

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!



JUNE 28, 2007

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50¢

MUNDO OBRERO

Masivas protestas en Colombia 12

Another world possible? How?

Another world IS possible. The question is how do we get it?

At the U.S. Social Forum meeting in Atlanta at the end of June, thousands are expected to participate in vibrant discussion and debate on the many social problems facing people in the richest and most bellicose country on the planet.

The contrast between what exists and what is possible is glaring and grows worse all the time.

So many young men and women caught in the net of the military,

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IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

- ▶ Connecticut
- ▶ Georgia
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ANTI-WAR SURGE

TONC discusses fall actions

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FREE THEM NOW!

Lesbians sentenced for self-defense

All-white jury convicts Black women

By Imani Henry
New York

On June 14, four African-American women—Venice Brown (19), Terrain Dandridge (20), Patreese Johnson (20) and Renata Hill (24)—received sentences ranging from three-and-a-half to 11 years in prison. None of them had previous criminal records. Two of them are parents of small children.

Their crime? Defending themselves from a physical attack by a man who held them down and choked them, ripped hair from their scalps, spat on them, and threatened to sexually assault them—all because they are lesbians.

The mere fact that any victim of a bigoted attack would be arrested, jailed and then convicted for self-defense is an outrage. But the length of prison time given further demonstrates the highly political nature of this case and just how racist, misogynistic, anti-gay, anti-youth and anti-worker the so-called U.S. justice system truly is.

The description of the events, reported below, is based on written statements by a community organization (FIERCE) that has made a call to action to defend the four women, verbal accounts from court observers and evidence from a surveillance camera.

The attack

On Aug. 16, 2006, seven young, African-American, lesbian-identified friends were walking in the West Village. The Village is a historic center for lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) communities, and is seen as a safe haven for working-class LGBT youth, especially youth of color.

As they passed the Independent Film Cinema, 29-year-old Dwayne Buckle, an African-American vendor selling DVDs, sexually propositioned one of the women. They rebuffed his advances and kept walking.

"I'll f— you straight, sweetheart!" Buckle shouted. A video camera from a nearby store shows the women walking away. He followed them, all the while hurling anti-lesbian slurs, grabbing his genitals and making explicitly obscene remarks. The women finally stopped and confronted him. A heated argument ensued. Buckle spat in the face of one of the women and threw his lit cigarette at them, escalating the verbal attack into a physical one.

Buckle is seen on the video grabbing and pulling out large patches of hair from one of the young women. When Buckle ended up on top of one of the women, choking her, Johnson

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CAMPAIGN TO NAME A STREET IN HARLEM, N.Y., IN HONOR OF MUMIA ABU-JAMAL



Emcee Esperanza Martell with NAACP's Sundiata Sadiq, above and artist Nana Soul, right.

Orrie Lumumba from N.Y. Free Mumia Coalition, top left and Immortal Technique, top right.

Abdul Haq, left, invited everyone to the naming of Sonny Abubadika Carson Street. See page 5.

Pam Africa, Int'l Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal above, gave an update on Mumia's Appeal for a new trial in Federal Court.

Igwe Williams, right, spoke about the struggle to name the Guillermo Morales-Assata Shakur Center of City College.

Mumia Street in Harlem

A June 16 event for the Harlem Campaign to name a street in honor of Mumia Abu-Jamal was an exciting youth-oriented evening. Speakers focused on the struggle to free Mumia, police terror, the criminalization of youth and the gentrification of Harlem. Immortal Technique gave a powerful Hip Hop performance.



Emcee Sandra Rivers

"Strong support for Mumia and the street naming campaign was clearly evident in the many statements the performers and the audience made. The program ended with a rousing statement from Pam Africa about the power of the people, and the demonstration of that power in the streets of Philadelphia on May 17th."

— Suzanne Ross from the NY Coalition to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Seated behind Ross are DeLacy Davis of Black Cops Against Police Brutality and Jaspir Finpho of the Jamaica NAACP Youth Council.

—Captions and photos by Lal Roohk

Atom workers denied government benefits

By Larry Hales
Denver

Though a federal panel, the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health, voted June 12 to expand compensation for ex-workers at Rocky Flats—a former weapons facility 16 miles northwest of downtown Denver—75 percent of the facility’s former work force will still be ineligible for automatic compensation.

The compensation will only cover those that worked at Rocky Flats from 1959 to 1966. Workers there from 1952-1958 had been recommended for compensation earlier.

The U.S. Atomic Energy Commission’s Rocky Flats weapons production facility first began production in 1952 under management of the Dow Chemical Co., producing detonators or nuclear triggers. It was later operated by Rockwell International.

A sprawling facility composed of several buildings on 6,500 acres, the plant was closed in 1991 after being raided in 1989 by the FBI.

The new decision has yet to go before U.S. Health and Human Services Department, which will have to make a recommendation on compensation to Congress—from which the final decision will be made.

The panel’s recommendation is ultimately a defeat of justice for the over 15,000 workers who worked under dangerous conditions being exposed to high levels of radiation and chemicals.

There were many incidences of accidents during the facility’s 40-year lifespan, ranging from fires to leakages to improper storing of waste—all leading to contamination of the ground soil and water sources in the plant’s vicinity.

In 2006 the facility’s owners were made to pay millions of dollars in fines and damages to owners of property in a class-action lawsuit that had lasted 16 years.

Justice denied

These workers are called “Cold War veterans.” The Department of Energy’s official history on Rocky Flats states that “the urgency of the nuclear arms race placed a national priority on weapons production and testing,” which illustrates the U.S. government’s callousness toward even those it deems “heroes,” something especially seen today with U.S. imperialist wars against the Iraqi and Afghan peoples.

The panel’s argument is that the question of whether the facility exposed the workers enough to these deadly chemicals to justify compensation has proved inconclusive.

Currently, according to a study conducted by the University of Colorado, there are 1,259 cases of cancers among these former workers.

In a document titled “Rocky Flats A Local Hazard Forever. Citizen’s Guide to the ‘Cleanup’ Wildlife Refuge A Bad Precedent For Other Sites,” LeRoy Moore, Ph.D, indicates that there was a great deal of plutonium released into the environment by the plant and that two studies—one by the Department of Energy and one by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health—found increased cancers in workers exposed to 5 percent of the permissible level according to DOE.

Many workers who are already sick are afraid they will die before receiving any compensation. The Rocky Mountain News studied the number of workers who were awarded compensation and never received it, and found:

• “In cases where the worker’s illness was linked to radiation, beryllium or silica, 46 workers died before

claims were paid; their survivors were paid \$6.9 million; 279 workers received compensation totaling \$41.7 million; 159 workers were dead when survivors filed claims and they were paid \$23.7 million.”

• “In cases where the worker’s illness was linked to chemicals or other toxic exposures, 21 workers died before claims were paid; their survivors were paid \$2.6 million; 16 workers received compensation totaling \$1.5 million; 153 workers were dead when survivors filed claims and they received \$19.2 million.”

Moore goes on to refute the government’s claim that the \$7 billion allocated for cleanup of the area—\$36 billion was necessary—was enough and that the cleanup was successful enough for the government to use Rocky Flats as a wildlife refuge and to open it to the public.

According to Moore, regarding evidence from autopsies on bone samples done from 1975 to 1979 and closer to the actual site of the plant: “The researchers in this DOE-funded study sorted the bone samples according to place of residence within three areas defined by concentric circles drawn at intervals of 25 kilometers (about 15 miles) out from 903 Pad at Rocky Flats. They found the highest plutonium concentrations in bone samples from the inner ring closest to Rocky Flats, with concentrations decreasing as they moved progressively away from the facility.”

He cited the study in response to a 1998 report released by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. Moore states, “In 1998 the Colorado Central Cancer Registry of CDPHE weighed in on the public health issue with a report asserting that there is no evidence of adverse health effects in residential areas near Rocky Flats by comparison with areas elsewhere in the Denver area.”

He quotes a German radiation specialist named Bernd Franke, who said the report was meant to “calm people down, for public relations purposes.”

Former FBI agent Jon Lipsky, who was part of the Rocky Flats raid and investigation, has filed a lawsuit against the Department of Justice in order to unseal records of contamination. He has filed this lawsuit with Wes McKinley, the former leader of the Rocky Flats grand jury, and Jacquie Brever, a former chemical operator who suffers from radiation exposure.

In an article in Muckraker, Lipsky said: “I left so I could help expose the truth. Without the truth there can be no real understanding of the extent of this environmental crime, and there can be no thorough cleanup.”

According to Lipsky, Brever and McKinley: “The department allocated \$7 billion to the cleanup, a sum initially criticized as far too low to enable a thorough job. And less than 8 percent of the allocated sum is even being used to decontaminate the site. ... The rest is going to administrative costs and decommissioning the plant.”

And the article reports, “She [Brever] said several fields and hillsides that had been dumping grounds for toxic and radioactive wastes have been excluded from the cleanup. Additionally, she said, the sampling techniques for determining contamination levels are misleading, and the standards for soil and water purification are weak.” (Jan. 21, 2005)

The workers are being denied their just due from the government—in the name of expanding profits worldwide for U.S. capitalism—that also lied about the dangers of the poisons workers and those in the surrounding communities were being exposed to. □

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From Connecticut to Georgia

Immigrant-rights activists defy ICE raids

Special to Workers World

In a show of resistance and solidarity more than one thousand people marched through the streets of New Haven on June 16 as part of the continuing protest of racist and retaliatory arrests of immigrants by the Department of Homeland Security/Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Large contingents from the labor unions Unite Here and SEIU Local 32B-J, along with broad participation from the Latin@ community and active support from progressive non-immigrants made Saturday's march a lively response to the ICE raids.

Two weeks earlier, the New Haven Board of Aldermen voted 25-1 to become the first city in the U.S. to issue ID cards to residents irrespective of their immigration status. The demand for "City ID" came from the immigrant community itself and is widely viewed as a way of bringing undocumented residents out of the shadows. The ID card makes it possible for residents to open bank accounts, access city services, and identify themselves to health-care providers, schools and landlords without disclosing their immigration status.

But only two days after the law was passed, ICE agents went on the attack, rounding up at least 33 residents in a show of force that Mayor DeStefano has described as "retaliatory." Facing a barrage of demands from community leaders, both of Connecticut's U.S. senators and Congressperson Rosa DeLauro have called for an investigation into the moti-



WW PHOTO: HEATHER COTTIN
Immigrants protest in Hartford, Ct., June 17.

vation and manner in which the raids were carried out.

In addition to evidence that the raids were in retaliation for the passage of the City ID law, there is also evidence that ICE used racial profiling to identify its victims and repeatedly violated its own rules. In one instance, ICE officials bragged about how agents had stayed with a boy whom they found home alone until his father returned, but neglected to mention that they entered the house illegally in order to do so. Then they arrested the boy's father and took him away.

City officials also charge that ICE agents illegally failed to notify the New Haven police about the raids until they were already underway, because ICE knew that

individual police officers would tip off residents in the largely Latin@ Fair Haven neighborhood where the raids occurred.

The passage of the City ID and the subsequent raids are raising the level of popular resistance to ICE. Many New Haven residents are expected to seek the new ID cards in order to show solidarity with immigrants, while there has already been discussion about similar measures being passed in other Connecticut cities. It is significant that after the harsh criticism directed at ICE, the regional director announced that the agency would "temporarily suspend" its operations in Connecticut. No one knows if this means that the raids will stop for a day, a week or a month, but activists are relying on solidarity, not government promises, to keep the people of New Haven safe from the racist attacks.

