

# WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

workers.org

MAY 1, 2008

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50¢

## MAY DAY 2008

# A world of reasons for ALL workers to unite

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By Deirdre Griswold

This May Day, International Workers' Day, there will be plenty of reasons for workers in the United States—and around the world—to take to the streets in protest over their conditions and to raise their demands.

There are of course the issues around disastrous layoffs, shrinking pay, speedup, shortened hours and other deteriorating working conditions.

But also on the agenda are the many ways in which the workers and their communities find themselves under assault from a billionaire class that uses racism, sexism, homophobia, immigrant bashing and pro-war propaganda to keep the people from being able to fight back effectively.

It was a huge outpouring of immigrant workers on May 1, 2006, organized rapidly and from the grassroots in response to legislation threatening their rights, that restored May Day in the United States as the premier day of workers' struggle.

For decades, since the rabidly right-wing period of the 1950s known as McCarthyism, May Day had been suppressed in this country as "too left." It was "unpatriotic" to march in synch with millions of workers all over the world demanding a better life—even though May Day actually originated in the struggle of workers in Chicago in 1886. Unions here were restricted to parades on Labor Day that left out the broader social issues.

But now it is clearer than ever that the problems workers face are global—and international working-class solidarity is vital to the solution.

The immigrant workers who brought back May Day have been the target of massive government repression since then. This year's marches by workers of all backgrounds must be dedicated to the tens of thousands who can't participate because they have been subjected to widespread raids, arrests and deportations

that have torn apart families and left them destitute.

This year, courageous longshore workers will be shutting down the West Coast ports for eight hours on May 1 in a strike against the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Other unions are pledging their support, showing that workers in this country believe this endless war, with its horrendous casualties and enormous cost, is definitely an issue for the labor movement.

In many parts of the country, particularly the Midwest, the epidemic of housing foreclosures and the demand for a moratorium will be raised as an urgent issue on May Day. Workers there are being hit with a double whammy: losing jobs with union pay just as the cost of subprime mortgages is ballooning. Being jobless and homeless is a worker's worst nightmare.

This nightmare is compounded for many tens of millions in the United States by racism and national oppression. Black workers, as well as Latin@s, are losing their jobs and homes in disproportionate numbers. The survivors of Katrina, those who made it through the hurricane and flooding only to almost perish of neglect in the aftermath, are struggling to actually keep decent public housing from being torn down in New Orleans.

The U.S. prison system, by far the largest in the world, is stuffed with people of color who are locked up for supposed "crimes" of survival. A recent study showed the U.S. rate of incarceration is five times the world average!

And while corporate criminals who swindle billions of dollars get out in a few months or years—assuming they ever go to jail at all—there are countless African American, Native and Latin@ prisoners, like Mumia Abu-Jamal, the Angola 3 and Leonard Peltier, who spend most of their lives behind bars because they refuse to knuckle under to the system. They are truly political prisoners, as are the Cuban 5 who tried to shield their country from U.S.-based terrorists.

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## MARCH DEMANDS 'FREE MUMIA!'

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WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD



Philadelphia, April 19.

WW PHOTO: GARY WILSON

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## Melvin Van Peebles' tribute

# Why we should support an 'Ex-Doofus'

By U-Savior Washington  
Black Waxx Multimedia Inc.

Pick any industry and you can point to a few pioneers who inspired us with their courage, innovation and drive. As time passes, these visionaries achieve godlike status and become the stuff of legend. We learn their methods, but only through books or disciples who are little more than knockoffs of the original.

But every once in a while we get a chance to work side by side with these giants, to learn from them and grow as artists.

Before anyone ever heard of Tyler Perry or Spike Lee, Melvin Van Peebles was making history.

His infamous film, "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song," grossed millions, made him the undisputed godfather of independent cinema and introduced the world to a one-man revolution.

Melvin has been a mentor for Black Waxx Multimedia and for me personally. He stresses the importance of Black people knowing the difference between telling a joke and being a joke. He taught me not to give away my formula in hopes of being accepted, but to pass my formula down to other brothers and sisters in need of the information.

He showed me that something is said with action that words cannot pronounce. On a Melvin Van Peebles set, you work on every aspect of filmmaking from building the set to rigging costumes. One day we were shooting several green screen scenes in a studio with a black floor. When we finished, the floor was covered with scuff marks and dust.

Melvin—The Melvin—grabbed some rags, got down on his hands and knees and started wiping. That's when I realized I was dealing with a singular individual. He's a great director not because he's good at telling people what to do (which he is). He's great because he shows people what to do. I'd be a liar if I said he wouldn't curse you out if you screwed up. But he's just as quick to take you aside and show you why he set up a shot a certain way.

Over thirty years and dozens of projects later, he brings us "Confessionsofa Ex-Doofus-ItchyFooted Mutha," which I had the honor to collaborate with him on through Black Waxx Multimedia Inc. It's an original, trippy, shocking, wise, brilliant and hilarious call to arms for all who say they long to see a revolution.

"Confessionsofa Ex-Doofus-ItchyFooted Mutha" illustrates that sometimes the manner in which a film is created—not the content—is the most political aspect of the film.

Support "Confessionsofa Ex-Doofus-ItchyFooted Mutha." Don't just spread the word on your list serve or your blog. Buy a ticket and come to see it. Demand more showings. We need to show up in droves to prove that we recognize the connection between independent media and a major overhaul of the popular mindset.

Though glad his film was accepted into the Tribeca

Film Festival, Melvin will be the first to tell you not to settle. We're in this to win, to dominate. This is just another step in the right direction down a road we've been walking for a long time.

Many will want to know what the film is about. They'll want to know who's starring in it. It doesn't matter what the film is about. What matters is that Black people have taken control over their intellectual property.

A movement cannot exist without industry. But how do we turn our intellectual and creative property into industry? We do it by creating our own stars and helping them to prosper. They, in turn, feed into the movement and make it stronger. Then repeat this process until through all of the different segments that we have supported and strengthened, we form an industry that we control.

I'll put it in political activist terms. We're going to have to CONVERGE on the Tribeca Film Festival. We need to MOBILIZE all the people that we can to DEMONSTRATE that buying not just one ticket but more than one ticket to "Confessionsofa Ex-Doofus-ItchyFooted Mutha" is a DIRECT ACTION that will result in a mass MOVEMENT toward the support of INDEPENDENT film and independent thinking. This is one SIT IN you need to stand up for.

No matter how many great films MVP—as I like to call him—makes, he is greater than the sum of his parts. His résumé extends beyond his filmography and his legacy will serve as a reminder for us to reach for greatness and to never settle for less.

Melvin Van Peebles has seen to it that the revolution will be televised, whether on an iPod, a flat screen computer monitor, a 60-inch HD set up or the big screen.

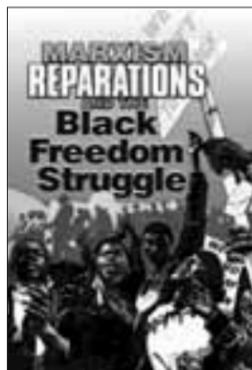
All the better to see us with.

*'Confessionsofa Ex-Doofus-ItchyFooted Mutha' debuts at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City on Sun., April 27th at 7:30 p.m. at Pace University. For tickets and directions, visit www.tribecafilmfestival.org*

## MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

The following sections present an outline of the contents beginning with the Introduction:

- 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
- Order online from [Leftbooks.com](http://Leftbooks.com)



Melvin Van Peebles



U-Savior Washington

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

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

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# No justice, no peace! Until Mumia Abu-Jamal is released!

By **Betsey Piette**  
Philadelphia

Over a thousand people voiced their collective outrage here April 19 that political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal was once again denied the right to a fair hearing by an injustice system determined to keep this innocent man imprisoned for life if it can't silence him outright through execution.

Protesters filled all four corners of a major intersection near the Federal Court building for a brief rally before marching around the Liberty Bell and up Market Street to City Hall for a closing rally. Along the way the march stopped for street meetings where speakers explained the case to passers-by.



The demonstrators filled all four lanes of Market Street, bringing traffic on this busy downtown street to a halt for over an hour. Drivers of stalled buses eagerly received materials to read about the case.

Groups of students in Philadelphia for class trips also stopped to listen. One teacher tried to keep students from taking handouts about the case. When a protester pointed out that the teacher was trying to keep them from getting information, one student responded, "Yeah, it happens all the time!"

Another teacher, however, encouraged her students to take literature and asked questions about the case so the youth could get a better understanding.

In addition to a strong turnout from Philadelphia, protesters came from Boston, New York City, California and there was also a delegation from France. Solidarity demonstrations also took place in other countries.

A threatened counterprotest by neo-Nazi skinheads turned out to be a dozen or so white men who looked more like off-duty police. The pro-Mumia protesters

did not allow them to disrupt and passed them by without incident.

## Denied fair trial

On March 27, a three-judge panel of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals denied Abu-Jamal's appeal of racism in jury selection, going against its own precedent on this issue. The appellant court panel also rejected appeals concerning prosecutorial misconduct and pro-prosecution judicial bias that could have led to a new trial.

Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther Party activist, has been on Pennsylvania's death row for 26 years in connection with the shooting death of a Philadelphia police officer.

The panel also upheld a 2001 ruling by Federal Judge William Yohn that overturned the death sentence in this case. Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham can still call for a new penalty-phase jury trial to attempt to reinstate a death sentence.

Abu-Jamal's lawyer is refusing to accept the ruling against a new trial that could determine guilt or innocence. Instead, the attorney, Robert R. Bryan, is now appealing to the entire Third Circuit Court of Appeals, and if necessary, he will appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The strong outpouring of support for Mumia comes at a crucial time. It follows earlier protests in cities around the country in the aftermath of this judicial panel's outrageous decision. Even one of the panel's members, Judge Thomas Ambro, took strong exception in a 41-page dissent strongly criticizing his colleagues for denying Abu-Jamal the courtesy of their own legal precedents concerning racism in jury selection.

## 'Keep on fighting'

Rally speakers included former U.S. Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, who is currently running for president of the United States and



Mumia protest in Atlanta, April 18.

who has long been an advocate for Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners.

Attorney Lynne Stewart, currently appealing her own conspiracy conviction, challenged people to "keep on fighting." Stewart pointed out that while this case goes through the courts there is a tremendous amount of work for people to do in fundraising and getting out publicity on the case.

Larry Holmes, of the International Action Center and the recently formed Ad Hoc Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions, stressed the need for solidarity to free brother Mumia, and to stop the onslaught of economic attacks against poor and working people evidenced by widespread foreclosures, evictions and layoffs.

Pam Africa of the MOVE organization and International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal challenged the courts to release Mumia now on the grounds that they have consistently denied his right to a fair trial. "We have absolutely no faith in the judicial system," she said, "but if Mumia does have a court

proceeding, we'll continue to mobilize and pack the courtroom and the streets. However, if Mumia gets justice, we know it will not come from the courts, only from the pressure generated by the people."

## ¡Sí, se puede! – Free Mumia!

Latin@s for Mumia brought two buses from New York, and Esperanza Martell of ProLibertad Freedom Campaign had the crowd cheering as she exclaimed: "Mumia is Dominican! Mumia is Puerto Rican! Mumia is Mexicano! Mumia is all of us! ¡Sí, se puede! (Yes we can) Free Mumia!"

