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Auto workers need bailout, instead Congress threatens UAW

By Martha Grevatt

During the week of Nov. 17, the CEOs of General Motors, Ford and Chrysler, along with United Auto Workers President Ron Gettelfinger, testified before Congress on the need for a government bailout of the auto industry. Specifically, they requested an emergency measure of \$25 billion of the \$700 billion in the Troubled Assets Recovery Program.

Without help, they claimed, one or more of their companies would go bankrupt, possibly before year's end. This would threaten the 200,000 who work for the automakers in the U.S. and some 700,000 who build components for vehicles. It has been stated that 2.5 million jobs could be lost if one of the Big Three goes belly-up.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson balked at the proposal, arguing that the money was for the banks—which he represents. Speaking for his party, Republican Sen. Spencer Bachus stated, "My constituents do not understand why their taxpayer dollars should go to support less-efficient business." (Detroit Free Press, Nov. 19)

Christopher Dodd, chair of the Senate Banking Committee, proposed the companies declare bankruptcy first as a condition for getting a little piece of the TARP. (abc.news.com, Nov. 13)

In the end Congress called for the CEOs to come up with a nine-point plan by Dec. 2, explaining how the billions would be used and demonstrating long-term viability and ability to repay the loan. Congress then adjourned for Thanksgiving recess, leaving autoworkers as nervous as ever about their futures.

Rick Wagoner of GM, Alan Mulally of Ford and Bob Nardelli of Chrysler were

all grilled on their high executive salaries, private jets and other perks, but the real target of the bipartisan compromise was the union.

The letter signed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid asking for "significant sacrifices and major changes to their way of doing business" is a thinly veiled demand for yet more givebacks by the workers. (Detroit News, Nov. 21)

When asked about the UAW, Pelosi stated, "I think everybody has to participate in ensuring the viability of the auto industry." (Detroit Free Press, Nov. 22) Would a bankrupt GM make the same outrageous proposals to the UAW as its former parts division, Delphi, did in 2005? At that time Delphi President Steve Miller wanted to trash the entire union contract with the exception of the no-strike clause.

Newspaper columnists from Detroit to Washington are going out of their way to demonize the UAW. Detroit News auto writer Daniel Howes complained Nov. 18 that Gettelfinger "isn't doing himself or his union any favors by insisting that the union... wouldn't consider accelerating historic gains [read concessions] scheduled to take effect in 2010."

Conservative ideologue George Will opposes any government bailout. "The answer," said Will, is to "do nothing that will delay bankrupt companies from filing for bankruptcy protection, so that improvident labor contracts can be unraveled, allowing the companies to try to devise plausible business models." (Washington Post, Nov. 18)

First to face the axe in any "plausible business model" would be what is known

Continued on page 3



Chuck Turner
WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Black City Councilor targeted

The Boston City Council is attempting to remove progressive City Councilor Chuck Turner—an African American—from his Council duties. Seven armed FBI agents went to Turner's home in the early morning of Nov. 21 to arrest him while he was at his office. Turner was arraigned in court later that day and charged with "attempted extortion" and "making false statements to the executive branch." He was released on a long list of conditions and a \$50,000 unsecured bond.

A press conference and open City Council meeting on Turner will take place Nov. 24. This is a political attack on the right of the oppressed community to political participation, representation and leadership nationwide. The International Action Center, United Steel Workers Local 8751 School Bus Drivers Union, Steelworkers Local 8751 and other activists are mobilizing local and national support for Turner, who has consistently stood up for the rights of all oppressed and working people in the Roxbury community and elsewhere. There will be more on this development in upcoming WW issues.

—Frank Neisser

THANKSGIVING:

A National Day of Mourning for Indians

Following are excerpts from a statement written by Mahtowin Munro (Lakota) and Moonanum James (Wampanoag), co-leaders of United American Indians of New England. Read the entire statement at www.uaine.org.

Every year since 1970, United American Indians of New England have organized the National Day of Mourning observance in Plymouth at noon on Thanksgiving Day. Every year, hundreds of Native people and our supporters from all four directions join us. Every year, including this year, Native people from throughout the Americas will speak the truth about our history and about current issues and struggles we are involved in.

Why do hundreds of people stand out in the cold rather than sit home eating turkey and watching football? Do we have something against a harvest festival?

Of course not. But Thanksgiving in this country—and in particular in

Continued on page 6

WWP CONFERENCE ON:

LGBT rights and Prop 8	2
Low-wage capitalism	4
California crisis	4
Africa & class struggle	5
Imperialism's contradictions	5
Global resistance	6



STOP FORECLOSURES!

Detroit, Cleveland organizing **3**

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Before it's too late, stop the murder of Mumia!

Lynne Abraham, the Philadelphia DA, known as 'the Deadliest DA in the U.S.' is calling on the U.S. Supreme Court to reinstate Mumia Abu-Jamal's death sentence, despite the mounds of evidence of his innocence. If Abraham's filing is granted that would mean EXECUTION for Mumia without even a new hearing or a new trial.

Join a day of International Solidarity to FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL Sat., DEC. 6

Actions will be held in cities across the U.S. & the world

12 Noon at District Attorney's Office 2 South Penn Square (East Side of City Hall)

MARCH to Federal Courts, 5th St. and Market St.

To purchase bus tickets from NYC to Phila. call the Solidarity Center: 212-633-6646

For information in Phila. call the International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal: 215-476-8812

and the International Action Center: 215-724-1618 Millions4Mumia.org FreeMumia.com



LGBT, marriage and the economic crisis

By Imani Henry

Around the world, tens of thousands of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people and their supporters are demonstrating as part of the Nov. 15 National Day of Action against the passing of Proposition 8, a ballot initiative that bans LGBT marriage in California.

The struggle for marriage equality is about the second-class status of LGBT people in the U.S. It is about the systematic oppression and criminalization of LGBT people by the ruling class.

The truth is that LGBT people do not have rights in the U.S. All that has been won is the overturning of anti-gay laws or the creation of anti-discrimination laws on a state or city level.

For 33 years the LGBT movement has been fighting the U.S. government to get an employment protection law. Finally on Nov. 7, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which includes housing, public accommodations, etc., was passed for the first time ever by the House of Representatives.

But the House chose to vote on a version of ENDA that—despite the outrage of LGBT activists, including a sign-on campaign by more than 350 leading organizations—omitted protection based on gender identity. If this version becomes law, it excludes not only transpeople but also anyone who could be “perceived” as gay.

It’s about workers’ rights. According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, there are “1,138 federal benefits and protections of marriage only available to couples that are allowed to legally marry.” Is it surprising as we enter the worst economic crisis in decades that the ruling class, through a coalition of the religious right, poured millions into denying LGBT workers the benefits that come with marriage?

Do the masses of working-class folks living in the U.S. see LGBT people as average, everyday workers? Or is it the perception that LGBT means white, middle-class, privileged—where Jack from “Will and Grace” doesn’t need a job to keep his New York City apartment?

There are several factors that contribute to this stereotype. It was a tactic used by some of the leadership in the LGBT movement to counter the church and Hollywood’s depiction of LGBT people as “mentally ill,” sexual deviants and murderers.



Imani Henry

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Like other oppressed communities, it was a tactic to push the struggle forward by saying “Look, we are just like you. Now where are our civil rights?” But ultimately it is always in the best interest of the ruling class to sow divisions and pit oppressed communities against each other.

LGBT people of all nationalities voted overwhelmingly for Barack Obama. But although Prop 8 was bought and paid for by the religious right, Black communities have been falsely accused of voting away marriage rights for white LGBT people. The truth is that just like the masses of people living in the U.S. are working class and multinational, so are LGBT communities and movements.

Ultimately the ruling class created the climate of terror and stigma to keep LGBT people isolated from the rest of our class.

It has been well-documented that Black single women with children have been the prime targets of the predatory loan scam. Kenyon Farrow from Queers for Economic Justice told me about a Black lesbian couple who recently lost their house due to a predatory loan; now they and their children are living in a shelter. Black lesbian households make at least \$10,000 less a year than Black hetero married couples. Who knows how many LGBT people have lost their homes?