The protest on June 16 followed a press conference two days earlier that local immigration rights organizers held in front of the Connecticut State Courthouse in Hartford. Dozens of activists from churches, schools, community groups, unions and immigrant rights networks from Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and Long Island gathered to challenge ICE's bail hearings for the immigrant detainees taking place that morning.

The workers were brought in to the courthouse handcuffed and chained at the waist. None of them could raise the \$15,000 to \$25,000 bail set, and supporters were working to lower the bail for the detainees, whose sole crime was working to support their families. Yale University

Law School sent lawyers and students from their legal clinic to help.

Teresa Gutierrez and Walter Sinche of New York's May 1 Coalition joined the local activists at the press conference. "It is amazing to see such community support for immigrants," Gutierrez said. "It is clear that in Connecticut, from Danbury to Hartford to New Haven, the entire community is standing up to resist these horrible ICE raids."

At the press conference in Hartford, Joel Rodriguez, a union organizer of Puerto Rican/Mohawk heritage from Local 108 Carpenter's Union in Springfield, Mass., said that ICE had made sweeps across Massachusetts, and that some of the New Haven 33 were in jail with workers arrested in Springfield. "I spoke to an 8-year-old boy who asked me, 'How can they call this the land of the free in school if they took my daddy away from me forever?'"

Atlanta: Thousands say, ¡Sí, se Puede!

The parking lot at Plaza Fiesta, a mall in the heart of the Latin and Asian immigrant community in Atlanta, was filled with thousands of workers and their families on the evening of June 18.

The emotion-filled rally was initiated by Georgia Latino Association for Human Rights (GLAHR) and called for "fair and comprehensive immigration reform."

Speakers addressed the common desire of immigrants to make a better life for themselves and their families and challenged the political leadership of the U.S.

Continued on page 4

Immigrant children say: 'Stop taking our dads!'

By Sharon Danann
Painesville, Ohio

In Painesville, Ohio, June 16, Father's Day was honored with love, tears and a courageous march and rally of several hundred immigrants and their supporters. They were protesting the recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids that resulted in 43 arrests and deportations, mainly of Latino workers.

The children of jailed or deported men carried a banner at the front of the march, proclaiming, "Stop Taking Our Dads!"

The march was a sea of the red flags of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, emblazoned with the slogan, "¡Hasta la Victoria!" (Until Victory)

Many people held signs with photos of their now-absent fathers, with heartfelt expressions such as, "My father is the soul of my family."

March participants traveled from Toledo, Youngstown, Cleveland, Columbus and as far away as Cincinnati, Ohio. Event organizer Victoria Dahlberg, executive director of Hispanas Organizadas de Lake y Ashtabula, expressed regret that there were not more Painesville residents in attendance, but acknowledged the fear that kept them away.

There were delegations from Oberlin College; the Ashtabula County AFL-CIO; and the Hiawatha Church of God in Christ, an African-American church in Ashtabula, among others.

Baldemar Velasquez, founder and president of FLOC, declared: "We are Mestizos, Native and Indigenous, with some Spanish ancestry. We have been here in the Americas. We did not immigrate. The

European-Americans are the immigrants."

After Velasquez spoke, a woman emerged from the crowd and tearfully took the bullhorn. Her father had been on his way to work when ICE agents stopped the van he was in. He and others were arrested. Now he is in jail in Youngstown.

She had been told that she would have to come up with \$5,000 before anyone could even start working on his case. She didn't know what to do. A baseball cap was placed on the ground in front of the speakers and it was soon buried under a mound of cash. Over \$500 was collected.

The raides are targeting children as well. Two sisters, aged 12 and 9, spoke of being awakened in the pre-dawn hours by ICE agents. They were required to report with their younger brother to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in Cleveland.

Dahlberg commented sarcastically, "What a wonderful use of our tax dollars." The girls' mother stood by them as they bravely spoke out, wiping tears from her face. The government agencies are the real terrorists.

United Church of Christ pastor Nozomi Ikuta Watson spoke of the experiences of her Japanese grandparents who were not allowed to become citizens. She said the immigrant struggle raises "broad issues of justice."

The Rev. Steve Sargent from the Hiawatha Church of God in Christ pledged to march with the immigrant community "until the immigration laws are just and fair." As he spoke of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and of Cesar Chavez, the crowd applauded. Rev. Sargent declared, "Your struggle is our struggle," to help

Immigrants give new meaning to Father's Day.

WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

express working-class unity.

The march eventually returned to its starting point, Kiwanis Recreational Park, silent by deliberate choice. But upon

their arrival, marchers broke into shouts of, "¡Sí, se Puede!" (Yes, we can!) □



Children demand justice for Smithfield workers

By David Dixon
Charlotte, N.C.

Harris Teeter is a supermarket chain with stores in six southern states. To honor their parents on Father's Day, June 17, children of Smithfield Packing workers led a spirited march to the home of Harris Teeter's president in Charlotte, N.C. After a short prayer vigil in front of a Harris Teeter shop, workers, their families and supporters marched to nearby HT President Fred Morganthall's home where they delivered a huge Father's Day card.

The card asked Morganthall to help in ending abusive and unsafe working conditions. It included messages from the workers' children urging Harris Teeter to sup-



port their just demands and drop Smithfield pork products from their stores. Harris Teeter's brand of bacon is even made at the Smithfield plant.

Of course, Harris Teeter denied any responsibility for the workers' conditions in a

statement released this past March.

Smithfield Packing is the largest hog processing plant in the world, located in Tar Heel, N.C. It was raided by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents this past January when 21 workers were detained and sent to detention facilities as far away as Georgia. There is an ongoing campaign for Justice at Smithfield. To learn more see www.smithfieldjustice.com. □

Can auto workers make the system work for them?

By Martha Grevatt

On June 4 a group of Chrysler workers from Ohio and Michigan demonstrated outside corporate headquarters near Detroit. While the group was small, a large number of honks greeted signs that read "No Cerberus." Cerberus is the Wall Street private equity firm poised to purchase Chrysler.

The sponsoring group, Chrysler Employee Ownership Buyout Committee, had put out a call on its web site. "Attention All Chrysler Workers And Retirees," the group appealed, "STAND UP FOR YOURSELVES AND BE HEARD!!! Act NOW To Save Jobs and Pension Fund!" The Buyout Committee rightly pointed out that "the employees are vested assets of 30 plus years and have everything to lose" as opposed to Cerberus, which is "trying to speed the signing of this sale with Daimler before negotiations this fall; they want to finalize it in July."

Then the Buyout Committee, whose offer to buy Chrysler was purportedly higher than that of Cerberus, goes on to claim that "employee ownership helps guarantee job security, wages, health care, and pension fund security."

In fact employee ownership is illusory.

As United Airlines flight attendant Michelle Quintus explained to Workers World, "Two things happened that underscored the fallacy of the ESOP. First, United Airlines made \$8 billion in net profit during the economic boom of the late 1990s while employees struggled to survive under concessions. And second, overcapacity in the airlines industry left workers carrying the burden when the industry collapsed. In fact, 20,000 jobs had been cut at United by the end of 2001." When UAL emerged from bankruptcy, the union pension plan had been gutted.

The Committee envisions Daimler maintaining a 20 percent stake in the new Chrysler, with multi-billionaire Kirk Kerkorian's Tracinda Corporation holding

another 20 percent while employees would "own" the remaining 60 percent.

These workers may feel some affinity with Kerkorian, stemming from his lawsuit attempting to block the Daimler-Chrysler merger. Kerkorian's bid to buy Chrysler was also rejected by Daimler. Yet as a major shareholder in Chrysler and later General Motors, Kerkorian had no qualms about pushing for worker concessions. The only real difference between the Las Vegas-based Tracinda and New York-based Cerberus is geographical.

A crisis of leadership?

While some autoworkers hope to solve the crisis through ESOP, others cling to the illusion that what is needed is a different style of "leadership."

Former Chrysler CEO Lee Iacocca has popularized this notion with a best seller, "Where Have All the Leaders Gone?" In an article in the May 17 edition of Business Week, "Daimler Screwed Chrysler," Iacocca asks, "Has the sale to Cerberus rescued Chrysler or doomed it to the junkyard?" His answer is that "in the end, it will all come down to leadership."

Some workers, like Iacocca, blame the current Daimler leadership for the massive job cuts and the coming threats to wages and benefits. In online comments they voice nostalgia for their old boss.

The former CEO dispels any illusions that workers would fare better under a different "leadership."

"It would be naive to think that cost-cutting and even downsizing are not necessary when a company is struggling," argues Iacocca, in a voice that could be Ford's Mulally, GM's Wagoner, or Chrysler's LaSorda. "I had to do that myself when we turned Chrysler around in the early Eighties."

Workers who look to different leaders, like those proposing the ESOP, are acting on the given assumption that there is some inherent "right" or "need" to earn a profit.

Auto workers need to understand that profit represents theft of their labor. Workers are not paid the full value of the product they produce. The unpaid portion is pocketed by the capitalist owners of the means of production as profit. The labor of today's auto workers generates billions and billions in profits.

Executive salaries and bonuses—such as the \$4.5 million going-away present Daimler is giving Chrysler CEO Tom LaSorda—are just the tip of the iceberg of this exploitation

Of course, companies try to suggest otherwise. For example, Chrysler's small car—the Dodge Caliber—is said to only generate \$109 in profit per vehicle. However, a car consists of many, many parts. More and more parts production continues to be outsourced. So besides the profit directly to the car manufacturer, there are profits to the suppliers of steel, tires, wheels, glass (Chrysler stopped producing glass a few years ago), carpeting, acoustics (Chrysler closed its elec-

tronics plant also), nuts and bolts, plastics—and there are also profits to the oil companies—and more.

The sale of products workers make also pays to construct new, more modern plants requiring fewer workers, thus increasing profit. Later, the car companies sell off certain "non-core" aspects of the business, such as parts plants, pocketing the cash and benefiting from the lower labor costs of the new, often non-union, enterprises.

More profits are made when a worker cannot pay cash for the vehicle. The lender—often the financial services division of the car company—makes thousands of dollars in interest on its loans. More profit is made by periodically selling off the financial arm of the company. Selling debt—or the opportunity to realize profit off our labor in the form of interest—generates additional profit.

It may seem that no one will make a profit on the near-giveaway of Chrysler. Not so.

Seven lenders—JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs Group Inc., Citigroup Inc., Morgan Stanley, Bear Stearns Cos., Toronto-Dominion Bank and the Royal Bank of Canada—are financing the Cerberus buyout to the record tune of \$62 billion.

Back on May 20 the Detroit News explained: "Some \$50 billion of proceeds will be used to refinance debt at Chrysler's financing unit. The amount will be the largest refinanced by a private equity firm, according to financial data tracker Dealogic."

"DaimlerChrysler Chief Financial Officer Bodo Uebber said during a conference call on Monday that the new Chrysler would likely carry a 'BB' junk rating after it splits from DaimlerChrysler, which has a 'BBB' investment-grade rating. The lower rating would equate to higher borrowing costs."

"As part of the \$62 billion financing, the banks have agreed to secure \$12 billion in loans that Cerberus can draw from to help in the restructuring." In other words, the lenders—who will also receive hundreds of millions of dollars in consultant fees, and doubly so for Daimler's financial advisor, also JPMorgan Chase—are profiting by financing the destruction of workers' living standards, all for the purpose of realizing bigger profits for the car companies!

