jails for defending their country against U.S.-sponsored terrorists.

In addition, FIST organizers envision the trip as an opportunity for young people to learn about how socialism functions in a revolutionary society. No country provides a better example of this than Cuba.

FIST is planning meetings with Cuban Communist Party leaders, and especially leaders of Cuba's Young Communist League. The FIST delegation will visit universities and work places to learn about young people's special role in building Cuba's Revolution. Other events are also being planned: for example, a trip to the memorial to Ernesto "Che" Guevara located in the province of Villa Clara, and visits with Cuban hip-hop artists to learn about



the role of revolutionary art in Cuba.

Many aspects of the trip are still being planned, but the visit will undoubtedly offer young activists from the United States an historic opportunity to meet with and learn from young socialist leaders in Cuba who are leading the way toward their country's socialist future.

FIST is still taking applications from young activists who are interested in joining the delegation. The delegation will leave July 19 and return July 28.

To learn more about how you can join the FIST delegation, or about how you can sponsor a young member of the delegation, call 212-627-2994.

Fry is a leader of the youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

Lavender & Red

Continued from page 12

and that they are savaged and tossed in the slammer, is pure bunk."

Hechavarría and Hatch stated categorically: "We know of no Cuban, for or against their government, who finds the movie credible. Nor do smart gay activists.

"This political falsity," they concluded, "has widespread currency among liberal skeptics and within the queer community. It is to this audience the film was targeted. It is necessary for friends of Cuba to dispute this fable with facts."

Next: *Cuban Revolution: trajectory of progress for homosexual/transgender population.*

For more on homosexuality/transgender and the Cuban Revolution, see *Lavender & Red* parts 86-92, at www.workers.org. Look for the lavender and red logo.

E-mail: lfeinberg@workers.org.

Drag King Dreams

by Leslie Feinberg

Night-shift trans workers in post-9/11 Manhattan struggle against imperialist war, police repression, racism and the round-up of Arab, Muslim and South Asian friends and neighbors.

Order online at www.Leftbooks.com

'Global Assembly Line' highlights women workers

An International Women's Day forum in Los Angeles on March 10 highlighted women's leadership around the world in struggles for national liberation and against specific oppressions as women and as workers under capitalism. The March 25 Coalition for immigrant rights and the International Action Center-Los Angeles hosted the program.

Gloria Verdieu of the IAC-San Diego opened the program with remarks on the complexity and variety of women's roles in cultures around the world. She also explained the communist origins of International Women's Day.

Terrie Cervas of Habi Arts, and the Southern California coordinator of the progressive Filipino organization BAYAN-USA, discussed women in the Philippines within the context of their contribution to their national liberation struggle. She showed photos of militant Filipino protests against U.S. domination as well as domestic political violence, including photos that documented the political assassinations of women activists.

Alma Castro, youth organizer of the March 25 Coalition, gave a moving multi-



WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

Photo l-r: Bev Tang, Anakbayan; Gloria Verdieu; Rosa Pisani, Maggie Vascassenno, IAC-LA; Martha Rojas, March 25 Coalition; Terri Cervas; Alma Castro; Shailendria Shakur, IAC-LA and Sahar Khanian.

media presentation with projected photos and text showing the quest for justice and accountability for the Mujeres de Juarez, the many women working in the Mexican border town of Juarez who have been disappeared and killed.

Participants also viewed "The Global Assembly Line," an Emmy-Award-winning film that documents the impact of the global capitalist economy on work-

ers employed in exploitative "free-trade zones" from Tennessee to the Philippines and the Mexican border.

The program closed with discussion on preparations for the March 17 demonstration against the U.S. war in Iraq and for the May Day 2007 immigrant-rights movement's call for a mass turn-out against the raids and deportations.

—Maggie Vascassenno

WW statement

Marching together on the Pentagon

Continued from page 1

Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, Sudan, Somalia, Haiti and any other country that asserts its right to sovereignty and self-determination against the imperious demands of U.S. finance capital.

At the same time, the corporations and banks are starving the cities in the U.S. to pay for their wars for imperialist empire and waging war on workers, particularly the most oppressed, on the domestic front.

From coast to coast, killer cops serve as occupation armies in nationally oppressed communities. The courts and prisons work hand-in-hand to keep members of these same communities and the poor locked away, hoping that they will be forgotten and ostracized. We cannot allow this to happen without raising our voices and our fists.