FIERCE, an LGBT people-of-color youth group, waged a year-long campaign to force a huge development company to build an LGBT youth center. Just before the bailouts, the investors pulled out of the deal, citing financial hardships. Sylvia’s Place, the only LGBT youth shelter in New York City, lost its funding and closed in September. In New York City there are 3,000 to 8,000 LGBT-identified homeless youth.

It is an outrage that young people, gay or straight, are homeless in the U.S. No Black woman, lesbian or straight, and her children should be forced from their home. All workers, trans and non-trans, should be paid a living wage. And it is an outrage that who we love and choose to partner with is even up for national debate!

Class solidarity is the weapon the ruling class fears the most—the kind of solidarity that I’m proud to say that a Marxist-Leninist, multinational, multigendered and multisexual, intergenerational organization like WWP actively lives and breathes everyday. □

This week ...



★ In the U.S.

Congress threatens UAW. 1
 Black City Councilor targeted 1
 Thanksgiving: A National Day of Mourning for Indians . . 1
 LGBT, marriage and the economic crisis 2
 Activists press Mich. gov to stop foreclosures 3
 Cleveland activists launch moratorium campaign 3
 Hundreds in Charlotte protest Prop 8 3
 The economic and political crisis in California 4

★ Around the world

Understanding the world situation 4
 Africa, imperialism and the global class struggle 5
 The contradictions of U.S. imperialism 5
 Solidarity messages to WWP 6
 Protest ‘greet’ Philippines president. 6
 Inspiration from global resistance and revolution. 7
 Fifth Labor Conference 7

★ Noticias En Español

Resistencia colombiana 8
 5ta Conferencia Sindical 8

WW is putting out an eight-page issue for this week only due to the printer’s holiday schedule.

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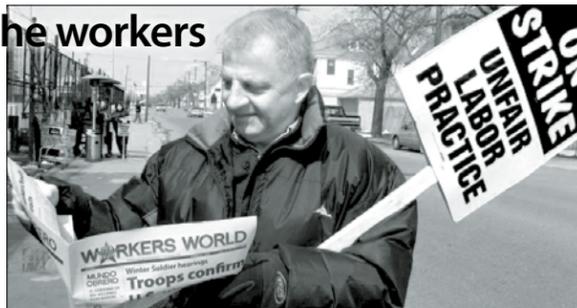
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WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

April 2008, American Axle striker on Detroit picket line.

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Activists press Mich. gov to stop foreclosures

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Union and community activists came out despite a brutally cold wind on Nov. 20 to demand Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm use her executive authority to implement an immediate moratorium stopping foreclosures. The demonstration, which targeted the State building in Detroit, was called by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions.

On Nov. 6 Granholm announced deep budget cuts at the same time that she ordered \$150 million to be released from the state treasury to go to banks and credit unions “to help spur economic growth throughout Michigan.” She also stated she wanted the legislature to enact a 90-day moratorium on foreclosures “to allow the homeowner and the lender to work out terms.” (www.michigan.gov)

For two years Granholm had steadfastly refused to acknowledge the foreclosure catastrophe and had opposed the grassroots struggle demanding a moratorium. Her answer to the extreme economic crisis in Michigan has been to give more money



to the corporations and ignore the people.

Coalition organizers were stunned by Granholm’s statement supporting a moratorium, and considered it a victory in the people’s struggle. Organizers noted, however, that Granholm still refused to use her executive authority and instead called for the state legislature to pass a moratorium.

SB 1306, a two-year foreclosure moratorium law, has been before the state Senate since May 2008. Other bills have been introduced for a one-year moratorium.

In a speech to a “poverty summit” held

in downtown Detroit on Nov. 13, Granholm didn’t refer to her moratorium proposal and reverted back to her rose-tinted view of Michigan’s economic prospects. She reiterated her refrain, “We may be down, but we’re not out!”

In a press conference, reporters from Telesur asked her if she would use her executive authority to order a moratorium on foreclosures. Granholm said, “No.” They asked if she supported SB 1306, and again she said, “No.”

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition is



Far left, Moratorium Now! organizer Sandra Hines and activists demand moratorium on foreclosures in front of State of Michigan Building Nov. 20 in Detroit. Right, Kris Hamel.

WW PHOTOS:
ALAN POLLOCK

vowing to keep up the pressure on all fronts in this struggle—on the governor, the City of Detroit and other municipalities—for a workers’ bailout and for defending peoples’ right to their homes by any means necessary.

On Dec. 6 the coalition is hosting a statewide organizers conference from 12 noon to 4 p.m. on the second floor of Central United Methodist Church, 23 East Adams at Woodward in downtown Detroit. Call 313-887-4344, email moratorium@moratorium-mi.org, or visit www.moratorium-mi.org for more information or to send a donation.

E-mail: kris@workers.org

Cleveland activists launch moratorium campaign

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

Activists in Cleveland have formed the Ohio Moratorium Now! Coalition to Stop Evictions, Foreclosures and Shutoffs using the Moratorium NOW! Coalition in Michigan as a model.

The Nov. 18 founding meeting was called by the Peoples Fightback Center, the Cleveland Chapter of the New Black Panther Party, the Lucasville Uprising Freedom Network (formerly the Cleveland Lucasville Five Defense Committee) and the Baldwin Wallace College Chapter of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST).

The call to “join a nationwide movement that is keeping people in their homes and keeping their utilities from being shut off”

drew additional community activists from outside the original sponsoring groups.

Those present were inspired by a reading from the classic book “Labor’s Untold Story.” The passage told the story of Peter Grossup, a cabinetmaker laid off in 1930 who eighteen months later faced foreclosure.

When the sheriffs finally came and threw the Grossup family’s possessions on the street, the Unemployed Council came and moved everything back in. Grossup, who until that day dismissed the Council as “a bunch of Communists,” was lifted from dependency, and subsequently became a Council activist in his own right.

The initial Moratorium Now! meeting was held in the Glenville neighborhood, a predominantly African-American community on Cleveland’s east side where the

foreclosure crisis is the most severe. The group agreed to hold the second meeting in the west side suburb of Lakewood, which has a large lesbian, gay, bi and trans population and where a Lutheran minister asked the coalition to come to her church.

By going to different neighborhoods, Ohio Moratorium Now! plans to launch a countywide and eventually a statewide

campaign to save people’s homes and prevent utility shutoffs.

Organizers will employ a two-pronged approach and push for a moratorium through legislative or other governmental action while at the same time building a rapid-response strike force to keep people from being thrown out on the street.

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Hundreds in Charlotte protest Prop 8, rally for LGBT rights

By David Dixon
Charlotte, N.C.

Some 300 people rallied outside the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center in downtown Charlotte on Nov. 15, part of a national day of protest against California’s Prop 8. The narrowly passed proposition denies the right of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people to marry and receive the more than 1,000 benefits that marriage entails.

There were a large number of energetic youth in the crowd. People driving by honked and raised their fists in support, as chants of “Out of the closet, into the streets!” filled the air.

Some of the signs read: “Yes we can.” “You can’t outlaw love.” “Ban H8.” “Marriage is a human right.” “Gay rights are human rights.” Many of the signs were homemade.

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s student newspaper reported: “To open up the program, two choral groups, Gay Men’s Chorus of Charlotte and One Voice, serenaded the crowd. Following their selections, Reverend Catherine Houchins of the Metropolitan Community Church spoke and offered a blessing for those couples, gay and straight, who were in serious and committed relationships. After Rev. Houchins, Mandy Plante, Providence High School president of the Gay/Straight Alliance, gave a captivating speech that promoted equality.” (nineronline.com, Nov.18)

Protests were held in hundreds of cities throughout the U.S., and are expected to continue until marriage equality and equal rights for LGBT people are attained.



Charlotte, Nov. 15.