Political prisoner and Lakota activist Leonard Peltier, recently moved to a federal prison in Pennsylvania, sent a message of solidarity in which he stated: "We are one, and we are many. We are forever, we are timeless. We are Crazy Horse, we are Geronimo, we are Mumia, we are Leonard Peltier, we are Malcolm X, and we are Martin Luther King. ... We are the American Indian Movement, we are the Black Panthers, we are MOVE, we are the Viet Cong, we are the Irish Republican Army, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

"We are every man, woman and child who desires to see a sunrise in a land of freedom and opportunity, a land of plenty and not hunger, a land of choices without fear, a land of progress without brutality." □



WW PHOTOS: GREG BUTTERFIELD, GARY WILSON AND BETSEY PIETTE

Support for Mumia is diverse and international. On right, Cynthia McKinney and Larry Holmes

## Sean Bell verdict due

# Mayor mobilizes 1,000 cops against community

By **Imani Henry**  
New York

Judge Arthur Cooperman has said he will announce a verdict on April 25 in the Queens, N.Y., trial of the three cops who shot and killed Sean Bell outside of a Club Kalua in Jamaica, N.Y., on his wedding day in November 2006.

A New York City coalition, Peoples Justice for Community Control and Police Accountability, is calling for a rally and community speak-out on April 25 in front of the Queens district attorney's office in solidarity with the Bell family.

Bell's aunt, Oniaya Shepherd, told WW, "We will never get him back. They can't bring Sean back. All my sister and our family want is justice for Sean."

Like the cop killing of West African immigrant Amadou Diallo in 1999, the 23-year-old Bell's death was also in a hail of bullets, 50 in his case. The gunfire also seriously injured Trent Benefield and Joseph Guzman, two of Bell's friends.

A Queens grand jury indicted the three detectives on March 16, 2007. Detectives Michael Oliver and Giscard F. Isnora were charged with first-degree and second-degree manslaughter, Detective Marc Cooper with reckless endangerment. All three have pled not guilty and chose to have a judge, rather than a jury, decide the verdict. The trial began on Feb. 25.

Attempting to vilify Bell and justify the killing, the police claimed Bell and his friends had a gun and had even tried to run down the cops with his car. Fifty witnesses, including Trent Benefield and Joseph Guzman, testified otherwise for the prosecution.

As the verdict approaches, it has become apparent that Mayor Bloomberg and the New York Police Department are nervous about the community's reaction. According to the April 7 Queens news service, the Times Ledger, Mayor Michael Bloomberg met with Southeast Queens' politicians, religious and community leaders "urging for peace."

Days later the New York Post, which has carried out a pro-cop campaign, reported on April 14, "The NYPD will flood Queens with 1,000 extra cops the moment a judge issues the Sean Bell trial verdict, as part of a plan to maintain order and prevent possible protest riots."

Jamaica is part of Queens' southeast section, whose residents are 55 percent either African-American or Caribbean. From the moment the shooting happened and throughout the trial, the inherent racism of this case has been evident. Bloomberg plans to increase police presence in several Southeast Queens neighborhoods, including near the site of the shooting and along major streets such as Roosevelt Avenue and Woodhaven Boulevard as well as at the 103rd NYPD precinct, where the Bell family has held monthly candlelight vigils.

Although the Bell family has insisted that they too want "peace and calm" after the verdict, the mayor and NYPD continue to plan this assault on the Black community.

"They are talking about having sharpshooters on rooftops," said Shepherd. "Do not label the African-American community as violent. Do not treat us like animals."

Even the two-week delay and scheduling of the verdict date for April 25 was orchestrated to avoid conflict with Pope Benedict XVI's New York visit. With the pope gone, the NYPD are freed up to mobilize a full-scale occupation of Southeast Queens.

Shepherd talked about the impact that Bell's killing has had on her family. "All we want is for the trial to be over. We have not had a restful night of sleep since November. But we will never forget Sean, and we don't want any more families to go through what we have been through."

A broad coalition of groups has endorsed the call to come out in support of the Bell family at 5:30 p.m. on April 25 in front of the Queens DA's Office, 125-01 Queens Blvd., whether or not Judge Cooperman delays his verdict. E or F train to Union Turnpike stop. For more information: [myspace.com/peoplesjustice](http://myspace.com/peoplesjustice). □

# Broad support strengthens American Axle strike

By Bryan G. Pfeifer  
Detroit

Presently 3,600 workers at American Axle & Manufacturing on strike since Feb. 26 continue fighting back against an attempted bosses' onslaught aimed at all workers internationally, specifically people of color, immigrants and women.

Negotiations are taking place, but slowly. AAM has rejected outright two concessionary proposals from the United Auto Workers International. The rank-and-file are clear: no concessions.

American Axle wants to cut the workers' pay in half, eliminate pensions and gut benefits—although the company made \$37 million in profits last year and CEO Richard Dauch himself was paid \$10.2 million. Workers make on average about \$45,000 to \$50,000 before taxes.

The week of April 13 a high-profit sports utility vehicle plant in Lansing, Mich., was idled when GM workers walked out during negotiations over local contract issues. As of April 22, workers at two other plants in Michigan and one in Kansas are also close to striking over local contract issues.

## Rally canceled, rank & file resist

Discussions among the rank and file of the UAW locals now on strike at AAM are becoming more militant, particularly in Detroit. There an April 18 mass support rally for the strikers at AAM, expected to draw thousands from throughout the Midwest, was canceled by the union International less than 48 hours before it was to take place.

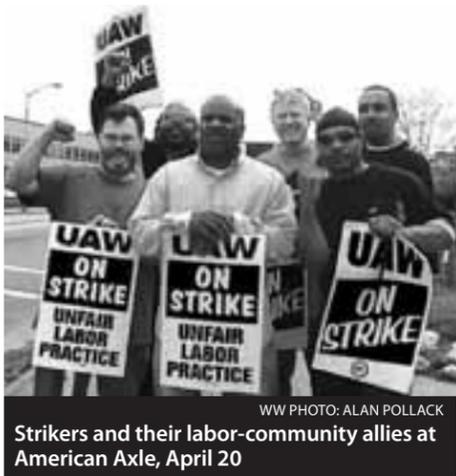
Besides the massive mobilization by the rank-and-file and their allies throughout Metro Detroit and beyond for the rally, Local 235 and Local 262 were receiving solidarity statements for the rally from union locals in the U.S. and around the world. These included messages from auto and other workers in Brazil, Canada, China, Australia and India. Some who had been planning to go to the rally instead went to the picket lines in Hamtramck, Mich.

A fax sent to the UAW Region 1 locals on strike from Region 1 Director Joseph Peters on April 16 at 12:56 p.m. declared, "UAW Rally in support of American Axle strikers has been postponed."

The body of the fax read: "Please be advised that the rally has been postponed. UAW President Gettlefinger and Vice President Settles believe that it is in the best interest in the negotiations process to delay the rally at this time. While these are extremely difficult negotiations, and the outcome is uncertain, some progress has been made and we are hopeful movement will continue."

A similar one-paragraph announcement is posted on the UAW International's Web site.

The rank-and-file's livid response to this capitulation to AAM continues unabated, augmented when, on April 21, Gettlefinger announced that there really wasn't any progress after all. This of course left the strikers and their allies asking many questions as to why the rally was really canceled. A massive boost of power from outside the bargaining room was direly needed



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLACK  
Strikers and their labor-community allies at American Axle, April 20

and could be the decisive factor in this epic struggle.

The rally cancellation added to the anger of strikers, who had not received any strike bulletins or virtually any other information from the International about the status of negotiations since the beginning of the strike.

Adolphus Heahth, a Black worker from Local 235, began working for GM in 1977 and has been working at American Axle since 1994. Heahth captured the sentiment of the rank-and-file when he said the April 18 rally shouldn't have been cancelled.

"We need a rally big time to change the way people think," Heahth told Workers World.

He added: "It's a class war. We need to be striking nationally. If we go down the tubes here it's going to be rough nationally. We need to get organized."

This type of resistance and anger from the rank-and-file forced the leadership to agree to a rally and march for April 24 beginning at 1 p.m. Strikers and their allies will march from Local 235 in Hamtramck to AAM headquarters a few blocks away to protest at the company's stockholders' meeting.

Like Heahth, most of the strikers hope that the march won't stop at the AAM headquarters; they insist the rank-and-file should go into the communities to make alliances and build coalitions.

"There are some things we can do," said Heahth, who is talking with fellow strikers in an effort to build creative fight-back actions to win the strike and broaden the working-class struggle. Some suggestions he had were to rally and march on a designated day every week or every day with strikers and their loved ones at the plants in Hamtramck and to bring in the over 40,000 strikers on layoff or strike at GM and other auto plants and suppliers.

Heahth said labor-community solidarity committees, led and built from the rank-and-file, could be a catalyst for the strikers and the larger community and could be used to put serious pressure not only on AAM but also on those within the UAW intent on selling a concessionary contract to the rank-and-file.

## 'When you win, we all win!'

Internationalist solidarity for the strikers keeps rolling.

"Every time the company gains more profits, they insist on taking away our rights. We completely support your struggle at American Axle, and we know that when you win a victory, it will be ours also. We will do everything possible to share the struggle at American Axle with others in Brasil in

order to increase solidarity with your struggle," read the statement from GM workers from a plant in São Jose dos Campos in Brazil, where the company is also trying to slash new workers' wages by 50 percent.

International Association of Machinists (IAM) members at the five struck AAM plants continue to refuse to cross the picket lines, foregoing pay. They've had to wait seven weeks to get unemployment.

A rally in Three Rivers, Mich., on April 17, sponsored by UAW Local 2093, drew hundreds of labor-community-student supporters.

And, as they have since the first day of the strike, donations, provisions and support resolutions continue to pour into the locals.

On April 20 Ed Childs, a chief steward for UNITE HERE Local 26 in Boston, joined the picket lines, visited the Local 235 union hall and met with Bill Alford Jr., Local 235, vice president. Childs was in Detroit as a keynote speaker for a Workers World Party Irish forum and while in town for the weekend spoke at a moratorium coalition meeting and visited the Gaelic League.

"You can't come to Detroit without being on the American Axle picket line. It's a tremendous experience just to be near these huge plants and these historic workers who are picketing," said Childs.

Asked about the rally cancellation, Childs said, "The cancellation was a mistake. You always should be at the table with as much strength as you possibly can and do whatever you can to strengthen your side. It's the whole class question of negotiations: they negotiate with strength and you negotiate with strength. It doesn't matter if it's a union struggle or it's a national liberation struggle. The Vietnamese showed us that. They came to the table with strength and the U.S. tried to bomb them with strength. The Irish did the same thing. In the history of the union movement it's always been those who have strength that get the best deals at the table. What does strength mean? Strength means that you get out as widely as possible the strength that you have."

Childs said his message to labor-community-student organizations after participating on the picket lines was: "Learn from history. Learn from struggles around the world."

He added: "There was one thing that one of the white workers had an understanding of and that's that in Detroit with not only the strikes going on, the foreclosures and other economic things hitting the workers, that he was looking for another rebellion to break out in Detroit like it did in the 1960s. And that now he was looking forward to it as an ally in the working class struggle. And that's analysis that the movement has to take, the leadership has to take and the ranks have to take. It's not only to look for it but to build it and help support it. That's what's going to win this working class struggle."

*Send donations and support resolutions to UAW Local 235, 2140 Holbrook Ave., Hamtramck, MI 48212; 313-871-1190; adrianrking@hotmail.com or billalford74@yahoo.com. For more information, www.uawaam.org.*

## ON THE PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

### UAW strikes GM in Lansing, Mich.

Workers at General Motors' newest assembly plant in Lansing, Mich., went on strike April 17 over substantive contract issues like work rules and grievances. The workers have been negotiating since June 2007 for their first contract since Auto Workers' Local 602 was set up. "This is the first local agreement for a brand-new assembly plant, so it is very imperative that we get respect for our membership," local president Doug Rademacher told the New York Times. (April 18) "We produce the hottest thing on the market today. It's time to respect that work force." Local 602 joins nearly 30 GM plants currently closed or partly shut due to the weeks-long strike at GM parts supplier American Axle.