For UAW members, the capitalist drive for profit is at the root of the problems they face in the upcoming negotiations. Workers who try to accommodate this unyielding pressure on their wages and benefits will be disappointed every time. Plant closings will go on and concessions will never be enough.

Understanding that profit is only what the bosses steal from us will help prepare class-conscious workers for the difficult battles ahead.

Grevatt has worked for 20 years at Chrysler's Twinsburg, Ohio, stamping plant and serves on the executive board of her local union.

E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

GE unions reach agreement

A strike by 23,000 General Electric workers was narrowly averted June 17 when a tentative agreement for new four-year contracts was reached. The terms will be announced on June 20 after they are reviewed by 13 union negotiating committees. Union members will vote on them on June 28. The biggest sticking point as of June 16 was health benefits.

"GE and the unions have agreed to accelerate our joint efforts to address the difficult health-care issues our nation faces," said Jim Clark, IUE-CWA president, in a June 17 joint union news release. "This will help to address a critical issue for not only GE employees but all American workers."

Grocery workers set to strike

If the grocery workers' union in southern California doesn't win a fair contract by June 21, its 65,000 members may strike. UFCW members will vote to either accept the grocery chains' contract offer or authorize a strike on June 24.

Negotiations have been going on for over six months, with the main issues the same as those that led to the 2003-2004 strike: wages and health coverage. These issues are critical for 33,000 "second-tier" workers who were hired after the strike with reduced wages and limited health benefits.

The 12,700 grocery workers in Houston, represented by three UFCW locals, authorized a strike against Kroger stores on June 8. On June 15 they voted not to extend the current contract. The main issue is—no surprise—health benefits.

It's the same story in Toledo where UFCW Local 911 is fighting for decent wages and health benefits. Stay tuned.

Women office workers defend pensions

When Miller Brewing Co. tried to shortchange women office workers in Milwaukee by cutting their pensions—after giving increased pension benefits to male workers—the women fought back. On picket lines over the last six months they exposed the bosses' double-dealing. And they lodged federal and state sex discrimination complaints.

On May 31 the workers in OPEIU Local 35 voted to accept the company's offer of an 8-percent raise over the life of the contract, a 20-percent increase in the pension multiplier from \$59 to \$70 a year, and improvements in life insurance and health benefits.

But there's a huge downside. The agreement froze pensions after 2009; the company will then replace the current pension plan with a 401(k) and contribute 45 cents less for new employees than for current ones.

In a June 1 Local 35 news release on June 1, Business Manager Judy Burnick said, "We achieved our major objective, which was to protect the pensions of our members, by winning increases in the multiplier that will mean millions of dollars to our members over the years." While she noted that the workers didn't get everything they wanted, she said, "We are certainly a hell of a lot better off now than we were with management's so-called 'final offer.'" She credited that to members' "creativity, hard work and solid unity" and support from other unions.

Quincy, Mass. teachers strike

Starting June 8, nearly 900 teachers in 19 schools in Quincy, Mass., walked picket lines for four days in defiance of a court order to return to their classrooms. This was the first teachers' strike in over a decade in Massachusetts.

After negotiating for 15 months, the teachers were determined not to pay more for health benefits. However, the settlement announced June 13, which included 3-percent wage increases each year of the five-year contract, also stipulated that employees pay 20 percent of the cost of health benefits. That could wipe out the raises. Teachers are due to vote on the agreement the week of June 18.

Calif. nurses rally

Nearly a thousand members of the California Nurses Association rallied near the Capitol in Sacramento on June 12 to support passage of Senate Bill 840, which would provide affordable health care for all Californians. They were joined by Michael Moore, whose latest film "Sicko" exposes the many ills of the U.S. health-care system. □

Immigrants defy ICE raids

Continued from page 3

to stop scapegoating immigrants for the problems caused by big-business practices and inadequate social programs.

Former Georgia Rep. Cynthia McKinney roused the crowd of 8,000 to cheers with her call for Black-Brown unity. She recalled how African slaves fleeing their brutal masters had found sanctuary in Mexico and urged active solidarity among all communities against a common enemy.

As darkness fell, thousands of candles were lifted high in memory of all those who have died crossing the border and a chorus of voices, declared "si se puede" in the struggle for immigrant and worker rights. □

Bed-Stuy now has a Sonny Carson Ave.

By Monica Moorehead
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Militant chants of “Black power!” resonated on a street corner in the Brooklyn, N.Y., community of Bedford-Stuyvesant on June 16 as 200 people, young and old, the vast majority of them Black, gathered for a historic street-renaming ceremony. Even a thunderstorm could not dampen the spirits of the rain-drenched crowd when the “Gates Ave.” sign at two corners of Nostrand Avenue were replaced with plastic strips with the inscription: “Sonny Abubadika Carson Avenue.”

This event’s literature cited the close proximity of “Juneteenth,” which commemorates June 19, 1865, the day when slaves in Texas found out that they had been legally freed by the Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863. People of African descent in the U.S. celebrate Juneteenth all over the country and Bedford-Stuyvesant was no exception.

Streets are named and renamed every day, usually without a lot of fanfare, especially in a large metropolitan city. This particular street naming, however, came about through a struggle that showed once again that racism is alive and well in New York.

On May 30, a resolution raised by Black City Councilmember Al Vann on behalf

of the thousands of people who signed petitions supporting the street-renaming campaign for late Black Nationalist community activist Sonny Carson was defeated. Twenty-four out of the 25 white council members, including the Speaker of the Council, Christine Quinn, voted against the street renaming. A majority of the Black council members voted for the resolution with some abstaining.

Councilmember Charles Barron and others stated at May 30 and June 10 news conferences and during many interviews that the defeat of this resolution was a racist slap in the face. Barron argued that the white-dominated capitalist establishment has no right to declare who should or should not be declared heroes in the Black community. Black people, Barron said, should have the right to self-determination.

So in defiance of the city council vote, the December 12 Movement (D12) and its allies and supporters carried out their own renaming ceremony to honor the legacy of Carson, who died in 2002.

Speakers included Al Vann, Barron and Viola Plummer, Barron’s chief of staff and also a longtime leader of the D12 Movement. They all spoke about how the Carson development was an important example of why Black people must continue to fight for all forms of empowerment.



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Recent racist editorials in the New York Post and New York Daily News attacked both Barron and Plummer for their consistent anti-imperialist stances and for defending Carson’s legacy. Carson had been an outspoken critic of police brutality and organized a struggle to keep drugs

out of the community.

Some of those who attended the Carson street renaming ceremony as a show of anti-racist solidarity were International Action Center volunteers and a multinational delegation from Workers World Party. □

On parade arrests

‘Being Puerto Rican is not a crime’

By Monica Moorehead
New York

On June 10 during the largest Puerto Rican Day Parade held in the U.S., the New York Police Department arrested 208 people, overwhelmingly Puerto Rican youth. At a press conference at One Police Plaza on June 17, the Justice Committee denounced the actions of the police. According to the committee’s press release, out of the 208 detained, 132 people were arrested for “unlawful assembly,” of whom 113 plead not guilty to this charge while the rest had their charges reduced to “disorderly conduct.”

On June 10 in Newburgh, N.Y., some 60 miles north of New York City, police viciously attacked a Puerto Rican Day block party. Police pepper-sprayed participants in the block party, including children, and confiscated video cameras showing the police attack. Residents were planning to raise complaints about this police riot at a June 11 city council meeting.

Panamá Vicente Alba, a union organizer and Justice Committee spokesperson, wrote an open letter following the massive police assault on the Puerto Rican community. Below are excerpts from that letter.

This past Sunday the 50th annual Puerto Rican Day Parade was held in New York City. Over the years it has become the largest expression of national/ethnic pride anywhere in the United States. This year’s parade was marred by an NYPD operation, which appeared to have targeted the Latin Kings.

It is impossible to attend a parade and not assemble either as participants or observers. This is the reason why whoever organizes a parade must obtain a parade permit, something which parade organizers do each and every year. In the United States freedom of expression guarantees the individual the right to wear any color desired.

In our community it is often said that “Pa’ los gustos se inventaron los colores” which equals “colors were invented to

please taste.” In our community yellow/gold is a very popular color in the summer because it contrasts with the beautiful pigmentation of brown people’s skin.

The use of beads is also extremely popular in our community. They are worn as ornaments by men and women alike. This is particularly true of young people. Yes, the Latin Kings wear black and gold beads. Black and gold is not illegal, nor are beads, nor membership in the Latin Kings.

The use of beads is particularly prominent amongst the many thousands (perhaps millions) in our community who practice the Yoruba religion. Many such individuals were either arrested or ordered to remove their beads during this year’s Puerto Rican Day Parade.

Being Puerto Rican, Latin@, or a Latin King is not a crime. Are there criminals amongst us? Certainly, and so are there amongst Irish, Italians and others. So are there amongst the biggest gang in New York City—the New York City Police Department. If anyone has doubts, look at

how many people’s rights they violated at the Puerto Rican Day Parade in the name of enforcing laws that do not exist.

Millions of people flock to the hundreds of floats carrying many popular entertainers and other prominent personalities. The day also has become a time for Puerto Ricans to celebrate our heritage at the parade and/or in our respective communities throughout the Tri-state area.

The historical clashes between the police at Sunset Park Brooklyn did not materialize in large part due to the presence of large numbers of activists on Cop Watch duty. Over the past few years, on the day of the Puerto Rican Day Parade, hundreds of police officers are reassigned to Sunset Park Brooklyn. Under a mobile command these cops awaited the return of parade goers. During the past three years many dozens of young people have been arrested, many beaten, particularly when the police attempt to enforce an illegal and unannounced curfew on the neighborhood. □

NYC meeting salutes Philippines leader

By Sharon Eolis
New York

Bayan USA and the Anakbayan Filipino Youth Collective of New York and New Jersey held a tribute here June 10 to the life and writings of Filipino revolutionary leader Jose Maria Sison, who is currently exiled in the Netherlands.

The meeting brought together anti-imperialist forces among anti-war, grassroots and community organizations and heightened awareness among progressives of Sison’s historic role and the leadership he has provided to the struggle for Philippine liberation.

Secretary-General Berna Ellorin of Bayan USA introduced the meeting: “We

are thrilled to bring to the world a glimpse of the man this government has so wrongfully labeled a terrorist. Terrorists are not popular or supported by the people. But tonight it is clear Jose Maria Sison’s life has won the hearts and minds of the Filipino people and strong support from all those who yearn for freedom from U.S. war and aggression around the world. He is not a terrorist, but a genuine freedom fighter, because he has dedicated his life to the democratic cause of oppressed peoples.”

Revolution Books, the site of the tribute, is launching the fifth edition of the historic text entitled “Philippine Society and Revolution,” which Sison wrote in 1970 under the name Amado Guerrero.

Sison was a radical student leader who

became the founding chairperson of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and is now chief political consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDF). He is also chairperson of the International League of People’s struggle (ILPS), a global anti-imperialist people’s organization.

The dictatorial regime of Ferdinand Marcos held him political prisoner for eight years. In 2001 the U.S. State Department declared that Sison, the CPP and the New Peoples Army (NPA) were all terrorist organizations and that the Philippines was “the second front of the war on terror.”

Through an international video conference Sison was able to participate interac-

tively with the audience. The discussion ranged over the prospect of socialism in Latin America, the state of socialism in China, the struggle for immigrant rights in the U.S. and the impact of the Katrina disaster.

Cultural presentations included Asian-American musician Fred Ho’s saxophone rendition of Bayon Ko, (My Country), a patriotic folk song first heard in the 1920s during the U.S. occupation of the Philippines. Sison’s poem, “The Guerrilla is Like a Poet” was read in Pilipino and English.