PHOTO: CAROL MARLEY

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force states: “The 1,138 federal benefits and protections of marriage are only available to couples that are allowed to legally marry. These include Social Security survivor and spousal benefits, the ability to file a joint tax return, immigration rights, and coverage under the Family and Medical Leave Act. To date, civil unions are not ‘portable,’ meaning that when a couple moves to another state, none of the benefits, rights or responsibilities coming from civil unions move with them.” (www.thetaskforce.org)

The Charlotte protest was organized by UNC-Charlotte PRIDE. To get involved, contact Braxton Midyette at 704-687-4150 or pride@unc.edu. □

Congress threatens UAW

Continued from page 1

as the “jobs bank.” Since its inception in the 1990s, the bank has provided a measure of job security for autoworkers who would otherwise be laid off. In the bank they perform “nontraditional” work, often for charities, and receive 40 hours pay.

Originally the jobs bank was a concession to allow the companies to eliminate “traditional” jobs through the use of high technology when contracts contained a moratorium on layoffs. When a three- or four-year contract expired, the workers in the bank were no longer protected. Yet in a limited way the job bank upheld the premise that a job is a right.

Now the jobs bank is portrayed as “a symbol of excess and inefficiency.” Clearly on the defensive, Gettelfinger argued against officially eliminating the program by stating, “It’s not gone yet, but it’s almost gone. We’re on the verge of eliminating that provision.” (Detroit Free Press, Nov. 22)

Presently the three companies combined have only about 3,500 workers in the bank, but the numbers could swell. Under the contract workers enter the bank after 48 weeks of layoff.

People are supposed to think that auto workers are overpaid and that they created this crisis for themselves. The reality is just the opposite. People are not buying cars for two reasons: higher unemployment and lower wages. Both are the end result

of the capitalist drive to increase profits by reducing the price of labor power.

This is done by decreasing the number of hours needed to manufacture a product—resulting in layoffs—or by pushing down costs through wage and benefit cuts. Either measure reduces the purchasing power of the masses. Workers become increasingly unable to make payments on mortgages, car loans and credit cards. Now there is no more easy credit through which people bought what they otherwise were unable to afford.

The deliberate destruction of the union wage scale throughout the capitalist economy has yielded a glut of products that few can now afford to buy, even on credit. Car sales have hit a 25-year low, and workers pay the price with loss of their jobs.

What shape the bailout takes, and if it ultimately saves all three companies from insolvency, remains to be seen. GM’s Board of Directors is, according to Reuters, considering the bankruptcy option. (Nov. 22) Completely missing in the debate is the notion that jobs, health care and old-age security are not luxuries but basic workers’ rights.

Whatever scenario plays out, what is central to the UAW now is how to restructure itself to again become a fighting machine that can forcibly assert its members’ right to their jobs.

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Understanding the world situation

Another aspect of 'Low-Wage Capitalism'

By Deirdre Griswold

We've discussed in this conference two books that elaborate our view of how changes in capitalism have impacted the working class: "High Tech, Low Pay" by Sam Marcy and the newly published "Low-Wage Capitalism" by Fred Goldstein.

Marcy's book, written in 1985, showed how the scientific-technological revolution was changing the means of production and the working class itself. A big shift was taking place in the economy to fewer manufacturing and more service jobs. New technology led to the further deskilling of jobs. The bosses were looking for workers who, because of their oppression, would be forced to take jobs that paid less. More women and more people of color were being hired in the U.S. Marcy predicted this would begin to undermine the social weight of the more privileged, generally white male workers.

Lenin had first described the development of a privileged labor aristocracy in the oppressor countries in his book "Imperialism." Marcy showed how this was starting to break down under the counter-pressure of the new trend. He predicted a shift in consciousness of the working class, with oppressed workers playing a leading role in the new struggles and greater potential for the solidarity of all workers.

Comrade Larry Holmes in his opening remarks explained how Comrade Fred's new book on low-wage capitalism builds upon this very important thesis. And that this phenomenon—the leveling down of the better-paid workers, which preceded the current economic crisis but continues ever more fiercely—is the material basis for the solidarity between Black, Latin@ and white workers that burst out in this election and changed the political landscape

in the U.S. with the election of the first Black president.

This is not to take anything away from Barack Obama himself and his extraordinary skills as a political figure. But there have been many other skilled Black leaders over the years, and they didn't stand a chance. Even Jesse Jackson, who had a movement behind him, couldn't get the Democratic Party nomination, let alone win in the general election.

We've talked about the reasons why a strong grouping in the ruling class would want Obama to represent them at this very difficult time for U.S. imperialism. That certainly made it easier for Obama to get decent treatment in the media, to raise funds and to reach out to the millions. But none of this would have happened if the hard-core racism represented by McCain and Palin had resonated with a larger section of the workers, or if the unions and other multinational, working-class organizations had not mobilized to get out the vote.

"Low-Wage Capitalism" brings Marcy's thesis up to date by devoting much attention to the international division of labor that now exists with the rapid spread of globalization. It also shows how the changes in the way capitalism works today validate once again the most basic teachings of Marxism and Leninism.

However, I want to bring up another aspect of Goldstein's book, one perhaps still difficult to raise in this country because of the steady drumbeat of anti-communism by the ruling class ever since the Russian Revolution and especially during the period of the Cold War.

Just as important as its analysis of imperialist globalization and the way in



Deirdre Griswold

WW PHOTO: GARY WILSON

The articles on pages 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 are based on speeches given to the 2008 Nov. 15-16 Workers World Party National Conference in New York by party leaders. Two of those published this week were given by WWP Secretariat members, Sara Flounders and Deirdre Griswold. More edited talks will be published in upcoming issues. The podcasts of all conference plenary talks are online at workers.org and workersworld.net.

which that has dragged down the wages of workers in the U.S. is what the

book has to say about the tearing down of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe.

Let's remember that Marcy's book, which predicted an upsurge of the workers, was written in 1985—23 years ago. Why has it taken so long for the political impact of the scientific-technological revolution to be felt here? How were the capitalists able to stave off until now the crisis of overproduction that was clearly visible in the stock market crash of 1987, when the market lost a quarter of its value in just one day? What gave them and their system a new lease on life, a new confidence that they could ruthlessly continue their offensive against the workers and get away with it?

What came to their aid, as Goldstein explains, was the final collapse of the system of workers' states in Europe, which had lasted as a competing social system for more than 70 years. This had a catastrophic effect on the workers there. Every social index—life expectancy, infant mortality, the rise of infectious disease and hunger, the sexual oppression of women, growing antagonism among the different nationalities—showed that the return to capitalism was a huge step backward.

Workers in capitalist Western Europe, where social democracy had been strong and promised great things if only the evil communists could be overthrown in the East, were also put on the defensive. It wasn't long after the downfall of the Soviet bloc that many of the social benefits won by the workers there began to be cut back.

The fall of the USSR also contributed to China's decision to rely more on the market in building up its economy. This meant opening up in a big way to foreign investment and the production of goods for export.

These two developments—the dismantling of the Soviet Union and its East European allies and the further opening up of China to foreign investment—actually doubled the number of workers available for worldwide imperialist exploitation.

WWP, from its beginning, understood the great contradictions in the Soviet Union between its socialized means of production and the privileged bureaucracy that arose because of its isolation, its economic underdevelopment and its lack of skilled workers in the early days of the revolution.

All this was made immeasurably more difficult by the combined assault of the imperialists. Fourteen imperialist countries invaded the new workers' state in 1919. The German fascists destroyed huge areas of the USSR and killed tens of mil-

Continued on page 7

The economic and political crisis in California

By John Parker

Stomach pain due to malnutrition is probably one of the most painful things to suffer from, especially if you are a growing child. It seems unreal that a system which throws trillions of dollars at multinational banks and insurance companies to shore up their profits and the lifestyles of their executives makes people actually go hungry. How could that be? Well, let's do the math.

The average wage in California is about \$35,000 per year. The census says \$39,000, but that doesn't take into account the underground economy, so that is probably a high average.

Humans need shelter, and that shelter costs conservatively about \$1,000 per month for a one-bedroom apartment in Los Angeles County.