Immigrant workers, with many women in leadership, are facing stepped up police-state shop-floor raids. La migra agents, now dubbed ICE—U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement—actually “sort” and physically “tag” workers based on skin color, tear apart parents and children through detention and deportation, and try to instill terror in the immigrant workforce.

In New Orleans, the levees broke because the funds to fortify them were channeled into the war drive. Then troops and private mercenaries from the Middle East were re-deployed to New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane

Katrina to train their weapons on the Black population, wading and swimming through the flood waters to find food and shelter for themselves, their loved ones and neighbors. Families were ripped apart and forced into yet another historically engineered Diaspora.

The same \$5 million a day—every day of the year—that the U.S. funnels to Tel Aviv for the occupation of historic Palestine is not publicized. While Israeli troops demolish Palestinian homes, the Malian immigrant community in the Bronx is burying nine children and one adult who died in a fire that ravaged a building—one of many in working-class and impoverished communities throughout the U.S.—without a sprinkler system or external fire escape.

Housing, health care, decent paying jobs, education—all of these basic human rights are unreachable for millions while cost is no object for wars for capitalist profit.

The working class and oppressed peoples worldwide hold great potential power. Those who do the work of the world everyday, with no say as to how it's organized and run, can rise up and make their demands a reality. The greatest tool to build a movement that can fight in the class interests of the exploited and oppressed is solidarity.

Unity—in actions as well as words—is a life-and-death requisite to end the wars for profit on every front, once and for all. □

The Iraq War

What's Marx got to do

By Fred Goldstein

What does Karl Marx have to do with being against the war in Iraq?

You don't have to be a Marxist to be opposed to the war in Iraq. From the “shock and awe” bombing to the torture at Abu Ghraib, from the killing of more than half a million Iraqis to the deaths of 3,000 plus U.S. soldiers and thousands more wounded—treated by the Pentagon as discarded goods at Walter Reed Hospital—there is plenty to be outraged about.

And you don't have to be a Marxist to understand the profit motives behind the Bush administration's biggest “benchmark of progress” for its client Maliki government in Iraq—namely the oil law that opens up the second-largest oil reserve in the world to Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Shell and British Petroleum. Incidentally, guess who just established its headquarters for all of Asia in Dubai? Of course it is Cheney's Halliburton.

It is not necessary to understand Lenin, who updated Marxism in the 20th century with his analysis of imperialism as a social system and its irrepressible drive to expand, to be opposed to the U.S.-NATO war in Afghanistan; or Washington's campaign for “regime change” of the independent government in Iran; or its support for the Israeli settler regime's ongoing war to destroy Palestinian national resistance; or its use of Tel Aviv to make war against Hezbollah in order to secure a pro-U.S. regime in Lebanon; or its attempt to destroy the socialist governments of North Korea and Cuba; or the campaign against the pro-socialist, anti-imperialist government of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela.

Whether or not one adheres to the Leninist theory of imperialism, one must oppose the latest “African strategy” of Washington to aid the oil companies by moving into the Gulf of Guinea with its reserves; the lawless military intervention in the Horn of Africa to put in power pro-U.S. “warlords” in Somalia and to re-colonize Ethiopia; and the U.S.-British drive to overthrow the government of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe because he dared to try to take back the most fruitful land in the country from white settlers left over from the old regime.

From slavery to Katrina

Marxists contend that the profit system is behind racism and national oppression. But you do not have to agree in order to see clearly that hundreds of thousands of African Americans have been left to permanently suffer the extraordinary trauma of forcible dislocation and separation reminiscent of slavery while real estate sharks, land developers and every variety of gentrifying parasite has moved into New Orleans to make the crisis of the poor into a profit opportunity for the rich.

The state, according to Marx, is an organ of the capitalist class—the ruling class of exploiters—for the suppression of the workers and the oppressed, who are the exploited. And whether or not you agree that this analysis applies to the U.S., one must ask how it is that the Department of Homeland Security winds up running terror raids against defenseless undocumented workers that leave children without parents and criminalize low-wage workers trying to survive.

It is undeniable that the police are an essential part of that state, whether you consider yourself a Marxist or not. Witness the police murder of Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell and the untold number of other victims of racist profiling and police brutality in the oppressed communities. Part of

that state is the prison-industrial complex, which holds 2 million poor people—disproportionately African-American and Latin@—who, before they became prisoners of the state, were prisoners of poverty and hopelessness in an \$11 trillion economy run by corporate multi-billionaires.

