

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

workers.org

JAN. 8, 2008

VOL. 51, NO. 1

50¢

Katrina report cites racist terror

Vigilantes, cops shot down Black people

By Gloria Rubac

In an investigative article released this week, a reporter who spent a year and a half in New Orleans connects the dots on reports that have circulated ever since Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005 showing that Black people were dying from indiscriminate shootings as well as from drowning after Katrina.

"Katrina's Hidden Race War," is a shocking investigation of racist vigilante violence written by A. C. Thompson for the Jan. 5 issue of *The Nation* magazine.

Thompson's exposé focuses on the predominately white neighborhood of Algiers Point, a national historic district made up of 150-year-old Victorian homes with fresh coats of paint and well-manicured lawns.

In Algiers Point, which itself is surrounded by the general community of mostly African-American Algiers, a system of racist vigilante justice was established while the police turned a blind eye.

After Katrina hit, the national news media screamed about roving gangs of "thugs" in the Superdome and "looters" rampaging through New Orleans. There was, in fact, serious crime going on but it wasn't in the Superdome and it wasn't "looters"—a codename for poor, Black people.

According to Thompson's report, it was bands of whites in Algiers Point who shot many and killed a reported 11 Black men. These murders, these serious crimes, were never reported on Fox News and have never been investigated by police or any other officials.

On Dec. 19, Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez interviewed Thompson as well as Donnell Herrington, a survivor of the vigilante violence, on Democracy Now. (www.democracynow.org)

Herrington nearly died on Sept. 1, 2005, after being shot by a white vigilante while he was heading to an official evacuation site at the Algiers Point Ferry terminal. His

story was featured in *The Nation* article.

When asked by Goodman if he would like to see justice brought to those who tried to murder him, Herrington said, "Yeah, of course. Of course. I would like to see all those who participated in that horrible, horrible act of violence—I would like to see all those people be brought to justice."

Goodman then asked him what it would take to bring about justice. "You know, this is the kind of thing that many, many people can investigate: the local DA, the local police, the state attorney general, the federal authorities. If the public demands that the authorities actually take a look at this, it may well happen. But it's going to take the public pushing the authorities to do something," Thompson said.

Since Thompson's lengthy piece was published, many e-mail lists and Facebook sites are promoting it and proposing pressure be put on officials to investigate.

Color of Change, an activist organization

Continued on page 3

BUDGET CUTS=FIGHTBACK

- Attacks on U.S. public schools
- NYC MTA: 'This shoe's for you!'
- NYS: Slashing legal aid
- Buffalo: Transit win

6-7



Richmond, Calif.

WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

NEW SCHOOL TAKEOVER

Student sit-in victory

4

Free Muntadar al-Zaidi!

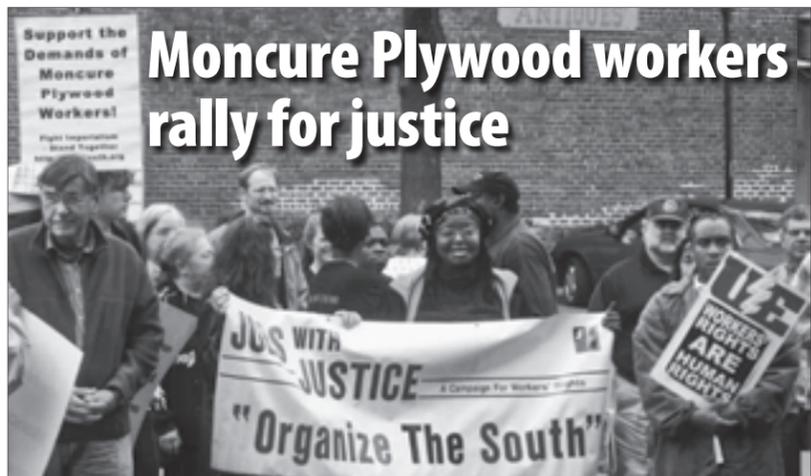
Worldwide support for Iraqi journalist

10



Striking Moncure Plywood workers from IAM local W369 rally outside Chatham County courthouse in Pittsboro, N.C. along with over 100 community supporters on Dec. 20, the 5 month anniversary of when the workers were forced out on strike. The bosses tried to make workers concede 60-hour work weeks, 300% increase in health insurance payments, attacks on seniority and more. Angaza Laughinghouse, president of UE 150, right with cap, is on the bullhorn. To read more about this important strike, read the top article on page 5.

—Dante Strobino



Moncure Plywood workers rally for justice



WW PHOTOS: BEN CARROLL

Subscribe to Workers World

Eight weeks trial: \$4 One year: \$25

NAME _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

WORKERS WORLD 55 W. 17 St. NY, NY 10011 212-627-2994
www.workers.org



This week ...

The road to build consciousness, fightback

Excerpts from a talk given by Sharon Black at the Nov. 15-16 WWP National Conference.

Karl Marx proclaimed that “being determines consciousness” and already we can see this in our own experience in the foreclosure struggle.

In Baltimore on Oct. 25 we held a “Bailout the People” demonstration during a horrific rain-storm while C-SPAN filmed the rally, which it later aired.

Because of that coverage, we received scores of calls from all over the country. A woman from Missouri called saying she wanted to help us. What could she do? Did we have a protest nearby that she could attend? A Wisconsin woman explained her knees were “shot from her job and she couldn’t walk anymore,” but she could do something from her house. She had a friend who had been foreclosed.

A nonunion truck driver called several times from Arkansas to give a 10-point program for truckers who are being abused on the job. In New Jersey a young man was thrilled to hear that we were considering a march on Wall Street.

These calls were dramatically different from the ones we received when we first mobilized for the Mortgage Bankers Association conference protest called by the National Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions in April.

The callers in April were angry about the foreclosure crisis but most were primarily interested in seeing if the network could counsel them on how to stop an individual foreclosure or find a solution to a particular problem. Many of these calls were very moving and all of them certainly important.

But the calls we received after the federal bank bailout reflected a higher level in consciousness. Workers wanted to know what could they do, how could they get involved. There were also many more questions about what we thought the solutions were.

In the space of a few months, you could sense that a change had taken place.

It takes a revolutionary party

One of Lenin’s important contributions was to figure out what kind of organization it would take to throw out the old regime and ultimately bring the working class to power.

The old forms of organization couldn’t cut it—where people sat around debating and even if they did arrive at some conclusion, each individual did and said whatever they wanted, without discipline of action or resolve. This



Sharon Black

WW PHOTO: GARY WILSON

certainly could not successfully challenge the ruling elite with all their centralized power—with their secret police and jails.

Lenin also saw with his own eyes that the spontaneous actions of the workers, no matter how heroic they might be, couldn’t do it either. He learned this from history—from the Paris Commune and from the Russian workers themselves.

It would take a party of revolutionaries who were dedicated to distilling the lessons of working-class struggle and who could guide that struggle based on political theory tempered with real experience.