If you own your own home, it's even worse. Just ask the over 380,000 people to date in California who've lost their homes due to foreclosures with mortgage payments that doubled and tripled or who can no longer refinance to pay the bills since their houses have plummeted in value.

So, again estimating conservatively, that's at least half the average person's income going to housing. But you also have to go to work and pay for gas.

Many of us have already forgotten how high these gas prices really are since they just came down. But, at about \$2.60 per gallon in California, with an average commute in Los Angeles County of 40 minutes, you're paying about \$10 per day after traveling to buy groceries, picking up the kids

and doing errands. Los Angeles County is very spread out and a car is a necessity.

But many cannot afford a car or may not drive because of their immigration status. A constant environment of terror reins down on the immigrant community in the form of racist immigration laws, making it sometimes impossible to receive a driver's license. Some fear being pulled over since racial profiling, raids and deportations occur on a daily basis.

The latest increase in a bus pass of \$70 per month similarly cuts into the lower wages of those forced to take inadequate public transportation at about 10 percent of their income.

Add to that the 50 percent of a person's income going to rent or mortgage and that makes 60 percent, and we're not done yet.

Health insurance, if you're lucky enough to have it, comes to about \$100 to \$200 per month. Taking the lower range, that's about five percent of one's income. But what about those high deductibles? Let's make that 10 percent and we're still being conservative.

OK, where are we? That \$35,000 per year average income, or \$2,000 per month after taxes, has been hit with 70 percent for basic necessities.

Now there's 30 percent left for food.

That is if we don't buy clothes or take care of emergencies or car repairs, etc.—all the things that happen often. But let's say by some miracle we have the complete 30 percent for food. That leaves us with about \$600 per month, or \$150 dollars per week, for the average-size household of two to three people.

I failed to also mention that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed further cuts in basic services and has topped that with a scheme to steal over \$4 billion through a regressive tax that targets working and poor people.

My neighbor echoed the complaints of many when he mentioned how he no longer receives the annual state benefit that he's entitled to due to his age and health. Instead, he received a letter in lieu of his check that stated although he was still eligible for this money, the state could not honor its obligation due to lack of state funds.

Another neighbor complained about the greater amount of bureaucratic tape you have to go through to get your Medicare or medical benefits.

People are digging deeper into their pockets to pay for medicine that can't wait or a home care attendant who must be in the home now. Those needs cut further into that \$150 per week for food.



John Parker

WW PHOTO: GARY WILSON

We should also consider unemployment, which is skyrocketing in the country now. In California, we enjoy the high end of the national average at over 7.1 percent. That means about 1.7 million people have no jobs, and that doesn't include those who've stopped looking for jobs that don't exist.

When you try to calculate the average percentage of housing, transportation and health care costs against a salary of zero you come up with an error in your spreadsheet—an unreal number. But the suffering of our class is very real—real enough to feel it in the gut.

However, in spite of these attacks against our class, we still fight back—like the immigrant community in Los Angeles did when it took the lead in fighting racist immigration legislation in 2006. And in regard to the same-sex marriage setback of Prop 8, our class is fighting that as well, in addition to other anti-working-class legislation.

We must realize that within this economic crisis lie the seeds of revolution that will begin to hammer the nails in the coffin that will bury all suffering due to lack of basic necessities like food.

We may not make the revolution in our lifetime, but everything that we as Marxists do is now watched more intently. Every action we take now, as trusted and sincere activists, is considered more seriously than before. And every idea we vocalize, every demand we make can become the demands of our class that will threaten any ruling-class opponent who dares to take a morsel of food from a child's mouth.

Now is the time. Let's get to work. □

Africa, imperialism & the global class struggle

By Abayomi Azikiwe

Most researchers and writers on African affairs, both bourgeois and historical materialist, have recognized the African origins of human society. The contributions of successive African civilizations and cultures have been well documented in various publications.

These efforts to correct the distortions in the way African history has been narrated and interpreted are important in understanding the significance and character of political events that are occurring on the continent today. In order for Africa to overcome the legacy of the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism, there must be a struggle to transform the exploitative and oppressive conditions which have been imposed by world imperialism, with a leading role played by the ruling class in the United States.

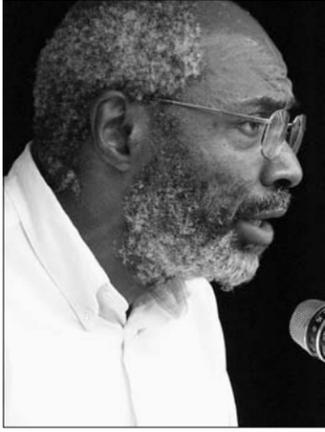
This African struggle is taking place with greater intensity in the first decade of the 21st century. What is taking place on the continent is a direct result of the continuing efforts by the imperialist countries to dominate the resources, labor and political institutions in all of the African states.

Progressive and revolutionary thinkers and tacticians have stressed the dialectical relationship between the economic development of Western Europe and the United States and the consequent underdevelopment of Africa. Activists and chroniclers of African and African-American history have maintained that the profits accrued from the exploitation of Black labor, land

and resources played a central role in the rise of world capitalism.

This historical materialist approach to analyzing the past as a guide to understanding the present and preparing for the future was discussed by the Russian revolutionary V.I. Lenin.

Beginning a historical analysis from this perspective leads us into understanding that the underlying social forces that fuel the conflicts that transform society are rooted in the struggle between dominant and subjugated classes.



Abayomi Azikiwe
WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

The class struggle in Africa & the African-American national question

The class struggle is not limited to the so-called advanced Western capitalist countries. With the expansion of colonialism throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, South Pacific, Indian Ocean region and within North America itself, class and national divisions were institutionalized by the imperialists to ensure the domination of finance capital.

Kwame Nkrumah, the founder of Ghana's independence movement after World War II, who later became the chief strategist of the African revolutionary struggle that emerged during the 1950s and 1960s, applied the theory of class struggle advanced by Marx, Engels and Lenin to developments on the African continent.

Nkrumah emphatically stated that "A fierce class struggle has been raging in Africa. The evidence is all around us. In essence it is, as in the rest of the world, a struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed.

"The African Revolution is an integral part of the world socialist revolution, and just as the class struggle is basic to world revolutionary processes, so also is it fundamental to the struggle of the workers and peasants of Africa." (Nkrumah, "Revolutionary Path," 1973)

The contributions of Workers World to the understanding of the central role of Africa and the other former colonial and semi-colonial nations in the global class struggle has been reviewed over the last year through various articles that are reprinted on a weekly basis. In studying and analyzing developments that emerged during the post-World War II period, Sam Marcy and other co-founders of the party clearly recognized the political significance of the revolutions in China, Korea, Vietnam, Cuba and on the African continent.

Today, Workers World covers the struggle against U.S. intervention in various parts of Africa, including, but not limited to, the efforts to destabilize Sudan in order to seize its oil; to isolate Zimbabwe over the land question; to dominate Somalia because of the people's refusal to submit to a foreign, imperialist-financed and-coordinated occupation.

The impact of the multinational oil and other extractive industries is noted in the ongoing struggles taking place in Nigeria, Mauritania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and South Africa, to name a few.

As anti-imperialists and proletarian internationalists, we will continue to work in solidarity with all genuine mass movements as well as progressive and revolutionary organizations in Africa. The role of the Africa Command (AFRICOM) and other militarist schemes to subjugate the continent will be defeated by the organizational weight of the African workers and farmers in conjunction with a class-

conscious proletariat in the Western countries.

Finally, the understanding and appreciation of the role of the African continent in the global class struggle also relates to the pivotal importance of resolving the problem of racism in the United States—what Marxists call the national question. The more than 40 million people of African descent in the U.S. have always maintained recognition of the continent as their historical homeland. Consequently, the history and contemporary affairs of Africa are of major concern to the African-American people.

The most progressive and revolutionary elements in the African community in the United States have always taken great consideration of the struggle for liberation by the peoples of the continent as an important objective in their own efforts aimed at achieving total freedom in this country.

