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Another New Orleans outrage

Judge drops charges on Katrina killer cops

By LeiLani Dowell

Just two weeks before the third anniversary of Hurricane Katrina—and the racist, genocidal neglect of survivors by local and federal officials and agencies in the storm's aftermath—a New Orleans judge has dismissed charges against six police officers in the killing of two unarmed survivors just days after the storm.

On the morning of Sept. 4, 2005, survivors of Katrina were attempting to cross the Danziger Bridge in New Orleans on foot to reach a grocery store. According to witnesses, they were ambushed by police officers who jumped out of the back of a rental truck and began shooting. Ronald Madison, a 40-year-old, mentally disabled man, was killed by seven shots in his back and shoulder; 19-year-old James Brisette was also killed.

In addition, Susan Bartholomew's arm was partially blown off and her spouse, daughter and nephew were all shot multiple times. All six officers were put on desk duty but continue to work for the New Orleans Police Department.

To add further insult, Madison's brother Lance—a 25-year employee of FedEx with no criminal record—was arrested, jailed and accused of shooting at the officers. The charges were later dropped.

Criminal District Judge Raymond Bigelow threw out the charges against the officers on two technicalities—one, that they were made to testify in front of the same grand jury that indicted them; and two, that a police lieutenant who was expected to testify alleged he had been shown one of the officers' grand jury testimonies. Both actions are impermissible by Louisiana state law.

However, rather than find the district attorney's office in contempt of court, the judge chose to further punish the family members of the slain by completely dismissing the charges against the police officers.

The entire case has been fraught with bias and corruption. Physical evidence was not gathered for the investigation for seven weeks; other evidence, such as the rental truck the police used, was discarded. Most of the eyewitnesses interviewed by homicide detectives were police officers, and the investigative report based some of its conclusions on testimony given by a man pretending to be a sheriff's deputy.

New Orleans Times-Picayune columnist Jarvis DeBerry describes a mountain of conflicts of interest in the trial: "Judge Bigelow employs a woman married to the spokesman of the Fraternal Order of Police, a major backer of the accused officers. Another employee's father is defending one of the accused officers in court. The judge's law clerk is a former partner of a lawyer representing an accused officer." (Aug. 17)

A protest was held against the ruling, organized by Safe Streets, Strong Communities. While the court clerk told reporters that the state plans to appeal (CNN, Aug. 13), it will take a continued struggle by the people of New Orleans and their allies to bring justice. □

SPECIAL DNC-RNC SUPPLEMENT

- The capitalist economic crisis and the workers
- WW supports McKinney & Clemente
- Schedule of protest events 9-12

AT THE OLYMPICS IT'S A SCANDAL



BUT WHEN CAPITALIST POLITICIANS LIP-SYNCH IT'S SOMEHOW OKAY

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Survivors of Katrina sought safety on bridges, as here. Police fired on one group, killing two. How can that be excused?

Interview with Pam & Ramona Africa

'Freedom must take priority over everything'



This week ...



By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

Two leading members of the Philadelphia-based MOVE organization, Pam Africa and Ramona Africa, spoke at a public meeting in Detroit on Aug. 2 on the continuing efforts to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and the MOVE 9.

This public event, held at the Dr. Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, was initiated by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice (MECAWI) and was co-sponsored by several other organizations—including the Detroit Green Party, Detroit Solidarity and the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality—as well as Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of the Archdiocese of the city.

Pam Africa, representing MOVE and the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, has been leading the global struggle in support of the award-winning journalist, who was a founding member of the Black Panther Party in Philadelphia. Abu-Jamal has been a staunch supporter of MOVE since the 1970s.

Abu-Jamal has been on death row since 1982 after he was falsely accused of and railroaded for the murder of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner in December 1981. Since 1995 there have been two death warrants, signed by former Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge, for the execution of Abu-Jamal. Only international mass outrage forced a stay, keeping him alive over the years.

Two recent federal appeals court decisions in the Third Circuit denied Mumia a new trial and a rehearing by the full panel. That consequently upheld a 2001 federal ruling that vacated the death penalty and sentenced Abu-Jamal to life in prison without parole. Despite the 2001 ruling, Abu-Jamal remains on death row.

Ramona Africa spoke on recent developments involving the denial of parole to the MOVE 9, who have been incarcerated since Aug. 8, 1978, when MOVE family members were attacked at their Powelton Village home by hundreds of Philadelphia police.

During the assault on the MOVE residence, an officer, James Ramp, was killed. The evidence presented during their trial could not prove that any of the MOVE 9 defendants fired the shot that killed the policeman.

Earlier this year the nine political prisoners were denied parole after serving the minimum terms for the 30- to 100-year sentences handed down after their trial.

Interview with Pam and Ramona Africa

During the Africas' visit to Detroit, this writer sat down with them to discuss various aspects of their work as well as important episodes in their own personal development:

Abayomi Azikiwe: What should people know about the case against the MOVE 9?

Ramona Africa: MOVE people who were in the Powelton Village residence on Aug. 8, 1978, are totally innocent. There were nine people charged and convicted in the killing of one cop. How can nine people be responsible for firing one gun? More importantly, the bullet that struck the cop was fired in a downward trajectory. All our family members were in the basement of the house.

AA: What excuse did the parole board give for not releasing the MOVE 9 this spring?

RA: They did their minimum sentences. This year they were asked to admit guilt. They refused to admit guilt because they are not responsible for the death of the officer. Guilt or innocence is not the issue. Neither is the serious nature of the crime because this was taken into consideration at the time the sentences were handed down.

This reminds me of my case when the Philadelphia police bombed our family's home on May 13, 1985. Eleven people were killed, including children. The entire neighborhood was burned to the ground because the fire marshal ordered the department not to put out the flames.

I was charged with riot and assault. I was in my own home, minding my own business, yet I was charged with riot. I was convicted and given 16 months to seven years in prison. They told me after 16 months that if I severed all ties with MOVE I could go. I told them to go to hell. Freedom must take priority over everything. I would prefer to do other things, but it is not an option.

Not being a revolutionary will never protect you. Amadou Diallo was not a revolutionary, but he was still victimized. So if you are getting oppressed anyway, you should fight back. This is the only way we can beat the oppressors back. The important thing to do is to contribute whatever you can to the revolution.

AA: Pam, what is the status of the struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal?

Pam Africa: We are continuing to put out information on the case. Mumia is in his last phase of appeals. The Third Circuit Court of Appeals decided not to follow the law when they denied Mumia a new trial. There was a vote where the majority decided to rule against Mumia. What is right is right. It has nothing to do with a vote. Then an appeal for a rehearing before the entire panel was denied.

However, we will continue to rely on the people throughout the world. John Africa, the coordinator of MOVE, told us in 1981 that the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal would one day be known all over the world. We have been able to stop several attempts to kill Mumia. Even Judge Albert Sabo, who was known for not granting stays of execution, was forced to do so in August of 1995 because of mass demonstrations throughout the world in support of Mumia.

By denying Mumia his freedom or a new trial, they are attempting to place him in prison for life without the possibility of parole. This is totally unacceptable. Mumia is innocent and must be released.

Our schedule is full with work in support of Mumia's freedom. In the next few weeks we will be traveling to Washington, D.C., Ohio, Denver and Mexico City.

We have to put out our own information through newspapers, leaflets and meetings like this. The media does not speak for us. Before I came into MOVE, I lived down the street from them in Philadelphia. I saw the good work they did and the nice people they were. Yet I chose to believe what I saw on television and read in the papers, which told lies about the organization, saying they were bad for the community.

It was the example set by John Africa and MOVE that brought me around the organization. We are still here despite all the efforts to lock us up and kill our family

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Low-wage capitalism & strategies for the coming period

Fred Goldstein, a member of the Secretariat of Workers World Party, submitted a paper to the 17th International Communist Seminar held this May in Brussels, Belgium. It summarizes the third and concluding part of his soon-to-be-published book entitled "Low-Wage Capitalism, Colossus with Feet of Clay." Below is the first part of the summary.

The first two sections of "Low-Wage Capitalism" discuss the worldwide wage competition instituted by finance capital in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe and the leaps forward in the scientific-technological revolution that made it possible. The fundamental thesis of the book's first section on imperialist globalization is that it is laying the basis for an end of capitalist stability in the imperialist countries and a revival of the class struggle, with special focus on the United States.

The technological segmentation of the production process and of services to low-wage areas throughout the globe has allowed the bosses to pit workers in the developed imperialist countries in a job-for-job competition against superexploited workers in the poorer, low-wage countries. This process is eroding the national determination of wages. Instead wages are more and more being determined internationally under the downward pressure of low wages in the oppressed countries. This process is destroying the privileged positions of the upper layers of the working class in the imperialist countries and destroying the social foundation for opportunism in the labor movement, as first described by Lenin during World War I.

The second section of the book documents the 30-year decline of the wages and standard of living of the working class and the oppressed in the U.S. under the impact of the global race to the bottom engineered by the giant monopolies. Both of these topics were dealt with in a paper presented at the International Communist Seminar of May 2007.

The third section, summarized here, reviews the last three decades, which have seen an unprecedented retreat of the U.S. working class in the face of union-busting, demands for concessions, and the general lowering of wages and deterioration of working conditions. Yet, even during this period of retreat, the workers have shown a willingness to fight back. The labor leadership of the AFL-CIO, and now Change to Win, have led the retreat and have been the great obstacle to mobilizing the kind of classwide struggles needed to turn back the capitalist anti-labor offensive. Developing and implementing a struggle strategy will be the task of communists in the labor movement.

We start with two examples—there are over a dozen in the book—of strikes in the U.S. between 1980 and 2005.

Pam and Ramona Africa

Continued from page 2
members.

We have been with Mumia from the time he was a journalist in Philadelphia. We were there when he was almost killed by the police, and we were the first to build support for his freedom. And we are still working on his case today.

Abayomi Azikiwe is the editor of the Pan-African News Wire. PANW articles have appeared in publications and Web sites throughout the world.

Hormel meatpackers

The struggle of the Hormel meatpackers of Local P-9, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) in 1985 in Austin, Minn., became a national cause within the labor movement and the progressive movement in general because the local decided to take a stand against concessions. In the face of opposition from the union's national leadership, which condemned the strike and suspended the local, the Hormel workers sent agitators to cities throughout the country and got material support from more than 3,000 locals. Movement activists and tens of thousands of unionists and local officials came to the area.

Mass picket lines blocked scabs and shut down Hormel's operations. The workers faced teargas, police attack and arrests. Gov. Rudy Perpich, a Democrat, sent in the National Guard against the strikers. But what defeated the strike, which lasted a year and a half, was the hostility of the national leadership of the UFCW and the refusal of the AFL-CIO to join the battle on a national basis.