The ILPS U.S. Coordinating Committee, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, the International Action Center and New York City Labor Against the War delivered solidarity statements. □

Cuba and homosexuality

Change apparent in still photos

By Leslie Feinberg

Two years into the AIDS epidemic and on the eve of the overturning of the Soviet Union—Cuba's primary trading partner—and the East European bloc of workers' states, the Cuban Revolution continued to make great gains in the battle against old, obstinate prejudice against same-sex love.

Qualitative developments of great import took place in Cuba in the late 1980s.

Leonardo Hechavarría and Marcel Hatch wrote that in 1987, the police were "forbidden to harass people because of appearance or clothing, largely benefiting gays."

A year later, another important change in Cuban law occurred. Pre-revolutionary legislation against "flaunting homosexuality" in public was rescinded. That edict had threatened feminine males and masculine females of all sexualities since its imposition under U.S. neo-colonial rule in the 1930s.

Punishment for homosexual acts had already been formally removed from Cuban law back in 1979—almost a quarter of a century before the U.S. decriminalized same-sex love.

Research scholars Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich noted, though, that the 1979 legal code "failed to legalize manifestations of homosexual behavior in the public sphere and left intact anti-gay laws dating to the Cuban Social Defense Code of 1939."

Arguelles and Rich, summarizing their research in Cuba in the mid-1980s, made a very important point about the difference between private and public spheres in a society building socialism that might not be readily apparent to anyone living in a capitalist system.

They explained, "As delineated in a Latin American socialist setting, private space is far wider than in the United States, encompassing virtually all behavior outside the purview of official sanction or attention, while approved policy, published texts, and official stances compose the public sphere."

They added that "within the private sphere, there are a clear latitude and range of possibilities for lesbians and gay men that surprise the critical observer."

Canadian activist Ian Lumsden quoted a gay émigré living in Toronto, who stated with regard to gay men that "homosexuals in Cuba find it much easier to be open and free about conveying sexual desire in the street than they would in Canada." ("Cuba and Homosexuality")

However, in 1988 Cuba took another major step by striking down the imperialist-era "Public Ostentation Law" against "public scandal" or "extravagance."

Revolutionary leadership, mass participation

Cuban society was not changing in some automatic, unconscious way. These developments—which are both a reflection of the growth of consciousness and an effort to raise wider, deeper consciousness—are the result of revolutionary leadership, with widespread popular discussion and debate.

Two years before the old law was rescinded, in 1986, Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party had initiated a popular campaign, "not simply to rectify errors committed in the last 10 years," the Cuban president emphasized, "or errors committed throughout the history of the revolution. Rectification is finding the way to resolve errors that are hundreds of years old." ("Alert on Before Night Falls," Jon Hillson)

That same year, Cuba's National Commission on Sex Education stated that homosexuality is a sexual orientation and announced the goal of countering homophobia with education. (From the film "Gay Cuba")

In 1988, Fidel Castro spoke out publicly about the need to change negative attitudes in society and in the party about homosexuality.

At the 1992 congress of the Union of Young Communists, Cuban revolutionary leader Vilma Espín, president of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), challenged prejudicial ideas presented by a psychologist. Sonia de Vries, director of the film "Gay Cuba," reported that Espín stated that what needed changing was prejudice, not gay and lesbian sexuality. (Cuba Update)

That same year, Fidel Castro stated in an interview: "I am absolutely opposed to any form of repression, contempt, scorn

or discrimination with regard to homosexuals. [It is] a natural human tendency that must simply be respected."

These qualitative changes in Cuba, like still photographs, capture the peaks of progress.

The release of three films in the 1990s—"Strawberry and Chocolate," "Gay Cuba" and "Butterflies on the Scaffold"—offered a panoramic moving picture of the sweep of progress resulting from decades of the process of building socialism despite the imperialist military, economic and political blockade.

From the balcony to the screen

When Havana was ruled by U.S. crime bosses and bankers, capitalism made room in the market for homosexual acts, forced to serve the fantasies of those who could afford the cost in dollars and pesos.

Often the patricians who paid for sex despised those whom they exploited—hating them for their class, their race, their sex and/or their gender expression and for witnessing the cruelty, self-hatred, guilt and shame in the customers' desires.

So there were lots of homosexual acts taking place in Havana—the biggest U.S. brothel industry in the Caribbean. But off the clock there was not much social room for two men or two women of any gender expression to meet and get to know each other, to freely follow same-sex attraction and exploration, or to fall in love and/or live together as couples or in other formations.

Many men found each other in the darkened theaters of old Cuban cinemas like the Campoamor, Rialto and Verdún. One older Cuban homosexual recalled, "[Y]ou could go and immediately pick up a young guy. Many had their first experience there. There was a lot of sex in those cinemas." (Lumsden)

The culture of Cuba changed with social ownership of the means of production on the island—the land, mines, factories and other major arteries of economic life.

The Cuban Revolution did not, and could not, wave a magic wand and instantly transform the social content of culture. But it quickly transformed the economic underpinnings of culture. Like everything else that is collectively produced on the

island, culture began to be produced to meet the social needs of the many, not just packaged for individual consumption for the few.

Lumsden, who published his views on Cuba in 1996, reported the ways in which he saw culture being made available to everyone in Cuba. "This is evident in the low prices and range of theater, dance and music that are available on stage or in open spaces like the Parque Central in Old Havana. It is evident in the quantity and quality of translated foreign and domestic books that have been published at low prices in huge editions. Finally it is evident in events such as the annual film festival (New Latin American Cinema), which has an impact as great as Toronto's Festival." (Temple University Press)

Lumsden observed: "When you attend a cultural event in Havana you come away as impressed by the informed and critical engagement of the audience as you are by the innovative quality of the performance itself. This involvement is far removed from the commodified nature of so many mainstream cultural events in North America."

This is the Cuban audience that flocked to the state-sponsored release of the 1993 blockbuster movie "Strawberry and Chocolate." The film, about an attempt at friendship and understanding between a young heterosexual communist and a homosexual, brought same-sex love out of the cinema balconies, where shame and guilt lurked in the shadows, and onto the silver screen of Cuban culture.

Over the next two years, two important documentaries followed—"Gay Cuba" in 1994 and "Butterflies on the Scaffold" in 1995.

All told, these movies offer a view of the influence of revolutionary process on popular culture, as well as the influence of popular culture on revolutionary development. The films are themselves part of that dialectical struggle, which itself takes place within the battle against the roar of ruling imperialist ideology, broadcast at every turn by its entertainment, media and education industries.

Next: "Strawberry and Chocolate," sweet taste of change.

To find out more about Cuba, read parts 86-101 of Lavender & Red at workers.org.

E-mail: lfeinberg.org

lavender
&
red #102

MASSACHUSETTS

Movement defends right to marriage equality

By Frank Neisser
Boston

June 14—Hundreds of supporters of equal marriage rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) couples thronged outside the State House here to celebrate a hard-won victory today. The Equal Marriage Rights supporters were stronger, more numerous and more vocal than the group that gathered on the other side of the street to oppose same-sex marriage rights.

Inside, the legislature had met in a special joint session, called a constitutional convention, to consider for the second time a reactionary ballot initiative that would put language into the Massachusetts Constitution stating that marriage is only between a man and a woman.

Had it passed, such legal language

would have shut down the right of LGBT couples to marry here. Marriage rights have been the law in Massachusetts since May 17, 2004.

The right-wing attempt to put the anti-same-sex marriage initiative on the ballot would have opened the way for a two-year-long public campaign fanning the flames of bigotry, hatred, fear and misunderstanding in the Commonwealth.

However, the reactionary initiative has been continuously opposed by a large-scale grassroots movement in support of equal marriage rights for LGBT people. This mobilization included an outpouring of calls and faxes and e-mails to legislators from around the state.

Last fall, voters put an increased number of equal marriage rights supporters into the legislature and elected an African-American governor, Deval Patrick, who has campaigned vigorously and publicly

for marriage rights and against the bigoted amendment.

Today, that grassroots movement was vindicated. Under progressive mass pressure, the legislators defeated the bigoted ballot question in a vote of 151 to 45. This killed the measure, which would have needed 50 or more votes to be placed on the ballot in 2008.

The next time it could possibly be on the ballot now is 2012.

This is a historic victory for equal rights. Massachusetts is the only state in the country that recognizes the right of all couples to marry. There are hundreds of specific rights available to married couples that are not available to couples in the civil unions that have been implemented in other states.

During the course of the fight in Massachusetts for equal marriage rights, the Stonewall Warriors and the Equal

Marriage Solidarity Coalition emphasized the need for solidarity among all oppressed groups. Activists stressed the need to fight on all issues affecting the LGBT communities, including access to the same rights for partners of immigrants that heterosexual married couples enjoy, employment rights for immigrants and trans people, and an end to bashing.

On the other hand, those marriage equality activists who tried to say that the struggle for equal marriage rights was identical to the civil rights movement of African Americans—part of a movement for national liberation—tellingly failed to incorporate demands and issues of importance to LGBT people of color. Instead, they stuck to a "single issue" approach.

The victory for justice and equal rights here today is surely an historic victory. Now, the struggle must continue for the rights of all. □

FREE THEM NOW!

Lesbians sentenced for self-defense

All-white jury convicts Black women

Continued from page 1

pulled a small steak knife out of her purse. She aimed for his arm to stop him from killing her friend.

The video captures two men finally running over to help the women and beating Buckle. At some point he was stabbed in the abdomen. The women were already walking away across the street by the time the police arrived.

Buckle was hospitalized for five days after surgery for a lacerated liver and stomach. When asked at the hospital, he responded at least twice that men had attacked him.

There was no evidence that Johnson's kitchen knife was the weapon that penetrated his abdomen, nor was there any blood visible on it. In fact, there was never any forensics testing done on her knife. On the night they were arrested, the police told the women that there would be a search by the New York Police Department for the two men—which to date has not happened.

After almost a year of trial, four of the seven were convicted in April. Johnson was sentenced to 11 years on June 14.

Even with Buckle's admission and the video footage proving that he instigated this anti-gay attack, the women were relentlessly demonized in the press, had trumped-up felony charges levied against them, and were subsequently given long sentences in order to send a clear resounding message—that self-defense is a crime and no one should dare to fight back.

Political backdrop of the case

Why were these young women used as an example? At stake are the billions of dollars in tourism and real estate development involved in the continued gentrification of the West Village. This particular incident happened near the Washington Square area—home of New York University, one of most expensive private colleges in the country and one of the biggest employers and landlords in New York City. The New York Times reported that Justice Edward J. McLaughlin used his sentencing speech to comment on “how New York welcomes tourists.” (June 17)

The Village is also the home of the Stonewall Rebellion, the three-day street

battle against the NYPD that, along with the Compton Cafeteria “Riots” in California, helped launch the modern-day LGBT liberation movement in 1969. The Manhattan LGBT Pride march, one of the biggest demonstrations of LGBT peoples in the world, ends near the Christopher Street Piers in the Village, which have been the historical “hangout” and home for working-class trans and LGBT youth in New York City for decades.

Because of growing gentrification in recent years, young people of color, homeless and transgender communities, LGBT and straight, have faced curfews and brutality by police sanctioned by the West Village community board and politicians. On Oct. 31, 2006, police officers from the NYPD's 6th Precinct indiscriminately beat and arrested several people of color in sweeps on Christopher Street after the Halloween parade.