Workers World has always understood the Leninist principle upholding the right to self-determination of oppressed nations under capitalism and imperialism. The party has never wavered in supporting and defending the inherent right of African Americans to determine the form and method of their struggle for liberation.

Workers World analyzed the significance of the social forces that propelled President-elect Barack Obama into an electoral victory where he will become the first African-American president of the United States. At the same time, the newspaper defended him and Michelle Obama against every racist attack by the right-wing and exposed the threats posed by the character of the McCain-Palin political base.

Abayomi Azikiwe is the editor of Pan-African News Wire. Go to panafricannews.blogspot.com

The contradictions of U.S. imperialism

By Sara Flounders

Let's take a look at some of the contradictions of U.S. imperialism, a system in decline and serious decay. There is a crisis of all capitalist institutions. We do not even know levels of disease and rot in the system based on decades of gargantuan subsidies that the huge U.S. military budget represents.

The U.S. ruling class is desperately trying to assert itself and reverse its fortunes. But every effort confirms their weakness and deepens the crisis. They no longer have the economic clout to back up their global position.

What is the approach for revolutionary forces right here in center of this unraveling system?

We are for the defeat of this class of pirates, robbers, looters and all the cynical mercenaries who work for them. A victory of resistance forces anywhere in the world strengthens workers as a class on a global scale, including here in the imperialist

center. We are not interested in saving capitalism. We are for its overturn.

At the outbreak of World War I, the Russian revolutionary Lenin argued that the workers could not win or gain in any imperialist war. Their true enemies are the imperialist leaders who send the workers and peasants into battle. What this means in essence is standing up to the capitalist class.

Lenin differentiated the communist position from the pacifists, who condemn all wars equally. He defined as just wars the wars waged by an oppressed class against the oppressor class and wars of national liberation by oppressed countries.

We cannot accept the call from all too many liberal imperialists to get out of Iraq and into Afghanistan. We reject all calls for U.N. or NATO intervention in Sudan, Congo, Georgia. There are no good or humanitarian imperialist wars.

Sam Marcy, the founder of Workers World Party, revived this whole debate in a wonderful book entitled "Bolsheviks and War: Lessons for Today's Anti-War Movement."

Today the U.S. is at war with the world

The more we link war, the military budget—which is a bailout of the biggest corporations in the country—and the bailout of the banks to mobilizations against the cutbacks the workers are facing, the more we help to develop

class consciousness.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, with great productive capacity, but it is a country with a military budget so bloated, so all-consuming that every possible social program has already been cut to the bone. Life expectancy, infant mortality, health and living standards in the U.S. rank behind those in every industrialized country, and are falling faster and faster.

Worldwide, the gap between the super rich, the owners of the giant corporations, and the billions who are living hand to mouth is larger than at any time in history. Two hundred billionaires own more wealth than 2 billion of the world's population.

This class can only survive by accumulating still greater wealth, resulting in greater poverty. They have no solutions except endless war. They have nothing positive to contribute.

It is an impossible situation and an explosive contradiction, impossible to resolve.

But now both the capitalist economy and two brutal U.S. imperialist wars have crashed.

U.S. imperialism can't extricate itself from the wars, can't just walk away and give up its control of such vital regions. But it can't stay. The ruling class's military machine is being just ground down.



Sara Flounders
WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

There are huge, unexpected crises ahead for U.S. imperialism, as unexpected and as uncontrollable as the economic crisis.

Consider: They did not foresee the possibility of resistance in Afghanistan. They turned the war over to their NATO allies, stationed troops in a few military bases and bought off some warlords.

There was no reconstruction. They just issued a few press releases promising the liberation of women and the building of schools—and then went on to the next war.

This week a major U.S. supply convoy, with layers of helicopter and satellite reconnaissance overhead, was hijacked in the Khyber Pass while still in Pakistan. The Khyber Pass is NATO's jugular vein—75 percent of all supplies come through this tortuously narrow 30-mile mountain road.

Seven years ago U.S. forces seized Afghanistan without one U.S. casualty. Now they have lost control of whole parts of Pakistan, an unstable country of 170 million people, and have trouble supplying their forces in Afghanistan. Their only response is to drop more bombs and fire more missiles.

Consider Iraq: Today more than one-third of the Iraqi population is dead, injured, disabled, imprisoned, internally

Continued on page 7

What YOU should know about the hidden war in CONGO—past & present

By Abayomi Azikiwe

Reprinted from Workers World

Summit fails to resolve crisis

Nov. 20, 2008

Fighting continues in eastern Congo; imperialist states weigh intervention

Colonialists plot return

Nov. 13, 2008

E.U. ministers signal troop deployment to Congo

U.N. poised for broader intervention in Congo

Oct. 30, Nov. 6, 2008

Historical background to the current crisis— In 3 parts

U.N. poised for broader intervention in Congo

Oct. 23, 2008

Order online at www.Leftbooks.com

Thanksgiving: A National Day of Mourning for Indians

Continued from page 1

Plymouth—is much more than a harvest home festival. It is a celebration of pilgrim mythology.

According to this mythology, the pilgrims arrived, the Native people fed them and welcomed them, the Indians promptly faded into the background, and everyone lived happily ever after.

The pilgrims are glorified and mythologized because the circumstances of the first English-speaking colony in Jamestown were frankly too ugly (for example, they turned to cannibalism to survive) to hold up as an effective national myth.

The pilgrims did not find an empty land any more than Columbus “discovered” anything. Every inch of this land is Indian land. The pilgrims (who did not even call themselves pilgrims) did not come here seeking religious freedom; they already had that in Holland.

They came here as part of a commercial venture. They introduced sexism, racism, anti-lesbian and -gay bigotry, jails and the class system to these shores. One of the very first things they did when they arrived on Cape Cod—before they even made it to Plymouth—was to rob Wampanoag graves at Corn Hill and steal as much of the Indians’ winter provisions of corn and beans as they were able to carry.

They were no better than any other group of Europeans when it came to their treatment of the Indigenous peoples here. And, no, they did not even land at

that sacred shrine called Plymouth Rock, a monument to racism and oppression which we are proud to say we buried in 1995.

The first official “Day of Thanksgiving” was proclaimed in 1637 by Governor Winthrop. He did so to celebrate the safe return of men from the Massachusetts Bay Colony who had gone to Mystic, Conn., to participate in the massacre of over 700 Pequot women, children and men.

About the only true thing in the whole mythology is that these pitiful European strangers would not have survived their first several years in “New England” were it not for the aid of Wampanoag people. What Native people got in return for this help was genocide, theft of our lands and never-ending repression. We are either treated as quaint relics from the past or are, to most people, virtually invisible.

When we dare to stand up for our rights, we are considered unreasonable. When we speak the truth about the history of the European invasion, we are often told to “go back where we came from.” Our roots are right here. They do not extend across any ocean.

National Day of Mourning began in 1970 when a Wampanoag man, Wamsutta Frank James, was asked to speak at a state dinner celebrating the 350th anniversary of the pilgrim landing. He refused to speak false words in praise of the white man for bringing civilization to us poor heathens. Native people from throughout the Americas came to Plymouth where

they mourned their forebears who had been sold into slavery, burned alive, massacred, cheated and mistreated since the arrival of the Pilgrims in 1620.

But the commemoration of National Day of Mourning goes far beyond the circumstances of 1970.

Can we give thanks as we remember Native political prisoner Leonard Peltier, who was framed up by the FBI and has been falsely imprisoned since 1976? Despite mountains of evidence exonerating Peltier and the proven misconduct of federal prosecutors and the FBI, Peltier has been denied a new trial.

To Native people, the case of Peltier is one more ordeal in a litany of wrongdoings committed by the U.S. government against us. While the media in New England present images of the “Pequot miracle” in Connecticut, the vast majority of Native people continue to live in the most abysmal poverty.