### Labor supports May Day protest

Labor groups on both coasts—the Vermont AFL-CIO and the California Federation of Teachers—passed resolutions in mid-April supporting the 8-hour strike on May Day by the longshore workers in Oakland, Calif. The Vermont resolution, which passed unanimously, expressed "unequivocal" support for what it called the first U.S. labor strike against the war in Iraq. It is also the first state labor federation to publicly back the strike. The CFT resolution "publicly supports statewide and local actions on May Day against the war and in support of immigrant rights, including the ILWU's portwide West Coast shutdown, marches, boycotts, and other mobilizations of labor, community, and student organizations."

### Equal Pay Day, April 21

Even though it's been 45 years since equal pay was mandated by law, working women are still not paid as much as men for the same work. White women average 77 cents for every dollar a white man is paid, while African-American women average 63 cents and Latin@s only 52 cents. It's estimated that a 25-year-old woman worker will be robbed of \$523,000 over the course of her lifetime. CEOs and shareholders benefit directly from such widespread crime. Equal pay advocates are observing Equal Pay Day on April 21 by demanding that Congress pass the "Lilly Ledbetter" Fair Pay Act, which is coming up for a vote in the Senate. The bill seeks to reverse a biased 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision and allow workers the right to sue for pay discrimination.

### Extending unemployment insurance

A bill to extend unemployment insurance for another 13 weeks was passed by the House Ways and Means Committee on April 17. Only after "official" unemployment jumped at the end of March to 5.1 percent of the U.S. workforce did Congress finally taken note of the plight of 7.8 million jobless workers. How long will it take to actually make this bill a law? Will President Bush even sign it? Stay tuned.

### Florida tomato fields slave-like

On April 15 the Senate held a hearing on slave-like working conditions that mostly Latin American immigrant workers are forced to endure while harvesting tomatoes for U.S. fast-food restaurants. Lucas Benitez, co-founder of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida, testified that workers are sometimes held against their will, victimized by physical and mental abuse and forced to do backbreaking work for little or no pay. Many are left at the end of the week with as little as \$20 after they're made to pay for housing and transportation. Thousands are trying to survive on poverty wages with no sick leave, no job security and no freedom to join unions.

The CIW has led a campaign, with the support of student, religious and community groups, and labor unions, since 2001 to end these abominable conditions. The first breakthrough came when Taco Bell agreed to the CIW demand to pay a penny more per bushel of tomatoes in 2005. Since then, other major brands like McDonalds have followed suit. Burger King is currently holding out. Boycott Burger King! End slave labor in the tomato fields! □

## National protest against foreclosures

# Michigan group stops eviction in Detroit

By Abayomi Azikiwe  
Detroit

A delegation of Detroit activists traveled to Washington, D.C., on April 16 to participate in the national demonstration called by the Ad Hoc Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions. The action took place outside the Mortgage Bankers Association Annual Policy Summit held in a hotel just two blocks away from Capitol Hill.

Chanting, "Mortgage bankers lie and cheat, people get thrown out on the street," a large crowd of protestors coming from New York, Baltimore, North Carolina, Florida, Boston and other places hit hard by the foreclosure crises like Detroit marched to the venue of the Mortgage Bankers meeting, the Washington Court Hotel, and immediately blocked the hotel's driveway and entrance.

Hiding inside the hotel were several hundred mortgage bankers, including top executives of Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Countrywide Finance, JP Morgan Chase and most of the other banks that have been evicting millions of people from their homes.

Scores of D.C. Metro police and private security personnel positioned themselves in front of and around the hotel, as victims of home foreclosures testified, turning the protest into a public hearing against the actions of the mortgage bankers meeting inside.

People who were outside the Washington Court Hotel provided firsthand accounts of how their households and communi-

ties have been devastated by the mortgage banking crisis that has rendered at least two million dwellings vacant throughout the country.

Sandra Hines of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice (MECAWI) told the security personnel and bankers standing outside the hotel where the summit was being held, that "You may think this is funny, but this crisis impacts people everyday in the city of Detroit."

Hines, who is a former Detroit Public School social worker, ran a grassroots campaign for a district seat on the local school board and was subsequently evicted from her childhood home as a result of predatory lending.

Also addressing the protest, organized by the newly formed National Ad Hoc Network To Stop Foreclosures and Evictions, were the Rev. Grayland Hagler, a leader of the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation Of America (NACA); the Rev. Lennox Yearwood, leader of the Hip Hop Caucus; Brenda Stokely of the Katrina/Rita Survivors Network; Pam Africa of the Families and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; and Tyneisha Bowens of Fight Imperialism—Stand Together (FIST).

### Activists stop eviction in Detroit

As soon as the MECAWI delegation returned to Detroit on April 17, a call went out about a young woman being evicted in



WW PHOTO: LEFT, ABAYOMI AZIKIWE, PHOTO, RIGHT: AGNES HITCHCOCK  
Activists stop eviction in Detroit, April 17.

the heavily depressed Linwood Corridor area on the city's west side. The homeowner has three children and an 84-year-old mother, whose wheelchair was thrown out of the home by thugs acting on behalf of the Wayne County bailiffs who enforce the mortgage banker's evictions against hundreds of families throughout the region everyday. It is estimated that approximately 72,000 homes are in foreclosure in southeastern Michigan alone.

Around 50 activists went to the young woman's home and took the furniture, appliances, clothes, family photos and documents and moved them back into the house. These household items had been dragged out of the home and thrown violently into a dumpster parked outside the property.

Furniture and appliances were broken in the eviction process. Food bought for the children living at the home was thrown out. Telephone lines were ripped out and a bathroom sink was knocked from the wall and thrown outside in the yard by the agents hired to carry out the bidding of the mortgage bankers, who incidentally are represented by a Wall Street-based security firm.

### Community meeting to build broad coalition

As a result of the national demonstration in Washington, D.C., and the announcement by Michigan State Sen. Hansen Clarke that he would introduce legislation that would impose a two-year moratorium on foreclosures in the state, MECAWI called for a meeting to press for the formation of a broader coalition to push for the passage of the bill.

The meeting was attended by State Sen. Hansen Clarke and members of his staff along with other community activists in the areas of housing, religion, education and labor. The Rev. Edward Rowe, pastor of the Central United Methodist Church, where the meeting was held in downtown

Detroit, pledged office space to house the new coalition which constituted itself as the Moratorium Now Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions.

Coalition committees were established in the areas of eviction reversals, legal strategies, publicity, outreach and office staffing. Data is being accumulated on city councils, county commissions, community organizations and other institutions throughout the Detroit metropolitan area and the state. This data will be utilized in a massive mobilization campaign to win the moratorium.

Atty. Jerome Goldberg, along with another lawyer, Vanessa Fluker, discussed the persistent efforts on the part of the mortgage bankers to drive thousands from their homes in the region.

"This moratorium will not be won through traditional lobbying but will be achieved through putting people in the streets throughout the state and at the capital in Lansing," said David Sole, president of UAW Local 2334. Sole, who committed himself to work on the outreach committee for the new coalition, said that seven homes were vacant as a result of foreclosures on his block alone on the east side of the city.

A follow-up meeting of the Moratorium Now Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions will be held on Saturday, May 3 at 3:00 p.m. at Central United Methodist Church. By this time the activists hope to have set up the office at the church with a phone and donated equipment. A team of volunteers will staff the office.

The Michigan coalition will be working with the national network that organized the April 16 protest in Washington to plan follow-up actions in June and beyond as the mass struggle against the foreclosures grows wider and stronger.

*Azikiwe is editor of the Pan-African News Wire.*

## Movement backs down bank, halts eviction

By Maureen Skehan  
Dorchester, Mass.

Over 50 activists from around Boston, including community organizers, residents, students and city councilors, succeeded in preventing US Bank/Wells Fargo/Premier Servicers from evicting the Meyers family from 200 Norfolk Street here on April 16. Tenants in the building include six children, three adults and a family-run childcare center.

Activists arrived at the home prepared to stand fast against any action by the constable to evict or remove possessions. The blocking turned into a victory celebration when the bank backed down and agreed to negotiate. After a speakout rally on the steps of the Meyers' home, with the family members smiling behind a banner that read, "Bankers get bailed out, people get thrown out," the demonstrators, led by the community organization City Life/Vida Urbana, proceeded to march through the streets to the Dorchester Court House (shown here).

There organizers read the list of 34 homes being foreclosed on in Boston just this week by greedy bankers. Organizers vowed to reach out to these homeowners to pull them into this growing fightback movement against foreclosures and evictions. Miya Campbell of the Women's Fightback Network and the youth organization, FIST, delivered a solidarity message.



WW PHOTO: MAUREEN SKEHAN

Stopping eviction in Dorchester, Mass., April 16.

The action occurred on the same day that the Ad Hoc National Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions was rallying against the Mortgage Bankers Association in Washington, D.C., and the Meyers' victory was announced to the crowd there by coordinator Larry Holmes.

The Meyers family was facing eviction as tenants in the foreclosed property. It is significant that the bank was forced to agree to negotiate, not just reschedule the eviction. This was the latest of several successful actions in the Boston area that have prevented foreclosure evictions from going forward. Many more families, however, have in fact been foreclosed on and evicted where organizers have not been present to shine a spotlight and point to the need for a full moratorium on foreclosures and evictions. Some 33,000 families are expected to lose their homes in Massachusetts by 2010, according to a new study by the Pew Center on the States and the Center for Responsible Lending. □

## Bank heads called:

# 'Greedy pirates of Cleveland'

By Martha Grevatt  
Cleveland

It's fairly easy and rather commonplace to speak disparagingly about an employer you no longer work for. Still, to call one's ex-bosses "the scum-sucking, money-hungry, greedy pirates of Cleveland" might seem like strong language on the surface. Yet these were the exact words of an ex-employee of Cleveland's National City Bank, who posted a comment in the online edition of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

The writer was probably thinking about the fate of his former co-workers, the 32,000 employees of Cleveland's largest bank who are facing a rerun of the Enron pension scandal. Last month their 401k

plans became practically worthless as NCB stock fell 43 percent in one day, to a 17-year low of \$7.52 a share. Now that stock, in which workers retirement savings have been invested, is valued at \$6.56 compared to \$38 a year ago. The situation is devastating.

Over 10 percent of the workers have been laid off. Those still working are anxious. Recently NCB announced major losses for the fourth quarter of 2007 and the loss of half a billion dollars in its mortgage division last year. Speculation in the media focused on the possible sale of NCB, which is a Fortune 500 company and the tenth largest U.S. bank, or its merger with another bank. This would have undoubt-

*Continued on page 10*

# ICE raids round up 400 workers at Pilgrim's Pride

By Dianne Mathiowetz  
Atlanta

Starting at 5:30 a.m. on April 16, immigration (ICE) agents accompanied by state and local police launched a series of raids on Pilgrim's Pride chicken processing plants in Mt. Pleasant, Texas; Live Oak, Fla.; Batesville, Ark.; and Chattanooga, Tenn. and arrested some 400 people.

In addition, agents took some workers from their homes. Federal officials say these raids are the result of a yearlong investigation involving undercover agents in the facilities.

These raids come just two weeks before May Day demonstrations are being organized around the country, fueled largely by the demands of immigrant workers for respect and human rights.

Pilgrim's Pride is one of the world's largest poultry-processing companies and a supplier to the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant chain, among others. Pilgrim's Pride employs about 55,000 workers at 37 plants, mostly in the South. The work is low-paid and extremely fast-paced with the constant possibility of injury from the cutting instruments and the wet and cold

conditions.

The company, which just two days prior to the raids announced it was reducing weekly production by 5 percent and closing a plant in Siler, N.C., because of decreased sales, stated in a press release that it had fully cooperated with the immigration agency and helped with the logistics of the raids. The statement further says that it has fired all those arrested and claims it was unaware of any immigration violations.