Without theory—meaning an understanding of how capitalism and imperialism work in their totality—and a broader goal of eradicating the old sys-

tem and putting in place a new socialist one, the workers could never advance beyond small reforms that were ultimately lost.

Lenin wanted the Bolshevik Party to be a workers’ party. Not that everyone had to be a worker or from the working class. Everyone who was interested—including intellectuals, youth and everyone from all walks of life—should be in the party. What was crucial was that they had revolutionary working-class politics and were doers.

Lenin thought it was critical to win the workers themselves. And the first party to win a proletarian revolution made it a priority to energetically pursue winning workers and the oppressed. They set up underground schools to train new cadre.

Workers World Party seeks to be the same kind of party. And since its inception we have struggled to do this. Our great difficulty is that history—particularly the collapse of the Soviet Union and the relative strength of capitalism borne on the backs of the oppressed colonial world—has made this process difficult. In some sense our members have had the task of keeping the fire burning rather than being able to spread the torch.

But everything is changing. The time has come to spread the torch.

This economic crisis has and will continue to open up the eyes of thousands of workers to new ideas. We need to go to the workers, to be with them in their struggles, to recruit them to the party—especially the most oppressed—the Black, Latin@, Native, Asian, youth, women, LGBT and immigrant workers—everyone.

Revolutionary Marxism has the answers for why and how this could happen and it has the answers to how we can build an entirely new world. □

★ In the U.S.

- Vigilantes, cops shot down Black people 1
- Moncure Plywood workers rally for justice 1
- The road to build consciousness, fightback 2
- Ramsey Clark stands with Chuck Turner 3
- Rosa Parks Human Rights Day protest 3
- New School students occupy building and win! 4
- Progressive journalist fights felony charges 4
- Southern conference organizes for justice 5
- Atlanta coalition says no to hospital cutbacks 5
- Strikers say: ‘Boycott Stella D’oro’ 5
- Cutbacks threaten public education across U.S. 6
- State slashes budget for legal services 6
- Riders resist cuts, layoffs, fare hikes 7
- People win victory over transit rate hikes 7
- Support U.S. war resisters 8

★ Around the world

- International briefs 8
- Anti-repression uprising takes root throughout Greece . . 9
- IAC/FIST letter to Greek gov’t 9
- World’s people rally to defend Iraqi journalist 10
- Sudan maintains defiance 11

★ Editorials

- Iraq now, Vietnam then 10

★ Noticias En Español

- Lecciones de la lucha en Republic Windows 12

Workers World
55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: (212) 627-2994
Fax: (212) 675-7869
E-mail: editor@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org
Vol. 51, No. 11 • Jan. 8, 2008
Closing date: Dec. 21, 2008

Editor: Deirdre Griswold
Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie Feinberg, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
West Coast Editor: John Parker

Contributing Editors: Abayomi Azikiwe, Greg Butterfield, Jaimeson Champion, G. Dunkel, Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Hales, Kris Hamel, David Hoskins, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Cheryl LaBash, Milt Neidenberg, Bryan G. Pfeifer, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Gloria Rubac

Technical Staff: Sue Davis, Shelley Ettinger, Bob McCubbin, Maggie Vascassenno

Mundo Obrero: Carl Glenn, Teresa Gutierrez, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Donna Lazarus, Michael Martinez, Carlos Vargas

Copyright © 2008 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved.

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

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at www.workers.org/email.php.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

This WW issue is the last one for 2008. There will be no WW printed between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. The next WW issue will be distributed on Jan. 8. We hope that you have enjoyed reading a selection of archival articles commemorating the 50th anniversary of Workers World Party and our newspaper. We look forward to providing you with the most up to date analysis and news on the many struggles to come in 2009. Thanks for all of your support —WW edit staff

Prepare for the year to come with with a subscription to the paper that will give you frontline news from the struggle against cutbacks, layoffs, foreclosures, deportations . . . **Workers World** Introductory sub 8 weeks \$4 or one year for \$25. Subscribe online: www.workers.org

JOIN US.

Workers World Party (WWP) fights on all issues that face the working class and oppressed peoples—Black and white, Latin@, Asian, Arab and Native peoples, women and men, young and old, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, trans, disabled, working, unemployed and students. If you would like to know more about WWP, or to join us in these struggles, contact the branch nearest you.

National Office
55 W. 17 St.,
New York, NY 10011
212-627-2994;
Fax (212) 675-7869
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 424,
Atlanta, GA 30301
404-627-0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St., Bsm.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443-909-8964
baltimore@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.,
Boston, MA 02130
617-983-3835
Fax (617) 983-3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-883-2534
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
773-381-5839
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216-531-4004
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.,
Detroit, MI 48202
313-831-0750
detroit@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 595
Houston,
TX 77001-0595
713-861-5965
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
111N. La Brea Ave., #408
Inglewood, CA 90301
310-677-8647
la@workers.org

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 23843,
Philadelphia,
PA 19143
610-931-2615
phila@workers.org

Raleigh, N.C.
raleigh@workers.org

Richmond, Va.
P.O. Box 14602,
Richmond, VA 23221
richmond@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
585-436-6458
rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego, CA 92163
619-692-0355

San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-738-4739
sf@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300,
Washington, DC 20037,
dc@workers.org

No racist frame-up!

Ramsey Clark stands with Chuck Turner

By Frank Neisser
Boston

Life-long civil rights advocate Ramsey Clark, winner of the 2008 United Nations Human Rights Award and founder of the International Action Center, held a press conference in front of the JFK Federal Building here on Dec. 17 to defend Chuck Turner, an African-American community leader and five-term Boston city councilor, against racist frame-up charges from U.S. Attorney Michael Sullivan.

Clark called for an investigation of Sullivan for "pursuing a prosecution that was politically and racially motivated" and going forward with a case that was "worse than sloppy." Clark cited Turner's commitment to fighting for justice and civil rights over four decades.

Clark explained that in the 1960s and 1970s, "Apparently every African-American member of the Congress was investigated and rumors of criminality were circulated. And we've got to do better than that. I'm honored to be here with Chuck Turner. I'm convinced that he'll be vindicated. I'm outraged that the public and he are hurt by this assault on his character."

Clark, a former U.S. attorney general, pointed out the pattern of abuse of



office across the country by the outgoing Bush administration. He called for a moratorium on prosecutions until the new administration can conduct an independent investigation and replace U.S. Attorney Sullivan and the current attorney

general.

People's lawyer John Pavlos from the Turner defense team said Clark's stature, intelligence and energy will be "a huge boost for Chuck Turner" and the effort to "vindicate him of these bogus charges." He characterized the case against Turner as "nothing more than a false fishing expedition."

Turner expressed tremendous gratitude for Clark's appearance in Boston seven days after receiving the U.N. award for lifetime achievement in the human rights field. He called the prosecution's actions "not just an attempt to disgrace me but an attempt to discourage people standing for justice across the city, state and country."