Since the 1980s there has been a steady increase in anti-LGBT violence in the area, with bashers going there with that purpose in mind.

For trans people and LGBT youth of color, who statistically experience higher amounts of bigoted violence, the impact of the gentrification has been severe. As their once-safe haven is encroached on by real estate developers, the new white and majority heterosexual residents of the West Village then call in the state to brutalize them.

For the last six years the political LGBT youth group FIERCE has been at the forefront of mobilizing young people “to counter the displacement and criminalization of LGBTSTQ [lesbian, gay, bi, two spirit, trans, and queer] youth of color and homeless youth at the Christopher Street Pier and in Manhattan's West Village.” (www.fierceny.org) FIERCE has also been the lead organization supporting the Jersey Seven and their families.

The trial and the media

Deemed a so-called “hate crime” against a straight man, every possible racist, anti-woman, anti-LGBT and anti-youth tactic was used by the entire state apparatus and media. Everything from the fact that they lived outside of New York, in the working-class majority Black city of Newark, N.J.,

to their gender expressions and body structures were twisted and dehumanized in the public eye and to the jury.

According to court observers, McLaughlin stated throughout the trial that he had no sympathy for these women. The jury, although they were all women, were all white. All witnesses for the district attorney were white men, except for one Black male who had several felony charges.

Court observers report that the defense attorneys had to put enormous effort into simply convincing the jury that they were “average women” who had planned to just hang out together that night. Some jurists asked why they were in the Village if they were from New Jersey. The DA brought up whether they could afford to hang out there—raising the issue of who has the right to be there in the first place.

The Daily News reporting was relentless in its racist anti-lesbian misogyny, portraying Buckle as a “filmmaker” and “sound engineer” preyed upon by a “lesbian wolf pack” (April 19) and a “gang of angry lesbians.” (April 13)

Everyone has been socialized by cultural archetypes of what it means to be a “man” or “masculine” and “woman” or “feminine.” Gender identity/expression is the way each individual chooses or not to express gender in their everyday lives, including how they dress, walk, talk, etc. Transgender people and other gender non-conforming people face oppression based on their gender expression/identity.

The only pictures shown in the Daily News were of the more masculine-appearing women. One of the most despicable headlines in the Daily News, “I'm a man! lesbian growled during fight,” (April 13) was targeted against Renata Hill, who was taunted by Buckle because of her masculinity.

Ironically, Johnson, who was singled out by the judge as the “ringleader,” is the more feminine of the four. According to the New York Times, in his sentencing remarks, “Justice McLaughlin scoffed at the assertion made by ... Johnson, that

she carried a knife because she was just 4-foot-11 and 95 pounds, worked nights and lived in a dangerous neighborhood.” He quoted the nursery rhyme, “Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” (June 15)

All of the seven women knew and went to school with Sakia Gunn, a 19-year-old butch lesbian who was stabbed to death in Newark, N.J., in May 2003. Paralleling the present case, Gunn was out with three of her friends when a man made sexual advances to one of the women. When she replied that she was a lesbian and not interested, he attacked them. Gunn fought back and was stabbed to death.

“You can't help but wonder that if Sakia Gunn had a weapon, would she be in jail right now?” Bran Fenner, a founding member and co-executive director of FIERCE, told Workers World. “If we don't have the right to self-defense, how are we supposed to survive?”

National call to action

While racist killer cops continue to go without indictment and anti-immigrant paramilitary groups like the Minutemen are on the rise in the U.S., The Jersey Four sit behind bars for simply defending themselves against a bigot who attacked them in the Village.

Capitalism at its very core is a racist, sexist, anti-LGBT system, sanctioning state violence through cops, courts and its so-called laws. The case of the Jersey Four gives more legal precedence for bigoted violence to go unchallenged. The ruling class saw this case as a political one; FIERCE and other groups believe the entire progressive movement should as well.

Fenner said, “We are organizing in the hope that this wakes up all oppressed people and sparks a huge, broad campaign to demand freedom for the Jersey Four.”

FIERCE is asking for assistance for these young women, including pro-bono legal support, media contacts and writers, pen pals, financial support, and diverse organizational support. For details, visit www.fierceny.org. □

workers.org on the march

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Organizers plan fall actions to challenge war funding

By Brenda Ryan
New York

More than 100 anti-war organizers, including many students and youths, labor, community and immigrant organizers, veterans and GI organizers gathered June 16 at the Solidarity Center in New York City for the National Anti-war Strategy and Planning Meeting. They came from as far away as California, Cleveland, North Carolina and Boston to discuss how to kick-start the anti-war movement into action following its pause after the Democratic Party-controlled Congress approved war funding this spring.

The meeting focused on a proposal for an action in Washington in late September, the next confrontation over the war. At that time the U.S. Congress will again debate funding the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and will hear Pentagon strategists report on the alleged status of Iraq following the U.S. "surge." Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC) organizers proposed an Encampment to Stop the War at Home and Abroad in front of the Capitol to confront Congress beginning Sept. 22 and culminating in a mass march on Sept. 29.

Last March, TONC had organized an encampment in front of Congress just before its members voted to hand over more money for the war. That event, organized in just three weeks and characterized by a series of dramatic actions, was TONC's first campaign to move "from protest to resistance."

TONC organizers told Workers World that in a discussion at a breakout session, the suggestions that part of the encampment be a "People's Peace Congress" during that September week aroused extensive discussion. At such a People's Peace

Congress, different groups could argue for better uses for the funds now earmarked for war. By demanding funds for health care, education and job creation, for example, they could directly confront the "war Congress" meeting at the Capitol.

"We need a grass roots movement to save the anti-war movement from becoming marginalized by the elections," TONC spokesperson Larry Holmes told the meeting. Holmes said that the anti-war movement now has another chance to galvanize people to force the government to halt the war.

'An opportunity for the movement'

"This is an opportunity for the movement to intervene in a political crisis," Holmes said. "Because when the struggle is taken from Congress and the courts and put on the street, that makes it more difficult for warmongers. It creates a new dynamic."

Holmes emphasized that his organization "encourages all of the antiwar coalitions on the local and national level to engage each other in order to build a united demonstration that will be as large and as strong as possible." He said that TONC was open to suggestions for improving the demonstration and could be flexible with dates, sites, etc., in the effort to achieve a united action.

The September encampment is aimed at developing this dynamic. "People are telling us we need a different approach, more than just another protest," said Sara Flounders, a TONC coordinator and co-director of the International Action Center.

Regarding the content of the anti-war call, there was overwhelming sentiment that it should be for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, with many expressing solidarity with the

'Let's not forget that Haiti is occupied too,' speaker at right. Solidarity Center hosts discussion of anti-war work, below left.

WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL

resistance movements in those countries and in Palestine and Lebanon. The TONC organizers took note of the U.S. threats against Iran and are raising slogans against U.S. aggression against Iran, too.

An Iraqi American reflected the meeting's feeling of urgency to end the occupation. "I get calls every day from people in Iraq," said Najim Chechen. "Hundreds in my family are homeless. We have no country." Chechen said that even though he had been tortured under Saddam Hussein, he considered that Iraqi leader "100 times better than Bush" for the Iraqi people.

From the floor, a Haitian activist brought up the struggle against the U.N. occupation of his country, and TONC activists also distributed a leaflet calling for a solidarity demonstration with the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela in its decision not to renew the broadcast license of a counterrevolutionary television station.

Many participants joined Holmes in emphasizing the importance of uniting the struggle against the war abroad with the struggle against the war at home. Those at the meeting encompassing these struggles included Teresa Gutierrez, a leading organizer of the May 1st Coalition for Immigrant Rights, Brenda Stokely of the Million Worker March Movement, Larry Hales of the Colorado United Communities Against Police Brutality, along with many trade union activists.

These activists are fighting for immigrant rights and joining the struggle against racism that exists on so many levels, from police brutality to reparations for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. This is something TONC organizers want to integrate with the group's anti-war work.

Members and representatives of many organizations—U.S. Labor



Against the War, Freedom Socialists, the Greens, Freedom Road Socialists, Military Project, among others—raised additional proposals for anti-war actions or for strategies to unite the anti-war movement. The call for the September encampment, however, sparked the greatest discussion.

Students plan actions for September

Tyneisha Bowens, of Raleigh FIST (Fight-Imperialism-Stand Together) and Chapel Hill Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), described how students and youth are using the tools of the Internet, including the Web site Facebook, to mobilize young people.

Laura Bickford, of the same two groups, noted that students have become politicized by the war. In the summer of 2006 about 100 youth met in Chicago and since then students on campuses across the country have formed 250 chapters of SDS, which, she explained, differs from the 1960s SDS.

These students are also planning actions in September. Ben Carroll, of Raleigh FIST and Chapel Hill SDS, said students are formulating a call to action for high school and college students to stage walk-outs and strikes and join the encampment. He noted the rise of the student anti-war movement and its forceful protests over the past year, from blocking a recruiting station in New York City to taking over a congressional office in Wisconsin and blocking a state highway in California.

Tom Barton of the Military Project, who publishes a daily Web newsletter, GI Special, read letters from enlisted troops, showing a rapid growth in opposition to the occupation.

Milt Neidenberg, a former steelworker and longtime union activist, called on the labor movement to organize opposition to the war on a class basis independent of the two parties.

Four "breakout sessions" took place for students and youth, GI organizing, labor and community organizing, and to mull over tactics for the encampment. □



Palestine chronology since January 2006

By Joyce Chediac

The Abbas-Dahlan clique within Fatah has allowed itself to be the agent of a U.S.-Israeli planned coup against Hamas, designed to topple the unity government. Hamas' military moves in Gaza this month were defensive actions to prevent that coup. Here's how it went.

January 2006: To the shock of Tel Aviv and Washington, 80 percent of the Palestinian electorate vote for Hamas, for a substantial majority in the Palestinian Authority Parliament.

February 2006: A program attributed to U.S. Deputy National Security Advisor Elliott Abrams calls for giving Fatah guns, ammunition and training, and getting them to fight Hamas for control of the

Palestinian government. Abrams is known for getting funds to Nicaraguan contras in the 1980s and covering up massacres and atrocities committed against civilians in El Salvador by U.S.-backed militias and death squads. (Asia Times, May 16; Conflicts Forum, Jan. 7; electronicintifada.net, June 14)

January 2007: The Bush administration announces plans to give \$86 million to "fortify Mr. Abbas against armed assaults from Hamas." The security program "reflects the basic sense in the [Bush] administration that the only way to change things is through confrontation." (Wall Street Journal, Jan. 12)

Much of these funds were earmarked for "unaccountable militias, particularly the 'Preventive Security Force' headed by

Gaza warlord Mohammad Dahlan, a close ally of Israel and the United States and the Abbas-affiliated 'Presidential Guard.'" (electronicintifada.net, June 14) Peter Beaumont, foreign affairs editor of the British Observer, called Dahlan "the man widely credited with beginning the cycle of violence in Gaza" (June 17).