The price of corporate rule

Part of that corporate-ruled state is the judges that allow corporations to tear up union contracts and workers' pensions using the legal maneuver of bankruptcy. Judges who issue injunctions against strikers, police who plow through picket lines and “labor boards” that nullify union elections are all part of that state apparatus.

You don't have to have a Marxist analysis of capitalism to know that super-rich HMOs and insurance companies are piling up profits from the health care system while 47 million people have no health insurance; that drug companies make super-profits while people get sick and many die because they cannot afford the monopoly price-gouging of the pharmaceutical industry; that profiteering landlords and developers have destroyed affordable housing; that people living paycheck to paycheck have to borrow to keep going, and that banks and credit card companies, mortgage lenders and other corporate loan sharks are preying on the people as personal debt interest payments soar.

But the more broadly and closely you examine the nature of contemporary society in the U.S., Europe and Japan, the more it becomes clear that what is happening today is not new at all but is a continuation on an expanded scale of what has been in existence throughout the history of capitalism and imperialism.

Endangering the planet and its people

One of the most dramatic and dangerous of recent developments under the profit system is the threat to the planet. For the sake of maintaining profit margins, the corporations are poisoning the soil, the water, the air and eroding the atmosphere. If anything reveals the inherent folly and greed generated by the profit motive and the profit system, it is the corporate risk to the planet.

Capitalism threatens the people who live on the planet, as well. It is only recently that women in this country won the legal right to make fundamental decisions about their own bodies. And that right has been steadily whittled away.

Women are battered every day in this country and the courts and police just fold their hands. There are safe houses for battered women all across the country.

Lesbian, gay, bi and trans people are assaulted, beaten by police, and these crimes go unpunished and largely unreported.

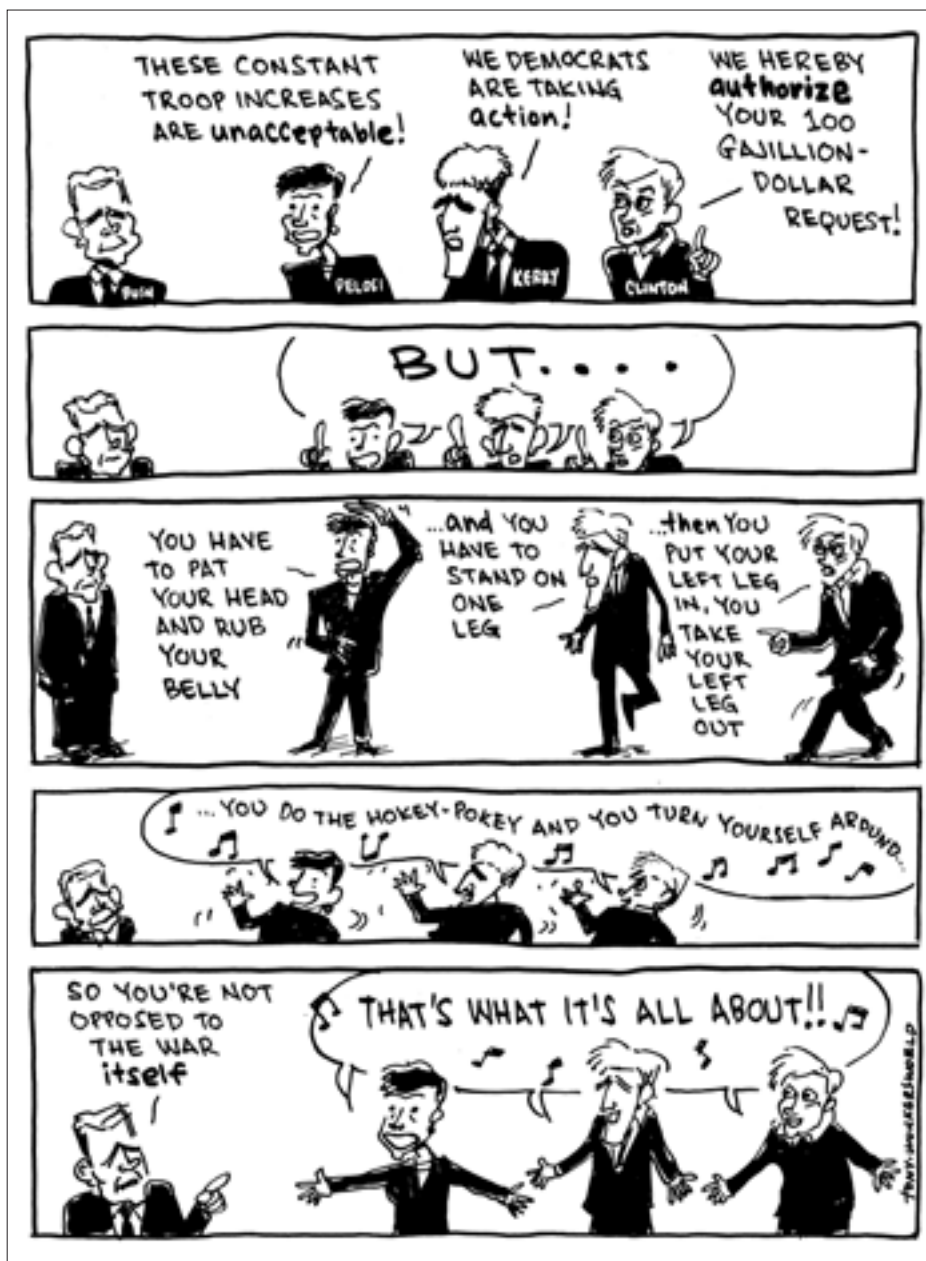
To this day, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people still struggle for the most basic rights, like the right to marry and to love as they please.