Can we give thanks for the fact that, on many reservations, unemployment rates surpass 50 percent? Our life expectancies are much lower, our infant mortality and teen suicide rates much higher than those of white Americans. Racist stereotypes of Native people, such as those perpetuated by the Cleveland Indians, the Atlanta Braves and countless local and national sports teams, persist. Every single one of the more than 350 treaties that Native nations signed has been broken by the U.S. government. The bipartisan budget cuts have severely reduced educational

opportunities for Native youth and the development of new housing on reservations, and have caused deadly cutbacks in healthcare and other necessary services.

Are we to give thanks for being treated as unwelcome in our own country?

When the descendants of the Aztec, Maya and Inca flee to the U.S., the descendants of the wash-ashore pilgrims term them “illegal aliens” and hunt them down.

We object to the “Pilgrim Progress” parade and to what goes on in Plymouth because they are making millions of tourist dollars every year from the false pilgrim mythology. That money is being made off the backs of our slaughtered Indigenous ancestors.

Increasing numbers of people are seeking alternatives to such holidays as Columbus Day and Thanksgiving. They are coming to the conclusion that if we are ever to achieve some sense of community, we must first face the truth about the history of this country and the toll that history has taken on the lives of millions of Indigenous, Black, Latin@, Asian, and poor and working-class white people.

The myth of Thanksgiving, served up with dollops of European superiority and manifest destiny, just does not work for many people in this country. As Malcolm X once said about the African-American experience in America, “We did not land on Plymouth Rock. Plymouth Rock landed on us.” Exactly. □

Solidarity messages to WWP

Economic crisis, elections are big issues

By John Catalinotto
New York

Following are excerpts from some of the 25 messages of solidarity to the Nov. 15-16 Workers World Party National Conference, focused on the worldwide capitalist economic crisis. More will appear in a future issue.

From the **Communist Party of Venezuela**: “Our Party awaits with great interest the conclusions of your conference, since surely it will deal with the important issues that also have implications in Venezuela: the policy of North American President-elect Barack Obama and the financial and economic crisis, events that require a rigorous analysis.”

“The world is immersed in a persistent and ever-larger discussion in the search

for alternatives that make it possible to end poverty, inequalities and war. Socialism has become the most viable option as a system to allow the development of nations, faced with the destruction that capitalism and neoliberalism have inflicted upon us.”

The **Pole of the Communist Rebirth** in France comments: “Less than 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the defeat of the European socialist camp, the same capitalism that then proclaimed that it was the end of history has entered into a structural crisis that Marxists have analyzed as sharpening over the last period.”

The **Communist Party of Bolivia** adds: “The methods the Bush administration has adopted are aimed at saving the bankers and in general the big bourgeoisie, passing on the costs [of the

crisis] to the true producers of social wealth, who are the workers. Also, the peoples of the world, especially those in the weakest position, will also suffer the effects of the crisis. At the same time this will contribute to clarifying the minds of the people so they see that it is the capitalist system in its entirety that is guilty of creating this suffering.”

From the **Spanish state**, the **Red Current** group writes: “You know that your struggle provides an example for workers in countries like ours, with very similar models of growth, and in which the consequences of the crisis affect the working class in a similar way: massive layoffs, scarcities of necessities of life and loss of homes.”

“We are facing, as you are too, the need to rebuild the workers’ movement. Your fight is central for all the peoples of

the world and we value your efforts as we do our own.”

The **Communist Party of the Peoples of Spain** adds: “At this time, the tremendous bankruptcy of the model of capitalist domination confirms and validates the justice of our vision of the world, of Marxist-Leninist analyses and of the necessity of our struggle.”

The **Socialist Unity Center of India** points out that “in all the countries the capitalist class, in its fanatic bid to tide over the crisis, is trying to shift and pass on the entire burden arising out of this crisis to the working class of the respective countries. We strongly feel that at this juncture, it is the first and foremost duty of all genuine Marxist-Leninist parties to come forward to organize the working class against these onslaughts.”

The **New Left-Caamanistas Circles of the Dominican Republic** says: “The great crises of capitalism are breeding ground for self-determination, new democracies and new socialisms.”

The **Union of the People of Galicia** writes: “We are also in agreement regarding the [conference’s] objectives: the defense of the working class and the oppressed people, beginning with the conviction that—as you write in your poster—‘Capitalism is the problem and socialism is the solution.’”

The **Danish Communist Party** says: “It is precisely in moments of serious structural crisis that there are real possibilities of mobilizing the working class and its allies in order to challenge the very exploiting logic of the capitalist system and replace it with a human system built upon new relations of solidarity, social property and internationalism.”

“Let the capitalists pay for their own crisis!” □

Protest ‘greet’ Philippines president

BAYAN-USA and the International League of Peoples’ Struggle (ILPS) organized a protest against the unpopular U.S. imperialist ally President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines. She was scheduled to attend an event at the Sheraton Hotel Nov. 21 in Los Angeles, on her way to the APEC Summit in Peru Nov. 22-23 but canceled. The organizers demanded the ousting of Macapagal-Arroyo and withdrawal of all U.S. troops in the Philippines. Other organizations at the rally included ILPS member organizations International Action Center and the International Migrants Alliance as well as the FMLN, Puerto Rican Alliance, Anti-Racist Action, Anakbayan and an Al-Awda member.

—John Parker

Photo: Speaker Kuusela Hilo from Bayan USA, Nov. 21.

WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH



Inspiration from global resistance and revolution

By Tyneisha Bowens

In this time of global capitalist crisis, it is in the struggles and resistance of the oppressed in Colombia, the Philippines, Palestine, Iraq and Nigeria that we can find inspiration to fight imperialist war and global domination. It is in the revolutionary paths of Venezuela and Bolivia and the ongoing process of the Cuban revolution that we can see the possibilities of what a united people can do.

I would like to give you an image of that possibility.

In the summer of 2007 I took a trip with other members of the FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) youth group and Workers World Party comrades to Cuba to gain political education as well as to see what socialism can bring to the people of the world.

We went to government programs, centers and schools. We visited the School of Marxism, the Center of Sexual Education, and the Hurricane Preparedness and Weather Center in Havana. On these visits we learned about how Cuba ensures the inclusive and analytical education of

its people, how they protect themselves from the deadly hurricanes each season, and much more.

I gained the most from our visits to the graduation of medical students and our visit to a local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, where I learned the often-unacknowledged effects and gains of revolution.

The class of medical students was a true reflection of the compassion and reach of the Cuban revolution. The graduating class was truly international, with students from almost every oppressed and impoverished country in the world, as well as eight students of color from the U.S. Their education was not only free—which means for them a life without student debt—but it was focused on treating the poor and oppressed of the world with preventative healthcare.

With the economic struggles that the U.S. has forced on the Cuban people, Cuba is still able to educate doctors from around the world and send doctors to countries in need of medical aid. This is an example of human nature and international community that we can aspire to.

On July 26th, a revolutionary holiday for the Cuban people, we visited a local CDR. There are CDRs in neighborhoods all over Cuba that provide a way for the



Tyneisha Bowens

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Cuban people to stay politically involved, informed and empowered in their communities and in their government. This is where elections and meetings about the law, the government and the ongoing revolution take place.

We were welcomed to a party of celebration and endurance at the CDR. I was fed until I was full and was invited to listen to first-hand stories of revolutionary battles and the progress that

the revolution has achieved.

I was amazed by the power and political presence of the children. An Afro-Cuban girl stated her life goal of being a doctor, with full confidence that she would achieve this goal. I was empowered by an old woman's claims that she would defend her revolution and her country with the spoon in her hand if she had to. This is hope and dedication we must use to drive our revolution.

The lessons we can learn are many. I have learned the importance of solidarity and compassion from Cuba, of struggle from Venezuela, of community from Palestine. And from all revolutionary struggles around the world I have learned the importance of passing on our revolutionary passions to each generation.

Be sure to hold on to the points that bring you inspiration, empower your fists and overwhelm your hearts. These are the fuels of revolution here and abroad, and we must hold fast to them. □

The contradictions of U.S. imperialism

Continued from page 5

displaced or refugees. That is the great victory of the "surge."

Anti-occupation sentiment among Iraqis is stronger than ever, while the conditions of life are beyond desperate.

These were the opening wars for U.S. global reconquest.