No charges have been filed against Pilgrim's Pride.

A small percentage of those arrested have been charged with identity theft for falsely using an authentic social security number, a felony with a maximum penalty of five years in federal prison and up to a \$250,000 fine. The majority of the workers, who come from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Colombia, are being held on administrative violations of immigration law. Following a hearing, they will most likely be deported to their country of origin.

Many of the men will be sent to the Stewart Detention Facility in Lumpkin, Ga., a private prison owned by the Corrections Corporation of America. This

prison is located in a poor, rural county about two hours south of Atlanta by car.

Some of the women have been released on humanitarian grounds because they care for minor children. They will wear an electronic tracking ankle bracelet until their deportation hearing.

Of 100 workers arrested at two plants in downtown Chattanooga, 36 have been allowed to go home until their court date. This includes Miriam, who has a 7-month-old baby and Candelaria, a Mayan woman, a widow who speaks little Spanish and has three children who are U.S. citizens.

Their situation is desperate. They no longer have jobs and although they have the right to legal representation at their deportation hearing, they will have to pay for it. Their children have the right to remain in the U.S., but there is no one in the U.S. to take care of them.

When 42-year-old Abel from Honduras found out his wife had been arrested in the Chattanooga raid, he said: "We are not criminals. We just have the need to work to help our families back home."

Reports from the towns where the plants are located describe a strong atmosphere of fear and anxiety with many businesses in immigrant neighborhoods shutting down and people leaving town.

However, newspaper accounts from Mt. Pleasant and Chattanooga also make reference to acts of solidarity.

Missey Walley, principal of Chapel Hill Elementary School in Mt Pleasant, remarked that when some of the children began crying and were visibly scared as news of the raid swept the school, other children showed support for their classmates. "It was not just the Hispanic children who were upset. It was all the children. It affected the whole school."

Likewise, community groups in Chattanooga received calls from Nashville and Knoxville, Tenn., and Dalton, Ga., offering legal assistance and financial and material help for those arrested and their families. A Spanish-language radio station in Dalton, just across the Tennessee-Georgia border, provided news updates and information on legal services and how to aid the children.

Dalton is home to another Pilgrim's Pride plant and the site of a training facility for 200 ICE agents, whose presence keeps the immigrant community on edge.

In addition, ICE raids were conducted April 16 at a doughnut plant in Houston, at employment agencies in Atlanta and restaurants in New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio. □

## Letter to the editor

### Obama, immigration and media bias

Dear America,

Sen. Obama's words regarding a portion of America being "bitter" are accurate.

The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that hate groups have grown by 48 percent between the years 2000 to 2007. This is a sign of increased bitterness in our nation. There are 26 recognized hate groups in New York State alone. Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols are tips of the iceberg regarding this bitterness that continues to grow as people lose faith in their government.

There are vigilante actions by many on our borders with Mexico with guns in hand against workers trying to find work in America. These actions are being taken by citizens who have lost faith in their government's ability to "secure" the border. This is the anti-immigrant attitude that Sen. Obama describes. The various local municipal ordinances being passed against undocumented workers are occurring mostly in small American communities—not in the big cities.

The borders were secure until President William Jefferson Clinton signed the North American Free Trade Agreement and subsequently Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with China. These trade bills destroyed good union jobs with health benefits and pensions here in America. The NAFTA destroyed Mexican jobs and forced this mass migration north.

The New York Times reported that during the Kerry-Bush election of 2004, working-class people were knowingly voting against their economic interests because of their religious beliefs. The "Hot Button" item at that time was gay marriage.

The media has given a pass to Sen. Clinton regarding her lying about her arrival in Bosnia. You do not forget being shot at and certainly not when you are being shot at with an AK-47 with your only child in tow. This is not a little white lie or the result of sleep deprivation. Her statement is a bold and clear lie. Like her husband before her, she is against trade bills until elected. Your key strategist is working to get a trade bill passed while you are opposed to said bill. Why is the journalist community giving her a pass while continuing to attack Barack Obama for what other people have said or done?

It is important to note that after the [1995] Million Man March, crime has gone down significantly. Minister Louis Farrakhan was seated at the White House with Ronald Reagan and recognized for using his influence in the Muslim world to secure the release of Lt. Robert O. Goodman on Jan., 4, 1984. He was invited to Philadelphia by then Mayor Ed Rendell to speak and help heal the racial divide: holding hands, singing and lavishing praise on April 15, 1997. On May 5, 2005, former President Bill Clinton praised Minister Farrakhan and the Millions More Movement, describing it as a positive idea.

The media have become bottom feeders and have not helped to elevate the dialogue between the candidates. The American people's issues: jobs, healthcare, social security, education and the war are more important than the mistakes made by all after speaking.

**Chris Silvera**  
Secretary-Treasurer,  
International Brotherhood  
of Teamsters, Local 808  
E-mail: [fitzverity@aol.com](mailto:fitzverity@aol.com)

## ¡Alto a las redadas y deportaciones!

**¡Legalización ya! ¡Justicia para tod@s!**



**Marcha masiva por los derechos de los inmigrantes y tod@s los trabajador@s**

**Jueves ▶ PRIMERO DE MAYO**

**STOP THE RAIDS & DEPORTATIONS**

**Legalization Now • Justice for ALL**

**THURSDAY ▶ MAY 1st**

▶ 12 p.m. Concentración en Union Square, *Gather at Union Square*  
(La Plaza de Inmigrantes) 14th Street and Broadway  
Calle 14 y Broadway, Manhattan

▶ 4 p.m. Programa - Música y Marcha *Rally & March*

MAY 1st COALICIÓN FOR IMMIGRANT RIGHTS May 1st Coalition for Immigrant & Worker Rights  
[www.May1.info](http://www.May1.info) 516.582.2720 641.715.3900 Ext. 97869#

### Después del Primero de Mayo qué sigue?

Venga a un foro de la Coalición Primero de Mayo

**Sábado 31 de mayo** 2-6 p.m.

Church of the Village Calle 48 Marks Pl., NYC  
(1 bloque al sur de la calle 9, entre la 1ª y 2ª ave.)

### After the May 1st March, What's Next?

Come to a Forum organized by the May 1st Coalition

**Saturday, May 31** 2-6pm

Church of the Village 48 Saint Marks Pl., NYC  
(1 block south of 9th St., between 1st & 2nd Aves)

## MARXISM CONFERENCE IN CUBA

# Low-wage imperialism & the potential for workers' struggle

*Workers World Party Secretariat members Teresa Gutierrez and Fred Goldstein will attend the Fourth International Conference on the Work of Karl Marx and the Challenges of the 21st Century in Havana, Cuba, May 5-8. We publish below excerpts focusing on the U.S. working class from Goldstein's paper. Both papers will soon be available on the workers.org site in their entirety.*

This paper is being written at the beginning of a capitalist economic crisis. No one knows at this point how it will end up. But our thesis is not based upon this present crisis or any specific event. It is part of a broader view of the profound effects upon the working class of the restructuring of world capitalism that has been in progress for three decades but has accelerated in the last 15 years or more.

Extremely important for the working class is the change in the international economic division of labor that has emerged in the last several decades.

For the first time in the history of imperialism, workers in the rich, privileged countries, in one area after another, are being thrown into direct wage competition, job for job, with workers in the low-wage areas by the economic architects of world finance capital. Auto parts workers in Detroit compete with auto parts workers in Mexico. Customer service workers in Phoenix compete with customer service workers in the Philippines. Legal secretaries in New York compete with legal secretaries in Bangalore. The transnational corporations have created a worldwide wage competition and a race to the bottom.

Additionally, millions of immigrants from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Middle East flood into the U.S. fleeing imperialist-imposed poverty and are subjected to low wages and extreme exploitation with few rights and protections. Immigration is an integral part of imperialist globalization and plays an essential part in the cultivation of wage competition among workers.

Marxism teaches that it is the development of the productive forces that not only creates new classes and destroys outmoded ones, but that under capitalism, which is compelled to constantly revolutionize the means of production, the character and relationships of existing classes constantly undergo transformation.

## May Day 2008

*Continued from page 1*

It is workers and the poor who are injured the most by corporate industrial pollution, not only where they work and live, but as people on a planet rapidly being degraded by global warming.

The good news is that while women's oppression intensifies with deteriorating economic conditions, it is women organizing into unions who have brought about the growth of the labor movement in the last couple of years.

All these issues rightfully belong in the May Day marches, along with so many more concrete examples of why the working class needs to unite and fight, together with our sisters and brothers around the world, against the super-rich class that is spreading misery to all four corners of the globe.

E-mail: [dgriswold@workers.org](mailto:dgriswold@workers.org)

### The Results of High-Tech, Low Pay

Since the dawn of capitalism, technological innovation has been aimed at increasing the productivity of labor, i.e., increasing the rate of exploitation of the workers. High-tech means relatively fewer workers producing more commodities in a given time at lower cost to the bosses. Bound up with this process is refinement of production to incorporate the skills of workers in machines and now embedded in software, robots, etc. The historic trend is to deskill the proletariat and thus lower their wages.

In the U.S. today there are millions of high-skilled workers whose skills are no longer needed by capital. Many have been laid off but many more come from the new generation of workers graduating from college or high school with skills and specialties which are not required by the low-wage economy. The service jobs that have absorbed the labor surplus in the U.S. are low-skilled and pay near poverty level wages. Whereas GM used to be the largest employer in the U.S., with 600,000 high-paying, secure union jobs, today Wal-Mart is the largest employer in the U.S., with 1.2 million workers with no unions who work for poverty wages.

This reduction of skilled jobs is adding to the worldwide wage competition and relentlessly leveling the standard of living downward in the imperialist countries and the U.S. especially. A new situation is threatening, the likes of which the workers have not experienced since the Great Depression.

Families have adjusted over the last three decades by working multiple jobs to supplement lost income. Workers have been forced to accept lower wages and the reduction or elimination of benefits; they have learned to live on less; they have submitted to harsh working conditions; they have relocated or traveled long distances to get jobs after having been laid off.

Workers have resorted to unprecedented

amounts of credit and borrowing to keep their heads above water. The personal debt of the workers has been used to stave off personal crises, daily, weekly and monthly in millions of individual cases. Now it has transformed itself into a crisis of the class as a whole and is part of the general economic crisis of the system.

At this very moment millions of families are faced with the prospect of losing their homes. In the twenty years between 1984 and 2004 over 30 million workers lost permanent jobs in the U.S. Only two-thirds were able to find new jobs and two-thirds of them worked for less money, with fewer if any benefits. Insecurity is growing.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has the largest prison population in the world, disproportionately Black and Latin@, and it is growing every year. Repression, police brutality and racism are used to enforce increasing social inequality which keeps the wages and living conditions of African Americans, Latinas and Latinos, Asians and Native peoples, stuck at the bottom of the capitalist economic structure.

The sociological consequences of the high-tech, low-pay economy were pointed out by Sam Marcy in his 1985 book, "High Tech, Low Pay":

"It is this highly significant shift from the higher paid to the lower paid which is dramatically changing the social composition of the working class, greatly increasing the importance of the so-called ethnic composition of the working class, that is, the number of Black, Latin, Asian, women and other oppressed groups, particularly the millions of undocumented workers."

This development will bring the oppressed into the leadership of the class struggle and invest it with the energy and militancy that flows from combining the struggles against national oppression and class exploitation.