February 2007: Hamas and Fatah, in an agreement brokered in Mecca by Saudi Arabia, form a national unity government that will place their militias under the control of a neutral interior minister. However, Abbas and Dahlan refuse and continue to amass weapons (Conflicts Forum, Jan. 7)

At that time, a senior Hamas official said of Dahlan, "This man has been involved in the American-backed plot to topple our

government." (Jerusalem Post, Feb. 14)

In addition to supplying guns, ammunition and training to Fatah forces to take on Hamas in the streets of Gaza and the West Bank, by this time the U.S. government had arranged for the training of a large number of Fatah military personnel at camps in Ramallah and Jericho, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

May 2007: "Israel this week allowed the Palestinian party Fatah to bring into the Gaza Strip as many as 500 fresh troops trained under a U.S.-coordinated program to counter Hamas. ... The troops were trained by Egyptian authorities under a program coordinated by Lt. Gen. Keith W. Dayton, a special U.S. envoy to the region." Additionally, the U.S. government "approved \$40 million to train the

National resistance confronts imperialism in Gaza

By Joyce Chediak

June 20—Recent events in Gaza were not a “power struggle between rival factions,” or a “five-day civil war.” These descriptions in the establishment press are imperialist attempts to conceal the events’ true nature.

The Gaza struggle was between irreconcilable class forces. On one side were the forces of national resistance represented by Hamas. On the other side were the forces of imperialist slavery represented by a small faction of Fatah under Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and his security advisor Mohammad Dahlan. This group consciously lent itself to Washington and Tel Aviv’s designs to drive Hamas from power and overturn the results of the 2006 election that gave Hamas a majority in the Palestinian Parliament. (see chronology)

“Our fight is not against Fatah, the one with the long history in the struggle, but against just one group of Fatah agents who were following the Zionist agenda,” explained Abu Obaida, spokesman for Hamas’s Qassam Brigades. (Observer, June 17) Hamas recognizes Mahmoud Abbas, and has called on him to join them in a new unity government (see related article).

Hamas was compelled to defend itself by destroying the armed forces of the cat’s-paw of imperialism before this cat’s-paw destroyed Hamas. This is why Hamas staged a pre-emptive assault on Fatah security offices, especially the Preventive

Security forces and the Presidential Guard, which reported to Mohammad Dahlan. In the heat of events, genuinely anti-imperialist, anti-Israeli militants in the Fatah side may have erroneously been drawn into the struggle. This, however, does not change the struggle’s class character.

Hamas and Gaza need worldwide support

The U.S., Israel, the Arab League and European Union have quickly lined up against Hamas, issuing further threats to that group and to the 1.4 million people of Gaza. Hamas and the Palestinian struggle need the support of progressives worldwide at this crucial time.

Palestinians, so much in need of a strong and united movement, have reacted to the Gaza developments and ensuing split with a heavy heart. Under constant attack by Israel, the situation in the Occupied Territories is dire. But it would have been worse if Hamas had been defeated in Gaza by the Fatah group. This group countered every attempt by Hamas to achieve unity against the Israelis, and stood by while Israel arrested 40 Hamas legislators. The group persisted in provocation, even to the point of trying to assassinate the Hamas prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh.

Quotes from the Gaza street reveal what this Abbas-Dahlan cooperation with U.S. and Israeli destabilization brought on the people. Hatem Shurrab, 22, an aid worker in Gaza, interviewed by aljazeera.net on June 15, said “I was really sad about what happened ... [but] one good thing is that

Hamas targeted many collaborators who worked for Israel and committed many crimes—such as killing Palestinians just because they had beards and blowing up supermarkets and houses linked to Fatah.”

Continuing its blatant intervention, “The United States had quietly encouraged Mr. Abbas to dissolve the Palestinian government and dismiss Prime Minister Ismail Haniya,” (New York Times, June 15). This is exactly what Abbas did, ignoring offers from Hamas to re-establish the unity government (see Hamas statement).

In violation of the Palestinian Constitution, and much to the joy of Washington, he has fired Hamas and the entire elected government and appointed an emergency government and prime minister—a former World Bank official who is the West’s economic point man. (see related article). This new government, in which only Abbas was elected, claims to preside over the West Bank, really ruled by the iron fist of Israeli occupation, where all the struggle forces must remain underground.

Now Bush is now calling Abbas “president of all the Palestinians,” and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is calling Abbas “friend.” However, neither Washington nor Tel Aviv have any intentions of granting true sovereignty to the Palestinian people, out of fear of their revolutionary potential.

‘Won’t fight for an American agenda’

The U.S. and Israel were caught unawares, and dealt a stunning defeat with the fall of the Fatah security forces. Even the New York Times, in an editorial (June 15), calls events in Gaza “a defeat for Israeli and American policy.” The U.S., which looks upon the people as commodities to be bought and sold, was truly shocked at how quickly the more numerous and better armed Fatah forces collapsed before Hamas.

But people have hearts and minds. Though poverty may have driven them into the security forces, many Fatah soldiers had no heart for enforcing a pro-

Zionist, pro-imperialist agenda on their own people.

The Observer (June 17) reports that people within Fatah support the Hamas move. Former senior Fatah member Khaled Abu Helah said on Hamas TV that he “welcomed Hamas’s cleansing of Fatah of its collaborators and traitors.” Additionally, “Some officers in the Presidential Guard had sent their men home as the fighting began.”

A Gaza resident added, “Hamas fighters were not getting salaries. They believed in what they were doing. Some fought for four days without going home.

“Fatah security forces fought for their thousand shekels or a pack of cigarettes. Dahlan had used poverty to recruit the people. The majority didn’t even turn up to defend their stations. Many stayed home. Most were in plain clothes. Dozens called the Qassam and said, ‘We want to leave, give us security and a safe passage.’ Most of the decent security people don’t want to fight for Dahlan, or Israel or America. They don’t feel they should be killed for the [U.S] American or Israeli agenda.”

There were earlier times when Fatah forces felt they had something to fight for. One of their finest moments occurred during the 1982 U.S.-Israeli siege of Beirut. For seven weeks, Israel attacked Beirut by sea, air and land, cutting off food and water supplies and disconnecting the electricity in blistering heat. But the armed people and heroic fighters, who mostly identified with Fatah, held strong under the most unbearable conditions, defended the camps and suburbs, and would not give in. Their steadfastness forced a negotiated settlement and inspired workers and oppressed people everywhere.

These Fatah fighters showed the world that only the struggle wins concessions, especially in a national liberation struggle as beleaguered as the fight for Palestine. Today Hamas is the most under attack for waging this struggle. It, and all who fight for Palestine, sorely needs the active support of all who value justice and freedom. □

New Palestinian premier has U.S. ‘blessing’

Salam Fayyad, whom Mahmoud Abbas unilaterally named premier in a government meant to bypass Hamas, was appointed “with the explicit blessing of the U.S.,” said Peter Beaumont, foreign affairs editor of the Observer (UK, June 17)

Before the appointment, this former World Bank official was “trying to drum up support to have international aid sent through a special Palestine Liberation Organization bank account in order to avoid Hamas.” (New York Times, June 16)

Fayyad has no known credentials in the struggle to liberate Palestine. “In last year’s elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council—the election Hamas won—Fayyad’s list secured just 2.4 percent of votes, Beaumont said. “He is largely unknown to most Palestinians. He has no party machinery to support him.”

“The only people who are really behind Salam Fayyad are the European and U.S. diplomats who have long sung his praises behind the scenes to any journalist prepared to listen,” continued Beaumont. □

Palestine chronology

Continued from page 8

Palestinian Presidential Guard, a force of about 4,000 troops. ... Although it is under Abbas’ authority, the Presidential Guard is run by Mohammed Dahlan.” (Washington Post, May 18)

Israeli paper of record Haaretz publishes on May 4 the full text of another U.S. plan, “Benchmarks for Agreement on Movement and Access,” which details deadlines for Israeli dismantling of roadblocks, with Mohammad Dahlan drawing up and implementing a security plan to stop Qassam rocket fire into Israel—code words for suppressing Hamas. The forces under Dahlan must be deployed to “problem areas no later than [the] date” of June 21. (Asia Times, May 16)

June 2007: With this plan and date as a backdrop, senior Fatah officials in the Gaza Strip ask Israel “to allow them to receive large shipments of arms and

ammunition from Arab countries, including Egypt.” This includes “armored cars, hundreds of armor-piercing RPG rockets, thousands of hand grenades and millions of rounds of ammunition for small caliber weapons.” (Haaretz, June 7)

Laila el-Haddad, a writer for Aljazeera.net, said while waiting to pass through the Rafah crossing from Gaza into Egypt on June 7 that she saw “several hundred and thousand” Palestinian troops enter Gaza. (democracynow.org, June 15)

In a preemptive move, in mid-June Hamas took control of Fatah’s national police headquarters, the border crossing with Egypt, the Preventive Security headquarters, Fatah’s intelligence services, the Presidential Guard offices, and media. While Fatah forces were more numerous and better armed, they were demoralized and offered little resistance (see related article). □

Hamas: ‘We were forced to do it’

The worldwide imperialist establishment and its media blame Hamas for staging a coup against the Palestinian unity government, a government dissolved and replaced by Fatah. To give our readers a more accurate picture, a statement from Hamas follows, excerpted from www.Manartv.com.lb (June 16).

“Hamas does not want to seize power,” said the group’s politburo chief Khaled Mershaal. “We are faithful to the Palestinian people.”

Mershaal added: “What has happened in Gaza is an emergency measure to deal with a state that wanted to impose itself on everybody ... we were forced to take this emergency measure. We did not want to take it but we were forced to do it. ... We want brotherhood with the sons of the Fatah movement. This was not a confrontation with Fatah. Our crisis is not with Fatah.”

“The people [of Gaza—JC] were suffering from chaos and lack of security and this treatment was needed,” Mershaal continued. “The lack of security drove the

crisis toward explosion.”

“Abbas has legitimacy,” Meshal said. “There’s no one who would question or doubt that he is an elected president, and we will cooperate with him for the sake of national interest.” Meshal called upon Arab League foreign ministers meeting in Cairo to help mediate talks between Hamas and Abbas, to act “as an umbrella to hold the national Palestinian dialogue to approach a Palestinian accord.”

Mershaal said that a national unity government is the only solution, and that Abbas’ dissolution of the unity government “will not remedy the situation ... and will not solve the problem. There will be no two governments and no division of the homeland.”

Meanwhile Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said, “The appointment of Salam Fayyad as a head of the emergency government is a coup against [Hamas’] legitimacy ... We ask President Abbas to withdraw the decision in order to preserve the integrity of our people.” □



Another world possible? How?

Continued from page 1

risking their lives in imperialist wars of conquest because they couldn't get good jobs or an education as civilians.

So many people in prison or brutalized by police because they are poor and/or the target of racial profiling.

So many workers unable to find full-time, living-wage jobs that provide some security from illness or old age.

So much new wealth funneled into the coffers of the already super-rich while workers' incomes stagnate and even decline.

So much waste and destruction of the environment when the technology for sustainable economic development already exists.

So many hurdles still preventing women and lesbian, gay, bi and trans people from achieving liberation from age-old oppressions, despite the many victories they have won.

The good news is that movements of resistance have been springing up all over. These grassroots groups will be in Atlanta and will contribute to a sharper definition of the problems.

We are sure that as the political questions become infused with the flesh-and-blood experiences of people in the struggle, the interconnectedness of all these issues will become even more apparent.

Out of all the talk should come a clearer view of the anatomy of capitalism in this most destructive, imperialist stage—when vast sums of capital can move instantly around the world searching out workers to exploit, resources to gobble up and governments to topple or control.

Just bringing so many people together to talk about the problems accomplishes a very important and necessary step. But the basis on which to judge the Social Forum will be whether it points towards a broader analysis of the problems and then becomes a platform to move from discussion to action.

While many thousands are expected to attend, there are tens of millions of people in the United States who need and want things to change. They must be engaged—and can be—in the struggle against the forces who want to maintain the status quo. And who is that?