Think of terms used just five years ago. "New World Order," "New American Century," "Shock and Awe" and the bragging about "Mission Accomplished." Remember the whole criminal plan for total U.S. world domination through the use of force? Remember the "Axis of Evil" hit list?

But they can't take Iraq back to a colonial age.

This is the same problem that Israel has with the heroic Palestinian struggle. Despite ceasefires, Israeli tanks and helicopters have bombarded Gaza again and again. Yet the Palestinian fighters have built hundreds of tunnels and blasted through the border wall.

Over the summer there were huge strikes in South Korea that shut down industry, shipping and the ports. Even at protests against imported U.S. beef, millions raised the political demand for U.S. troops out now.

The U.S. has more than 700 bases, and

is on the prowl for more in Africa and South Asia. But from the Philippines to Poland and the Czech Republic to Ecuador the demands are "U.S. bases out."

Now every capitalist competitor is no longer willing to accept the desperate and jarring maneuvers of U.S. policy. The European imperialist allies have withdrawn troops from Iraq, are pulling back in Afghanistan and refused to back up the U.S. in Georgia.

The newly emerging Russian capitalist class imagined that they would be partners with U.S. imperialism in the long-term exploitation of the giant, once-socially-owned industries.

But as they watched the former republics of the USSR turned into pawns and military bases arrayed against them, finally they asserted themselves in Georgia this summer. This was another big setback for the U.S.

But militarism is a stimulant. It has run its course, yet the U.S. economy cannot live without it. It is an addiction that is pulling the capitalist economy down.

What is needed is for workers to become conscious as a class of the cost of endless militarism, of the need for solidarity and of the need to develop an awareness of their own collective power for their own survival. □

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FRIDAY, DEC. 5

Free the Cuban 5 Dinner/Reception with Magali Llorca Ruiz, mother of Fernando González, and Leonard Weinglass

See the new documentary, **Against Silence in Our Own Voices: Families of the Five Speak Out**, by Sally O'Brien and Jennifer Wager. (special donation requested for dinner \$25) Please RSVP to laborexchange@aol.com

SATURDAY, DEC. 6

U.S.-Cuba/Venezuela/International Relations FTAA/NAFTA: the ALBA Alternative Special segment on Int'l Day of Solidarity to Free U.S. political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal

SUNDAY, DEC. 7

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Invited panelists (partial list):

CUBA: Ernesto Freire Cazanás, *Head Officer, Foreign Relations, CTC*; Carmen Godínez, *Dir., Americas, Dept. of Foreign Relations, CTC*; Ramon Cardona, *Gen.-Sec. WFTU America Region*; Andrés Morejón, *ICAP*; Silvia García, *Nat'l Assembly*; **VENEZUELA:** Alfredo Spooner, *Vice-Pres., Federación Ferroviaria, CST*; Carlos Lopez, *Pres. Federación de Trabajadores Universitarios*; **ECUADOR:** Edgar Luis Sarango Correa, *Vice-Pres., Confederación de Trabajadores*; **BOLIVIA:** Mario López Choque, *Sec.-Gen'l. de la COB*; **NICARAGUA:** Representante; **COLOMBIA:** Edgar Paez, *SINALTRAINAL*; **HAITI:** Paul Loulou Chery, *Sec.-Gen'l., Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH)*; **PHILIPPINES:** Elmer Labog, *Chairperson, Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU)*; **MEXICO:** Sindicato Mexicano Electricistas (SME); **MEXICO/U.S.:** Elvira Arellano and Emma Lozano, *La Familia Latina Unida, Chicago*; **U.S.:** Cristina Vasquez, *UNITE-HERE*; Clarence Thomas, *ILWU, ...and more*

Understanding the world situation

Another aspect of 'Low-Wage Capitalism'

Continued from page 4

lions in World War II.

The U.S. imperialists threatened the USSR with nuclear war and forced it into an enormously expensive arms race. All this wore down many of those in leading positions in the Communist Party so that when the counter-revolution came, it was party leaders like Mikhail Gorbachev who initiated the so-called reforms, and the workers were totally confused.

While we never closed our eyes to the problems in the USSR, we also understood that it remained a bastion of strength against the rapacious imperialists. The

USSR aided innumerable national liberation movements. It helped the Cuban Revolution survive imperialist sabotage, invasion and blockade.

Its very existence forced the imperialists to allow better conditions for the workers, especially in Western Europe. It kept the exploiters from being able to plunder one-sixth of the earth's surface for its valuable minerals, timber and oil.

All this changed once the USSR was pulled down.

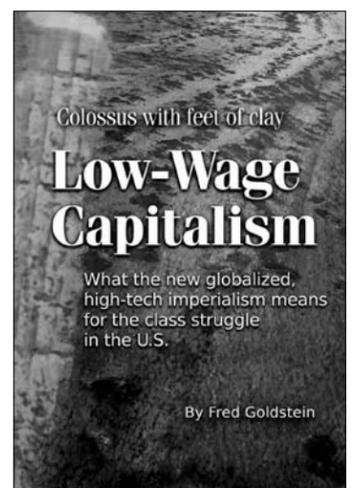
We need to understand not only the U.S. but the world in order to chart a path to victory for the working class. □

Low-Wage Capitalism

Timely new book 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.

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Lucha del pueblo colombiano, ejemplo de resistencia

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Compañeras y compañeros,

El compañero Sam Marcy, fundador del Partido Workers World/Mundo Obrero, escribió un artículo en el 1983 durante la primera campaña electoral de Jesse Jackson para la presidencia de los EEUU sobre el derecho a la autodeterminación y la lucha de clases. Yo quisiera citar un segmento. Marcy escribió: "En los tiempos de Marx tal y como aparece en el Manifiesto Comunista, la consigna era 'trabajadores del mundo, uníos'. A esta consigna Lenin le añadió 'los oprimidos'. De modo que ahora es "¡Trabajadores/as y oprimidos/as del mundo, uníos!"

Esto introdujo una diferencia fundamental en la tarea de acercamiento a los pueblos oprimidos en el exterior, pero también, y no menos importante, al pueblo súper explotado y oprimido de aquí en las colonias internas. Aunque ya han pasado muchas décadas desde la formulación de Lenin, ahora más que nunca se necesita su correcta aplicación puesto que la agresión del capitalismo monopólico se hace más peligrosa y amenazante cada día que pasa. (WW/MO 8 de diciembre de 1983)

Luego de 25 años, la globalización neoliberal ha hecho que esta formulación se torne más relevante y urgente. Y aunque se aplica a toda la clase trabajadora y pueblos oprimidos del planeta, yo quisiera relacionarlo con los pueblos y las luchas en América Latina y el Caribe. [Nota de la redacción: Joubert-Ceci habló brevemente de las muchas luchas en la región, enfocándose luego en Colombia].

La victoria de Obama fue celebrada



Berta Joubert-Ceci

MO FOTO: G. DUNKEL

a través del mundo y también en las Américas. En Colombia, por ejemplo, que tiene la segunda población más grande de afrodescendientes en Latinoamérica después Brasil, había caravanas de coches que sonaban las bocinas y la gente bailaba al igual que se hacía en mi vecindario en Filadelfia.

En ninguna parte de Latinoamérica y el Caribe han estado las masas luchando más feroz y firmemente que en Colombia. Las mujeres, la juventud, las/os defensoras/es de los derechos humanos y las/os sindicalistas desafían las fuerzas criminales y represivas del régimen fascista del presidente Álvaro Uribe-su policía, su ejército y sus paramilitares.

Colombia es ahora el centro del imperialismo de los EEUU en la región, el Israel de Latinoamérica. Colombia es la esperanza del Pentágono y de la clase dominante para minar los gobiernos progresistas de Venezuela, Bolivia y Ecuador.

Es la esperanza de las corporaciones estadounidenses para continuar extrayendo enormes ganancias y recursos naturales del pueblo colombiano, particularmente a través del Tratado de Libre Comercio.