This major confrontation, which had been brought on by Hormel, was recognized as a highly significant battle among the rank and file of the labor movement. The workers at Hormel and far beyond showed a readiness and desire to unite and fight back.

UPS Teamsters

The 1997 strike against United Parcel Service (UPS) was a powerful one that fought to reverse concessions begun in 1982. The company had won the right to create a two-tier, part-time system of employment. In August of 1997 the 185,000 members of the UPS division of the Teamsters union waged a 15-day strike that electrified the labor movement and the working class as a whole. Despite compromises made in the final settlement, it was understood, rightly so, as the first major victory for a significant section of the working class after two decades of defeat and retreat.

The strike was led by Teamsters President Ron Carey, who had democratized the union during his tenure. It was won by meticulous planning for a genuine class struggle, bringing in the rank and file at every stage. The struggle was popular in the union movement and among the working class as a whole because it was projected as a struggle against part-time and low-wage work. Sixty percent of the 185,000 UPS workers were part-time workers who earned only \$9 per hour, as opposed to \$19.95 an hour, plus benefits, for full-time workers.

The strike was won through a major test of strength between labor and capital. The AFL-CIO leadership supported the strike—John Sweeney promised to back the Teamsters' strike benefit fund with \$10 million a week. UPS workers forced the company to agree to turn 10,000 part-time workers into full-time employees, won raises for the lower-paid workers, and warded off an attack on pension funding.

When the strike was over, the government quickly framed up Carey on false charges of illegally providing funds for his union election. Acquitted of all charges, Carey was nevertheless driven out of the union by a government board overseeing the union.

Fearing a government attack, the AFL-CIO leadership left Carey to face the frame-up and ouster alone. Instead of standing up and challenging the government to indict the entire top leadership of the union movement, and preparing the rank and file to defend the leader who had launched the biggest union challenge to big business in two decades, the AFL-CIO leadership abandoned the struggle.

The forward momentum gained by the militant mass struggle of 185,000 workers, backed by workers everywhere, soon died down. What the mass struggle had won was diminished by the craven retreat of the leadership.

Technology and need for higher class organization

The working class in the U.S. is facing a crisis that will bring to light the urgent need for a leap forward in class organization. This crisis is taking place in the framework of the global restructuring of capitalist production and services, which had already pushed tens of millions of workers and oppressed to the edge of mass pauperization, even before the onslaught of the new economic crisis.

Technological innovation is a constant under capitalism. Ever since its earliest beginnings, each generation of capitalists has sought to more thoroughly exploit the workers, most often through the introduction of more efficient, more productive equipment.

Each new wave of technology is directed by capital precisely at eliminating the highest-paid jobs and the areas in which labor organization has been most successful. Its tendency is to drive down the price of labor power—that is, wages. The most pervasive methods of accomplishing this are to destroy union jobs; to deskill jobs, making it easier to replace one worker with another with minimal to no training, which will increase competition among

workers; or to direct capital towards new low-skill, low-wage, high-profit industries and avoid unions altogether.

For the working class this means that each new stage in capitalist technological development requires greater and greater class solidarity, wider and wider organization, and more unified struggle to overcome the ever-increasing tendency by the bosses to widen the competition among workers, both at home and abroad.

Building a broad working-class movement

For the working class in the U.S., a whole new classwide approach must be taken. Marx himself a century and a half ago sketched the outlines of what is needed today.

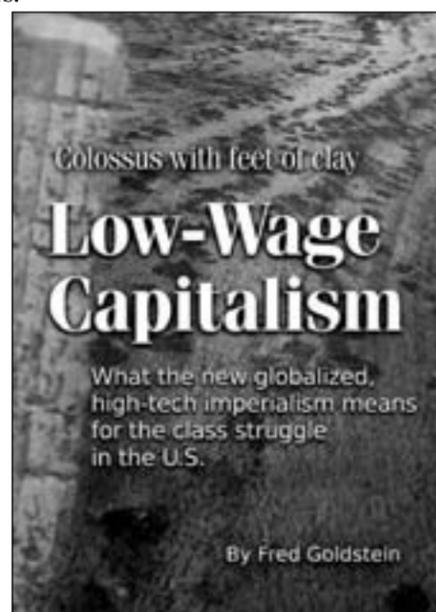
He wrote: "Apart from their original purpose, [the unions] must now learn to act deliberately as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation. They must aid every social and political movement tending in that direction. Considering themselves as acting as the champions of the whole working class, they cannot fail to enlist the non-society men [the unorganized—FG] into their ranks. They must look carefully after the interests of the worst paid trades, such as agricultural laborers, rendered powerless by exceptional circumstances. They must convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions." (Karl Marx on "The Future of the Unions" from "Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council of the First International," August 1866.)

What does this mean concretely today in the U.S.? To take the broadest view of the potential strength of the working class and organized labor, it is essential to take into account not only the 15 million workers in the unions plus the 50 million workers who say they want a union, but the hundreds of thousands of activists and community organizers in cities and towns across the country.

The reservoir of strength from this vantage point includes the natural allies and potential members of a broad working-class movement that reaches out and gives leadership in the general struggle to meet the needs and raise the demands of the working class as a whole.

To be continued.

"Low-Wage Capitalism" will be published this fall. For information and to donate to the cost of publication, contact the publisher: World View Forum, 55 W. 17th St., 5th floor, New York, NY 10011.



Coming soon

Low-Wage Capitalism

"Low-Wage Capitalism" By Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx's law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval. The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world's workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.
- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.
- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

World View Forum, 55 W. 17th St., NY, NY 10011 212.463.7146

Chrysler wants autoworkers in U.S. to compete with autoworkers in Canada. The answer is not rivalry but solidarity. Here, the UAW rally in Auburn Hills, Mich.

'No plant, no peace'

Workers march on Chrysler headquarters



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

By **Martha Grevatt**
Auburn Hills, Mich.

"Enough is enough" was a recurring theme as 800 Chrysler workers and their supporters rallied outside the corporation's headquarters here on Aug. 14 to protest the latest attack on their livelihoods. The issue of the day was the recent announcement that Chrysler would indefinitely idle the St. Louis South minivan assembly plant Oct. 31, combined with the abrupt cutting of an entire shift at the St. Louis North truck assembly plant.

Management scheduled a transfer of all minivan production to Chrysler's other minivan plant in Windsor, Ont., Canada.

The protest was militant. However, instead of invoking international workers' solidarity, the protesters fell prey to the company's strategy, chanting "USA! USA!" and "Build them where you sell them." T-shirts offered statistics that most minivans are sold in the U.S., not Canada. U.S. flags outnumbered picket signs at the protest.

The demonstration was called by United Auto Workers Local 110, which represents the workers at St. Louis South. Over 400 multinational workers from that local arrived in Michigan after an all-night bus ride. UAW Local 136, at St. Louis North, also sent a large contingent. Both locals voted overwhelmingly against last year's concessionary contract, which passed by the slimmest of margins. Local 122, which also rejected the contract, sent three dozen members from the Ohio stamping plant in Twinsburg.

Hundreds more Chrysler workers came from Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and elsewhere. A large delegation of engineering and clerical staff, represented by Local 412, marched over on their lunch break from inside the Chrysler Technology Center with flags and signs. Homemade signs expressed solidarity with the St. Louis workers and anger at Chrysler's plans to eliminate 2,400 jobs.

It took several days for the UAW International to officially bless the rally, after it became clear that a number of Chrysler locals around the Midwest were mobilizing for it.

Many UAW presidents spoke in solidarity with the St. Louis workers. Turning toward the Chrysler building, one yelled, "You're a liar, Tom LaSorda!" in reference to the company's vice president. Another used the analogy of an open hand, where the fingers can be cut off one by one, versus a clenched fist representing workers' power.

A spirited picket line followed the rally with

chants of "No plant, no peace!" and "No jobs, no peace!"

Dividing in the name of solidarity

Whipsawing is a term for the corporate tactic of pitting employees at one plant against workers at another plant of the same company. Workers who produce similar vehicles or components find themselves in competition to get new work into their plant. When one group of workers agrees, under intense pressure, to certain concessions, the second group will often agree to give up even more to hold on to their jobs. It's a vicious downward spiral, and only the bosses come out on top.

Minivan and truck sales are declining. Understandably, workers in St. Louis feel that Chrysler is forcing an unequal burden of suffering on them by closing their plant while running three production shifts in Windsor. Feelings are especially strong after UAW members took drastic concessions as a trade-off for job security.

The Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) rejected the two-tier wage structure but gave up a week of vacations, essentially agreeing to a longer work-week and indirectly helping Chrysler cut jobs.

Chrysler's owners—the Wall Street firm Cerberus—want to consolidate minivan production under one roof. Cerberus is engaging in cross-border whipsawing.

The CAW fell into the same trap earlier this year during an otherwise splendid blockade of GM's Canadian headquarters that shut operations there for almost two weeks. The CAW's uniform was a T-shirt with a Canadian maple leaf and the slogan "Made in Canada should mean something."

This attitude of dividing the working class by the country they live in actually plays into the bosses' strategy of divide and conquer.

Wouldn't it be much better to extend the hand of solidarity across the border and unite around the slogan "A job is a right"?

Brazilian autoworkers understood this very well when they held a solidarity protest outside their country's American Axle plant during the strike in the U.S. How about an international conference of autoworkers to discuss a fightback strategy?

A militant, mass protest against forced layoffs is a laudable first step. The next move should be launching a worldwide movement among workers in the entire auto industry. That is the only true way to assure our mutual survival.

Martha Grevatt has worked at the Chrysler Ohio Stamping Plant for 21 years. E-mail: mkgrevatt@workers.org

Sept. protests to hit foreclosures

By **Kris Hamel**

Millions of people in the U.S. are facing foreclosure; some 8,500 workers lose their homes each day, largely due to predatory subprime loans.

While the federal government touts a new bill that bails out banks and lenders but does little to help the millions of people in crisis, activists are putting forward a real solution: a moratorium to halt foreclosures and evictions.

Organizers in Michigan and California are gearing up for demonstrations on Sept. 17 to demand immediate relief from the foreclosure crisis.

In Michigan the Moratorium NOW! Coalition and other activists will converge at the State Capitol in Lansing to demand passage of SB 1306, a two-year foreclosure moratorium law.

Organizer Jerry Goldberg told Workers World: "SB 1306 has languished in the Bank and Finance Committee since its introduction. We are demanding immediate public hearings on this bill. On Sept. 17 the victims of foreclosures and evictions

will make their voices heard in Lansing."

The action starts at 11:00 a.m. at the Capitol building. For bus information from Detroit, contact the coalition at 313-319-0870 or visit moratorium-mi.org.