There are important revolutionary political conclusions to be drawn from these developments. There is a vast increase in

the superexploited international working class in the oppressed countries. This rapidly growing proletariat is being organized by the penetration and growth of capitalism which lays the basis for future class struggles. In the previous period of imperialism the export of capital sustained class stability in the imperialist countries at the expense of the oppressed. In the present phase, the export of capital is being used by monopoly capital to undermine the economic position of all sectors of the working class. This is destroying the material basis of class collaboration in the labor movement and class peace.

The downward pressures will lead to a break up of the present stability and a revival of the struggle among the workers and the oppressed in the U.S. that will break through the surface of reactionary ideology and capitalist norms and lead to struggles not seen in the last 75 years. Intensified national oppression, including that of Indigenous peoples, and sexual and gender oppression, are all taking place in the framework of deepening class exploitation. This is bound to arouse resistance.

We have made this analysis not so we could sit by and wait for the revolution to come, but to use Marxism as it was meant to be used—as a guide to a revolutionary future. Our party is fighting with our limited resources to stimulate the struggle and to reach out to the masses in the early stages of the coming crisis.

We are struggling for international class solidarity with workers from India to Mexico who need jobs at good wages too. In the era of globalization this is the answer to worldwide wage competition. We are fighting in defense of immigrant workers, against racism, national oppression, and against sexual and gender oppression as the only road to class unity. On this basis we seek to unite with all anti-imperialist and communist forces in the current battle against capitalism and in the next phase of the struggle for world socialism. □

## Inflation, wage cuts & the disappearing 8-hour workday

By Gary Wilson

If you woke up this morning, you got a pay cut.

First there's the food price hikes. Milk prices have increased almost 25 percent in the last few months, going to over \$4 a gallon in some cities. Eggs have nearly doubled in price during the last year. Food prices have gone up almost 8 percent in the last year, AP reports.

Then there's the soaring prices for gas and oil. Gasoline for autos is now at the highest price it's ever been in the United States: over \$3.50 a gallon, on average.

The falling dollar also means more inflation in all prices for consumer products, most of which are imported. In March, the dollar hit a 12-year low against the Japanese yen and an all-time low against the European euro.

Rising inflation and a cheaper dollar are in reality wage cuts for U.S. workers.

On this May Day, workers' day around the world, wage cuts, job losses, rising food prices and the housing crisis will be on the minds of most workers.

May Day began with the struggle by immigrant workers living in Chicago

to demand an 8-hour workday with no reduction in pay.

On May 1, 1886, 80,000 workers marched down Michigan Avenue in Chicago in that first May Day rally. In the week after the impressive march in Chicago, more than 350,000 workers went on strike around the U.S. in support of the demand for the 8-hour workday.

Great strikes and struggles followed that eventually won the 8-hour workday and a 40-hour workweek, as well as union rights and union wages. May Day has been celebrated as the workers' day ever since, in honor of the revolutionary movement begun in Chicago for the 8-hour day.

The 8-hour workday, however, has mostly been taken away from U.S. workers. That's because 8-hour pay has not kept up. It's not unusual for workers to depend on overtime hours—that is, work past 8 hours—in order to make enough money just to get by. Those who can't get overtime often work a second or even a third job.

Now that's being taken away as well.

The New York Times reported April 18 that "the erosion of the paycheck has become a stealth force driving the

American economic downturn. Most of the attention has focused on the loss of jobs and the risk of layoffs. But the less-noticeable shrinking of hours and pay for millions of workers around the country appears to be a bigger contributor to the decline."

The Times continues, "The reduction of wages and working hours for those still employed has become a primary cause of ... the downward spiral."

The report adds, "From November through March, as employers began to scale back in a variety of ways, wage growth fell below the pace of inflation, meaning that paychecks were effectively shrinking."

The average workweek hours are declining and overtime hours have dropped severely.

But as the workers in 1886 showed, even though the capitalists claim that it is the market that makes them cut wages and lay off workers, in most cases that's not true. The capitalists can and will pay a fair and full wage, if the workers fight for it. But without the fight, the capitalists will take advantage and make as many cuts as they can get away with. □

# Students sit in against sweatshops

By Linda Goma  
Raleigh, N.C.

April 22—Several students and workers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are entering the sixth day of a sit-in in Chancellor James Moeser's lobby, the longest sit-in at UNC since 1993. About 25 students and workers entered the administration building on April 17 and have been occupying it ever since.

These students and workers are affiliated with Student Action with Workers (SAW), a UNC group affiliated with United Students against Sweatshops, as well as several other campus groups that are part of the Sweatfree Coalition and the community-based youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

Brand names such as Nike and Adidas are currently partnered with UNC to make apparel bearing the "Carolina" name. These brands source the apparel from factories all over the world and have been paying increasingly lower prices for the apparel.

It is in the brands' best interests to pay as little as possible to these factories for the clothing produced by the workers. This in turn forces factory owners to cut the wages of the workers producing the apparel.

The workers, however, have not remained silent. Many have tried to organize their factories or become involved in union activities. These attempts are met with harsh consequences: union organizers have been assaulted, harassed, fired and even killed. In addition, brands often "cut and run" from factories in which a union has been established, sometimes leaving hundreds of workers without jobs or means of livelihood.

What is important in this situation is the power dynamic. While brands have power over the factories, administrations of universities have power over the brands. Recently, students have begun putting pressure on their administrations to compel brands to pay enough to factories for a living wage, as well as to allow freedom of association among all workers.



WW PHOTO: PETER GILBERT

FIST members Ben Carroll (center) and Salma Mirza (right) at student sit-in.

In 1999, students at UNC held a 72-hour sit-in to pressure the university to adopt codes of conduct which would ensure freedom of association and a living wage for workers producing Carolina apparel. However, almost 10 years later, these codes are still not being enforced because brands refuse to pay enough to the factories to allow for these worker gains. In fact, when factories do follow these codes of conduct, they are penalized by losing orders to other factories that pay their workers lower wages.

The Designated Suppliers Program was designed to combat the practice of "cut and run" by requiring brands to source their apparel from factories that uphold these basic human rights—a living wage and the right to organize. The DSP, once adopted by a university, begins a gradual process of sourcing increasing amounts of apparel from fair labor factories. These practices would be monitored in the factories by a third-party non-profit agency called the

Worker Rights Consortium. Already, 42 universities have signed on to the DSP, including Duke, Cornell, Columbia and the entire University of California system. For three years, students in SAW have carried out a campaign to ask the UNC chancellor to adopt the DSP and uphold the labor codes that the university already has in place.

The UNC sit-in is the fourth sit-in in the country in the past two weeks in support of the DSP, starting with an April 15 sit-in at Pennsylvania State University where 31 students were arrested. Later that week, nine students were arrested at the University of Montana, followed by six arrested at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C. With the UNC-CH sit-in currently in its sixth day, students at the University of Florida have begun a hunger strike.

"The university tries to portray itself as a university for the people, but this struggle around the DSP exposes their true motives—profits and friendly relationships with big corporations," stated Ben Carroll, member of both SAW and FIST. "While the university likes to talk about respecting workers rights, it does everything it can to ignore the demand for a DSP for apparel with the UNC logo. This apparel brings in huge profits for the university because of the cheap labor they are able to secure by superexploitation of workers. The university won't sign on to this program because it would contradict their established capitalist relationships."

For more information, visit [dsp4unc.wordpress.com/](http://dsp4unc.wordpress.com/)

Goma is a member of both SAW at UNC and the Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill chapter of the youth group FIST. She has been an active participant in the sit-ins.

## Play about Lucasville prisoners cheered

By Sharon Danann  
Cleveland

Family, supporters and those wanting to become informed gathered on the 15th anniversary of the 1983 rebellion in the prison in Lucasville, Ohio, to put on two performances of a play about the event. A cast of 20, ranging in age from 11 to 84, presented "Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising," by Staughton Lynd, Gary Anderson and Christopher Fidram.

Included in the cast were two sisters and two nephews, aged 11 and 14, of Greg Curry, one of the prisoners wrongfully convicted following the siege. Also in the cast was Kevin Lowery, cousin of Keith LaMar (Bomani Shakur), who played Shakur. LaMar is one of the five prisoners given death sentences who are known as the Lucasville 5.

Before the play opened, Gwen Curry described the indignities her brother was forced to go through during his trial and the racist attitudes of the jury toward both him and the rest of his family. Greg Curry has been subjected to continuing abuse, such as contamination of his food with bodily waste matter.

Because of the intense legal pressure, the prison system has been forced to reclassify Curry to a status where he can have full contact visits. Tears rose in his sister's eyes as she described with joy that for the first time in 15 years, his mother would be able to hug him.

Along with many other prisoners who either participated in the uprising or refused to give false testimony in the trials that followed, the Lucasville 5 have been in solitary confinement for the past 15 years. At the gatherings on April 11 and 12, participants paid tribute to all the prisoners with wrongful convictions and recognized their families for their strength and determination during this long period.

Many members of the LaMar family attended, as did the wife and stepdaughter of Siddique Abdullah Hasan, another one of the Lucasville 5. Also attending was the mother of Mosi O. Paki.



GRAPHIC BY JASON ROBB

Paki has been held all this time without a trial. Instead he was punished with violations related to the uprising before the prison system's Rules Infraction Board (RIB). Such violations are supposed to extend prison terms by up to 90 days maximum, but Paki has been held on these charges for 15 years.

One of the performances was held in a community center in a working-class community on Cleveland's west side. Desktop computers were set up all around the back of the center so that during the intermission the audience members could sign the electronic petition for amnesty at [www.acluohio.org](http://www.acluohio.org) in the Lucasville Justice Project.

A second performance was in a community center in a part of Cleveland's east side that is primarily African-American. The building had been completely renovated by involving the young people of the community and teaching them construction and maintenance skills.

The cast's passionate performance was matched by the audience's enthusiasm on both nights, which included a standing ovation the second night. This enthusiasm showed that the campaign for the freedom of the Lucasville uprising prisoners has become a popular movement. □

## Forum on Irish struggle history

On April 19 the Detroit branch of Workers World Party sponsored the forum, "In the Spirit of the 1916 Irish Rebellion: James Connolly and the 1981 Hunger Strikers." Ed Childs

of UNITE HERE Local 26 in Boston, WWP member and longtime Irish liberation fighter; Abayomi Azikiwe of the Pan African News Wire; Kris Hamel of WWP; and Workers World newspaper Contributing Editor Bryan G. Pfeifer spoke. Debbie Johnson of WWP chaired and, along with Mike Shane of WWP, prepared a traditional Irish meal.

Talks and discussion topics included the roles of revolutionary Irish women, dual power, the Black and the Green struggle, the 1981 hunger strikers, the Irish and Irish-Americans, the legacy of James Connolly, the 1916 rebellion, Bobby Sands and Mairead Farrell, Ireland today, communism, the science of dialectical and historical materialism, transitional demands, the American Axle strike, the moratorium campaign and the fight for socialist revolution in the U.S. and internationally.

### War in Colombia Made in U.S.A.

A book from the International Action Center covers the struggle in Colombia from the perspective of trade unionists, human rights activists, and the FARC and ELN insurgencies. Authors include: Fidel Castro, Ramsey Clark, Javier Correa, Rep. Cynthia McKinney, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Gloria Gaitan, Raul Reyes, Manuel Marulanda, Stan Goff, Teresa Gutierrez, James Petras, Sen. Paul Wellstone, Roy Bourgeois, Garry Leech and others.

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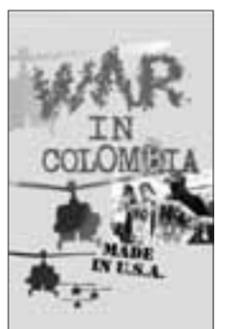
WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLACK

The role of Irish internationalism and the relationships between the Irish and Cubans, Indians, Mexicans, the Black and Native nations in the U.S., Palestinians, Puerto Ricans, South Africans and other oppressed peoples sparked deep discussions with regard to self-determination, the national question and nationalism vs. socialism from the packed house.