Pero dos recientes luchas que aún están en curso, frente a una crisis financiera severa en ese país, le han hecho muy difícil la tarea de seguir con sus negocios como de costumbre al gobierno paramilitar de Uribe y a varias de las corporaciones de los EEUU. Y lo que es más crucial es que estas luchas están siendo libradas por los dos sectores de la sociedad colombiana que han sido los más excluidos y explotados: los pueblos afrocolombiano e indígena.

El pasado mes de septiembre, cuando la tentativa de negociar con las compañías falló, 12.500 cortadores de caña de azúcar se fueron en huelga en el sudoeste del país. Trabajan en ocho refineras de azúcar que producen azúcar y etanol para el beneficio de la oligarquía colombiana y de las compañías estadounidenses Cargill y Exxon Mobil. La gran mayoría de los cortadores de caña (conocidos como "corteros") son de descendencia africana. Su existencia en esta industria altamente subvencionada es, como dijo un trabajador, "como esclavos, lo único que ya no tenemos cadenas."

Los corteros trabajan duramente cortando caña por 12-16 horas al día para recibir un pago mensual de \$150 a \$300. De los 12.500 trabajadores, solamente 485 son empleados directos. Unos 9.500 están subcontratados a través de las infames Cooperativas de Trabajo Asociado. Las CTAs no son sino un esfuerzo para minar y substituir los sindicatos y explotar aún más las/os trabajadoras/es colombianas/os.

Bajo una CTA el/la trabajador/a es un/a "socio/a" de la compañía, no un/a trabajador/a, y tiene que pagar su cuidado médico y no tiene ningún beneficio, ni vacaciones, nada. Tienen incluso que proveerse su propio transporte y herramientas para cosechar la caña de azúcar.

Hay 10.000 CTAs en diversas industrias a través del país. Terminar con estas "cooperativas" ha sido una de las demandas de los corteros. También exigieron pago de domingos y días festivos, contrato directo de trabajo, estabilidad de empleo, cuidado médico, educación y vivienda.

Ahora, después de 56 días en huelga, después de la intimidación por los paramilitares al servicio de las compañías, después del uso de la policía para despejar los trabajadores en huelga de los trapiches, después de la detención de varios líderes y de incluso los ayudantes de un senador progresista que apoyó la huelga, los trabajadores en siete de las ocho refineras han logrado acuerdos con la compañía y finalizaron la huelga.

No todas sus demandas fueron resueltas, pero como dijo Adolfo Tigreros, consultor de uno de los sindicatos: "El logro más importante fue poner las CTA en el ojo público, de modo que [la gente] se de cuenta que son un modelo para minar los derechos laborales y los sindicatos en Colombia."

Durante la huelga y la movilización, los corteros recibieron gran solidaridad

de sindicatos, organizaciones sociales y del pueblo indígena que conducía un "minga," un encuentro y protesta pacífica. Desde el 12 de octubre, pueblos indígenas de Colombia comenzaron una valiente caminata a través de las mismas regiones donde los corteros se encontraban en huelga, en el sudoeste.

Caminaron centenares de kilómetros para intentar reunirse y confrontar al presidente Uribe con sus demandas: No al TLC con los EEUU; reforma agraria; fin al terrorismo del estado contra el pueblo indígena y los/as líderes sindicales y sociales. La agenda no es sólo para el pueblo indígena, es la agenda del pueblo.

Tres veces intentaron "caminar la palabra", largas caminatas a través de la región al sudoeste. La primera vez, la policía mató a tres personas e hirió docenas en una confrontación. Cuando las/os caminantes- más de 30.000 indígenas y sus partidarios llegaron a Cali para reunirse con Uribe, esperaron tres horas. Después de esperar vanamente, se fueron.

Uribe finalmente llegó, pero para entonces había solamente sólo cerca de doscientas personas. Uribe les llamó terroristas.

Las/os caminantes intentaron otra vez reunirse con él en La María. Uribe hizo promesas vacías, ninguna devolución de tierras, nada. Ahora las/os indígenas están caminando otra vez; esta vez a Bogotá. Esperan llegar allí el viernes 21 de noviembre.

Éstas han sido no sólo caminatas largas, sino que también han sido esfuerzos por organizar y unirse con los diversos movimientos sociales. El pueblo indígena ha demostrado gran solidaridad con los corteros y ha incluido las demandas de los corteros en sus demandas. Llamen a este movimiento una Minga de la Resistencia Social y Comunitaria.

El gobierno de Uribe está siendo expuesto por el pueblo en Colombia y por la comunidad internacional como uno que tiene nexos cercanos a los paramilitares, al tráfico de droga, a las muchas masacres y asesinatos de indígenas, afrocolombianos/as, líderes campesinos/as, sindicales y sociales.

Un informe reciente de Amnistía Internacional dice que bajo Uribe en el año 2007, fueron asesinados 1.400 civiles y 305.000 fueron desplazados, más que en 2006. Hasta ahora, en este año, han asesinado a 45 líderes sindicales. El año pasado 39 fueron asesinados/as.

La lucha del pueblo colombiano es nuestra lucha. En esta época de globalización, la consigna, "la lucha de los/as trabajadores/as no tiene fronteras," está más vigente que nunca.

Digamos, como dicen en Puerto Rico, "que la crisis la paguen los ricos". Eso es lo que están haciendo los/as trabajadores/as y oprimidos/as en Colombia.

Absorbamos aquí, en el corazón del imperialismo, las lecciones de la lucha de nuestros/as hermanos y hermanas al sur del Río Grande. Unámonos y luchemos juntos y juntas contra este régimen opresivo de explotación.

¡Trabajadoras y trabajadores y oprimidos y oprimidos del mundo, unámonos! □

5ta Conferencia Sindical Cuba/Venezuela/México/Norte América 2008 5, 6 y 7 de diciembre

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¡La lucha obrera no tiene fronteras!

Viernes, 5 de diciembre
Recepción-Cena

'Liberen a los Cinco Cubanos'

con Magali Llorca Ruiz madre de Fernando González, y Leonard Weinglass
Proyección del nuevo documental 'Against Silence in Our Own Voices: Families of the Five Speak Out', por Sally O'Brien y Jennifer Wager.
(Donación especial para la cena - \$25)
Favor de responder a laborexchange@aol.com)

Sábado, 6 de diciembre
EEUU-Cuba/Venezuela/Relaciones Internacionales

TLC's/TLCNA: la alternativa del ALBA
Segmento especial sobre el Día Internacional en Solidaridad para Liberar al prisionero político estadounidense Mumia Abu-Jamal

Domingo, 7 de diciembre
Inmigración entre EEUU y América Latina

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¡A sólo unos cuantos minutos de San Diego, Calif., usted puede intercambiar ideas y experiencias con líderes de la lucha obrera en América Latina!

Lista parcial de panelistas invitados/as:
CUBA: Ernesto Freire Cazanaz, Jefe Dpto. Relaciones Internacionales, Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC); Carmen Godínez, Funcionaria Dept. Relaciones Internacionales CTC; Ramón Cardona, Sec.-Gen. FSM Región de las Américas; Andrés Morejón, ICAP; Silvia García, Asamblea Nacional; **VENEZUELA:** Alfredo Spooner, Vice-Pres., Federación Ferroviaria, CST; Carlos López, Pres. Federación de Trabajadores Universitarios; **ECUADOR:** Edgar Luis Sarango Correa, Vice-Pres., Confederación de Trabajadores; **BOLIVIA:** Mario López Choque, Sec.-Gen'l. de la COB; **NICARAGUA:** Representante; **COLOMBIA:** Edgar Paez, SINALTRAINAL; **HAITI:** Paul Loulou Chery, Sec.-Gen'l., Confederación de Trabajadores Haitianos (CTH); **FILIPINAS:** Elmer Labog, Director, Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU); **MÉXICO:** Sindicato Mexicano Electricistas (SME); **MÉXICO/EEUU:** Elvira Arellano y Emma Lozano, La Familia Latina Unida, Chicago; **EEUU:** Cristina Vásquez, UNITE-HERE; Clarence Thomas, ILWU, ...y muchos/as otros/as más...