In California, Service Employees' Local 721, with 85,000 members, has joined with the International Action Center and community organizations to call for a march in Los Angeles on Sept. 17. The union's Latino Caucus has been especially active in mobilizing for this action.

According to John Parker of the IAC, "We'll be presenting a resolution to the City Council calling for a moratorium. We'll also be demanding that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger use his executive authority under the law to declare a state of economic emergency in California and impose a statewide moratorium on foreclosures and evictions."

Activists will gather at 10 a.m. at Placito Olvera Plaza in downtown Los Angeles for a march to the City Council. Call the IAC at 310-677-6407 for more information. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

Tinker Bell arrested at Disneyland

Dressed as famous Disney characters, 32 workers at three Disney-owned hotels were arrested for blocking a highway outside Disneyland in Anaheim, Calif., on Aug. 14. The 2,300 maids, bellhops, cooks and dishwashers, represented by Unite Here Local 681, organized that dramatic action to protest Disney's latest contract proposal. It makes health care unaffordable for hundreds of employees and creates an inequitable two-tier wage system, including a new category of part-time employees with greatly reduced benefits. "At the other hotels in the same classification, for the same work, the workers get paid \$2 to \$3 an hour more," local president Ava Briceno told the Associated Press. (Aug. 14) The workers' contract expired in February. The protest was supported by community activists and religious leaders.

L.A. mandates day-laborer centers

The Los Angeles City Council unanimously approved an ordinance Aug. 13 requiring new home improvement stores to build day-laborer centers that provide shelter, drinking water, bathrooms and trashcans for the workers, most of whom are immigrants. "We welcome it," said Pablo Alvarado of the Los Angeles-based National Day Laborer Organizing Network. "We need it. The workers deserve it." (Los Angeles Times, Aug. 14) Though the ordinance only applies to new stores, the bill's sponsor hopes to extend it to existing stores in the near future. Nonprofit organizations currently run eight such centers in the city.

Two strikes averted

Verizon workers, 65,000 strong from Maine to Virginia, and Qwest workers, 20,000 in 13 states, all represented by the Communication Workers union, voted to strike in August to fight for decent contracts. In both cases, threatening to strike was enough to stop the bosses' cutback demands and win contracts with wage increases and health coverage. Agreements were reached with Verizon on Aug. 10 and with Qwest on Aug. 17. Qwest workers backed up their strike vote with a big stick: a strike would have shut down both Democratic and Republican conventions. Doesn't that show a lot about the potential power of the workers? (New York Times, Aug. 11, and CWA release, Aug. 18)

Support American Idol workers

The hugely popular TV show American Idol, produced by FremantleMedia, has begun holding auditions for the upcoming season. But the writers, drivers and other workers at American Idol have nothing to sing about. Because the Fremantle workers receive below-standard wages, health insurance and retirement benefits and report serious workplace violations, the Teamsters and Writer's Guild East and West launched the American Idol Truth Tour on July 16 to expose the substandard working conditions. To see a video exposing Fremantle's abuse, go to www.truthaboutfremantle.com. To sign a petition demanding respect for Fremantle workers, go to www.union-voice/campaign/fremantle. (Jobs with Justice release, Aug. 14)

Nursing home workers win 6-month strike

What did 220 health care workers in New York City do when the boss stopped paying health care coverage? They went on strike Feb. 20. And their union, 1199 Service Employees, filed a suit against the Knightsbridge Heights Rehabilitation and Care Center for many violations of labor law. These included spying on the workers, threatening to fire them if they went on strike, and offering to give them bonuses if they quit the union. A federal court ruled Aug. 14 that Knightsbridge Heights had committed "serious and pervasive" labor law violations and ordered the nursing home to resume providing health insurance for the workers and end its anti-worker practices. (New York Times, Aug. 15)

Labor solidarity with Colombian, Gulf Coast workers

The San Francisco Labor Council, representing more than 100,000 workers in 150 unions, passed a resolution July 14 in support of the Peoples Permanent Tribunal in Bogotá, Colombia, which took place July 21-23. In addition to condemning the deaths of 2,562 trade unionists murdered over the last 20 years and pointing the finger of complicity at such U.S. companies as Coca-Cola and Chiquita Brands, the resolution opposed the so-called Colombian Free Trade Agreement and any additional U.S. aid to Colombia and called for prosecution of those responsible for murdering union leaders.

The 8,000 delegates at the national convention of the Letter Carriers union, representing 300,000 workers at the U.S. Postal Service, passed a resolution July 25 supporting the call for a federally funded Gulf Coast Reconstruction Program. The program would include prevailing wages for workers, the right to organize, the right of displaced residents to return to the Gulf, a Gulf Coast Public Works Program (similar to 1930s' programs) and national solidarity committees. NALC locals in California and the San Francisco Labor Council passed similar resolutions earlier this year. □

The health costs of high food prices

By Hillel Cohen

Sharply higher food prices are not making headlines as much as the high price of gas and oil, but are squeezing working people's budgets all the same. Making ends meet is harder than ever and higher food prices can mean flat-out hunger for millions with the lowest incomes.

Food pantries and meal programs report many more people requesting help, but with lower donations, smaller budgets and higher costs, the pantries cannot make up the difference.

Elderly people with inadequate food are at risk of wasting, meaning they are more likely to get sick or even die from infections like flu and pneumonia. Infants and young children are also at risk for illness as well as long-term impact on physical and mental development.

Those with the lowest incomes are forced to live in the most polluted neighborhoods with the fewest services and have the least access to medical attention.

The missed or inadequate meals will have both immediate and long-term health effects on the most vulnerable people. In addition to the anxiety and pain that many feel right now, the long-term health impact could become an even greater crisis.

Those with low- or even middle-income jobs are also feeling the need to cut back on what they spend for food. Ironically, for some this will increase their risk of obesity, which means an accumulation of excess fat on the body.

Although obesity may seem to be the opposite of hunger, because the individual is over the average weight, it is really another type of malnutrition. Obesity does not arise simply from eating too much food. It is often about the type of food.

If one compares the amount of calories per pound of food, those with more calories per pound, called calorie-dense, tend to be cheaper and at the same time often less healthful. Industrialized agriculture and the economics of agribusiness make

grains like corn and wheat cheaper than fruit and vegetables.

The long-term health effects of obesity are well known. Obesity is a major factor in the development of diabetes, which in turn is the single biggest risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Obesity has also been linked directly to heart disease, some cancers and other chronic conditions.

A recent report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed a continued rise in obesity, including among adolescents and younger children. Some media outlets noted that the states listed with the highest levels of obesity were primarily in the South and Southwest. What they did not note, however, was that those states with the highest rates of obesity are the states with the highest proportions of families living in poverty.

Nutritionists have long pointed to the widespread use of high fructose corn syrup as a contributor to the obesity epidemic. High fructose corn syrup along with refined wheat flour, animal fats and palm oils are very high in calories per pound but low in other nutrients or fiber.

Even though fast food is not really cheap, because it is loaded with high calorie sugars, fillers, fats and oils, the cost per calorie is lower. As people try to keep control of their spending on food, they will be pressured to choose the cheaper, calorie-dense foods over the healthier whole foods.

Similarly, schools providing lunch programs and other institutions providing meals, many of which had been trying to improve the nutritional quality of what they serve, will now be under cost pressure to return to the high-fat, high-sugar/carbohydrate offerings.

The high price of oil has pushed up food prices by increasing costs of transportation and fertilizers. Transporting the heavier whole foods like fruits and vegetables is making these costs go up even higher.

But perhaps a larger part of the price increases is based on the rise of biofuel,

which in the U.S. is primarily ethanol. Ethanol is a type of alcohol, like whiskey or vodka, which is fermented and distilled from corn sugar.

Biofuel is very expensive to produce and actually consumes more energy, primarily coal, than it yields. It was developed by agribusiness giant Archer-Daniels-Midland as a way to get the government to subsidize corn prices and to give ADM huge contracts to produce ethanol to achieve "energy independence from foreign oil."

So for years ADM funneled money to politicians who in turn bought more and more ethanol and just warehoused it. But there was too much to store and ADM got the government to "mandate" that gasoline include ethanol even though it actually increased the cost of gasoline. As oil and gas prices went through the roof, ethanol and other biofuels became economically more attractive.

More and more corn is being diverted away from food processing and more and more land is being devoted to corn for ethanol. Similar diversions of land and crops for biofuels are taking place in Brazil and elsewhere, leading to less available food and higher prices.

A United Nations report recently called biofuels a "crime against humanity."

Even though the price of corn, and therefore high fructose corn syrup, has jumped up, it still is cheaper relative to other, healthier foodstuffs, which have to compete with the cheaper foods for land and transportation.

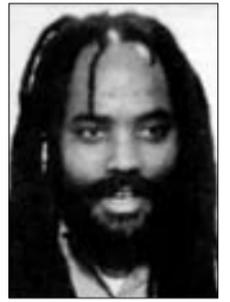
As a result, hunger and malnutrition are climbing side by side in the U.S. and around the world. The long-term health consequences for millions here and billions worldwide will be severe.

Agribusiness, the oil monopolies and the banks that control both will make ever greater profits at the expense of everyone else until people are able to take back control of the natural produce and resources now in private hands.

Hillel Cohen is a Doctor of Public Health.

Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

The perils of Black political power



Taken from an Aug. 6 audio commentary located at www.prisonradio.org. To read legal and political updates on Abu-Jamal's struggle for freedom, go to www.millions4mumia.org.

As we are on the eve of what may be the most powerful Black achievement in U.S. history, it would be well to examine the history of Black political leadership in this country.

Most historical researchers look to the 1967 election of Carl Stokes (1927-1996) as mayor of Cleveland, Ohio, as the emergence of Black political power in major American cities. Many Blacks saw this as the beginning of an age of freedom for our people.

From the 1960s to now, we most certainly have been disabused of that notion.

For while Black political leadership has surely been a source of pride, they have not been a source of Black political power.

That's because as agents of the state, they must defend the interests of the state, even when this conflicts with the interests of their people.

For example, let's look at the experience of Mayor Stokes.

Shortly after taking office, Stokes appointed former U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. as his public safety director, a kind of super police chief. Gen. Davis, fresh from the rigors of Vietnam, ordered 30,000 rounds of hollow point or dum-dum bullets, items in violation of the laws of war.

The object of his ire? The Cleveland branch of the Black Panther Party and a local office of the National Committee to Combat Fascism, a Panther support group.

In August 1970, Gen. Davis resigned from the post and criticized Mayor Stokes for not giving him sufficient support in his battle against radicals like the Panthers.

Stokes, the more politically adroit of the two, made Davis look bad for ordering ammo which violated the Geneva Conventions, but Stokes' personal papers revealed meetings between the two men and their agreement on dum-dums as appropriate arms to be used against Panthers.