Turner said the country's "soul must be cleansed for the sake of our children and grandchildren." Turner and Clark were joined by over 70 community and labor supporters, including a security squad from United Steel Workers Local 8751 Boston School Bus Drivers, Haitian community leaders, activists from the International Action Center, Bishop Filipe Teixeira OFSJC and others who marched from the

steps of City Hall to the federal building.

The press conference was covered by the major TV media; the Boston Herald; and the Bay State Banner, the newspaper of Boston's African-American community.

Meeting with activists and supporters in City Hall, Turner and Clark called for a nationwide campaign to investigate the investigators and prosecute the prosecutors, as well as a moratorium on politically-motivated prosecutions and dirty tricks by the outgoing administration. These include attacks on the environment, enacting last-minute executive orders and regulations, and locking in open-ended continuation of war.

Such a campaign is being prepared. For more information and to participate, go to supportchuckturner.com, iacoboston.org or iacenter.org.

Community support for Turner continues to grow. Hundreds packed the hall for a support rally at Roxbury Community College on Dec. 9, in advance of his latest court appearance on Dec. 10. The event was an outpouring from the community of people of all ages, with youth cultural performances by Miya X of FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) and the Foundation.

Supporters also packed the courtroom and the hall outside on Dec. 10 when Turner was arraigned in Boston. The case against him has been falling apart, with the FBI's undercover witness contradicting the FBI's own affidavit in the case.

But in an abuse of prosecutorial power by the FBI and the U.S. attorney's office, without any new facts or evidence the prosecutors filed a superseding indictment accusing Turner of a joint conspiracy with State Sen. Dianne Wilkerson. This is an attempt to deny him the right to confront the witnesses and case against him in a probable cause hearing.

The arraignment on the new conspiracy charge took only ten minutes in court. Turner emerged surrounded by supporters and his attorneys, who condemned the prosecutors' maneuver for the assembled media. The next court appearance is scheduled for late January. □

Katrina report confirms racist terror

Continued from page 1

tion that came into prominence promoting justice for the Jena 6 defendants, did a massive e-mail blast that included letters to Louisiana's new governor, Bobby Jindal, Louisiana Attorney General James "Buddy" Caldwell and the U.S. Department of Justice, urging them to investigate the Algiers Point attacks.

A reign of terror in New Orleans

Sister Krystal Muhammad told Workers World, "When the Panthers first got to Algiers Point in New Orleans, it was seven days after Hurricane Katrina had hit. I remember because the headline in the paper that day said '7th Day of Hell.' Sister Queen had called us. She didn't have power. A large tree was down on her property on Newton Street. We had gone to get her and others who wanted to leave. When we got there, we saw something I couldn't believe. A body in the road, so bloated and smelling. Right there, stretched out spread eagle. He had a bullet hole in the middle of his head.

"We saw police cars drive by, right past the body, and they kept on driving. They did nothing and there was a dead body in the street with a bullet hole in his head."

Muhammad and other members of the Houston chapter of the New Black Panther Party, had gone to New Orleans to help take people out after evacuees in Houston's Astrodome told them that many buses were taking only whites out of New Orleans.

What she and others found in New Orleans was desperate, hungry, hot and thirsty people living under a dusk-to-dawn curfew in an atmosphere created by former Gov. Kathleen Blanco and former Mayor Ray Nagin, where any Black person was labeled a suspected looter and became a target not only of racist bands of vigilantes but also of the police themselves.

"As soon as we got into New Orleans, there were spray-painted signs everywhere saying, 'If you loot, we'll shoot!' Mayor Nagin ordered over 1,000 cops to stop

trying to rescue people and to go after so-called looters instead," Muhammad said.

The NBPP says that while they heard reports of the vigilante activity in Algiers Point, they also heard many in the community talk about other extra-judicial killings and those were done by the police themselves.

"The body in the street at Sister Queen's house—all the neighbors said that the police had killed him and left his body there to rot. They saw this.

"We took this one family on our bus back to Houston. The boys were Mario and Roland and they were with their grandmother and their uncles. Their mother had been arrested walking down the street with a loaf of bread and some water. They took her like a criminal, not like a mother looking out for her children.

"Another family was a young woman named Tasha and her little sister and her two daughters. They told us that while under curfew they watched the police drive down the street while people were sitting in their own yards and the cops would point guns at them with the red beam of light shining on their foreheads. The cops told them to get inside. It was hot and there was no power," Muhammad said.

The ruling classes of Louisiana and the U.S. have covered up the crimes committed after Katrina because the most serious crimes were committed by the government itself. It was inept, unprepared, uncaring and racist officials that caused a reign of terror over New Orleans.

There are four lawsuits pending in federal court in New Orleans arising from the police decision not to allow people to walk on foot across the Crescent City Connection Bridge to leave the chaos of Hurricane Katrina. On Dec. 19 the federal judge dismissed one of the central claims and sided with the police, saying they were only trying to keep law and order.

Order will come to New Orleans when the people living there can control their own lives free of racists, whether in City Hall or in the streets. □

RHODE ISLAND

Rosa Parks Human Rights Day protest

By Frank Neisser
Providence, R.I.

A spirited protest of over 50 community activists was staged here on Dec. 1 to commemorate the 53rd anniversary of the arrest of Rosa Parks in Montgomery, Ala., for refusing to give up her seat on a city bus for a white man. Parks' act launched the modern Civil Rights Movement.

The protest was sponsored by the Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee of the Rhode Island Peoples Assembly/Asemblea Popular. Participating and supporting groups included DARE (Direct Action for Rights & Equality), DARE Youth, UMAM (Urban Men Against Murder), SOCK (Saving Our Club Kids), SGAW (Sisters Gathering at the Well), NOI (Nation of Islam), The George Wiley Center, the Laborers Union, and State, City and Municipal Employees Council 94.

The demonstrators demanded bail out the people, not the banks; fund human needs, not capitalist greed; tax the rich, not the poor; foreclose on the wars, not our



homes; feed the people, not the Pentagon; stop foreclosures, evictions, utility shut-offs, layoffs and RIPTA (Rhode Island Public Transit Authority) service cuts; no city, state or federal cuts to human needs; full employment and jobs at living wages; universal health care; affordable housing and utilities; secure pensions and social security; and a green future.

The afternoon demonstration took place on Broad Street in Providence, across the street from the town of Crossroads. The protest was kicked off and coordinated by Mary Kay Harris of DARE. A large contingent of DARE youth marched in with a banner to join the demonstration. □

New School students occupy building and win!

By Tyneisha Bowens

Students at The New School in New York City formed the New School Radical Student Union and occupied the dining hall of a New School building on Dec. 17, demanding more accessible and democratic education.

The Union demanded the removal of New School President Bob Kerrey, Executive Vice President James Murtha, and war profiteer and treasurer of the New School Board of Trustees, Robert B. Millard.

Other demands included transparency and disclosure of the university budget and investment, money toward scholarships and reducing tuition, and the provision that students, faculty and staff elect the New School president, executive vice president and provost.