Racism, sexism and gender oppression are rooted in the need of the tiny minority of super-rich that rule to divide the workers, to throw prejudice and hatred in their eyes so that they cannot see how every facet of the profit system works against them—to keep them from uniting against their natural enemy: the capitalist class.

Marxism shows the way out

If you are against all these evils and if you want to put an end to them once and for all, then Marx and Lenin are indispensable.

Marxists fight for political, social and



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with it?

economic justice in capitalist society on every level and every day. There is no form of oppression and exploitation that should be allowed to pass without a fight. We are not waiting for socialism to drop from the sky and make everything right.

But in order to really put an end to all these byproducts of capitalism, the organized workers and the oppressed must take away the power of the corporations to lay people off, cut wages and take away health care. This movement must take away the power of the landlords to make housing unaffordable; the state's ability to wage war on immigrants; the Pentagon's power to wage wars of aggression and intervention abroad; and it must destroy the system and the ruling culture of racism, national oppression, degradation of women and gender oppression.

The power to do so rests in the control of the economy, the control of the media, of education, of the health care system and so on. Marxists want to rid society of the two capitalist parties, Republicans and Democrats, both of which are in the pay of the corporate rich and deceive the people—generation after generation—while war, poverty, racism and suffering continue on and on.

Political parties of the workers and the oppressed must mobilize to reorganize society on a revolutionary basis.

Working people must take control of the vast wealth they create. And oppressed nations and nationalities—African Americans, Latin@s, Asians, Indigenous peoples and all those who have been held down by racism and national oppression in this “prison house of nations”—must have the right to self-determination — i.e. the freedom to determine their own political, social and economic destiny.

We must take over the media so the lives of the working class and the oppressed communities around the country and around the world can be on the front pages, in the periodicals and on peoples' television networks. The medical industry must be used the way it is in socialist Cuba—where all health care, as well as education, is free—for the well-being of the masses, not the profits of the capitalist “health industry.”

In other words, the capitalist class—the class that lives from exploitation and profit—its system and its repressive state has to be destroyed root and branch through the revolutionary struggle of the masses of workers and oppressed peoples. Then and only then will there be an end to imperialist wars like the one in Iraq.

That's what Marx has to do with it. □

Japanese 'denounce U.S. Aegis destroyer'

Dear Friend

On March 1, the U.S. Navy's destroyer USS Mustin arrived in the port of Nagasaki, Japan. Over 100 workers protested its arrival at Yanagi pier there. The USS Mustin is an Aegis destroyer that has an anti-missile system. It was suspected of carrying nuclear weapons.

At about 8:30 a.m. on this day, workers gathered on Yanagi pier and staged a protest action. And at 9:00 a.m., as the giant figure of the USS Mustin was coming into sight, the workers chanted intensely to denounce it.

In solidarity, Anti-war Joint Action Committee Secretary Kikuchi Takao



Palestinian women battle police at checkpoint on the West Bank.