Just because he was a Black mayor didn't mean he wasn't dedicated to destroying a Black organization. Indeed, in times of Black uprising and mass discontent, Black mayors seem the perfect instrument of repression, for they dispel charges of racism.

If Barack Obama wins the White House, it will be a considerable political achievement. It will be made possible only by the votes of millions of whites, most especially younger voters.

This does not diminish such an achievement; it just sharpens the nature of it.

But Black faces in high places does not freedom make.

Power is far more than presence. It is the ability to meet people's political objectives of freedom, independence and material well-being.

We are as far from those objectives as we were in 1967.

Source: Ryan Nissim-Sabat, "Panthers Set Up Shop in Cleveland," p. 111; from Judson L. Jeffries, ed., "Comrades: Local History of the Black Panther Party" (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007), pp. 89-144.

'McCain says warfare, we say health care'



More than 150 chanting protesters took over the sidewalk in front of the entrance to the downtown Atlanta Marriott Marquis on Aug. 18. The hotel was the site of an exclusive fundraiser for Republican presidential candidate John McCain.

As the luxury automobiles arrived to discharge their wealthy occupants, they had to drive through a spirited picketline of union members, retired workers, Iraq and Vietnam war vets, students, anti-nuclear activists and others.

Signs demanded troops out now and no war on Iran, denounced McCain's plan to privatize Social Security and labeled him as Bush III. Passing motorists honked their horns in approval of the varied slogans.

Among the protest's initiators were the International Action Center, Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition, North Georgia Labor Council and Alliance of Retired American Workers.

—Dianne Mathiowetz

PHOTOS: SUSAN KEITH

U.S.-NATO's war in Georgia

Who wins, who loses?

By Sara Flounders

The Georgian army's assault on the small nation of South Ossetia this August, backed and armed by the U.S., will have widespread repercussions, including here in the U.S. The attack immediately caused great suffering to tens of thousands of people in South Ossetia and Georgia. It was the topic of a top-level meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels and will impact on the struggle against placing U.S. missile bases in Poland and the Czech Republic.

While there were many losers, the war has boosted the expected profits of the giant U.S. military corporations. The long-term cost for the war and for the expansion of NATO—if it is allowed to happen—will contribute to the further deterioration of cities across the U.S. and will diminish the lives of working people here.

The war in the Caucasus was “a bell-ringer for defense stocks.” (Wall Street Journal, Aug. 16) Big U.S. weapons programs costing billions of dollars, like the F-22 Raptor fighter jet and high-tech destroyers, will have an easier time getting ensured long-term funding if the news media focus on alleged threats from Russia or China.

The Georgian war comes at a time of record profits and sales in the military industries, wrote the Journal. “Now the Russia situation makes the debate over the equipping of the U.S. military a front-burner issue. ‘The threat always drives procurement,’ said a defense industry official. ‘It doesn't matter what party is in office.’”

The U.S. stake in Georgia

Georgia's attack was a devastating blow to the Ossetian people, who maintained their national identity and culture as a distinct autonomous region for 70 years when they were part of the Soviet Union and have resisted Georgia's attempt to grab the autonomous enclave since 1991.

Georgia's Aug. 7 attack destroyed Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, with bombs hitting the university, parliament, hospital and many other buildings.



WW PHOTO: SUE HARRIS

Anti-war forces from the International Action Center gathered in New York's Times Square Aug. 18 to protest the expansion of NATO and the U.S.-backed Georgian regime's provocation that led to the war in the Caucasus. The IAC is also circulating a petition protesting U.S.-NATO aggression. See iacenter.org.

More than 1,400 people died and thousands were wounded and traumatized. Tens of thousands were left homeless.

Russian troops responded to the devastating attack that destroyed much of South Ossetia, driving back the attackers. Under this counterattack, the Georgian army, trained and equipped by U.S. and Israeli advisers, totally collapsed and abandoned its new high-tech weapons, tanks and missiles on the roads.

“Israelis were stationed at bases throughout [Georgia] to carry out battalion-level infantry and reconnaissance training,” reported the Israeli daily Ha'aretz on Aug. 10.

“The United States, Britain, France, Israel, the Czech Republic, Poland and a number of other countries have been supplying Georgia with the latest in offensive weapons, including tanks, planes, strike helicopters and armored personnel carriers.”

The collapse humiliated the Georgian military, whose U.S.-supplied defense budget has grown by 60 percent annually since 2004 and is currently at \$1 billion. (Stockholm International Peace Research Report) U.S. Marines had just finished three weeks of military exercises with the Georgian military before the attack.

The U.S. government's National Endowment for Democracy and multi-billionaire George Soros had funded the 2003 project, called the Rose Revolution, that installed Georgia's current regime. The U.S. also instigated a similar regime change called the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004-2005, installing a government compliant with U.S. wishes.

Escalation and setback to U.S. plans

Following Georgia's frantic retreat and appeals for NATO intervention, Washington escalated tensions by push-

ing the Polish government to agree to station U.S. missiles in Poland. Earlier, the pro-U.S. Polish government had hesitated to agree to this base. Poland's population had expressed, in polls, overwhelming opposition to this aggressive and dangerous military escalation.

NATO members Germany, France and Italy had also publicly opposed this U.S. anti-missile base, which could make a U.S. nuclear first strike against Russia feasible. The base could escalate tension between NATO and Russia and begin a new Cold War-type arms race.

Washington had called the Aug. 19 emergency NATO meeting to press for united anti-Russian action. The Bush administration used the week's heavy anti-Russian propaganda to try to push through Georgia and Ukraine's NATO membership. Instead, European NATO members said, as they had at the Bucharest meeting in April, that the two countries' member-

Palestine Popular Conference meets in Chicago

By Bill Cecil
Chicago

Under the slogan “Reclaiming Our Voice, Reasserting Our Narrative,” hundreds of Palestinians living in the U.S. gathered in Chicago Aug. 8-10 for the first Palestine Popular Conference. It was the fruit of two years' work in cities across the country. Nearly 800 people attended the conference cultural night on Aug. 9 and more than 500 took part in conference work.

The Palestine Popular Conference is part of a global effort to give voice to nearly 6 million Palestinian exiles not represented by the Palestinian Authority. Another 5 million Palestinians live under direct Israeli terror in the West Bank, Gaza and inside the Israeli apartheid state.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of Al Nakba (The Catastrophe), when the majority of Palestinians were forced into exile and the U.S.-funded settler state of Israel was erected on the ruins of their homes.

A pall was cast over the gathering by the death of Palestine's great national poet, Mahmoud Darwish. A special session of the conference was held in his honor and the conference was given his name.



Flag-raising ceremony at the conference cultural night.

PHOTO: RAJA ABDULHAQ/AWDA NY

The conference heard live greetings from Palestine from leaders Fadwa Barghouti, Abla Saadat and Oum Hisham, whose husbands are in Zionist prisons, as well as Sheikh Raid Salah and Orthodox bishop Atallah Hanna. They urged the conference participants to work for a Palestinian united front and to fight for the freedom of political prisoners.

Speakers included Dr. Ghada Talhami, Dr. Naseer Aruri, Dr. Rabab Abdelhadi, Laila Al-Arian and former ambassador Clovis Maksoud. The event was enriched by the poetry of Tamim Barghouti and traditional music, spoken word and dancing. The dance troupes Firqat Al Awda from New York and Hurriyah from Washington

International League of People's Struggle.

The conference was structured to ensure maximum participation. Many youth attended and women played a leading role. Participants ran and developed 24 workshops on such topics as women and self-determination, culture of resistance, hip-hop and spoken word, experiences of Arab youth in the U.S., defending civil rights, recording Palestinian oral history and the right of Palestinians to return to their homeland. Children had a live feed interchange with children in Balata refugee camp in the West Bank. There was also a panel on the one-state solution: the Palestine solution for the conflict.

The main events of the conference

were two town hall meetings that allowed broad participation and set goals for future work. These included defense of civil rights and support work for political prisoners, working to build a representative body for Palestinians in the U.S., and developing networks of women, students and youth. It was voted to reconvene the conference on a regular basis and the conference network was renamed the Palestine Community Network.

Said California labor activist Monadel Herzallah, who chaired the conference preparatory committee: “We are building on the example of the popular institutions created in Palestine during the First Intifada; they were genuine popular organs. And the conference has succeeded in bringing together people from all spectrums of our community—women, men, the young, the older, workers, students, professionals, small business owners, those born in the homeland and those born here. We have not had this type of grassroots institutions since the Oslo Accords.

“We are saying that Palestinians living in the U.S. are an integral part of the Palestinian people and that nothing can be done in our name without our having a say.” □

ships would be discussed in December.

Following the Georgian army collapse, the Bush administration claimed it had told the Georgians that they must not use force in Ossetia or in Abkhazia, another autonomous region bordering Georgia. But Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had visited Georgia less than a month before the attack, at which time she made clear that the Bush administration fully supported Georgian claims to the two regions.

Georgia would hardly have dared to move hundreds of millions of dollars of U.S.-supplied equipment without Washington's backing. Nor could they move such equipment secretly.

South Ossetian officials publicly warned, two days before the Georgian offensive, that such a Georgian attack would occur before September. (RIA Novosti News, Aug. 6)

Problems for NATO expansion

NATO has expanded from a U.S.-commanded military alliance of Western imperialist powers active in Europe. It has more than doubled its original 12-country membership and has intervened from Afghanistan to the countries surrounding China as part of the drive to ensure U.S. corporate domination of the globe.

Each new member of NATO must go into debt and dependency to equip its military with U.S.-supplied weapons. Like the anti-Russia drive, this is great for a handful of U.S. corporations and bad for everyone else.

From Iraq to Afghanistan and now in Georgia, the Pentagon's plans are creating problems and meeting resistance.

Major demonstrations in Ukraine last spring opposed NATO membership, while polls show 70 percent in Poland and the Czech Republic oppose the U.S. bases, which the parliaments in both countries must pass. Putting any of the agreements to a popular vote could set back these right-wing, pro-U.S. regimes.

In Georgia, President Mikheil Saakashvili's humiliating defeat following his adventurous aggression may lead to his downfall. This New York-trained lawyer, who had worked at the well-connected top law firm of Patterson, Belknap, Webb, and Tyler, is Washington's best friend in the region.

Economic crisis and militarism

While the Pentagon is the largest military machine on the planet, paying to maintain this global war machine is worsening the economic meltdown in the U.S.

The U.S. military budget is now larger than all other national states' military budgets combined. Just the supplementary budget to pay for the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, not part of the official defense budget, is itself larger than the combined military budgets of Russia and China. According to the Friends Committee on National Legislation, U.S. military spending has doubled in the last decade, with the Pentagon budget alone set for over \$600 billion in 2009.