The students forming this coalition included members of New School Students for a Democratic Society, Student Environmental Action Coalition and United for Peace and Justice, as well as independent graduate students.

Occupying the building at 65 5th Ave. was an expression of student power as part of a year-long struggle for administrative transparency and accountability to students, faculty and staff.

When asked what drove the students to occupy the building, a New School student explained to Workers World: "We have been pissed off about this administration for a long time and a lot of us wanted to do something about it. So after the faculty vote of no-confidence regarding President Kerrey, students met and talked about restoring the radical New School foundations.

"We decided on that building because that building was supposed to be torn down over winter break to build a skyscraper, and it shows how Kerrey is loyal to corporate interests and is willing to compromise student space and rights."

Outside the building students coordinated a picket line of students, faculty, staff and supporters. Sarah Lopez, a member of New School SDS, describes these support efforts to WW: "At first we tried to occupy another building but we decided to picket outside to build support and visibility. At one point we blocked Fifth Avenue and marched, and we were also able to break some more students into the building."

Solidarity helps win student demands

On the second day of the student occupation Unite HERE Local 101, which rep-

resents the New School cafeteria workers, showed their support for the students by refusing to cross the barricades and picket line at the occupied dining hall.

Meaghan Alysia Linick-Loughley, member of the New School Radical Union and New School SDS, emphasized to WW the importance of solidarity between students and workers: "It's in the Unite HERE contract that they can't cross picket lines, and it was a really powerful thing to have workers stand in solidarity with us!" Linick-Loughley continued: "Our occupation was inspired by the recent workers' occupation in Chicago and the worker and student uprising in Greece."

International support for the New School occupation came in the form of endorsements, solidarity statements, international blogs, and independent and student media coverage.

After long negotiations between students and the administration on Dec. 19, President Kerrey conceded to many of the student demands. Kerrey, who was acting as president and interim-provost, stepped down as interim-provost and signed an agreement that included total amnesty for all participants involved in the occupation and all events related to it.

The agreement also provides for voting representation for students on the search

committee for the interim-provost and the provost, as well as any searches that may take place in the future for a new president. And it allows the University Student Senate to have a representative at meetings of the Board of Trustees.

On the high note of this victory the student occupation ended early morning on Dec. 19. Sarah Lopez of New School SDS described to WW this moment as an inspiration and motivation for students to get involved on their campuses and reignite the student movement. Lopez stated, "I think our next steps need to be getting the word out about the occupation and victory and getting more students involved in working together to build coalitions of student power."

Taking inspiration from the workers' struggle in Chicago and the uprisings in Greece, the students of The New School have taken the student movement in the U.S. to the next level, calling on students across the country to take democracy into their own hands.

For more information on the New School Radical Student Union occupation and victory, visit www.newschoolinexile.com and newsds.org.

Bowens is an organizer with SDS and Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

Progressive journalist fights felony charges

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Detroit

A growing, broad-based coalition in metro Detroit is fighting to have five felony charges against people's journalist Diane Bukowski dropped immediately. Many view the attack on Bukowski as an attack against the entire progressive movement as well as freedom of the press.

"I believe these charges are retaliation against me and a total attack on the freedom of the press," said Bukowski at a press conference Dec. 15 at the AFSCME Local 312 union hall.

Dozens of individuals and representatives of labor, community and faith-based organizations attended the press conference.

The outrageous charges stem from an incident on Nov. 4 when Bukowski, a reporter for the Michigan Citizen, a progressive weekly newspaper, arrived at an accident scene on Detroit's east side where a motorcyclist and a pedestrian died after a police chase by Michigan state troopers.

Bukowski came upon the scene to observe and investigate. While taking photographs of the deceased motorcyclist, she was accosted by Detroit cops and state troopers, handcuffed and put in the back



WWW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

City Councilwoman JoAnn Watson, Dave Sole and Diane Bukowski.

of a police vehicle. Originally charged with a misdemeanor, Wayne County prosecutor Kym Worthy charged Bukowski with five felony counts of assaulting, resisting and obstructing a police officer.

Bukowski and her allies say these charges are an attack against her for her years of steadfast anti-racist community

reporting on a range of issues, including police brutality and police murders, utility shutoffs, foreclosures and union struggles. Bukowski and the Michigan Citizen have been fighting for access to public documents from Worthy's office in relation to police brutality and murder cases.

Bukowski says the attack against her is a clear intimidation tactic against freedom of the press. Before she was handcuffed and placed in police custody she had already interviewed witnesses at the scene who claim the state police vehicle ran upon the motorcyclist's back tire, forcing the crash and deaths and putting other lives at risk.

The Dec. 15 press conference was sponsored by the newly-formed Committee to Defend Diane Bukowski and Freedom of the Press. Speakers included representatives from Call 'Em Out; the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions; Detroit City Councilwoman JoAnn Watson; the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality; the Detroit Green Party; Michigan Citizen publisher

Teresa Kelly; UAW Local 2334 President David Sole; and Bukowski's attorney, Arnold Reid.

"We are going to do everything to make sure Diane is completely exonerated. We're going to win this case. We're going to give them hell. We're going to fight," said Reid, who is working pro bono on the case and is also a journalist.

JoAnn Watson summed up: "It's outrageous that a woman like Diane, who has given her life to justice, is attacked like this. This is an attack on those who stand for justice. We're not going to stand for this."

Drop ALL charges now!

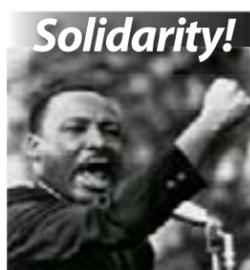
On Dec. 16 Bukowski supporters again packed the courtroom for a preliminary examination where testimony was given by the state troopers and Detroit police officers at the scene on Nov. 4. Because of lack of evidence on the part of the police, the judge dropped three of the five felony charges.

Future court dates are in the process of being scheduled and the defense committee will be mobilizing for these as well as other support actions. The committee is also soliciting funds for defense expenses.

"Diane is a voice, a soldier of the people speaking on our needs, our plight. This is critically important, especially during this time of economic crisis when independent reporting is so needed. We will fight until we win this battle," said Sandra Hines of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition and a Bukowski defense committee member.

To contribute funds for the defense committee and for more information, contact attorney Arnold Reid at 248-855-6330 and/or Diane Bukowski at 313-205-6718.

Supporters are urged to contact Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy and demand the remaining two charges against Bukowski be dropped immediately. Write to the prosecutor at 1200 Frank Murphy Hall of Justice, 1441 St. Antoine, Detroit, MI 48226; call 313-224-5777 or fax 313-224-0974. □



Solidarity!

In Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of
DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S BIRTHDAY

A FIGHTBACK CONFERENCE
Bail Out the PEOPLE

Not Wall St. *Uniting and fighting against WAR and for economic & social justice in the biggest crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s!*

SAT • JAN 17th
12 to 6 pm • Public School 41 • 116 West 11 St., NYC

• Panels • Invited Guests
• Breakouts • Workshops:
current crisis/the elections/
first 100 days in the new administration: how to forward the struggle/mobilizing students & youth/
solidarity with immigrant workers/organizing workers/international solidarity/
merging antiwar & social justice movements: is it possible?
relevance of King's legacy/and more.