It is the class that controls the productive machinery of this country, that sucks up profits from agribusiness and heavy industry to the

retail chains and the banks. It also controls the bought-and-paid-for political system, including both major parties.

This class is now on the defensive around the world. Its "neocon" political grouping launched a disastrous and incredibly brutal war for control of the Middle East's oil that has boomeranged and generated resistance everywhere. Oppressed nations are standing up to its dictates and making new alliances to strengthen their independence.

With all the jockeying going on between Democrats and Republicans before the 2008 presidential election, it should be clear to everyone now that neither of these capitalist parties is willing to break with the ruling class and oppose the imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even those who say they oppose the war are only searching for a more successful strategy for extending U.S. corporate domination.

This means the field is wide open for a militant, grassroots movement of opposition to capitalist exploitation and all its disastrous by-products: national oppression, sexism, LGBT oppression, militarism and a growing police state.

Whether it's plant closings, high gas prices, assaults on women's clinics, mass arrests of immigrant workers or the poisoning of whole communities by industrial waste, all can be traced to the way capital rides roughshod over our lives, letting no human value stand in the way of profit.

Many times in the past, large popular assemblies—like the communes in Paris, the soviets in czarist Russia, the speak-bitterness meetings in China—have galvanized the people into linking up their individual grievances and struggles into a class-wide assault on the powers-that-be. Eventually, that will come here, too.

If, out of the USSF gathering, a clearer view emerges on the need to fight capitalism and replace it with a socialist system, where the working masses control the productive wealth of society, much will have been accomplished.

And if this view then becomes the basis for coordinated, mass actions that are explicitly against imperialist wars and the assault on the working class here at home, then history indeed will have been made. □



VILMA ESPÍN *ipresente!*

Dear Comrades and Dear Sisters of the Cuban Federation of Women,

We are deeply saddened by news of the death of Vilma Espín Guillois. Vilma Espín was in every sense a leader of the profound revolutionary processes that have transformed Cuba from an island enduring neocolonial slavery into a proud and independent socialist country setting world-class standards of social development for the masses of people.

Our party has learned much from the Cuban Revolution and its leaders. Sister Vilma was no exception. Representatives from the Federation of Cuban Women have spoken to us on many occasions and each time we learn more and more about the profound revolution within the revolution. Cuban women are exceptional people and revolutionary leaders. Comrade Vilma can take much credit for this phenomenon.

As a young woman, Vilma Espín gave up privileges to become a selfless guerrilla, fighting the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship from the mountains along with Fidel Castro and the 26th of July Movement. Once in power, she and the other leaders of the revolution just as selflessly began the task of eradicating the severe poverty, inequality and underdevelopment created by centuries of foreign domination. Nowhere was this more glaring than in the status of women.

Under Vilma Espín's leadership, the Federation of Cuban Women encouraged and organized millions of women to break their chains and demand full equality in everything from employment to reproductive rights. Today, as just one measure of their success, 65 percent of Cuba's college graduates are women.

She also played a key role in raising awareness on lesbian, gay, bi and trans oppression, leading to progressive changes in Cuban law as early as 1979.

Vilma Espín forever remained a revolutionary. With great intelligence and determination, she strove to continue the "revolution within the revolution."

She lives on in the remarkable achievements of socialist Cuba and in all the millions who have been inspired by her life and deeds. Vilma Espín Guillois, presente!

Teresa Gutierrez for the Workers World Party Secretariat

Socialist Korea focuses on sustainable development

By Deirdre Griswold

Not too much has appeared in the U.S. media lately about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In this case, no news is good news.

The socialist north of the Korean peninsula is making gains, despite long-standing economic sanctions and menacing military threats from both Washington and Tokyo. But the corporate media, which have long abused and ridiculed this heroic country, aren't interested in letting the people of the United States hear about its hard-won achievements.

The DPRK's economy was built up from scratch after the devastation of the U.S. invasion and war of 1950-53, but took another big hit in the 1990s after the collapse of the USSR. It is now growing in both heavy industry and consumer goods.

The DPRK is building new hydroelectric and tidal power stations to provide clean energy. It has also shown it has the scientific and technological capacity to build a nuclear industry if U.S. imperialism continues to deny it other sources of power.

While expanding its production of machine tools, it is also improving both the quality and quantity of textiles, from cotton and silk to synthetics, and the clothing and household items made from them. Focusing on the development of indigenous resources, its research institutes are working on improving the quality and variety of processed grains and bean paste.

At a recent exhibition of consumer goods in Pyongyang, the capital, 550 different items produced in northern Korea were on display.

An improved power supply has helped make all this possible.

In its planned development, the DPRK is taking environmental issues very seriously. Reforestation is high on its agenda; for example, in March 170,000 chestnut trees were planted in just two counties. It is concerned with the protection of its biodiversity and has set aside large areas of land as nature preserves.

Along its east coast, a large-scale effort has begun to improve water quality and create underwater habitats more conducive to the cultivation of marine ani-

mals like abalone, mussels, scallops, sea urchins and sea cucumbers.

The Yanghwa Fishery Station has moved 100,000 cubic meters of granite and gravel from nearby mountains into areas of the seabed to provide more favorable conditions for marine life. Tens of millions of young sea cucumbers and sea urchins are transferred from controlled breeding grounds into these areas in the open sea each year.

In addition to creating a better habitat for these animals, the sea floor in this area now supports a large harvest of kelp and other seaweeds.

The DPRK's socialist economy makes such large-scale projects possible. These campaigns are integrated with mass education on the importance of protecting and improving the environment. Thus they draw on the people's participation to improve their own lives and that of the nation.

Korean development is driven by its own needs and not by the intrusion of foreign capital seeking profits from raw materials and cheap labor, as has happened in so much of the world. The

Koreans credit their independence to their great revolutionary struggles, first against Japanese colonial rule and then against the division of their country by the U.S. after World War II.

Recently they celebrated several dates symbolic of the unity of the people around their revolutionary leaders and the Workers Party of Korea. One marked the anniversary of the day when Kim Jung Il, the present leader of the DPRK, began working in the Party's Central Committee.

Another date—June 15—was commemorated for its importance in the efforts to reunify Korea. Seven years ago on June 15 the DPRK and South Korea signed a North-South Joint Declaration laying out steps toward reunifying a people cruelly separated for almost two generations.

Recently, a rail line connecting the two parts of Korea for the first time in over 60 years was inaugurated with great hope. It represented a victory over U.S. imperialism's politics of division and another tangible step toward peace and cooperation between north and south.

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Vietnamese at court hearing

Agent Orange survivors challenge Dow, Monsanto

By Workers World New York bureau

Scores of people attended a rally and Federal Court of Appeals hearing June 18 calling for compensation for victims of Agent Orange by the corporations that produced the dioxin-laden toxic chemical sprayed as a defoliant extensively during the U.S. war against Vietnam.

U.S. veterans and Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange and anti-war activists accused Dow, Monsanto and others of supplying chemical warfare agents known to be toxic to humans. "Corporations must pay for their crimes" and "Justice for Vietnam Agent Orange survivors," read some of the signs.

A larger group of Vietnamese "contras" waved the flag of colonial rule in Vietnam, screaming epithets at those calling for justice and trying unsuccessfully to surround and intimidate those supporting the survivors. Many had come by bus from Virginia, outside Washington. One boasted he had come from Paris. These were the Vietnamese who had supported the pro-colonial regime that was so

unpopular it collapsed despite massive U.S. military intervention to prop it up.

Passersby listened with interest to explanations about the continuing effects of chemical warfare 30 years after the war's end. Many had never heard of Agent Orange before.

Workers World asked Ngo Thanh Nhan, an organizer with the Vietnam Agent Orange Campaign, why these contras supported the poisoning of 3 million people from their former homeland, which has resulted in birth defects over three generations. He replied, "They think the government of Vietnam is communist and they are so fanatically opposed to communism that they don't care about the suffering of the people."

On June 16 the Campaign sponsored a well-attended welcome ceremony at the Martin Luther King Jr. Labor Center/1199, where Nguyen Thi Hong, age 60, Ngyen Muroi, age 24, Vo Thanh Hai, age 48, and Nguyen Van Quy, age 52, spoke in very moving terms about the difficulties of living with the deadly diseases they contracted after they—or their parents in the



case of Nguyen Muroi—were exposed to the dioxins found in Agent Orange.

They are named plaintiffs in the suit that was discussed in court June 18, but not yet ruled on as of June 20. □

WW PHOTO: ELLEN CATALINOTTO

June 18 outside Federal Court in NYC.

Ousmane Sembène: African revolutionary artist

By G. Dunkel

Ousmane Sembène, widely considered the parent of African cinema and an artist of worldwide renown, died in Dakar, Senegal, on June 9 at the age of 84. His films were original and masterful. He won prizes at the Venice Film Festival in 1968 for "Mandabi" and 1988 for "Camp de Thiaroye," and at Cannes in 2004 for "Moolaadé." However, Sembène really was a novelist who used films to reach his people of Senegal and West Africa who had little or no access to books.

Sembène's message came from his experience. He was the son of a fisher, born in Ziguinchor, a city in the Casamance, the southern section of Senegal. He went to Dakar, the capital of Senegal, in his mid-teens, laying bricks and doing manual labor, after he was expelled from school for indiscipline. He was drafted into the French army in 1944, came back to Dakar a few years later, joined a construction union and took part in one of the general strikes that were shaking French colonial rule at the time.

Having trouble finding work, Sembène stowed away on a ship bound for Marseilles, France. He stayed there for 10 years, loading and unloading ships—heavy, backbreaking labor before the use of containers. The dockworkers' union was part of the CGT (General Confederation of Workers), closely allied with the Communist Party, which he soon joined.

Sembène joined MOURAP (Workers' Movement against Racism, Anti-Semitism and Peace) in 1951, and protested against the colonial war in Indochina (1953) and the Korean War (1950-1953). He also protested the Rosenbergs' trial and execution in the United States in 1953. He openly supported the Algerian National Liberation Front in its struggle for independence from France (1954-1962), in opposition to the French CP's official line.

In 1956 his first novel was published. "The Black Docker" examined how issues of race played out in a strike he had participated in on the Marseilles waterfront.

He published another novel and then "God's Bits of Wood," a recreation of the tremendous struggle the Senegalese people waged against their French colonial master in 1947-48.

This tremendous novel, which should be compared to Maxim Gorky's "The Mother," shows how the Senegalese people supported the African workers who were striking against a railroad to gain the same rights as the French who worked for it. The railroad linked Dakar to Bamako, Mali, moving the cotton and peanuts of French West Africa to market. "God's bits" were the small pieces of wood track workers used in laying rails, a term which they ironically applied to themselves.

Sembène shows how women took up the challenge and sparked the struggle; how French attempts to divide and manipulate the people were countered; and the corrosive effects of racism, imperialism and colonial domination on the French themselves as well as on the colonized.

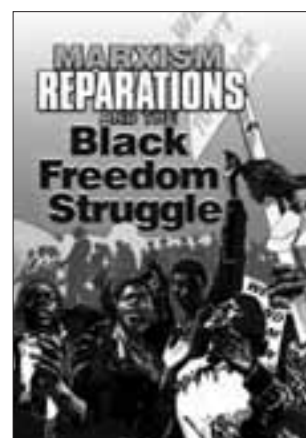
While Sembène's politics are plain, his characters come alive and the reader sees how the class struggle raging in Senegal is reflected in the characters' lives and inter-



actions, as well as how they change. It is a moving, illuminating and emotionally engaging book. Every high school student in Francophone Africa is exposed to it.