This budget is a giant subsidy to the largest and most powerful corporations in the U.S. today, which pay top dollar to their executives and multibillion-dollar profits to their shareholders. Meanwhile more than 2 million people are losing their homes in foreclosures.

It is the responsibility of the anti-war, progressive and working-class movements in the U.S. to expose and mobilize against these dangerous and aggressive war plans that threaten life on the entire planet. And it is equally essential to connect the exorbitant costs of militarism and the fantastic profits for a handful of the super-rich to the cuts in social programs, health care and education for the rest of the population. □

Revolutionaries advance in Nepal

Maoists win race for prime minister

By David Hoskins

The recently formed Constituent Assembly of Nepal has made history with the election of Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda as the country's prime minister. Nepali Congress was the only party to field a candidate against the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist. CPN-M's Prachanda won the prime minister slot in a landslide victory of 464 votes to the NC's 113.

The CPN-M had placed first in the popular election to the Constituent Assembly, winning 37 percent of the seats. The party was able to secure victory for its candidate for prime minister by forming an alliance with the third-largest party in the assembly, the United Marxist-Leninists. These two large communist parties control an outright majority in the CA with a solid 54 percent of the seats between them.

The CPN-M and UML are likely to divide the cabinet positions along with the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum. The MJF is the fourth-largest party in the CA and backed the Maoists in their bid to form the government along with the UML. Sixteen smaller parties in the assembly also supported the Maoists in a bloc.

The support of the UML and MJF meant they broke an alliance with the bourgeois Nepali Congress Party. That alliance, during voting in late July, was responsible for the Maoist-backed candidates losing their bid for the symbolic posts of president

and vice-president as well as assembly chairperson.

The leading parties are now in serious negotiations regarding the division of cabinet positions. As of mid-August preliminary agreements have proposed a 24-member cabinet in which the Maoists are expected to take nine portfolios, with senior Maoist leaders heavily favored for two key portfolios—finance and defense. The UML will take six portfolios and MJF will have four. Several smaller communist parties are also expected to gain a few portfolios once the full cabinet is formed.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has sent congratulatory messages to Prachanda on his victory in the race for prime minister. The DPRK has promised to strengthen cooperative relations with Nepal as a result of this victory.

Difficult road ahead

Despite the victory the CPN-M faces a long struggle needed to advance the revolutionary process in Nepal and provide justice to the country's oppressed masses. The new governing alliance has agreed to implement a Common Minimum Program to address many of the critical issues facing Nepal.

While the details of the program have not been fully concluded, it is widely expected that land reform will be high on the agenda. Land reform will be one of the portfolios in the 24-member cabinet, and has been high on the Maoists' agenda

since they first launched the People's War in 1996, which eventually led to victory in the elections.

Prime Minister Prachanda has said that the government will soon launch a number of immediate relief programs to alleviate many of the hardships endured by the average Nepali. In addition to the relief and land reform programs, the new government is charged with the task of writing a new constitution over the course of two years.

The road ahead for the revolutionary process in Nepal is fraught with difficulty and danger. The Nepali Congress Party is openly working against the formation of a people's government and the implementation of fundamental reform. The deposed monarch, King Gyanendra, waits in the shadows for any potential opening to return to power.

The CPN-M has decided to rely on the People's Liberation Army to provide security for Prachanda instead of the Nepali Army or the Armed Police Force. This is a testament to the very real danger that Prachanda and the Maoists face in the early days of the revolution. The bourgeois parties, the old monarchy, India's capitalists and U.S. imperialism still pose a substantial threat to Nepal's revolution.

Despite this threat the Maoists and their allies in government have decided to forge ahead with their goal of peace and justice through socioeconomic transformation. □

Musharraf resigns but Pakistan's crisis remains

By John Catalinotto

Pakistanis poured into the streets of their country's major cities and towns Aug. 18 to celebrate as Gen. Pervez Musharraf announced he would resign from the presidency to avoid impeachment. He first took power nine years ago in a military coup.

The former army chief, hated by the people but an ally of George W. Bush, said he was resigning because "the Pakistani nation will be the loser" if there is an impeachment proceeding. "After taking advice from my supporters and friends, I have decided to resign in the best interests of the nation."

It was an admission that Washington and many in Pakistan's ruling class and military pushed for the general's resignation, hoping it would lower tensions in Pakistan. His departure, however, especially if he evades punishment for his many crimes, will not placate the democracy movement in Pakistan. Nor will it resolve the conflict of Pakistan's capitalist ruling class with neighboring India, both of them nuclear-armed powers, nor with anti-government forces on its Afghan border.

Nor does it resolve Pakistan's skyrocketing inflation. "The poor are the worst hit," writes analyst Tariq Ali in the Aug. 17 Independent, "but middle-class families are also affected and, according to a June 2008 survey, 86 percent of Pakistanis find it increasingly difficult to afford flour on a daily basis, for which they blame their government."

Rather than an end, the general's resignation is just another step in the unfolding of the anti-imperialist and class struggle in

this country of 170 million people, representing many nationalities and language and ethnic groups. These conflicts developed at an accelerated rate after Washington enlisted Musharraf and the Pakistani state in the so-called war on terror after 9/11. The war has proven to be nothing more than an imperialist attempt to dominate the countries of Central and South Asia in order to open up their resources to exploitation by U.S. transnationals.

Musharraf's support dropped like a stone. He was hated by the population and his political rivals and abandoned by many of his former supporters in the military. The Pakistani Parliament was about to bring impeachment charges against the general for crimes against Pakistan's Constitution.

Musharraf aroused popular indignation when he ordered the storming of a mosque last year, which resulted in the killing of over 100 people, and on Nov. 3, when he declared martial law and deposed Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry of Pakistan's Supreme Court, in violation of the constitution. This arbitrary decision aroused the anger of lawyers throughout the country and led to mass demonstrations. There was also massive suspicion that the Musharraf regime orchestrated the assassination of his political rival, Benazir Bhutto.

The general's subservience to Washington created the contradictions that led to his downfall. The new government, if it continues the alignment with the U.S., will be in the same boat.

To call Musharraf a U.S. "ally" oversimplifies the relationship. Musharraf himself

once said on the CBS News 60 Minutes program (Sept. 24, 2006) that U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage had called Pakistan's intelligence director shortly after 9/11 and threatened military action if Pakistan did not support the U.S. According to Musharraf, Armitage warned: "Be prepared to be bombed. Be prepared to go back to the Stone Age."

To follow Washington's lead, Musharraf had to break with the policy of Pakistan's secret police agency, the ISI, toward the Taliban in Afghanistan. The ISI had helped bring the Taliban to power—at a time when Washington also saw the Taliban as allies against secular leftists in Afghanistan. Since then, Washington has created a new pro-U.S. government there and tried to eliminate all opposition to it.

Washington has put the same pressure on the new Pakistani government, still dominated by ruling-class politicians dependent on their relationship to imperialism. Striking from bases in Afghanistan, U.S. planes have bombed Pakistan's border regions, killing many civilians and even striking Pakistani troops and officers in June.

Undoubtedly responding to this U.S. pressure, the Pakistan army bombed and shelled in this region in the first half of August. Pakistan's Interior Ministry chief Rehman Malik vowed to "wipe out" Islamic militants in a volatile tribal region "where the government says more than 460 insurgents and 22 troops have died in 10 days of fighting." (AP, Aug. 16)

The general may depart but the crisis and bloodshed remain.

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China stuns the world

Chinese athletes, children, artists and choreographers, 15,000 performers and an abundant display of new technology since the opening of the Beijing Olympics have stunned billions of people around the world. The transnational imperialist-dominated media have left most people unaware of the tremendous progress made in the world's most populous country since the earthshaking revolution led by Mao Zedong's Communist Party in 1949, less than 60 years ago.

Perhaps the most shaken up were the U.S. media professionals themselves—that's a nice way of saying paid propagandists—who were rendered speechless by the opening ceremony. When these pundits got their act together, they were still reduced to nit-picking about the age of Chinese gymnasts and some debatable decisions about lip-synching a song and technologically enhancing some fireworks. Hollywood and U.S. television use these techniques on a regular basis; only rarely are they made an issue.

Then there were the stories about the difficulties applying for a protest permit in Beijing. One New York Times op-ed analyst applied for his own protest permit. We recommend he apply for such a permit in Denver or in St. Paul in an attempt to get close to the national conventions of the Democrats and Republicans. Protest organizers in those cities need a team of lawyers to get anywhere near the conventions and still face threats from tanks, tear gas, lasers, water cannon, and rubber and lead bullets.

And the reasons for protesting here are so much more compelling,

as the conventions will be filled with war criminals like George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, who have ordered illegal foreign occupations and destructions of entire countries while they abandoned New Orleans' Black population, persecuted immigrants and destroyed the environment at home. That's only a partial list of their crimes.

You might think that the corporate media's analysts would try to credit China's progress solely to its decision to allow in foreign investment and private capital. These pro-capitalist hacks recognize, however, that something else is behind the massive show of Chinese confidence. They see that "kow-towing" to Western rulers is in the dustbin of history.

A hundred years ago, though China still had 5,000 years of civilization behind it, foreign imperialist ruling classes with far less history but more powerful weapons and a stronger industrial and financial base enslaved China's people.

It took more than technological improvements to turn this situation around. Nor was it done through the good will of China's foreign rulers. A revolution lasting decades, led by the Chinese Communist Party, not only pushed out foreign imperialist invaders and exploiters but mobilized hundreds of millions of Chinese peasants and workers, women and men in the effort to build socialism. This revolution turned the Chinese people into conscious actors on the world scene, soldiers and organizers who could liberate their nation and shake the world in 1949, just as the performers on Aug. 8 this year stunned the billions watching on television screens. □

Sudan and 'human rights' charges

Imperialists try to recolonize key African state

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

On July 14, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, charged President Omar Hassan al-Bashir of Sudan with genocide and crimes against humanity. This announcement was made while the government in Khartoum, the capital, was carrying on negotiations with the various rebel groups based in the western Darfur region of the country.

In response, Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, adviser to President Bashir, reiterated the Khartoum government's position that it will in no way deal with the ICC. The Sudanese government has declared it will never hand over any of its citizens for trial in a foreign court. Ismail maintains that the ICC has no jurisdiction or mandate over the nation of Sudan or its people.