212-633-6646
The Bail Out The People Movement
To endorse and pre-register go to:
www.BailOutPeople.org/BailOutPeopleEndorse.shtml

Struggle, solidarity, strategy

Southern conference organizes for justice

By Monica Moorehead
Durham, N.C.



The 7th biannual Southern Human Rights Organizing Conference (SHROC VII) was held in Durham, N.C., from Dec. 12 to 14. The first SHROC was held in 1996. "Framing a Southern Human Rights Agenda—Strategies for Moving Forward" was the overall theme of this year's conference.

North Carolina is a right-to-work state, meaning that the right to collective bargaining is denied to low-wage workers in the public sector.

The more than 300 conference delegates came mainly from the South, but also traveled from other U.S. regions, representing local, state and regional labor, community, and youth and student struggles and campaigns. The social composition of the conference was Black, Latin@ and white of all ages and political experiences.

Two important labor victories helped set the political tone throughout the two-and-a-half day conference as well as energized the participants: Workers at the Smithfield hog-processing plant in Tar Heel, N.C.—the largest of its kind in the world—voted in the Food and Commercial Workers union after a 15-year struggle, and the factory takeover by workers at the Republic Windows and Doors plant in Chicago was successful.

Plenary talks, strategy sessions and solidarity messages provided opportunities to connect current struggles in the U.S. South with these two victories. The gathering also acknowledged the historic Nov. 4 election of Barack Obama as the first African-American U.S. president and the impact that this development will surely have on the ongoing struggles for fundamental social change.

A simultaneous youth summit was held during SHROC to give youth and students the space they wanted to share their varying political views and strategies on issues affecting them.

In a welcoming message, SHROC organizer Jaribu Hill, an African-American lawyer with the Mississippi Workers' Center for Human Rights, paid homage to martyrs of the struggle—including the Greensboro Five; Imperial Food Products poultry workers of Hamlet, N.C.; civil rights activist Rev. James Orange; and Coca-Cola Bottling Plant union organizers from Colombia.

In explaining the goals of SHROC, Hill stated: "Human rights defenders come to SHROC to retool, think, plan and build. In these critical times of unjust wars and economic decline, it is urgent that we forge a unity based on common struggles and experiences. It is this unity that will sustain the fight and ensure ultimate victory."

'Stroke capital' of North Carolina

On the first day of SHROC, delegates took a 90-minute bus ride to Duplin County, known as the state's "stroke capital." Tour guides from the North Carolina-based Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help explained to the delegates that this county is home to two out of the 10 million hogs located throughout the eastern part of the state. Only Iowa has more hog farms than North Carolina.

Duplin also has one million turkeys. Smithfield Foods, which has a virtual monopoly on the hog and pork processing industry worldwide, also owns Butterball turkey production.

There are almost 40 hogs to every person in Duplin, which has a human population of 52,000. There are at least 500 large and small hog farms, which are either out in the open or hidden in forests. Each of the barns on the largest farms is occupied by between 3,000 and 5,000 hogs.

Next to these barns are lagoons which look like regular ponds, but in reality they are deadly cesspools filled to the brim with hog feces. Most of the lagoons are located near the homes of Black and Latin@ people, who compose 28 percent and 15 percent, respectively, of the county's population. The mainly white Smithfield owners live in luxury homes at least 30 miles away from the hog farms.

The waste of two million hogs creates a horrific stench 24 hours a day. And worse than that, these lagoons have created an environmental health hazard. This includes polluting the air, water and earth for so many years that it will take generations to clean up.

Naeema Muhammad, a leader of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network, led a discussion between SHROC delegates and two Duplin County residents. Elsie Herring and Violet Branch shared shocking stories about how their land had been contaminated with hog waste in an effort by hog owners to force them to move.

As a result of this racist environmental injustice, residents are suffering from high incidences of stroke, diabetes, cancer and depression, as well as asthma among children. That's how Duplin got its name.

Farm workers, Moncure strikers demand justice

Baldemar Velasquez, leader of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee based in Toledo, Ohio, gave a moving speech at the conference on a very important campaign to organize tobacco workers, mainly immigrants from Central and South America. FLOC represents thousands

of migrant workers harvesting 26 different crops throughout North Carolina.

The main target of this campaign is the powerful RJ Reynolds tobacco farms. According to a March 30, 2007, shareholders' report released by Susan M. Ivey, president and CEO, RJ Reynolds' 2006 combined sales amounted to over \$8 billion. Ivey herself received \$9.5 million in corporate compensation, including a 42 percent raise in 2007. (www.floc.com)

In sharp contrast, tobacco workers make on average less than \$9 per hour for the back-breaking work of picking tobacco for hours in the hot sun.

Lewis Cameron, president of Machinists Local W369, spoke on an important strike that started this past summer against Moncure Plywood, owned by Atlas Holdings. These machinists were forced to go out on strike when the owners refused to bargain in good faith.

The owners have violated labor laws, including those under the International Labor Organization Convention, when they hired permanent scab labor to replace the strikers. To add insult on top of this injury, a hangman's noose was found by strikers on Sept. 12. This current—and historic—threat is used by racists who want to keep Black workers "in their place" by not fight-

ing for their political and economic rights.

Cameron made it crystal clear to the entire conference that the machinists will not bow down to the racist intimidation and will keep this very difficult strike going until they win. Out of solidarity with the strike, \$1,000 was raised at SHROC for the Moncure workers' strike fund.



WW PHOTOS: MONICA MOOREHEAD

'Hey, hey, ho, ho! 287G has got to go!'

SHROC delegates held an emergency direct-action protest Dec. 13 outside the Raleigh city jail against immigrant-bashing edict 287G. This edict legalizes

complicity between Immigration Customs and Enforcement, an arm of Homeland Security, and local police to target immigrants they label "illegal."

Under 287G, 70,000 immigrants in North Carolina have been scheduled for deportation. Of 287G detainees, 63 percent are in city and county jails throughout the state, including in Raleigh.

When SHROC delegates held a picket line in front of the jail and began anti-287G chants, detainees waved to the demonstrators to show their appreciation for the much-needed solidarity. Organizations such as the Southern Coalition for Social Justice and the ACLU of North Carolina are organizing political and legal campaigns against this repressive law.

Go to www.shroc.org for more information. Email: mmoorehead@workers.org.

Coalition says no to hospital cutbacks



Over the last year, some of the largest Atlanta banks, corporations and property developers working through the Chamber of Commerce forced the privatization of the city's public hospital, Grady Hospital, by promising large infusions of capital, greater efficiency and no cuts in services to the poor. However, the hospital administration is preparing to drastically lower the income level at which poor and indigent patients receive free care. The Grady Coalition, which mobilized against the privatization, held a well-attended press conference on Dec. 18 to denounce these proposals, which would require a person making more than \$13,000 a year to pay as much as 25 percent of their annual income for incurred medical expenses. Community organizations urged people to turn out for the Jan. 5 board meeting to defeat the cutbacks.