Bush effigy in Brazil, left. Above, Guatemala.



Oaxaca, left, and Sri Lankan, above, protests government.

Anti-imperialist Int'l Women's Day worldwide

By K. Durkin

Protestors targeted U.S. imperialism on March 8, International Women's Day. In cities across the globe from São Paulo to Seoul, women activists demonstrated against U.S. wars and against U.S.-led or supported occupations, militarism, and economic and political domination.

Brazilian women led a demonstration of tens of thousands down São Paulo's main street to protest U.S. President George Bush's five-nation Latin American trip. They turned their International Women's Day march into an anti-imperialist one, chanting anti-Bush slogans, with signs reading, “Out with Bush,” “No to war,” and “For the women of Iraq.”

Organizer María Fernanda Marcelino stated: “Women are demonstrating to say ‘no’ to North American imperialism, ‘no’ to neo-liberalism and ‘no’ to the domination of one people over another.” (www.nst.com)

Women in the Brazilian MST (Landless Rural Workers Movement), trade unionists, students and activists were among the participants, showing that the struggles of women, workers, landless farmers and the Indigenous are fusing with anti-imperialism and class struggle in Latin America.

Guatemalan women focused their International Women's Day demonstrations not only to denounce Bush's trip to Latin America but also to vociferously protest U.S. government repression of immigrants from their country.

Prensa Latina explained that “the backdrop of the march was [the recent] arrest of 500 immigrants in a factory in [Massachusetts], including 321 Guatemalans and 183 women, who were separated from their 100 children, who were placed with strangers.”

The Immigration Custom Enforcement (ICE) brutally sent these workers to Texas, far from their children, including nursing babies. The U.S. government deported over 18,000 Guatemalan immigrants in 2006.

Their sisters in Venezuela, where President Hugo Chávez is a fierce, stalwart leader in the Latin American anti-

imperialist movement, demonstrated in opposition to U.S. aggression and the ruthless war in Iraq with its horrifying toll of Iraqi civilians. They demanded, “Bush, get out of Latin America.”

Rallies and marches also took place in Colombia, Uruguay and Mexico, where protestors decried Bush's visit to their countries.

In a stunning show of strength, tens of thousands demonstrated in Oaxaca, Mexico, site of recent militant anti-government struggles and a women-led takeover of TV stations. The Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO), peasants', and women's groups, including the Coordination of the Women of Oaxaca and teachers' unions, joined the March 8 action.

Across the globe, women in the Philippines defied the U.S.-backed Macapagal-Arroyo regime. Thousands marched throughout the many islands of their country on March 8, demanding their rights and an end to political repression.

In Manila, demonstrators chanted, “Women resist U.S.-Arroyo terrorism now,” and stood up to riot police who stopped them on their way to the Malacapang Presidential Palace. Led by the mass women's activist network Gabriela, they denounced the “anti-terror” law used to stifle political dissenters, including women's organizations.

Nationwide, protesters strongly condemned the military's violence against women activists. Eighty-three women organizers have been murdered since Macapagal-Arroyo came into office in 2001.

Gabriela's Secretary-General Emmi de Jesus emphasized, “As the government unleashes its own brand of terrorism on women, the hundreds of thousands of Gabriela members all over the country remain steadfast in our fight to resist the government's attacks on our lives.” (GMANews.TV)

Women activists in Seoul, South Korea, paid tribute to the unknown number of women killed in the devastating U.S. war on Iraq. In front of the Defense Ministry, they demanded the withdrawal of South Korean troops and held signs which read: “Withdraw the Zaytun unit from Iraq.”

Palestinian women led several militant protests on International Women's Day against the continuing incursions, assaults, imprisonment and murders of their people during the many years of U.S.-backed Israeli occupation. In the last year, 36 Palestinian women have been killed by occupation forces. Many are in jail.

Holding high Palestinian flags, women demonstrated and defied Israeli border police. Some attempted to get through the Qalandiya checkpoint near Ramallah on the West Bank. Others rallied at Hawara checkpoint to protest Israel's recent invasion of Nablus. They carried photographs of loved ones killed and imprisoned by the Israeli occupation forces. Other women



Celebrating IWD in the Congo.

marched in Gaza City.

Over 1,500 women joined in a march in Istanbul, Turkey, to demand their rights and an end to anti-woman violence. Many Kurdish women carried pictures of their imprisoned leaders and demanded their freedom.