The decision to transfer the Darfur question to the ICC was made by the U.N. Security Council—in which the Western imperialist powers dominate. Dr. Ismail pointed out that this decision was defective because it included a clause exempting U.S. nationals from standing before that court—"a matter that undermines the whole concept of international justice and allows for impunity." (Sudanese Media Center)

The African Union and the Arab League have stated openly that recent ICC charges leveled against Bashir and other Sudanese governmental officials have done more to delay a peace agreement with rebel groups than create the conditions for a settlement. However, the U.S. government and its allies have demonstrated through various actions that a normalization of the political situation within Sudan is not their priority.

Ismail emphasized in the Sudanese Media Center interview that the question of Darfur has become "a window threatening the national security of the country." He said Sudan had waited a long time for the "international community" to come up with a solution, but that it breached the accords to which it was a party "when it sought to transfer the question of security arrangements from the [African Union], as stipulated in the Abuja Agreement, to the international community." He called this a clear attempt to divide Arabs and Africans.

He also mentioned that "the international community has so far failed to organize any meetings between the government and the Darfur rebel movements despite the continued declarations by the government that it was ready for talks anywhere, any time."

Sudan has warned the U.N. that there will be "serious consequences" for its personnel and infrastructure if the ICC moves forward on threats to authorize an arrest warrant for President Bashir. On Aug. 18, Ashraf Qazi, head of the U.N. Mission charged with supervising the peace accord signed in 2005 between the political parties in the north and those in the south, indicated that the monitoring group was preparing for such actions. The accord had brought about the end of the two-decades-long civil war.

Qazi also stated that a recent outbreak of fighting in the town of Abyei placed the overall 2005 agreement to the test. In addition, attacks by Darfur rebels on the city of Omdurman also created difficulties in the gov-

ernment's efforts to reach a lasting peace with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), as well as other groups fighting the government in Khartoum.

It has been reported that as a result of the fighting in Abyei in May, tens of thousands of people have fled their homes. Abyei is located in an oil-rich area near the boundary between the northern and southern regions of Sudan, which is Africa's largest nation-state in territory.

Long history of hostile threats and attacks

For many years the government in Sudan has attempted to chart an independent course in regard to the interventionist policies of the United States. As far back as the U.S. war against Iraq in 1991, Khartoum refused to support the actions of successive imperialist regimes in Washington.

In August of 1998, during the Clinton administration, the U.S. military bombed the only pharmaceutical plant in Sudan, claiming it produced chemical weapons. This was done supposedly in retaliation for attacks on the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

However, no evidence was provided that the plant had ever produced any type of weapons. Moreover, it was never substantiated that Khartoum had any connection with the attacks on the U.S. embassies.

Nevertheless, the U.S. government has accepted no blame for its unprovoked destruction of this facility, which deprived millions of Sudanese of direct access to medicines.

Over the last decade, closer political and economic ties have developed between Sudan and the People's Republic of China. Approximately 80 percent of Sudan's oil exploration and distribution is done in cooperation with China. China has entered into economic and political partnerships with various African states.

It is within this context that the present-day conflict between Sudan, the U.S. and its allies should be viewed. It is also significant that many of the people within the country are Islamic and that the ruling party is closely allied with other Muslim and Arab countries. The U.S. administration can conjure up its so-called war on terrorism and radical Islam when waging its diplomatic, economic and military struggle against Sudan.

Nonetheless, anti-war and peace movements within the U.S. and Europe must uphold Sudan's right to self-determination, including its right to find its own methodology for forging national unity and social stability.

The ICC indictments and the threat to issue arrest warrants against the Sudanese president and other officials are designed to provide a rationale for further interference in the country's internal affairs. On Aug. 18, however, in defiance of the ICC and other threats from Western nations, President Bashir traveled to Istanbul to participate in an African-Turkish summit.

With all the crimes being committed against the peoples of Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Colombia, Palestine, Zimbabwe and others by the U.S. government and its allies, any objective observer can see clearly that the current hostile posture towards Sudan is crafted to advance the interests of the imperialist countries. □

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? Copeland shows how mass movements can upset even the best-laid plans of the 'king-makers.' Who has been excluded from voting? How were electoral politics used to betray Black freedom after the Civil War?

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Rosa Clemente, Cynthia McKinney

AS CAPITALIST CRISIS DEEPENS

The workers' fightback is coming

Activists can help

By Larry Holmes

Aside from wanting to find out as much of what can be known about the current capitalist crisis, the question on the minds of all who are interested in the prospects for opening up the class struggle is "Will U.S. workers fight back?"

What makes that question all the more critical historically is the fact that this capitalist crisis is no ordinary one that's likely to pass by quickly.

The world system of finance capital, including thousands of banks and financial institutions of every size and in every part of the world, would have gone into a freefall last March if the U.S. government had not rushed to bail out the Bear Stearns bank in order to reassure Wall Street. The freefall would have happened again in July without Washington's bailout of two enormous government-backed mortgage banks, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

The catalyst for the crisis was the housing market crash, but it has now spread throughout the entire financial system. Banks are not extending credit, factories and plants are closing, businesses are going bankrupt, unemployment is rising, and the rate of home foreclosures and evictions is rising even faster.

No industry, region of the U.S., or region of the world is unaffected by the crisis, and it is going to get worse. The only question is whether it will unfold in a slower and somewhat controlled way, or if another event—a series of bank runs, the collapse of a big bank or a new war—overcomes any efforts on the part of the government and the big banks to manage the crisis and things spin out of control.

In either case, this appears to be the end of a prolonged period when capitalism had been able to divert, escape or forestall a systemic crisis of this magnitude.

Imperialist globalization—which amounts to a war on the workers, wars of conquest, deregulation, monetary manipulation and easy credit are among the methods the capitalists have employed to avert a deep and intransigent crisis. This time they don't seem to be working. In fact, they are making things worse.

Imperialism has not given up on these methods, and will try them again. But this time, all indications are that the inevitable megacrisis rooted in the chaos of capitalist overproduction for profit has arrived.

Not 'the end of history'

Finding a way out of this crisis will be very, very difficult for U.S. imperialism. While still the center of world imperialism, it can no longer dominate the world through economic strength, as it once did; it has had to rely more and more on superior military might. But the military option hasn't worked so well for them in Iraq, or even in Afghanistan.

Since the end of the Soviet Union, the U.S. and the major European imperialist powers have assumed they could devour the remains of the former Soviet republics, rich in oil and other natural resources, as well as the countries of Eastern Europe, without meeting any serious resistance. The events of the past few weeks have put an end to that dream.

World events have come full circle since capitalist pundits declared themselves forever triumphant and proclaimed the "end of history." The "end of history" chapter of imperialism's history book just got cut.

The capitalist economic crisis should and will direct more attention to the reality that the world imperialist system has reached such an advanced yet destructive and paralytic phase that very little can be accomplished that really serves society. Has it ever been more crystal clear that all progress, including saving the ecology of the planet, is premised on consigning imperialism to history and commencing socialist transformation?

The interconnectedness of every aspect of maintaining life on earth has never been more apparent. Clearly, while people will fight to transform the conditions where

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they live, ultimately there will be no national or regional solution to the crisis of the world. The solution must be global.

But the political consciousness, organization and preparedness of the working class, its organizations and the revolutionary movement are not yet on a par with world developments.

Who will respond to economic crisis?

The ranks of the communist and socialist movement are far too small, fragmented and lacking in influence within the working class. The movement is not oriented towards the mass of the workers—in some cases it is distinctly oriented away from the working class, particularly the most oppressed sections.

One can go to any number of important demonstrations, marches or meetings concerned with an array of critical issues and organized by hardworking activists and find that the biggest economic crisis of capitalism in 75 years is not likely to be on the agenda, except perhaps in some narrow and limited way. Yet the capitalists are both preoccupied with and genuinely frightened by the crisis.

Most events, like the political movement itself, are issue oriented as opposed to ideologically oriented. While it is necessary for activists to organize around concrete issues, the problem is that the issues are seldom viewed in a larger ideological context.

There seems to be a great distance between the severity of the capitalist economic crisis and the capacity of revolutionary and progressive activists and forces to

comprehend what's happening and do anything about it.

At the moment, the organized labor movement in the U.S., its leadership in particular, is putting a lot of resources and hope into the outcome of the presidential elections. It is not prepared to mount a real struggle against the attacks on the working class that the crisis will generate like waves, each wave bigger and more destructive than the last one.

It would be wrong to place the blame on the many activists and militants within the working-class movement who are trying to make a difference under difficult circumstances.

Understanding the history of the development of the working class in the U.S. and what events affected that history is essential to an understanding of why the working-class movement is not yet up to the task, and why the working class is still in the process of becoming conscious of itself as a class.

What made U.S. imperialism so strong

World events and economic developments have actually come full circle over a larger time period than 20 years. It is more instructive to go back to the middle of the 20th century, when U.S. imperialism emerged victorious from World War II as the undisputed leader and center of world imperialism.

The end of that war marked the real beginning of U.S. imperialism's world reign. The problems and contradictions that have frustrated the political development of

Continued on supplement page 2

SAVE THE DATE!

Why WW endorses Cynthia McKinney for president

Workers World newspaper in the past has supported the candidates of Workers World Party running for national office in the U.S. presidential elections who have put forward a revolutionary socialist program. This time we are taking the unusual step of endorsing the candidacy of Cynthia McKinney because these are unique times and this is a unique candidate.

McKinney, a courageous Black woman and former U.S. Congressperson from Georgia, has become one of the most militant leaders and voices for the U.S. left, progressive and Black movements.

Because of her militancy in the struggle against the war, the struggle to impeach Bush, as well as her struggle to expose the government's role in the displacement of survivors of Hurricane Katrina, she was branded too Black and too radical to walk the halls of Congress. She was pushed out, not once but twice, by the leadership of the Democratic Party. Last year, McKinney severed her ties to that party.

On July 12, McKinney and her running mate, activist Rosa Clemente, won the Green Party's nomination to run for president and vice-president, respectively. The Green Party's nomination will put McKinney on the ballot in about 20 states, which is no small thing in the U.S. where the ruling class has made it very hard for any electoral formation independent of, and even slightly to the left of, the two major ruling-class parties to get ballot status. The Green Party is not the reason why we are supporting McKinney.

McKinney's "Power to the People Campaign" gets most of its program from the draft program of the still-information Reconstruction Party. Activists in New

Orleans and the Gulf Coast, together with supporters nationwide, have been developing a Reconstruction Party as a mass political vehicle to fight for the reconstruction of the Gulf and justice for Katrina survivors.

The draft program of the Reconstruction Party is inspired by the program of the original Black Panther Party. The Reconstruction Party draft program calls for, among other things: self-determination for Black people, the relocation of displaced survivors of Katrina back to the Gulf, jobs, healthcare and housing, reparations for Black people, an end to racist terror and political repression, an end to the prison-industrial complex and an end to the war.