A screening of a DVD depicting the barbaric U.S.-British colonial activities in the North of Ireland in the 1980s and the relationships between national liberation struggles drew rapt attention, as did a clip from the movie, "The Wind That Shakes the Barley." Participants from throughout Michigan and Milwaukee attended.

Pictures on lecture are of Mairead Farrell and Assata Shakur.

—Bryan G. Pfeifer



# Imperialists' policies cause worldwide hunger

By Deirdre Griswold

When hungry people rebel in the streets over the high cost of food, it is only because they have tried every other way to feed their families—and come up with nothing.

That is what is happening around the world today—in so many countries that those whose economic policies have created this situation are truly alarmed. When the problem was just hunger, it was very, very low on their agenda. But now that the problem is seen as one of “social instability,” the huge transnational corporations that control the world market know their “bottom line” could be severely affected.

The U.N.'s World Food Program released a report in mid-April estimating that 800 million people are going hungry every day around the globe and malnutrition is rampant. Many explanations are being given for why, suddenly, so many people are in a dire situation of “food insecurity” after so many promises that the “green revolution” pushed by agribusiness would end world hunger forever.

Some point out that a huge and growing area of rich cropland is now producing crops for biofuel—in other words, to fuel cars, buses and trucks instead of to feed people. Others say it's because the earth's population is getting too large.

However, the same WFP report says that food production has been rising along with population and enough food is grown to feed everyone in the world. Yet hundreds of millions just can't afford to eat.

Was there any warning that a crisis like this was coming?

Absolutely. In fact, people who study food production in the developing world have been literally pleading with the rich imperialist countries—especially the U.S.—to change their policies.

For example, as long ago as 1999 Sophia Murphy of the Institute for Agricultural and Trade Policy wrote an article on “WTO, Agricultural Deregulation and Food Security,” in which she concluded

that “Those who face persistent hunger in the world do not have the money to exercise effective demand in a ‘free’ market. ... Nobody needs to go hungry—each person that does is the victim of conscious policy choices and policy failures.”

What Murphy, and others who work in various organizations trying to mitigate the effects of the “free market,” are referring to are the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization on poor countries. These institutions are controlled by the banks and corporations in the rich imperialist countries and do what's best for them, even though their stated mission is to help the development of poorer countries by loaning them money—at interest, of course.

It is a measure of the enormous injustice incorporated into international agreements that the very countries plundered of their resources during centuries of colonialism are now in the category of “debtor nations.” They are up to their ears in debt and have been forced by these international imperialist institutions to accept the most onerous “adjustment” to their economies just to be able to participate in any commerce or trade.

In fact, in this era of neocolonialism, it is the banks and the transnationals that keep the people of the oppressed nations enslaved. This arrangement is usually more satisfactory for the exploiters than direct rule, although the U.S. is now attempting to reconquer in the old colonial way countries like Iraq that exerted some real sovereignty.

The SAPs were pushed on the poorest countries in the world beginning in the 1980s. That was a time when the vigor of the Third World national liberation movements was waning, along with the aid that had been given developing countries by the Soviet Union and China, whose socialist commitments had been worn down by the unrelenting pressures and costs of the Cold War.

There were two main focuses to the SAPs: privatization and deregulation.

To continue to get loans so they could pay their “debt” and hopefully have something left over, the poor countries had to sell off what had belonged to the state: natural resources, airports, land, even water.

They also had to end import tariffs that had protected their farmers against the inflow of cheap agricultural products—especially products from the U.S., where grains in particular can be grown very cheaply because of abundant land and modern technology.

In Mexico, for example, the flooding in of cheap corn after the implementation of NAFTA ruined millions of small farmers, many of whom have lost their lands and must emigrate to the U.S. in order to get work.

Under the SAPs, countries also have had to eliminate subsidies and price controls that helped keep food affordable for the people.

The imperialist bankers forced all this on the developing countries in order to squeeze out of them even more immense profits and to take over the reins of their

economies. The result has been that, where once these countries were fairly self-sufficient in food, much of their agricultural land has now been taken over by transnationals, which produce cash crops for export.

Flowers, palm oil for biofuel, cattle for the huge hamburger chains, and costly fruits and vegetables for export year-round to the colder and more affluent countries of the North are replacing the indigenous crops that had provided a balanced diet for most of the people.

The structural adjustment programs have completely broken down the sovereignty of those countries drawn into their web. Economic decisions are not made in-country, as the military say, but in the boardrooms on Wall Street and its European and Japanese equivalents.

There will undoubtedly be many more studies that show how cruel and unsustainable is the new world order created by imperialist globalization. What will end this nightmare, however, is the revolutionary action of the popular masses. The food rebellions are a signal of their desperation but also of their hope and belief in their own power. □

## Women's group hosts Filipina leader



WW PHOTO: ARTURO J. PEREZ-SAAD

The Women's Fightback Network held a reception and round-table discussion on April 19 at the Solidarity Center in New York City for Emmi De Jesus, secretary-general of Gabriela, a mass women's organization based in the Philippines. De Jesus, standing behind the podium, had toured the United States since April 6, speaking on efforts by the Filipino

movement to resist all forms of human rights violations taking place in her country by the U.S.-backed regime of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. The Philippines has been a semicolony of the U.S. since 1898.

—Monica Moorehead



### MARKET ELECTIONS

How Democracy Serves the Rich By Vince Copeland

Every four years, big money chooses the presidential candidates. Their war chests filled to the brim, they are then packaged by the media as “the people's choice.” It's U.S.-style democracy-of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. But how do these chosen politicians win the votes of the millions as well as the millionaires?

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WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD

## Protest meets S. Korean Pres. Lee

By Eric Struch  
New York

Nodutdol for Korean Community Development and other groups organized a powerful demonstration at Manhattan's posh Plaza Hotel on April 15 to protest a visit by newly elected South Korean president, Lee Myung-bak. Lee is a member of the ultrarightist, pro-U.S. Grand National Party, a party that has a close identification with the brutal dictatorships in the Republic of Korea (RoK) from the 1950s to the 1980s.

Lee was in the U.S. to meet with Bush to iron out the details of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in addition to fast tracking closer military and political ties to U.S. imperialism. To this end, Bush, with Lee's full support, wants to spend billions of dollars to create a so-called Missile Defense Shield, which will contribute further to the militarization of the peninsula and escalate tensions between the RoK and the Democratic People's Republic of

Korea (DPRK or North Korea).

Nodutdol and its allied organizations are opposed to the FTA. If passed, the FTA will lead to massive unemployment in the RoK as well as to the relaxation or even repeal of labor laws and environmental standards. Nodutdol also opposes the Missile Defense Shield and any further militarization of the Korean peninsula. The group advocates a withdrawal of U.S. occupation troops, a peace treaty to end the state of war with the DPRK, and peaceful reunification on Korean terms of the northern and southern halves of the nation.

The loud, militant demonstration disrupted what Lee surely thought would be a smooth visit. Other organizations that participated in the demonstration included Solidarity for Peace and Reunification of Korea (SPARK), Congress for Korean Unification, Bayan U.S.A., the International Action Center, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) and the New York City People's Referendum on Free Trade. □



## Self-determination! But where?

In February it was Kosovo. In April, Tibet. Can the ruling classes in the imperialist countries, those world-class oppressors, suddenly be major supporters of self-determination?

Only when it suits their interests.

The French and Spanish rulers repress self-determination in the Basque Country, the British keep their troops in the northern counties of Ireland and—closer to home—Washington sends the FBI into its closest colonial possession, Puerto Rico, to harass, frequently arrest, and sometimes kill independence activists.

In mid-April, Puerto Rican independence activist Miguel Viqueira was about to leave his home for work when FBI agents showed up, armed and with bulletproof vests, insulting and threatening him. That same morning the FBI spread their bad will around, approaching Tania Delgado Soto from Rio Piedras. Both are members of the “Nueva Escuela” or New School in Puerto Rico, not to be confused with the university in New York.

In the case of these two activists, after

the FBI harassed them, the agents left without showing any judicial papers or warrants that would allow them to arrest or question the two. There were reports of others being harassed.

The continued efforts of the FBI and other U.S. police agencies to interfere with the rights of Puerto Ricans who believe their country has the right to sovereignty and self-determination should be protested by all in the progressive movement. Some already joined the April 21 protest at Federal Plaza in New York, a worthy target of protest. There will certainly be other opportunities to show solidarity with the Puerto Rican activists, who are freedom fighters really close to home.

When the imperialist ruling class starts to champion some national group demanding autonomy or secession, it's time to get suspicious. Ask these rulers' representatives if they are also going to support the self-determination of the oppressed nations in their own sphere of influence. It isn't hard to predict their answer. □

## Kathleen Kelly

### *pioneer of radical Internet media*

Kathleen Kelly who, with Bob Richards, was the New York Transfer News Collective, which broke the U.S. embargo on Cuba and distributed news reports from Havana's Prensa Latina in the United States, died Jan. 22 following a stroke. She was 59.

Known to most as Kelly, she was an Irish Republican Army supporter and anti-war activist during the 1960s who used her training as a psychiatrist to help returning Vietnam War vets. New York Transfer was an early bulletin board system set up by Vietnam vet Bob Richards. It was used primarily by vets seeking to deal with the war and with their anger against the system that sent them there.

The bulletin board system was connected by phone lines; this was before there was an Internet. When the Internet was opened, New York Transfer was a pioneer participant. By 1984 the operation was renamed New York Transfer News Collective to reflect its change into a distribution network for radical news.

New York Transfer was the first radical news service on the Internet and it was widely recognized for both its editorial quality and its many exclusives and its nonsectarian distribution policies. The news service redistributed articles from a great many sources, including small and big newspapers

in the U.S. and around the world.

It also distributed articles from revolutionary leftist newspapers, carrying articles ranging from Workers World newspaper to the Maoist Peru Communist Party's press. New York Transfer began distributing Workers World articles in 1985.

The distribution went far and wide.

In the 1990s New York Transfer began to break the longtime U.S. embargo on Cuba. Kelly began transcribing and translating into English the shortwave broadcasts of news from Cuba and distributing them through New York Transfer. This caused a stir at the time, but it also raised a demand for more.

Working closely with Prensa Latina in Havana, Kelly and New York Transfer were able to set up a daily communications link into Havana that let articles and news reports as well as email from Cuba to be exchanged in the U.S. for the first time. The English-language edition of Prensa Latina continues to be hosted on New York Transfer's Web server.

With the death of Kelly, New York Transfer has been forced to shut down. Bob Richards told Workers World, “I will always feel that Kelly fell in battle.” Messages can be sent to rrichard@blythe.org.

— Gary Wilson

## 'Greedy pirates of Cleveland'

*Continued from page 5*  
edly meant more layoffs.

Instead, a group of investors led by former JP Morgan division Corsair Capital LLC will buy a 50-percent stake in the distressed lender. “The deal will preserve the 163-year-old bank's Cleveland headquarters—a huge relief to 7,800 local workers and to a community that doesn't want to lose another Fortune 500 company,” the Plain Dealer reported on the Sunday evening the bailout was announced. Yet such buyouts usually come with strings attached—demands for “cost-cutting,” that is, job cuts.

These bank workers are the latest to suffer from a crisis not of their own making. Their precarious economic position stems from NCB's predatory lending policies, including

the 1999 purchase of the California-based subprime mortgage giant, First Franklin. Prior to that, only five percent of NCB's total profits, or \$50 million, came from mortgages. By 2003 that figure had grown to 50 percent, or \$2.3 million per day!