—Report and photo by Jimmy Raynor

Don't eat Stella D'oro cookies

On Dec. 20 in Bronx, N.Y., striking bakery workers and their supporters chanted "Stop Scab, Scab, Scab!" on the picketline. The strikers, many of them immigrants from Latin America and Africa, are calling for a boycott of Stella D'oro cookies. The new owners, Brynwood Partners, are demanding drastic concessions from the workers who have been on strike since Aug. 13. Supporters including the Million Worker March, May 1st Coalition for Immigrant and Worker Rights, Professional Staff Congress and Bail Out the People Movement presented the workers hundreds of dollars in donations.

—Report and photo by Lal Roohk



Cutbacks threaten public education across U.S.

By Heather Cottin

Even while trillions of dollars were being poured into the Pentagon budget, education in the United States was slipping behind the rest of the world.

According to the National Governors Association Web site, in just 11 years—from 1995 to 2006—the percentage of college-age people who obtained a bachelor's degree in the U.S. dropped from first place in the world to 14th. By 2006, the U.S. had the highest college dropout rate of 19 industrialized countries. And eighth graders here have been losing ground in mathematics and science.

Nevertheless, huge cutbacks in school funding are now being announced at every level of public education across the U.S. Schools get most of their funds from state and local governments. About 21 percent of state budgets are spent on K-12 education.

In early November the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported that, because of budget shortfalls due to the declining economy, at least 16 states were proposing to cut funding for kindergarten through 12th grade as well as early education. On the level of higher education, at least 21 states had already implemented cuts to public colleges and universities.

The cuts had resulted in layoffs of faculty and staff and,

Students at Portola Middle School join the protest outside Dec. 10 West Contra Costa Unified School District Board meeting in Richmond, Calif. to demand that their school stay open.

WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

in more than half these states, tuition hikes of 5 to 15 percent.

And the cuts keep growing as more jobs are lost, the economy declines, and the federal government uses public money to bail out the banks.

In California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is calling for education cutbacks of \$2.5 billion in K-12 schools. The California state universities plan to cut admissions—though figures show applications to the Cal State University system are up 21 percent as fewer people can afford private universities.

CSU tuition has risen in six of the last seven years. California community colleges may lose up to 260,000 students due to forced budget cutbacks.

In Connecticut, Education Commissioner Mark K. McQuillan has warned that budget shortfalls in that state would result in cutting education aid to municipalities by 6 to 12 percent. (Hartford Courant, Dec. 2)

Hard-hit by the crisis in the auto industry, Detroit is contemplating the closure of 63 schools by 2013. At two area high schools there is now



a lack of heat and lights in the classrooms and a shortage of teachers. (Michigan Messenger, Dec. 15)

Lights are out in the hallways in the Las Cruces public schools in New Mexico. There is no money for substitute teachers so teachers are advised "not to be absent." (Las Cruces Sun News, Dec. 14)

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care provides money for early education and after-school programs for 31,000 children from low-income families. Another 18,000 children are on a waiting list. But as the number of homeless families skyrockets due to both layoffs and foreclosures, the state on Nov. 3 implemented a "voucher freeze" that would cut off access to child care for homeless families. (Boston Herald, Dec. 14)

In the small Wisconsin city of Rhineland, 50 percent of students are poor enough to qualify for the school lunch program. But there's not enough money, so, to make up the shortfall from the state, the school board wants to reduce graduation requirements, thereby reducing the quality of education. (NewsoftheNorth.net)

In South Carolina, at a time when the state's student population is increasing, a growing number of teachers are retiring and the rate of teacher turnover remains high, the state government has decided to shut down the state's major teacher training program. (The State, Dec. 15)

In Vermont the legislature is threatening a rise in state college tuition that would come to nearly 20 percent at some institutions. While enrollment has increased 42 percent in the last eight years, full-time faculty has increased just 11 percent. The Green Mountain State expects a 13-percent drop in the state appropriation for education. Families may have to borrow more or not send their children to college at all. (Burlington Free Press, Dec. 12)

In New York, Gov. David Paterson has had to delay proposed cuts to education until next September. However his proposed 2009-2010 spending plan would reduce school budgets by more than \$2.5 billion, or more than 12 percent.

The governor's budget proposal would raise undergraduate tuition at the State University of New York and the City University of New York. The governor would also reduce funding to SUNY training hos-

Continued on page 10



New York Gov. David Paterson released his 2010 budget on the morning of Dec. 16. That afternoon, 500 City University of New York faculty members, staff, students and their supporters protested outside his New York City office. The vast majority of CUNY students are the sons, daughters or members of New York City's working class, and raising tuition by hundreds of dollars will make getting an education much harder. Barbara Bowen, president of CUNY's Professional Staff Congress, which called the protest, pointed out that an alternative to raising tuition would be raising the tax rate the rich currently pay in New York. ■

WW PHOTOS

Just when workers need them most

State slashes budget for legal services

By Julie Fry
New York

Gov. David Paterson has announced his proposed New York State budget for fiscal year 2009-2010, which begins July 1. Among the list of regressive tax hikes and devastating cuts to almost every state service, from education to health care, is yet another proposed cut to the state's paltry indigent legal services budget.

For the first time since 1995, the governor is proposing to cut the Aid to Indigent Defense fund—the general pot of money from which the state funds criminal legal services for the indigent. He proposes reducing the fund from \$11.2 million to \$9.8 million. The governor also threatens to eliminate some of the state's specialized funding for certain defense programs, such as programs for clients with mental disabilities.

As for providers of civil legal services—

those who defend the poor in housing court, at public benefits hearings and in many other critical matters—Paterson included no money in the executive budget for such services. This omission of civil legal service funding is, unfortunately, typical of past executive budgets.

Last year's budget, however, did include a \$1 million "place holder" for civil funding, which the legislature then reduced to \$980,000. This year, no such place holder is included. The already struggling civil legal service organizations are left to fend for themselves with the legislature.

While not as monetarily staggering as some of the cuts proposed for education and health care, these new proposed cuts in legal services come on top of millions of dollars already taken out of the budgets of legal service organizations across the state in 2008. In New York City the Legal Aid Society, the state's largest provider of criminal and civil legal services

for the poor, has already endured more than \$6 million in state and city cuts this past year.

Attorneys for the Legal Aid Society are already overwhelmed. Criminal lawyers' average caseload already exceeds 100. Civil attorneys are forced to turn away six out of every seven people who seek their help. Both numbers are expected to increase drastically as the economic crisis deepens and more poor New Yorkers are arrested, evicted and denied public benefits.