Thousands marched in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Multan, Pakistan, insisting on equal rights and an end to discrimination. The Working Women's Association was a key organizer for these actions.

Chanting for their rights, disabled women led a strong march of women and their supporters in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Protests demanding equal rights were held throughout India. In Mumbai, demonstrators pushed for higher wages for working women, including domestic workers. In that city's Churchgate Railway Station, women called for an end to the super-oppression of Dalit women and for solidarity with all oppressed women.

International Women's Day saw protests in every area of the world, throughout all of Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Europe and North America. Strong, determined women stood their ground and made their voices and struggles heard. They demanded an end to women's oppression in all spheres and the right of women to political, social and economic equality.

On March 8, millions of women came out around the world to connect the struggles of women to their forceful opposition to U.S. imperialism and the worldwide effects of capitalism, militarism and globalization.

Additional sources for this article include: Gabriela Network USA, Indybay.org, Sun.Star Cagayan de Oro.

MUNDO OBRERO EDITORIAL

Otra muerte que se pudo evitar

Continúa de pagina 16 necesita. Una encuesta reciente por el New York Times/CBS News reportó que, “Una mayoría de estadounidenses dice que el gobierno federal debe garantizar la seguridad de salud a cada estadounidense, especialmente a los niños.” (New York Times, 2 de marzo)

Es revelador que las dos cuestiones públicas identificadas que han recibido la mayor atención por esta encuesta para la campaña presidencial del 2008 son, primero la guerra en Irak, y segundo el cuidado de salud a bajo costo.

Los programas sociales están siendo recortados por todo el país para reubicar trillones de dólares que el gobierno necesita para llevar a cabo la guerra inmoral por ganancias en Irak. El pueblo aquí ya se está dando cuenta de que esta es una guerra también contra este país. La lucha por el cuidado de salud bueno y universal y la lucha para terminar la guerra son una sola lucha. □

EDITORIAL

Otra muerte que se pudo evitar

El niño de doce años de edad Deamonte Driver, murió en el estado de Maryland el 25 de febrero después de que la infección bacteriana del absceso en un diente se extendiera al cerebro. La mayoría de personas que leyó esta historia quedó escandalizada. ¿Cómo era posible?

Mientras que las complicaciones de la infección ocurrieron rápidamente, los factores que condujeron a la infección fueron de larga duración y evitables.

Durante largo tiempo la madre de Deamonte, Alyce Driver, había intentado encontrar cuidado dental adecuado para todos sus hijos. En ese momento, ella estaba especialmente enfocándose en encontrar cuidado para el hermano de Deamonte porque tenía múltiples caries y se quejaba de dolor constantemente.

Su primer obstáculo fue que sus trabajos en una panadería, en la construcción y en el cuidado de salud a domicilio no le proveían seguros de salud. Aunque finalmente recibió la seguridad federal Medicaid le fue difícil encontrar un dentista, especialmente un cirujano dental que aceptara Medicaid y le sacara los dientes caridos de Deamonte. Eventualmente, ella buscó la ayuda de un abogado del Centro de Justicia Pública basado en Baltimore.

Cuando por fin encontró a un cirujano que le sacara seis de los dientes de su hijo, tuvo que cancelar la cita porque le faltaba la evidencia necesaria de su certificación actual de Medicaid. Ella sospecha que la notificación de la aprobación fue enviada al refugio para los sin techo donde ella solía vivir. Días después Deamonte fue hospitalizado. Y murió semanas más tarde.

Tan horrenda como es esta historia, representa un problema mucho más grande. Casi 47 millones de personas en los Estados Unidos no tienen seguro de salud y los números están creciendo rápidamente. Muchas de las que sí tienen seguro de salud, les falta seguro dental.

En el estado de Maryland menos de un@ en cada tres niñ@s en el programa Medicaid recibió servicios dentales en 2005. Estos datos son peores en Washington, Distrito de Columbia donde más del 70 por ciento de l@s niñ@s no recibieron tratamiento dental ese mismo año.

La carie dental es todavía la enfermedad infantil más común en todo el país. L@s niñ@s pobres tienen el doble de probabilidad de tener caries que sus iguales más ric@s, y es mucho menos probable que reciban tratamiento. La falta de transporte, períodos de vivir en refugios, y la falta de servicios de teléfono consistente contribuyen al cuidado inadecuado. Esto es especialmente el caso para l@s niñ@s que viven en regiones rurales que muchas veces tienen que viajar por horas para recibir cuidado dental. (Washington Post, 28 de feb.)