In 2006 NCB sold First Franklin to Merrill Lynch for \$1.3 billion—six times what it paid for the firm—but was left holding \$10 billion worth of subprime loans. The bank still holds \$6.6 billion of that \$10 billion and \$17 billion in home equity debt, including \$11 billion in “piggyback” loans.

The Plain Dealer explains that “A piggyback loan works like this: A person who had no down payment could get an 80 percent first mortgage at a low rate and a 20 percent second mortgage at a slightly higher

# The day women took to the streets



*Editor's note: Workers World is in its 50th year of publication. Throughout the year, we will share with our readers some of the paper's content over the past half century. Below is a reprint from a 1970 article on the first massive women's demonstration from that period in New York City.*

By Naomi Cohen

NEW YORK, Aug. 26—For all of us who took part in the Women's Strike here today, the single most significant fact about the day's action was indisputably the enormous number of women who poured out onto the streets in response to the call. Tens of thousands came out in an overwhelming show of strength to demonstrate their commitment to the struggle for Women's Liberation. In spite of all the snide remarks, the chauvinist comments in the bourgeois press, women, recognizing their oppression as women, came in a serious mood to demand 24-hour childcare centers, free abortion on demand and equal job opportunities.

The turnout was far beyond the expectations of the organizers of the march and particularly took the police and city administration by surprise, who up until the last moment were insisting that the women could only have part of Fifth Avenue for the march. But as the marchers lined up, snaking their way deep into Central Park at 60th Street, it became clear that there was no way the cops were going to confine this enormous crowd to one lane. And as we marched out of the park we could see women marching shoulder to shoulder and curb to curb down Fifth Avenue as far as the eye could see.

The crowd was for the most part young, with many, many women of high school and college age. But there were also older women, working women, mothers with children and groups of Black women. Although the vast majority were women, some men did come, one group with a sign, “Men Support Women's Liberation.”

We marched down Fifth Avenue with arms linked, chanting and carrying banners. The street was lined with spectators. Often the women among them were friendly, but most of the well-dressed businessmen types along the way seemed to regard the demon-

rate. It benefits the borrower. But since the consumer has absolutely no equity in the home, he has less motivation to repay the loan and that leaves the lender with 100 percent of the liability.”

Now, plunging home prices in Ohio have left homeowners owing more than the value of their property, and the country's sixth largest mortgage lender with \$25 billion worth of debt it cannot sell.

Like steelworkers, autoworkers or any other workers, the bosses consider bank workers expendable. When Merrill Lynch closed the now worthless First Franklin last month, 2,100 employees got the axe. Among the NCB workers laid off are 450 in the now closed home equity loan division and 900 in the mortgage division.

NCB's previous CEO David Daberko—the architect of the lending monster's destructive strategy—departed after three years of “service” with compensation totaling \$46 million. □

stration with a cold hostility which gripped them during this day for women.

There were also **WW in 1970** the usual fascist hecklers. One group held up a sign in German—Children, Church and Kitchen—Hitler's slogan to keep women enslaved in the home!

The most militant section of the march gathered around the banner of the Third World Women's Alliance. It read, “Hands off Angela Davis.” This contingent of Black, Spanish and other women of oppressed nations chanted, “Ho, ho, hey, hey, Angela Davis is here today.” Behind them a group of women from the YAWF Women's Caucus carried banners, “Support our Panther sisters and brothers” and “Equal pay for equal work.”

Bryant Park filled up quickly as the marchers poured in. Organizers of the event estimated the crowd at 50,000. The rally began with a spirited message delivered by Jo O'Brien, a militant working woman from Nottingham Women's Liberation in England.

Journalist Gloria Steinem, who chaired the rally, then introduced a representative of the Third World Women's Alliance. This Black sister, whose name was never announced, gave by far the most revolutionary speech of the evening and in doing so explained to the largely white audience there exactly how Black women feel about the women's movement and what their relationship to it will be.

She began her speech by stating, “Third World women are the most oppressed. ... Neither Third World women nor other women can be liberated until this capitalist, imperialist system is destroyed.”

Addressing herself to the white women she continued, “Until you can recognize your own racism and address yourselves to poor women, you cannot expect us to ally with you. ... We are the women who are the slaves in the garment center, work for the telephone company and in the factories.”

“The difference between white women and Third World women is the difference between exploitation and slavery. ... We cannot worry about petty problems like who is going to put out the garbage. We don't have garbage because we don't have enough food to eat!” And she ended her speech by saying, “Revolution and not reform is the only answer.”

Most of the speakers were the usual bunch of politicians you would expect to find at any large rally of this kind. There was a woman from Mayor Lindsay's office, Bella Abzug plugging for the Reform Democrats and an SWP candidate pushing her own election. Betty Freidan of NOW and Kate Millett, feminist and author of “Sexual Politics,” also spoke.

It goes without saying that the leaders of the August 26 action have no class line, that they are tied to bourgeois, parliamentary politics. Nevertheless, this was an enormous demonstration of the fact that women do recognize their oppression as women and want to struggle against it. In any huge outpouring like this, the consciousness of women grows and once women are on the streets they will be susceptible to a class approach to the revolutionary struggle of women. □

# Communists sweep elections in Nepal

By Sara Flounders

While focusing for weeks on Tibet, the corporate media in the imperialist countries have played down the earthshaking developments in the neighboring Himalayan country of Nepal, the poorest country in Asia. Yet the revolutionary communist forces of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist or CPN-M won an overwhelming electoral victory for the national Constituent Assembly on April 10.

The defeat of the monarchy, the corrupt feudal forces, pro-monarchy parties and the capitalist Nepal Congress Party, which supported the monarchy, is a blow to U.S. imperialism in this strategic country of 27 million people, bordering China. Washington is unlikely to accept the present mass upheaval without attempting to intervene.

Pre-election opinion polls commissioned by the U.S. Embassy in Katmandu, Nepal's capital, gave the Maoists forces only 8 to 10 percent of the popular vote. Western and Indian media coverage also predicted widespread violence, intimidation and vote rigging.

Although the final vote count will not be confirmed for two to three weeks, it is already clear the CPN-M, out of 55 political parties participating in the election, swept the direct vote and won 122 out of 240 direct seats, more than half. This 122 is more than three times as many seats as either the centrist Congress Party of Nepal or the social-democratic, left party known as the Communist Party of Nepal (UML—United Movement of the Left). These are the two major parties that had participated in the Parliament under the King.

The added votes of the major parliamentary left and several other left parties will provide a potential bloc, led by the CPN-M, of more than two-thirds of the seats. The monarchist parties received too few votes to secure any seats. Although the counting is not yet finalized for the proportional delegates, the CPN-M is already the confirmed winner of over 100 of the 335 proportional seats.

The vote spells the end of the feudal monarchy and the establishment of a democratic, federal, secular republic. Great new challenges lie ahead.

## Revolutionary composition of Assembly

The CPN-M only agreed to a ceasefire in June 2006 in the decade long "peoples' war" after securing the agreement on the holding of a constituent assembly and on its character and structure. The composition of the new body indicates that it will have a revolutionary character regardless of the specific delegates seated.

In the proportional seats women must be 50 percent of the delegates and 33 percent of the total Assembly. This is a stunning accomplishment considering the low status of women in Nepal.

Nepal has 40 nationalities and seven major languages, along with 125 recorded languages. The ethnic minorities must all be substantially represented in the Assembly. The Dalits and most oppressed castes are also guaranteed seats in the Assembly.

The monarchy and the old state insisted that there was only one language and one people in Nepal, leaving the overwhelming majority of the population ignored and unrepresented.

Such a grouping of oppressed peoples sitting down, not within the existing framework, but to draft wholly new laws and structures that more closely meet their needs, means that even bigger changes lie ahead.

The demand for an election of a constituent assembly to draft a completely new constitution became a powerful mass movement. The masses saw it as a national referendum on ending feudal class rule and an unpopular, repressive monarchy.

Even with such a large electoral victory this is unlikely to be a smooth transition. The CPN-M will now head the Defense Ministry, managing the army that it fought for 10 years.

Prachandra, the leader of the CPN-M, has moved from having a price on his head, dead or alive, to becoming the probable next president.

The archaic forces that have ruled Nepal for hundreds of years had no choice but to agree to the present election, which for the first time is not for seats in an existing structure that favors the landlords and propertied classes. Mass general strikes and massive demonstrations that swelled into a 19-day uprising in April 2006 forced the collapse of the existing government. An eight-point agreement was signed to establish a cease-fire, set up an interim government and begin preparation for the election for a constituent assembly.

The uprising in the cities was preceded by a well-organized, peasant-based armed resistance that lasted from 1996 to 2006. It grew to control more than three-quarters of the countryside. In district after district, the movement in the impoverished and undeveloped countryside, led by the CPN-M, focused on radical land reforms, cancellation of peasants' debts, gender equality and political representation of oppressed nationalities.

The determination of the CPN-M to bypass the old parliamentary talk-shop in Katmandu and demand a wholly new constituent assembly takes a page from the experience of the Constituent National Assembly of the Third Estate in the French Revolution of 1789 and the role of the Soviet Councils of workers and peasants in the Russian Revolution of 1917. It is also a powerful reassertion of the validity of peoples' war tactics and mobilization of the peasantry in the 21st century.

The stated goals of the CPN-M are to work through the mass organizations and

the process of the Constituent Assembly on deciding the character of the state. At this point 80 percent of the population is engaged in subsistence agriculture. Popular demands to cancel the debts of the rural poor and for land reform will be brought to the Assembly.

Only private schools presently exist in Nepal. Public education is the first order of business. More than 80 percent of the population lacks access to electricity and education. The first national campaign is to organize for full literacy within five years and electrification within 10 years.

Although the majority of the population of Nepal is desperately poor and a third of the population lives on less than \$1 a day, the country is rich in undeveloped resources. It has mineral resources of gold, copper, iron, coal, oil and gas. It has plentiful water resources and extremely fertile soil in the lowlands able to produce three crops a year.

The CPN-M and all the forces struggling for revolutionary change in Nepal have a formidable task ahead of them. Nepal is isolated, landlocked and almost totally underdeveloped. Even the most basic improvements in the standard of living are up against the global capitalist downturn and soaring fuel, construction and food prices.

## U.S. intervention

After Sept. 11, 2001, U.S. imperialism asserted itself globally more than ever. Washington put the CPN-M on the "terrorism" list and sent U.S. military advisors to aid Nepal's feudal forces, also providing a third of Nepal's national budget. Of 13,000 killed in the 1996-2006 peoples'

struggle against the monarchy, more than 10,000 died after the 2001 U.S. intervention increased the slaughter.

In contradiction to the phony U.S. message of great "respect for human rights" in neighboring Tibet, in Nepal the Pentagon rushed to supply helicopter gunships, night vision equipment, M-16s, stores of ammunition and other military technology to combat the peasant insurgency. Currently, Washington still has the CPN-M on its "terrorist" list.

In a Feb. 13, 2007, interview in Global Eco Politics U.S. Ambassador Moriarty compared the attitude toward relations with CPN-M with the hostile U.S. approach toward the democratically elected government of Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza.

U.S. imperialism has again and again shown its deep hostility to any elected government that does not serve its interests, supporting or initiating coups against democratically elected governments in Congo, Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Venezuela, Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza. In an effort to frustrate and defeat popular movements for change, U.S. corporate power has used tactics of sabotage, economic strangulation, sanctions, invasions, arming contra bands of landlords and property owners and orchestrating military coups.

The Constituent Assembly opens new revolutionary possibilities in Nepal. This unfolding process is likely to have a profound impact throughout South Asia, where the majority of the population is still impoverished peasants facing a global capitalist market. □

# Chinese Olympic wheelchair athlete

By Caleb Maupin

Jin Jing had a smile on her face as she rolled her wheelchair through the streets of Paris. Her smile was undeterred by the fact that anti-Chinese Tibetan separatists, dressed in black and bearing a fictional "Tibetan flag," violently attacked her as she bore the Olympic torch through the streets.