Among the richest New Yorkers are most of the Wall Street bankers who are clearly responsible for state budget crises, as well as the national economic crisis. Instead of demanding that the bankers and other wealthy New Yorkers pay more in income taxes to solve the deficit they created, Paterson's budget has placed the burden squarely on the shoulders of the most vulnerable.

Now, as more and more New Yorkers lose their jobs, can't pay their rent and/or become police targets because they are poor, they will find no one to protect their rights in the legal system. The courts, already hostile institutions to any working or poor person, will become even more of an instrument of repression against them. The system will be able to have its way with them to a staggering degree.

The cuts, however, are not inevitable. They still must be passed by the legislature. The governor has asked the legislators to pass his budget in mid-March. This leaves time for workers to build a fightback struggle against the entire draconian budget.

The cuts hit almost every agency that provides any sort of support to working and oppressed people. The millions who will be affected can demand that the rich pay for the crisis—not the workers. □

Struggle begins over mass transit

Riders resist cuts, layoffs, fare hikes

By Tony Murphy
New York

Layoffs and cutbacks are skyrocketing. It might seem like all you can do is hunker down and try to weather the storm.

But the storm is also revealing areas of struggle where workers have more power than they might think. One of these areas is mass transit.

Every major mass transit system in the country is in crisis, with many imposing fare hikes and service cuts. The worst case is probably New York, where the transit authority plans to raise fares, cut bus lines, close stations and lay off workers. A new bridge toll is also being considered.

However, in St. Louis the base fare is to be raised from \$2 to \$2.25 in January. The same is true in Sacramento, Calif. In Boston a toll fare will jump from \$3.50 to \$7.

What many riders may not know is that mass transit has always served as a cash cow for the banks, which loan money to cities so they can then sit back and collect interest payments for decades.

In the 1990s the banks found a way to extract even more money. They "bought" trains and buses and rented them back to the transit agencies. The sale was for tax-reporting purposes only. They didn't need and never intended to use the items.

The whole thing was arranged to benefit the banks, which used the trains' depreciation to reduce the profits they had to report. And while part of the money from the sale went to the transit agency—with executives taking their six-figure salaries—the other part went into a fund designed to ensure that banks would receive regular "rent" payments from the transit agencies forever.

To further protect their interests, the banks required the deal to be backed by a guarantor. If that guarantor ever lost its credit rating, the transit agency would owe huge, hundred-million-dollar penalties.

This is exactly what has happened. The guarantor in many cities was AIG—the insurance company that was going belly up a few months ago until it received a

government bailout now valued at \$152 billion. It lost its credit rating and can no longer guarantee transit loans, so suddenly all these loans have come due, leaving mass transit authorities in crisis.

The lavishly compensated transit heads knowingly arranged deals that could never be paid for if something went wrong. Yet no media pundits have lectured them for "taking out loans they couldn't afford."

The media won't take the rich to task. But it should also be noted that, for the present at least, they have adopted a respectful tone to the resistance against fare hikes and transit service cuts.

Resistance with a shoe

In New York on Dec. 17, Bail Out the People Movement activists confronted transit executives at the monthly board meeting of the Metropolitan Transit Authority.

The MTA allows a teensy platform at these meetings—what it calls a "Public Comments" section.

This televised sliver of participation—called for 9:30 a.m. when most subway riders are at work—takes place in a fifth-floor area that seats about 40. When it fills up, the public is put into a third-floor "overflow room." Security guards stand near the podium and roam the hallways.

After people sign in to speak, they must wait until a handful of politicians, who don't have to sign in, get to talk before them.

Confronting this tightly organized and undemocratic system, Stephen Millies, a railroad worker who arrived with BOPM activists an hour and a half early in order to speak, took inspiration from Muntadar al-Zaidi, the Iraqi journalist who threw his shoes at George W. Bush.

When it was finally his turn, Millies gave an eloquent denunciation of the fare hikes. Referring to the MTA's executive director, he then asked, "Where's Elliot Sander?" And reached down for his shoe.

As security guards grabbed him, he said, "You made \$300,000 last year. This shoe is for you!"

The media coverage was huge.



Steve Millies being dragged out of MTA hearing, Dec. 17 in NYC.

Millies received a summons for disorderly conduct—not a heavy charge. And the widespread media coverage has been respectful, allowing him space to explain the class politics of his actions. The Daily News headline the next day was "MTA Foe Has Sole of Iraqi."

Why didn't the media demonize him, the way it usually does strikers or anti-war activists? The answer may have a lot to do with the mood of the masses, who are beginning to awaken. The Republic Doors and Windows workers who sat-in in Chicago just won against the banks, and students in New York took over the New School for several days.

It's the same story in Buffalo, N.Y., when the transit authority held a meeting in early December to announce fare hikes. Local International Action Center activists mobilized the community to attend. After the people gave the executives a piece of their mind, the agency partially

retreated on the increases.

Transit Executive Director Lawrence Meckler was asked by one rider to confirm that his salary was over \$100,000 a year. He did, adding defensively that he earned every penny.

"Derisive laughter and catcalls followed his comment," the Buffalo News reported, "and Meckler then had to call for a return to decorum."

When it comes to mass transit, the ruling class is fearful. Subways and buses involve millions of workers of all nationalities. There's a huge potential for class-wide unity.

The seeming neutrality of the media may change when the ruling class realizes it's too late to keep the workers from fighting back. At the moment, however, the powers that be are on the defensive—something workers should take advantage of as we confront layoffs, cutbacks and fare hikes. □

People win victory over transit rate hikes

By Beverly Hiestand
Buffalo, N.Y.

Transit riders in Buffalo have a right to feel excited about their efforts to stop a two-phased, 50-cent rate hike—25 cents now and another 25 cents in six months.

The Niagara Frontier Transit Authority has been pushed back. It has announced that, following public protests at the rate-hike hearings in Buffalo and Niagara Falls, the transit board will try to find other sources of funding for its second increase in six months.

It is a partial victory. But it wouldn't have happened if angry riders and their supporters had not come together in powerful resistance to this particular attack on the poorest of the working class, many with disabilities. Most important, this victory gave the people a greater awareness of their strength when they come together in common interest against those forces that constantly try to grind them down and take away all their resources.

The board may have thought that few people would attend the hearings. They may also have believed that, if people came, they would be overwhelmed by

statistics or intimidated by the arrogant, highly paid suits—mostly white males. They were wrong on all counts.

Community members posted No Fare Hike leaflets at all the rail transit stations and at major bus stops in the city. Ellie Dorritie, a spokesperson for the Buffalo/Western New York International Action Center, saw that most people still did not know about the hearings. So activists distributed leaflets in downtown Buffalo.

The stories riders told about how the fare hikes would negatively affect their lives were so moving that the IAC called the media to come to the transit stations to listen to these riders. Announcements on the major television channels and a large picture story in the Buffalo News helped assure good attendance at the Dec. 3 hearing in Buffalo.