While the strike was a major incident in the struggle to get France to end its direct colonial rule, the struggle over the railroad still continues, now over neocolonial foreign owners who are running it for their own profits in a way that does not help the economies of Senegal and Mali.

After "God's Bits of Wood" was published, Sembène returned home and began to travel widely in Francophone Africa. It was during his travels he came up with his ideas on reaching the masses of Africa through film. He got a scholarship to the Gorky Film Institute in Moscow in 1962, returned home a year later with a used Soviet camera and began to make films.



Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

A new book from World View Forum The following sections present an outline of the contents: • Black liberation & the working-class struggle • The material basis for reparations in the U.S. • Brief overview of racist oppression & heroic resistance • What Hurricane Katrina exposed to the world • Africa: A battleground against colonialism and for sovereignty • Justice for the Caribbean • A salute to women revolutionaries. • Why fight-back is inevitable • Black labor and class solidarity

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Until "The Black Girl" in 1966—his first feature film—he made socially conscious, short black-and-white films. "The Black Girl" examines the story of Diouana, a Senegalese maid taken to the Riviera by her employers, who learns what living in France means for an African: She is no longer Diouana but "the black girl."

In 1969, Ousmane Sembène, Timite Bassori, Oumarou Ganda and others organized a festival of cinema and television in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, which grew into the PanAfrican Festival of Cinema and Television, held every two years. It has become a major venue for African films, both from Africa and the Diaspora.

Sembène could have made many more films but he had trouble financing them, given both his politics and the economic underdevelopment of Africa. "Mandabi" (1968) is a Kafkaesque film on the travails of a poor resident of Dakar trying to cash a money order. Other films like "Xala" (1974) dealt with social issues inside Senegalese society; it was censored in Senegal for five years. "Ceddo" (1976) is a historical film about the resistance to Muslim and Christian missionaries.

"Camp de Thiaroye" (1989) recreates the fate of African soldiers captured by the Nazis and put in a military camp in Senegal before they returned home. They belonged to the same unit Sembène had served in but had fought in Europe. They had mutinied to get the bonuses promised to all French soldiers who wound up in Nazi concentration camps, which had only been paid to the white soldiers. On Dec. 1, 1944, the French army ordered the camp destroyed with heavy artillery and tanks. This film is such a searing indictment of a French colonial massacre that it couldn't be shown in France for years.

Sembène was an African who wrote and made films for an African audience. But his artistic output was so strong, so true to the struggle of poor and working people in the continent of his origin, that people throughout the world have learned from and appreciated it.

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Masivas protestas sobre la educación estremecen Colombia

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Las masivas protestas que comenzaron el 23 de mayo, culminaron el 30 de mayo en la movilización nacional más grande en la historia reciente de Colombia. En Bogotá, más de 220.000 personas marcharon en esa capital, cerrando exitosamente la transportación por algunas horas. Alrededor de la nación, l@s estudiantes ocuparon más de 300 colegios—sólo en Bogotá cerraron 130—defendiendo el derecho a una educación pública a bajo costo; cientos de miles protestaron en toda la nación.

Desde el Primero de Mayo, día que l@s trabajador@s celebran en todo el mundo, Colombia ha estado bajo un estado de convulsión. El sufrimiento de las masas populares en ese país es muy difícil de imaginar. Aún así, a pesar de las masacres, los desplazamientos, los asesinatos selectivos, los arrestos y detenciones masivas, la represión general y la siempre presente amenaza de los paramilitares, el movimiento sindical y social mantiene la lucha a pesar de todos estos obstáculos, forzando su agenda progresista.

El Presidente Álvaro Uribe con su recién propuesto Plan Nacional de Desarrollo (PND) y el Proyecto de Ley de Transferencias, (PLT) ha provocado la ira e indignación particularmente de maestr@s, estudiantes y trabajador@s de colegios y universidades, quienes han estado en un estado permanente de movilización en oposición a las medidas desde el 23 de mayo.

El PND—que es básicamente el plan financiero para la nación hasta el año 2010—dicta que las escuelas y universidades deben pagar a l@s jubilad@s de sus propios presupuestos, dando así fin a los subsidios gubernamentales. El PLT reducirá la cantidad de dinero que el gobi-

erno federal da a la educación y a los servicios de salud. El sistema de educación en Colombia es ya precario y estas medidas contribuirán a la decadencia de estos vitales servicios.

Los analistas en Colombia dicen que estas medidas prepararán el camino hacia la privatización de la educación y la salud y consecuentemente el fin al acceso a estos servicios para las familias pobres quienes son parte de la mayoría de la población.

El Plan Colombia, el Tratado de Libre Comercio con los Estados Unidos y la infiltración de los paramilitares en el gobierno local y nacional ya han producido una gran oposición de las masas. Ahora este nuevo ataque contra la educación ha agregado una nueva capa de activismo.

Las acciones y asambleas de maestr@s y estudiantes que se estaban celebrando en toda la nación culminaron el 23 de mayo tornándose en un nuevo descontento social en Colombia. La Central Unida de Trabajadores (CUT), el partido de oposición de centro izquierda en el Congreso Colombiano—el Polo Democrático Alternativo—y la Federación Colombiana de Educadores (FECODE), entre otros, convocaron a una huelga nacional del 23 de mayo en contra de las políticas de Uribe, incluyendo el PND y el PLT.

Ese día l@s maestr@s de primaria y secundaria iniciaron una huelga que duró hasta el 1º de junio. Las acciones del 23 de mayo también exigieron una solución política y no militar al conflicto interno armado, el rechazo a la privatización de la industria petrolera (ECOPETROL), y por la verdad y justicia en el escandaloso caso de los lazos entre políticos y paramilitares.

Sólo en Bogotá 42.000 personas marcharon el 23 de mayo. Estudiantes, maestr@s, trabajador@s, jubilad@s,

la comunidad indígena y la comunidad afrocolombiana, campesin@s, mujeres, y muchos otros sectores entre l@s trabajador@a pobres marcharon por más de seis horas por las calles capitalinas.

En la mayoría del país las escuelas quedaron paralizadas, con marchas y otras acciones en Medellín, Manizales, Pereira y Pasto incluyendo bloqueos de carreteras en otras partes. Telesur reportó ese día que en la muy pobre región occidental del Chocó, fronteriza a Panamá, “las comunidades indígenas cerraron la ruta Medellín-Quibdó y demandaron la presencia de organismos de control como la Defensoría Pública y la oficina del fiscal para que sus demandas, especialmente las demandas sociales, sean cumplidas”.

Maestr@s y estudiantes tuvieron asambleas y acciones diversas a nivel nacional después del 23 de mayo. El movimiento estudiantil se unió y formó un frente unido en defensa de la educación pública, llamando a la ocupación de universidades y otro día de manifestaciones nacionales para el 30 de mayo.

La reacción del gobierno hasta ahora ha sido la de proceder con el PND y el PLT, cerrar la Universidad Nacional en Bogotá y utilizar a la policía antimotín, la ESMAD, en contra del estudiantado en algunas ciudades. Alrededor de 100 agentes de la ESMAD invadieron violentamente la Universidad de Caldas en la madrugada del 5 de junio rompiendo puertas, lanzando gases lacrimógenos y tirando perdigones a l@s 200 estudiantes que ocupaban el campo universitario. L@s estudiantes reaccionaron lanzando piedras a la policía, la cual arrestó a 22 estudiantes. El 11 de junio, la Federación Estudiantil de la Universidad Caldas difundió una declaración en el Internet pidiendo solidaridad.

Esta represión no ha disminuido el espí-

ritu de lucha de l@s estudiantes ni de las masas. Las acciones siguen alrededor de Colombia y un llamado a la “ocupación de Bogotá” ha sido hecho para el 13 de junio.

El papel de los EEUU y los medios corporativos

Los medios de comunicación capitalista en los EEUU han comenzado finalmente a reportar sobre el escándalo colombiano de la “parapolítica”—la infiltración paramilitar del Congreso Nacional y las presuntas conexiones entre los paramilitares y Uribe. Esto es una señal de que un sector de la clase dominante en Colombia y en los EEUU también está intentando distanciarse del régimen de corte fascista de Uribe. El Congreso de los EEUU captó esta señal y está al menos, demorando su voto por el TLC con Colombia, basando esta demora en los notorios abusos de ese país contra los derechos humanos.

Sin embargo, ni siquiera un solo artículo ha sido publicado por los medios corporativos de comunicación de los EEUU sobre las importantes huelgas y las grandes manifestaciones de estudiantes y trabajador@s. Aparentemente estos medios comunicativos han decidido que la publicidad de la resistencia popular en contra de un aliado capitalista de los EEUU, aunque sea el gobierno de Uribe, es dañina a los intereses de los Estados Unidos y de la clase dominante de Colombia.

En contraste, los mismos medios noticieros han proporcionado una desmedida cobertura a las manifestaciones contrarrevolucionarias de estudiantes venezolanos en contra del cierre constitucional y completamente legal de la estación golpista RCTV. Esas protestas, mucho más pequeñas, sí representan los intereses de la clase dominante en Venezuela y en los EEUU. □

Reporte expone las prisiones secretas de la CIA en Europa del Este

Por Caleb T. Maupin

Un político suizo llamado Dick Marty ha publicado una revelación del Concilio de Europa que muestra, basada en sus entrevistas con fuentes de servicios de espionaje estadounidense y europeo, que habían varias prisiones secretas de la CIA en Polonia y Rumania desde el 2003 hasta el 2005. En estas prisiones l@s detenid@s, en su mayor parte del Oriente Medio, estaban encadenad@s, forzad@s a quedarse desnud@s durante meses sin haber estado acusad@s de ningún delito. Los guardias iban enmascarados para esconder la cara. “Técnicas de interrogación”, un eufemismo para los métodos de tortura, fueron usadas.

La CIA tachó el reporte como “exagerado” pero nunca negó que tales prisiones existieran ni se opuso a las reclamaciones del reporte. El reporte muestra que hubo 10 vuelos secretos a Polonia de aviones militares estadounidenses. Seis de ellos procedían de Afganistán.

Tal parece que algun@s de aquell@s que vieron a su país bombardeado e invadido por los Estados Unidos, y tomaron un fusil para resistir, se encontraron aprehendid@s, montad@s en un avión, y llevad@s como cualquier cargamento a prisiones en Europa del Este, donde se enfrentaron a torturas e interrogaciones.

Este reporte se añade al creciente acumulado de conocimientos sobre la política estadounidense hacia l@s prisioner@s

acusad@s de ser “terroristas” desde el 11 de septiembre del 2001. Es sabido mundialmente que las fuerzas militares estadounidenses torturaron brutalmente a prisioneros en Abu Ghraib, y que la tortura fue aprobada desde muy alto en la cadena de mando.

Un número no sabido de personas está actualmente detenido sin cargos por el gobierno estadounidense en la Bahía de Guantánamo, donde están sometidas a tratamiento brutal y abusivo.

Este reciente reporte de Marty sólo refuerza el hecho que la clase capitalista, en su búsqueda desenfrenada de ganancias y control del Medio Oriente, no se detendrá de cometer cualquier forma de brutalidad, tortura, violación de derechos

humanos o represión. La única ley en la mira del Partido Republicano, la cual la lleva a cabo, y en la del Partido Demócrata, que la aprueba silenciosamente, es que las ganancias del petróleo del Medio Oriente deban seguir alimentando sin límites la clase parásita de Wall Street. □



LIBERTAD PARA LOS CINCO CUBANOS