Jin Jing, whose name means "gold," was born in Shanghai, the daughter of two workers. At the age of nine she suffered from a cancerous tumor in her ankle, which required the amputation of her leg. But this did not stop Jin Jing. She helped her family by working as a switchboard operator at a hotel until she got the idea to become an athlete. (China Daily)

It was when she participated in a speech contest in 2001 that she was introduced to the idea of getting involved in sports. She said she wanted to become a fencer because one of her childhood favorites was Zorro, the fictional television hero who fought the agents of Spanish colonialism. Perhaps images of Zorro's battles with corrupt Spanish officials were with her as she clutched the torch away from servants not of Spanish colonialism, but of U.S. finance capital. (China Daily)

Jin Jing has participated in six international wheelchair fencing contests and won six medals: two silver and four bronze.

After defeating the anti-China agents,



Jin Jing holding Olympic torch in Paris.

she sent a text message to her mother, reading, "You can be proud of me." Before the press and the crowds of cheering Chinese students in the streets of Paris, Jin raised her left fist and shouted "Go China" at the top of her lungs, according to reports in the Chinese media.

Jin Jing has made it clear that she is in opposition to the U.S.-funded cause of Tibetan separatism. Jin has also said she is very proud to be representing her country the first time it will host the Olympic events. □

## Tibet and the CIA's anti-China Crusade

*Has Tibet become the front line of a new national liberation struggle?*

*Or is something else happening there?*

- Why weren't the Dalai Lama's slaves freed until 1959?
- Why was one of Hitler's top Nazis part of the Dalai Lama's inner circle?
- Why did the CIA create a Tibetan contra force beginning in the 1950s?
- What are the Dalai Lama's connections to the CIA?
- How are the Tibetan poor affected by the Chinese Revolution?
- What about the ruling class Tibetans who went abroad?

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### Expansión de la OTAN, segunda parte

# Washington en busca de tropas

Por Sara Flounders

En la víspera de la reunión de la OTAN, el Almirante de la Marina, Mike Mullen, presidente de la Junta de Jefes del Estado Mayor, dijo que se necesitaban 7.500 soldados y 3.000 entrenadores militares más para ser enviados inmediatamente a Afganistán.

Cerca de 59.000 soldados de 39 diferentes países están ahora ocupando a Afganistán, incluyendo 19.000 de Estados Unidos. De esta cifra, 47.500 están bajo el comando de la OTAN.

Como su misión ha fallado y la resistencia afgana ha crecido, las divisiones internas en la alianza de la OTAN se están aireando públicamente. Los desacuerdos sobre la distribución de las obligaciones, la coordinación y la dirección estratégica están plagando la alianza. Canadá amenazó con retirar sus tropas de Afganistán si otros países no envían un número substancial de tropas. Alemania ha rehusado expandir su fuerza de 3.200 tropas.

La administración de Bush no tenía una esperanza realista de lograr que los aliados de la OTAN enviaran más tropas. Pero aún así el Pentágono está tan sobre extendido en Irak que ya no puede proveer más tropas. El mensaje de Bush—"Esperamos que nuestros aliados en la OTAN provean la ayuda necesaria para tener éxito"—no fue muy popular.

Bajo presión durante las reuniones, el Presidente Nicholas Sarkozy dijo que Francia proveería 1.000 tropas más. El Parlamento francés inmediatamente recortó esta cifra a 700. Polonia aceptó enviar otras 400 tropas. Rumania, España y Bretaña se comprometieron a enviar unos cientos más. Pero la meta inmediata de 10.000 tropas adicionales no se logró.

#### Se reduce la coalición en Irak

Los ex primeros ministros Tony Blair de Bretaña, John Howard de Australia, José María Aznar de España y Silvio Berlusconi de Italia perdieron sus puestos por la poca popularidad del compromiso de enviar tropas a Irak y por su apoyo a la guerra. Ahora se considera un suicidio político en Europa Occidental que los políticos aumenten la cifra de tropas para Afganistán o Irak.

Los nuevos miembros dependientes pequeños de la OTAN que están siendo presionados por todos lados para que envíen más soldados como carne de cañón a Afganistán, Irak y otras misiones, se confunden con la estructura de comando. El Presidente de Rumania, Traian Basescu se refirió a las tropas de su país en Irak como fuerzas de la OTAN durante una conferencia de prensa el 8 de abril. El fue públicamente corregido con una explicación de que la OTAN no tiene una misión en Irak, donde las tropas rumanas

son parte de la "Coalición Internacional." La misión en la misma—asegurar la ocupación imperialista. Solo el nombre es diferente.

Mientras otras fuerzas imperialistas—como por ejemplo Bretaña, España, Italia, Australia, y Japón— se retiran de Irak, la reducida "coalición internacional" queda a cargo de las fuerzas de países más pobres como El Salvador y Tonga, así como varios que una vez fueron parte de o aliados a la Unión Soviética, como Rumania, Bulgaria, la República Checa, Ucrania, Georgia, Azerbaiyán, Armenia, Moldova, Lituania, Estonia, Latvia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Albania, Kazakstán, y Mongolia.

La suma de tropas no estadounidenses en Irak ha bajado de 23.000 en el 2003 a menos de 10.000 hoy, y sigue reduciéndose.

Los costos de la participación de los 20 países más pobres están pagados por l@s contribuyentes de impuestos en los EEUU. El costo de las más de 160.000 tropas de los EEUU y de los 100.000 contratistas privados en Irak está pagado también por los impuestos y recortes presupuestarios que afectan a l@s pobres y al pueblo trabajador en los EEUU.

#### Semillas de la derrota de OTAN

La OTAN es primordialmente una alianza militar. Es ahí donde yacen las semillas de su derrota. Cada batalla en Irak al igual que en Afganistán confirma

que mientras las fuerzas de los EEUU/OTAN puedan prevalecer sobre las fuerzas locales de resistencia por el empleo de un poder militar abrumador y bombardeos indiscriminados, solo logra incrementar aún más la resistencia y en reclutar más insurgentes. Enviar más tropas solo exacerbaba el problema.

El imperialismo de los EEUU está enfrentando una contradicción que es irreconciliable. El movimiento político progresista tiene que estar atento. Estas contradicciones pueden volver más desesperados y peligrosos a los multimillonarios. Mientras que su posición económica mundial se está erosionando, junto con el dólar todopoderoso, cada vez más están atraídos por las soluciones militares. Pero el mantenimiento de las armas, las bases y las tropas, succiona una proporción creciente de los recursos disponibles. El militarismo es tanto una forma de rescate con subvenciones corporativas como un drenaje sin fin de la economía en general.

Cada día que pasa el costo de las guerras de ocupación infinitas se torna más obvio y menos soportable a l@s millones de pobres y gente trabajadora en los EEUU y en Europa. El incremento de penuria económica, recortes presupuestarios, y bajas militares están socavando esta gran alianza militar. La OTAN se está desmoronando desde abajo, a la vez que se expande numérica y geográficamente. □

# TORTURA: la podredumbre comenzó en los altos mandos

Por Dianne Mathiwetz

La administración de Bush ha sido atrapada en otra mentira.

¿Recuerdan cómo el presidente miró seriamente a las cámaras de televisión el 6 de octubre de 2007, y dijo, "Este gobierno no tortura a seres humanos"?

Mientras que la cuestión de las prácticas ilegales e inhumanas perpetradas contra los prisioneros irrumpió en la conciencia pública después de la publicación de las fotos horribles desde Abu Ghraib en abril de 2004, memorandos secretos escritos mucho antes revelan que discusiones detalladas y elaboradas sobre el uso de la tortura fueron conducidas en la Casa Blanca por oficiales de los rangos más altos del gobierno.

En vez de ser unas pocas "manzanas podridas" como describieron en aquel entonces a l@s soldados de rangos bajos que fueron enjuiciados por sus crímenes en Abu Ghraib, estos documentos comprueban que la "podredumbre" comenzó en la Avenida Pensilvania número 1600.

Discusiones sobre cómo evadir las leyes estadounidenses e internacionales tomaron

lugar casi inmediatamente después del once de septiembre por entre otros, Dick Cheney, la Asesora de Seguridad Nacional Condoleezza Rice, el Secretario de Defensa Donald Rumsfeld, el director de la CIA George Tenet, el Secretario de Estado Colin Powell y el Fiscal General John Ashcroft.

Mientras que las palabras que definen la tortura en los Convenios de Ginebra, la Carta y otros convenios y declaraciones de la ONU, al igual que los códigos domésticos y militares de los EEUU se pueden interpretar de varias formas, indiscutiblemente prohíben que el uso del dolor intenso, sufrimiento o degradación, ya sea mental o físico, sea intencionalmente aplicado a cualquier persona con el propósito de extraer información o una confesión.

Éstas políticas son consideradas "crímenes de guerra" bajo la ley internacional y el encausamiento no se limita a los torturadores materiales sino que también es aplicable a aquellos que promulgaron y emitieron las órdenes de tortura.

Desde el once de septiembre, se ha mantenido un esfuerzo sostenido por parte de ciertos ele-

mentos en la administración Bush, particularmente por Cheney, para imponer la idea de que el presidente tiene un poder ilimitado para ordenar interrogaciones brutales de detenidos para extraerles información estimada como necesaria para proteger a los EEUU.

La Casa Blanca, cuando era confrontada con acusaciones de usar a militares estadounidenses o agentes de la CIA y del FBI en el extranjero para torturar, inicialmente alegó que esos sucesos eran aberraciones. Luego dijeron que la solicitud para expandir las técnicas de interrogación vino desde "el terreno de combate".

Documentos obtenidos por la Unión Americana de Libertades Civiles (ACLU) en su batalla legal sobre los cientos de prisioneros detenidos en Guantánamo, comprueban cómo el uso de la tortura del agua conocida en inglés como "waterboarding", posturas de estrés prolongados, sesiones de interrogación de 20 horas de duración, aislamiento extremo, poner capuchas, desnudar a los detenidos, privación de sueño, temperaturas extremas y otras medidas brutales, fueron aprobadas desde los más altos niveles del gobierno, incluyendo a George W. Bush. Instrucciones dándole cobertura legal al uso de la tortura fueron enviadas a la CIA por el Departamento de Defensa comenzando en el 2002.

Ashcroft, en unas de estas discusiones sobre la "tortura", expresó esta inquietud: "¿Porqué hablamos de esto en La Casa

Blanca? La historia no va a juzgar esto bien."

Sin embargo, las revelaciones recientes de la aprobación oficial del uso de la tortura por parte de la administración de Bush son solamente una parte del cuadro.

Las cárceles y prisiones de los EEUU, los departamentos de la policía, agentes de inmigración, hospitales mentales, escuelas militares disciplinarias para jóvenes y otras instituciones represivas emplean tácticas inhumanas, racistas, sexistas y homofóbicas similares para obligar confesiones, mantener el control o alterar el comportamiento.

Innumerables demandas judiciales detallan las condiciones en prisiones y la práctica de tortura al estilo de Abu Grahíb y Guantánamo por todos los EEUU, desde el encarcelamiento en solitario por décadas a los miembros de los 3 de Angola hasta las confesiones inducidas por tortura que están detrás de la acusación de los 8 de San Francisco.

Más de 2 millones de personas están encarceladas en prisiones y cárceles estadounidenses, en su mayoría hombres y mujeres de color, casi tod@s pobres que suelen ser enjuiciados por crímenes de sobrevivencia sin tener representación legal adecuada.

La conexión entre la "guerra en el exterior" y la "guerra en casa" se manifiesta abiertamente a través de las barras de las prisiones y los calabozos de aislamiento.