McKinney's campaign is laying the foundation for a radical coalition of Black, Latin@, Asian and Indigenous activists, trade unionists, progressives and revolutionaries. This is important and timely.

We have no illusions regarding the difficulty that McKinney's campaign will face, because this presidential election is like none other before it.

Obama, the economic crisis and prospects for class struggle

Barack Obama is the first Black person to be the nominee of a ruling-class party, and he could be the first Black president of the U.S. Many are understandably excited



Rosa Clemente for vice president

Cynthia McKinney for president

about Obama's candidacy, especially Black people.

No matter how far Obama moves to the right, most likely Black people are going to come out in unprecedented numbers in November in the hopes of achieving something that very few thought possible a year ago. Apart from Black voters, many others will vote for Obama in November for reasons that are historically progressive. And some will not vote for Obama because of his name, because they think he's Muslim and because he's Black.

Race, or what some of us call the national question, is central to this year's election.

But then there is the negative side to this contradictory development. Should Obama win the election (a prospect that shouldn't be considered certain), the U.S. imperialist ruling class will have a gifted Black politician



Washington, D.C., demonstration demanding a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures at Mortgage Bankers Assoc., April 2008.



New York May Day March and Rally for immigrant rights, 2008.

AS CAPITALIST CRISIS DEEPENS

The workers' fightback is coming

Continued from supplement page 1

the working class and its organizations in the U.S. can be traced to the beginning of this reign.

The most revolutionary and militant communists and socialists who fought in the battles of the 1930s believed that out of the working class upsurges sparked by the worldwide capitalist depression would come the opportunity for the working class to make great gains and even seize political power away from the bosses—yes, even in the U.S.

The capitalist ruling classes got themselves out of the crisis of the thirties through fascism and war in much of Europe and war and reforms in the U.S. After the war, the revolutionary struggle continued in the East and among the colonized peoples of the world, but, in relative terms, it ebbed in the West, especially in the U.S.

U.S. imperialism accumulated enough wealth by looting the colonized and semi-colonized peoples and nations of the world to use a little of that stolen wealth to create the illusion that the U.S. was different than any other country.

As the myth goes, the U.S. was now a prosperous, middle-class society where the need for workers to wage class struggle against capitalism was no longer necessary. As long as you weren't Black or Brown—and of course women had to stay "in their place"—you could do well for yourself, and your children could do even better.

Before long, the tremendous working-class struggles of the thirties that had expanded the right to unionize and had won Social Security, the minimum wage and other reforms were all but forgotten—with the help of the ruling class, of course. Anti-communism, racism and reaction rendered most of the leadership of the organized labor movement loyal to the system.

The Reagan/Thatcher era

In a different kind of way, this process, which resulted in a weakening of the working class, repeated itself a generation ago. By the late 1970s, U.S. imperialism, dogged by a long post-Vietnam War economic crisis, decided that restructuring the economy, including the introduction of new technology into the production process, would get them out of the crisis. Doing this would necessitate a new, wide-scale and brutal assault on the working class, starting with the strongest unions.

It needed a sharp right-wing, anti-worker shift in U.S. and world politics. Hence, the Ronald Reagan era. Sometimes it's called the Reagan/Thatcher era, referring to both Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, the prime minister of Britain during the 1980s.

Reagan, as the principal representative of U.S. imperialism, was infinitely more powerful than Thatcher. But they became linked by their common anti-worker, anti-union, anti-communist agenda, particularly their dedication to destroying the Soviet Union.

In the U.S., the Reagan anti-union offensive reached a new level of seriousness when he fired nearly 12,000 striking air traffic controllers in 1981. That was only the beginning of the onslaught that robbed hundreds of thousands of auto, steel and other unionized workers of their hard-won benefits and jobs.

Notwithstanding some heroic struggles that workers mounted during the 1980s and 1990s in self-defense, overall the working class was not yet ready to prevail in the war being waged against them by capital.

It would have required a high level of political consciousness and preparedness on the part of the working class, and seasoned leadership free of ties to the system, to mount the kind of struggle that might have stopped the anti-worker offensive. Capitalism's victory over the working class at home set the stage for counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and elsewhere.

Since that time, capitalism and imperialism have been on the offensive. Over 90 percent of the people on the planet, who are workers and oppressed peoples, have been losing ground.

Up until now, strength, power, force and victory have



Larry Holmes speaking at May Day Rally for immigrant rights, 2008.

to help them save their troubled empire. An Obama presidency as the face of an imperialist state will not change anything fundamental, but on the surface it will mark a change, a new situation.

The U.S. capitalist class desperately needs to try something new to help them with their overlapping crises of deepening economic turmoil and imperialist war. In the board rooms of Wall Street, some are, no doubt, hoping that someone like Obama can delay or derail an uprising against widespread Depression-level social conditions, or at least be the scapegoat for the unbearable misery that the ruling class has in store for workers.

The Obama phenomenon is more than anything else a sign that the period of political reaction, which has held the working class back and weakened revolutionary movements, organizations and their revolutionary ideas, is coming to an end.

No matter who wins the election, the magnitude of the spiraling crisis of world imperialism, centered here in the U.S., is going to challenge all the forces who share an anti-imperialist, working-class-centered socialist orientation to put aside narrow views, sectarian habits and small differences that have festered during a long and demoralizing period of world reaction.

The material conditions for resurgence of the working class may sooner than later reach levels not seen in this country since the 1930s. In order for the working-class movement to grow politically and organizationally, it will take time, experience in the class struggle, and the assistance of conscious political forces who are dedicated to reviving the struggle.

What is required of all of us who consider ourselves among the dedicated? At a minimum it is a higher level of clarity, seriousness, confidence, solidarity and coalition building.

McKinney's campaign is Black-led, anti-imperialist, working-class-centered and has a multinational radical base with the potential of unlimited growth.

Of course, we believe that the struggle should not be confined to the electoral arena, especially as the capitalist ruling class completely dominates the electoral process. We must be in the streets fighting the war, fighting foreclosures and evictions, fighting in solidarity with immigrant workers, etc. However, Workers World believes that supporting the McKinney campaign is a step forward towards the path that the movement needs to take.

First published in Workers World on July 17.

Mass protests set for political conventions

By John Catalinotto

The nominating conventions of the two major parties representing the imperialist ruling class of the United States—the Democrats and the Republicans—are coming up. Massive demonstrations on the most important issues affecting the people of this country and the world will coincide with, and in some cases directly challenge, these conventions.

Schedule of DNC protests in Denver

In Denver the Recreate 68 Alliance has put together a series of events for the five days of the Democratic National Convention. The group has been organizing protests since the announcement early last year that Denver would host the gathering.

The protests are designed to show the Democratic Party's complicity with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as expose it as a party of the capitalist class.

The week begins Aug. 23 with training and clinics from noon to 6 p.m. at Lincoln Park across the street from the State Capitol.

An Aug. 24 End the Occupations rally on the west steps of the Capitol begins at 9 a.m., and a march kicks off from the Capitol at 10:30 a.m. and goes to the Pepsi Center. Featured speakers at the rally include Ida Audeh, a Palestinian refugee; former Black Panther Kathleen Cleaver; Ward Churchill; Chairman Fred Hampton Jr. of the Prisoners of Conscience Committee; Larry Holmes of Troops Out Now Coalition; Larry Hales of Recreate 68 and FIST; Ron Kovic, author of 'Born on the Fourth of July;' and Cynthia McKinney, Green Party presidential candidate. Performances will be by Blue Scholars, David Rovics, M-1 and stic man of dead prez, and Jim Page.

On Aug. 25 a march and rally for human rights and in solidarity with political prisoners will begin at 10 a.m. at Civic Center Park in downtown Denver and proceed to the federal courthouse.

There will be special messages from Mumia Abu-Jamal and Leonard Peltier. Speakers will include Pam Africa from the MOVE Organization; Rosa Clemente, Green

Party vice presidential candidate; King Downing, national coordinator for the ACLU Campaign against Racial Profiling; Ricardo Romero, national coordinator of the Mexican Liberation Organization; Natsu Saito; Jenny Esquivel, speaking for political prisoner Eric McDavid; and Cha Cha Jiménez, founder of the Young Lords.

And on Aug. 28 the DNC National Mobilization for Just and Humane Immigration Reform will stage a march beginning at Rudy Park, 2855 W. Howard Pl., moving down Colfax Avenue to a rally at Lincoln Park.

An event billed as the Festival of Democracy will occur throughout the week, with speakers including Deb Sweet from World Can't Wait and Ramona Africa from MOVE, as well as representatives of many organizations sponsoring and holding events on imperialism, the economic crisis, racism and the prison-industrial complex, sexism, homophobia, and many other capitalist ills.

Other musicians and spoken-word artists performing throughout the week are Savage Family, Rebel Diaz, Debajo Del Agua, DJ Cavem/Moetavation, Whiskey Blanket, Mindstates Music, Dario Rosa, DJ Asar Heru and Karma, Dinigunim, Slam Nuba and more. For details for all events, see recreate68.org.

Schedule of RNC protests in St. Paul

The Sept. 1-4 actions at the Republican National Convention focus on the following four slogans: "U.S. out of Iraq now! Money for human needs, not for war! Say no to the Republican agenda! Demand peace, justice and equality!"

The issuing call reads: "Whether you are building the labor movement in Peoria, Ill., building solidarity with Palestine, or are speaking out against the many injustices that face people at home and abroad," people should go to St. Paul to protest the Republican National Convention.

The action begins Aug. 31 at 10 a.m. with a Solemn Funeral Procession organized by Vets for Peace at the State Capitol, with a display of Boots on the Ground, followed by a march with participants carrying tombstones with names of dead soldiers and Iraqis.

On Sept. 1, different groups start mobilizations at 11 a.m. for a 1 p.m. major march on the RNC, followed by a closing rally and music from 4 to 6 p.m.

Contingents include the Minnesota Coalition for Immigrant Rights (MIRAC), gathering on the West Steps of the Capitol building on Constitution and University Streets at 11 a.m. MIRAC says: "No to war against oppressed peoples. No to war against the immigrant community. No to state terrorism against Latin America."

The Poor People's Contingent is meeting on the west side of the Capitol Mall, and a Crash the Convention group organized by the RNC Welcoming Committee is also taking part in the march.

There will be A Solutions Driven Conference, called Peace Island, held at Concordia University on 275 Syndicate Street North in St. Paul, starting at 8:00 a.m. on Sept. 2 and ending at 8:00 p.m. on Sept. 3. Organizers say: "Nationally known speakers will participate in panels and discussions relating to their fields of expertise," including Col. Ann Wright (ret.), Sara Flounders of the Troops Out Now Coalition, Leslie Cagan of United for Peace and Justice and many others.