La Asociación Dental Americana (ADA) publicó una declaración sobre la muerte de Deamonte Driver. “Es una desgracia nacional que en el siglo 21 en este país millones de niños no tienen acceso a los cuidados dentales básicos preventivos y curativos. Miles de est@s niñ@s sufren de enfermedades graves dentales— no pueden ni comer ni dormir normalmente, no pueden prestar atención en la escuela porque sufren de infecciones crónicas y del dolor resultante que podía ser prevenido y aliviado a través de tratamiento.” (www.ada.org/)

Cada día la mayoría de la gente que vive en este país experimenta sus propios horrores al tratar de encontrar el cuidado médico que

Quedan expuestos los lazos entre Uribe y los escuadrones de la muerte de Colombia

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Las noticias procedentes de Colombia en las cuales se exponen los lazos que existen entre el Presidente Álvaro Uribe y los terroristas paramilitares ó escuadrones de la muerte comerciantes de cocaína, no han recibido, como es usual, atención adecuada en la prensa capitalista de los Estados Unidos. Si estos en verdad se preocuparan por el tráfico de drogas, estas noticias ya habrían aparecido en la primera plana de los principales periódicos del país. En su lugar, estas noticias quedan enterradas en las páginas traseras de los diarios si acaso son cubiertas sino, son totalmente ignoradas.

Nos preguntamos quién toma la decisión de suprimir estas noticias en los periódicos, un tema que les proporcionaría un gran potencial de venta. ¿Llegará directamente desde la Casa Blanca? Después de todo, en un intento por apoyar a su más leal aliado en un momento de gran “necesidad”, el Presidente George W. Bush, ha programado una visita a Bogotá, durante su gira por América Latina entre las fechas del 8 y 14 de marzo. Esta es la primera vez que un presidente estadounidense visita Bogotá desde que Ronald Reagan fue. Bush también visitará Brasil, Guatemala, México y Uruguay.

¿Cuáles son los nexos con Uribe que ahora se ven expuestos?

Desde el descubrimiento el pasado año del computador confiscado del líder paramilitar, Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, alias “Jorge 40”, ha habido una cadena de revelaciones diarias como efecto dominó en ese país. Aparentemente un gran número de oficiales gubernamentales ha trabajado en categoría de socios con paramilitares llevando a cabo fraude electoral, intimidación de votantes, expropiación de tierras y uso de la violencia dirigida a l@s opositor@s políticos, activistas sociales y líderes sindicales. La violencia incluye secuestros y asesinatos.

Ocho miembros del Congreso colombiano han sido arrestados y están ahora en la cárcel por su colaboración con los paramilitares. Todos son de partidos y organizaciones políticas uribistas. Según las declaraciones del partido de la oposición, el Polo Democrático Alternativo (PDA), enviado por correo electrónico el 23 de febrero, “Hay cerca de 100 líderes políticos uribistas en la cárcel, fugitivos o que han sido señalados por sus conexiones a poderosos grupos armados ilegales.”

El 19 de febrero, María Consuelo Araújo, la joven ministra de la Cancillería a quien Uribe fervientemente había defendido de las críticas de la oposición, fue forzada a renun-

ciar. Esto siguió al arresto de su hermano, Álvaro Araújo, un ex gobernador y senador uribista, junto a otros cuatro políticos. La Corte Suprema ordenó el arresto basado en los lazos con Jorge 40 y su papel en el secuestro de un político que interfirió con la elección de Araújo. El padre de la ministra, Álvaro Araújo Noguera, también está bajo investigación por cargos similares.

Tres días después, el 22 de febrero, Jorge Noguera fue arrestado. Éste es un aliado muy cercano a Uribe y director de su campaña electoral del 2002; también fue director del Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad (DAS), la policía secreta. Noguera fue arrestado bajo el cargo de haber dado a los paramilitares una lista de nombres de líderes sindicales, defensor@s de los derechos humanos y otr@s activistas sociales. Varias personas nombradas en la lista, fueron eventualmente asesinadas.

El arresto de Noguera ha sido la peor pesadilla para Uribe. Según una investigación por la oficina de la Procuraduría, Noguera se había reunido por lo menos en nueve ocasiones en su oficina en el DAS con Álvaro Pupo Castro, vocero de los jefes paramilitares y primo de Jorge 40.

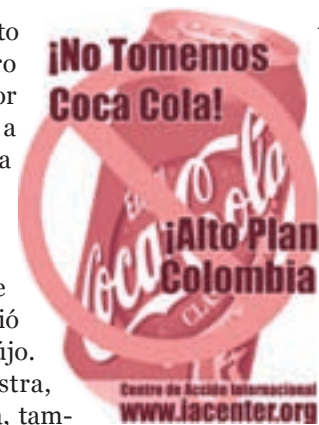
Según Rafael García, ex jefe de informática del DAS, Pupo Castro llevó la información secreta del DAS a Jorge 40 y la lista con los nombres de 15 líderes sindicales, los cuales fueron asesinados en Barranquilla. El mismo García fue detenido en el 2005 acusado de haber borrado los archivos de los narcotraficantes y paramilitares de la base de datos del DAS.

Desde entonces, él ha colaborado con los fiscales como testigo clave en contra de Noguera. Como resultado de la detención de García, Noguera renunció a su puesto en el DAS. Uribe entonces lo nombró cónsul para Milán en Italia, puesto del cual renunció el año pasado rodeado por el escándalo.

Reacción de Uribe

Uribe no ha proporcionado ninguna explicación creíble. En vez de ello y siguiendo la máxima de Bush de “Si no estás conmigo, eres mi enemigo” y el antiguo dicho de que “la mejor defensa es una buena ofensiva”, Uribe ha lanzado una campaña viciosa y mortal de acusaciones contra la oposición. Incluso antes de las actuales revelaciones, había pruebas suficientes de que los paramilitares en Colombia son seguidores leales de Uribe y que su palabra es su orden supremo.

Varios líderes del PDA, entre ellos el senador Gustavo Petro, han expuesto a los elementos uribistas. Petro ha pedido un debate congresional para inves-



tigar las conexiones entre políticos, empresarios y otros sectores, con el paramilitarismo en Antioquia. Ex miembro del movimiento guerrillero M-19, Petro ha acusado consistentemente a Uribe de permitir las relaciones entre los paramilitares con políticos, terminando en la terrible violencia que trastorna el país con masacres, asesinatos selectivos, secuestros, etc. Uribe, por su parte ha acusado a Petro y a otros de ser “guerrilleros vestidos de civil”.

Dos días después de las declaraciones de Uribe, un nuevo grupo paramilitar, las Águilas Negras, envió un mensaje amenazando de muerte a docenas de organizaciones sociales, laborales, estudiantiles y de medios de comunicación alternativos. El hermano de Petro también fue amenazado. Dos miembros del PDA fueron asesinados bajo circunstancias sospechosas.

Uribe también ha criticado fuertemente a otras figuras de la oposición. Ha denominado al director de la revista semanal VOZ del Partido Comunista Colombiano (PCC), Carlos Lozano, “un cómplice de las FARC”. Esto tiene el mismo efecto que escribir el nombre de Lozano en la lista de condenados a muerte de los paramilitares.

Una declaración del PCC afirma, “Las declaraciones irresponsables de Álvaro Uribe en las que señala a Carlos Lozano, director del semanario VOZ como “cómplice de las Farc”, son una consciente provocación en boca del jefe del Estado, dirigida a proseguir la cacería de brujas con la que intenta defenderse de los cargos de la Fiscalía y la Corte Suprema en contra de sus voceros parlamentarios y funcionarios.”

¿Se desmovilizan los paramilitares?

La supuesta desmovilización de las Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) o paramilitares ha recibido bastante publicidad. Salvatore Mancuso, el conocido jefe del Bloque Catatumbo de las AUC y responsable por las muertes de por lo menos 5200 personas, actualmente se encuentra encarcelado. El se aprovechó de la ley de “Justicia y Paz” de Uribe que permite a los paramilitares confesar sus crímenes a cambio de una condena muy reducida, y ha dicho que “el rearme de las autodefensas es una cruda realidad que no podemos soslayar o minimizar”. (Tomado de una declaración de FENSUAGRO, sindicato nacional campesino).

A continuación: Más violencia contra organizaciones colombianas: ¿Quiénes son las Águilas Negras? ¿Cuál es el papel jugado por los EEUU? Y la visita de Gustavo Petro a Washington. □