For music, on Sept. 2 from 12:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. go to the RNC Music Festival at the Capitol Mall. This Political Festival says, "All ideologies welcome—intended to create a positive and welcoming space to organize for progressive change. A nonpartisan event, featuring Anti-Flag, Wookie Foot, the Sustainable Living Roadshow and more. Free and open to all."

On Sept. 2 at 4 p.m., gathering at Mears Park in St. Paul, there will be a March for Our Lives! focusing on demands for "Money for health care and housing, not for war!" called by the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign.

On Sept. 4 people will rally at the State Capitol at 4 p.m. and, say organizers, "march to the Xcel Center where people will utilize a diversity of tactics to confront the RNC creatively and directly." For details for all events, see marchonrnc.org. □



Protest on the steps on New York City Hall, June 2006, includes survivors of Katrina and City Councilperson Charles Barron, center.

WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

could, should and ultimately must be doing to stop the war that is being waged by the government and racist thugs against immigrant workers.

Revolutionaries can, under the right conditions, turn what they imagine into a reality. Conditions

will increasingly favor a fightback.

New opportunities for struggle

Events have now pushed the historic pendulum away from imperialism and towards the working class.

The present world economic and political crisis is going to change everything. It is already transforming the consciousness of larger and larger sections of the working class in ways that will astonish us all.

What will the workers do this time? Will they fight back? The most meaningful response for revolutionary and progressive activists is to ask themselves: What will we do as activists? Will we wait for others to take on this struggle? Will we conclude that there is nothing we can do?

Activists cannot substitute themselves for the masses of workers. But activists can, if they have the political will, help forge a working-class fightback. If ever there was a time for boldness, for imagination, for confidence, now is such a time.

What will be the role of politically conscious activists in responding to the crisis this time? The answer is bound to be decisive. All that remains is to find out how the movement can move things forward. What will it take, what is it that's most important to understand? All who are serious will find the answers.

Larry Holmes is a member of the Secretariat of Workers World Party.

Need for solidarity with most oppressed

It's the impact of this imbalance that is principally responsible for the political weakness, fragmentation and demoralization that are to a greater or lesser extent a factor challenging revolutionary and progressive forces.

Every capitalist crisis raises critical theoretical questions for serious Marxists. Experience had shown a long time before the capitalist depression of the 1930s that, if allowed the opportunity, capitalism had the ability to find its way out of a crisis.

Moreover, every crisis, even the big ones, doesn't necessarily get transformed by the workers and their organizations into revolutionary opportunities. In the wake of defeats, the necessity for critical analysis can become supplanted by a very subjective cynicism, pessimism and doubt.

The biggest casualty of such a development is the erosion of solidarity.

Imagine on this third anniversary of the Katrina/Rita hurricane what the response might have been to the government's calculated racist non-response if the working class movement had been stronger, more revolutionary and keenly aware that an injury to one is an injury to all.

Imagine what the working class and progressive forces

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OBAMA *Un análisis*

POR LARRY HOLMES

Carácter de clase de la campaña de Obama

Las masas no lanzaron la campaña presidencial de Obama: una parte de la clase gobernante y sus operativos políticos lo hizo. Algunos en esta clase gobernante respaldaron a Obama simplemente para avanzar sus batallas contra los Clinton dentro del Partido Demócrata. Y sí, algunos de los que se opusieron a Clinton son clara y sencillamente misóginos.

Pero otras fuerzas en la clase gobernante de los EEUU se han unido a Obama porque lo ven mejor preparado que Clinton o McCain para entrarle a la crisis central del imperialismo estadounidense. Quieren encontrar una forma de detener el rápido deterioro de su posición como el poder económico y militar dominante.

El debate de política exterior entre los candidatos parece haberse reducido a si el imperialismo de EEUU debe hablar con sus enemigos, con Obama proponiendo el diálogo en lugar de (o además de) la política de guerra.

Fundamentalmente es un debate ficticio. La diplomacia o el diálogo es tan sólo otra arma que cada gobierno imperialista usa para avanzar sus intereses. Los imperialistas hablan un día y bombardean el siguiente. Desde la perspectiva de una estrategia amplia, sin embargo, hay algo en este debate.

Para Obama y sus aliados de la clase gobernante, la llamada política neoconservadora que se basa en la fuerza militar del imperialismo estadounidense para recolonizar el Medio Oriente y dominar el mundo, ha sido una completa catástrofe, dejando al poder del imperialismo estadounidense en ruinas.

Obama y sus aliados quieren intentar un abordaje diferente. Obama está más en sintonía con el nuevo orden transnacional capitalista creado por la globalización imperial.

Para revertir la erosión de la posición mundial del imperialismo estadounidense, Obama quiere dejar de apoyarse únicamente en la fuerza militar, y ponerle una cara más amistosa al imperialismo estadounidense para reforzar la capacidad de competir económicamente con China, India, Europa, América Latina, etc.

La contradicción es que los problemas del sistema capitalista son tantos y tan graves que Obama, con nuevas ideas y todo, no los puede resolver.

El casi total colapso del sistema bancario mundial en marzo anterior, salvado sólo por la masiva intervención de la Reserva Federal de los EEUU, no fue el fin de la crisis crediticia capitalista. Es el inicio de una nueva crisis sistémica del capitalismo mundial que posiblemente será más grande y violenta que la Gran Depresión de los 30. La única pregunta es la velocidad con que

la crisis se desarrollará y los eventos que afectarán su curso.

El imperialismo estadounidense está estancado en por lo menos dos guerras que no puede ni ganar ni abandonar, con una posibilidad de guerra contra Irán antes de las elecciones del otoño (noviembre), y ahora también en una confrontación con Rusia.

Para los/as trabajadores/as, las cosas sólo empeoran. La tasa de pérdidas de casas y empleos va en aumento, únicamente sobrepasada por el aumento del precio de los combustibles y alimentos.

Muchos se preocupan de que el racismo vaya a tumbar la candidatura de Obama. Otros se preocupan de que balas racistas maten a Obama. Ambas son cosas serias de las que hay que preocuparse.

El problema más frustrante puede ser que, como Obama es cautivo del horrible sistema que busca servir como presidente, no puede defenderse. Los ataques ya han sido terribles y puede ser que hasta noviembre será llamado traidor, terrorista y una amenaza para la cultura Occidental, la civilización, la Cristiandad, los valores "americanos" y peor aún.

Y si Obama quiere ganar la elección, va a tener que aguantar y sonreír porque lo que necesita no es la aprobación de las masas sino la de la clase gobernante capitalista para llegar a la Casa Blanca. La campaña presidencial es simplemente una audiencia ante ellos.

No hay ninguna razón lógica para justificar los cuestionamientos que la clase gobernante de los EEUU hace a la lealtad de Obama. Sin embargo, la clase gobernante de los EEUU no es lógica; es profundamente suspicaz y paranoide, como se puede esperar de una clase explotadora/opresora profundamente reaccionaria y racista, que ha construido un imperio a través de la esclavitud, el colonialismo, la guerra, el robo y la represión. La clase gobernante es sumamente consciente de lo que ha hecho y continúa haciendo a los/as negros/as. El racismo está vivo y coleando, pero Obama debe pretender que es algo del pasado.

Relación con Obama de los movimientos de clase trabajadora, liberación negra y antiimperialistas

Supongamos que Obama es elegido presidente. Uno de los primeros temas para el próximo presidente sería presidir recortes masivos en programas sociales como Medicare, Medicaid, educación y Seguro Social.

Es más, estos recortes se llevarían a cabo al mismo tiempo en que los/as trabajadores/as están siendo golpeados/as y ensangrentados/as por una crisis económica que se profundiza cada vez más.

Esto nos lleva a la pregunta de la relación entre los movimientos de la clase trabajadora y los antiimperialistas, de todas las fuerzas progresistas (especialmente de aquéllos/as que están trabajando para reconstruir un movimiento centrado en la clase trabajadora, antiim-

perialista y pro liberación negra, en los EEUU) y el fenómeno Obama.

En el movimiento amplio, claramente no nos podemos dejar llevar por nuestras críticas y denuncias de Obama, cuando el apoyo masivo para él es esencialmente de fuerzas progresistas y la oposición es sobre todo de tipo racista y reaccionaria. Tampoco podemos darnos el lujo de engañarnos por la naturaleza de clase de Obama, ni por las otras contradicciones.

Las contradicciones también hacen difícil si no inútil para los/as revolucionarios/as trabajar dentro de su campaña como vehículo para avanzar las exigencias progresistas. Obama no siente presión del movimiento de las masas. La presión a la que es sensible viene de la clase gobernante.

Haciendo una comparación histórica, las dos campañas de Jesse Jackson para la nominación presidencial demócrata en los 80s estaban llenas de contradicciones también. La diferencia, sin embargo, es que las campañas de Jackson vinieron desde abajo y por lo tanto, estaban influenciadas por la presión de las masas. Este no es el caso de la campaña de Obama. Por lo menos no hasta el momento.

De hecho, la única forma en que los/as progresistas pueden defender a Obama contra el racismo y la reacción, si llega a ser necesario, es situándose fuera de, e independientes de su campaña y del Partido Demócrata.

Dependerá de los/as activistas negros/as el tomar el liderazgo y explicar las contradicciones de Obama, y cuestionarlas. Si alguna vez ha habido un momento para las fuerzas negras progresistas y revolucionarias de forjar algún tipo de unidad estratégica, el momento es ahora.

Es posible que la candidatura presidencial independiente de la ex congresista Cynthia McKinney pueda servir como uno de los polos de unidad. Está claro que para todos/as aquellos/as en la izquierda que se dan cuenta de que la crisis galopante del imperialismo va a producir un resurgimiento de las luchas de la clase trabajadora más pronto de lo que creen muchos, y radicalizar a más y más trabajadores/as, aumentando nuestras filas, la necesidad de nutrir organizaciones centradas en la clase trabajadora, antiimperialistas, independientes de los partidos políticos de las clases gobernantes, basadas en la lucha, es mucho más que esencial. Es urgente.

Más que nunca, los/as trabajadores/as están empezando a ver las guerras imperialistas en Irak y Afganistán como factores agravantes importantes que profundizan la crisis económica, y están en lo cierto.

La crisis de guerra junto a la crisis económica están dándonos las bases para la próxima fase de la lucha contra la guerra. La próxima fase del movimiento contra la guerra, si los/as militantes de la clase trabajadora prevalecen, estará centrada en un resurgimiento de la lucha de la clase trabajadora.

Las hermanas y hermanos del Sindicato Internacional de Estibadores nos dieron una primicia del potencial de esta próxima fase, cuando miles de ellos/as cerraron los muelles en toda la costa oeste de los EEUU el 1º de mayo para protestar contra la guerra.

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