More than 100 angry riders and their supporters showed up, determined to let the NFTA board know how devastating these fare increases would be on their lives and how they were not going to take this quietly without fighting back. The mostly low-income students, seniors, oppressed and disabled riders spoke to the fact that the statistics presented by the board did

not tell the whole story.

People objected to the exorbitant pay of executives, wasteful spending on management vehicles and the self-defeating tactics of cutting services while expecting more riders. Many noted that none of the board members rides the transit; they do not know what the problems are.

One speaker protested that whenever working and poor people need anything, there is no money. However, when the banks need it, the government takes our tax money and bails them out. She finished by saying that this is going to stop and we will not go on letting this happen.

The riders protested when no deaf interpreter was provided for a disabled person, making the board promise to hear her testimony with an interpreter the next day. Participants booed attempts of a board member to monopolize the time meant for riders to speak. At 10:30 p.m., when the hearing was closed, people were still coming in and asking to speak.

The NFTA is responsible for overseeing air, rail and bus travel in Buffalo, Niagara Falls and the Western New York communities surrounding these cities. This entire region, where tens of thousands used to

work in the large steel, chemical and automobile companies, is now one of the poorest in the country after decades of plant closings.

Buffalo is the third most segregated city in the U.S. Most African-American, Latin@ and other people of color live inside the city, while most jobs are outside the city. The very high unemployment rate among African-American men has been attributed to the fact that they do not have transportation to get to jobs in the suburbs. Many speakers addressed the inadequacy of current routes and called for extensions to their jobs, health care offices and schools rather than the proposed cutbacks.

The commissioners started out the evening saying that their job was to convince those present to be partners in their efforts to "save" the transit in these times of economic crisis by cutting back routes and raising rates. Not a single person supported that. In fact, the essence of the public testimony was that the only way to build a good transit system was to provide more service, bring in more riders and, as one person said, bring more money to the people, especially jobs. □

International briefs:

European students, workers in motion

ITALY

Hundreds of thousands of workers in different sectors of the economy left their jobs Dec. 12 to take to the streets all over the country in the first general strike since the right-wing government of Premier Silvio Berlusconi was voted back into office last April. The strike takes place as economists predict a severe downturn in the Italian economy with a drop in the GNP of one percent in the coming year.

The largest demonstration took place in the city of Bologna, where 200,000 joined a march led by Italy's General Confederation of Labor (CGIL), the only labor center that had called the strike. Tens of thousands more demonstrated in Turin, Milan, Venice, Rome and Naples, and other major marches took place in Florence, Ancona, Bari, Palermo and Cagliari. The marches included workers, students, teachers and others. At the main FIAT auto plant in Mirafiori, half the workers walked out.

On the day of the strike, Berlusconi announced a one-year suspension of the planned "reform" of higher education that students have been protesting throughout the fall. (Avante, Dec. 18)

FRANCE

Concerned that a planned "school reform" would cut teacher jobs, increase class sizes and in general diminish the quality of French secondary school education, 150,000 high school students hit the streets Dec. 17 in protest. In an immediate move to try to defuse the anger of the youths, Education Minister Xavier Darcos postponed the "reforms" and promised consultations.

According to reports in the media, French government figures feared that the high school protests would spill over into the kinds of street actions that were taking place in Greece. While the French econ-



Michel Collon and John Catalinotto, second and third from left with four activist students from the occupied Autonomous University of Barcelona, Nov. 28.

omy has not experienced a severe downturn such as that in Greece, this may be on the agenda even in the most prosperous of the West European countries.

Youth in many of the high schools (lycées) continued the protests on Dec. 18, demanding guarantees that the government would postpone and re-discuss the proposed changes.

CATALONIA/SPAIN

University students have been occupying buildings and holding other forms of protest in different regions of the Spanish state since November to try to stop the government from imposing the so-called Plan Bologna. This "reform," decided on in the Italian city six years ago, is meant to create a more nearly uniform curriculum in the universities of the European Union. But it also makes the courses more tuned into training students for professions and more linked to private corporations rather

than exposing students to overall learning. In general, the process diminishes student input into university curricula.

More than 100 student representatives from universities in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Seville, Burgos, Zaragoza, Cádiz and Málaga met for the first time on a federal level on Dec. 13 and 14 in Valencia to coordinate their mobilizations to try to put a stop to Plan Bologna. The student takeover at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)—located about 10 miles from the city center—began in mid-November and by early December these actions had spread to many other places.

On Nov. 28, invited by one of the student groups, leftist Belgian media expert and political analyst Michel Collon and Workers World managing editor John Catalinotto, who were in Barcelona for a series of forums (see next), spoke on the world economic crisis and the threat of war to some of the 600 students occupy-

By John Catalinotto

ing offices. Youth in the Spanish state have been hit hard by the economic crisis, with unemployment for that group growing from 18 percent to 28 percent over the 14 months ending in October. (International Herald Tribune, Dec. 19).

BARCELONA FORUMS

The Barcelona-based Pere Ardiaca Foundation invited political analysts from different parts of the world to a series of four evening discussions held starting Nov. 27 to discuss "Peace, War and Neoliberalism." Among those speaking were Samir Amin, Egyptian political analyst and head of the Forum of Alternatives; Catalinotto and Collon (see above); and three European political analysts—Daniel Cireira from the French Communist Party, Willy Meyer from the United Left in Spain and John Neelsen from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Germany—who shared the Dec. 1 forum. Catalanian progressives introduced and chaired the discussions, which took place before audiences of between 50 and 100 people.

As the forums coincided with a deepening awareness of the depth of the current economic crisis, much of the commentary took up this harsh crisis and its likely impact on both the drive to war and the potential for mobilizing against war. The speakers represented diverse views on the left, but there was near unanimity that the capitalist crisis was severe, that the government intervention in the economies up to that point were solely directed at aiding the big financiers and capitalists, and that neither the new U.S. administration nor the European Union could be counted on to stop new wars or end the existing occupations.

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

Support U.S. war resisters

By Dee Knight

The statements of war resisters Benji Lewis and Robin Long are strong examples of the current surge in GI resistance and the emerging struggles for amnesty and sanctuary.

Benji Lewis served two tours in Iraq and was honorably discharged in 2007. In 2008 he got the news that he is eligible for recall to active duty. At a Winter Soldier event in Portland, Ore., he announced his intention to refuse reactivation. On Veterans Day, Lewis and fellow resister Brandon Neely made the following statement:

"We ... have refused or will refuse any activation orders that would lead to us serving an unjust and imperial U.S. foreign policy. It is a prevailing notion that this refusal is unpatriotic, but we consider

our actions the only choice. Not only did the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan do great harm to the people of those countries, but they undermined the ostensible goal with which the wars were begun: Instead of stopping terrorism, it has proliferated terrorism, an expectation that was predicted well before the war started. ...

"We are direct witnesses to the horrors of this war, having experienced its atrocities at their source, and we have decided that we can no longer carry out these illegal and immoral policies. ...

"We believe that veterans and active-duty GIs are in a key position to stop illegal and unjust war, and we are inspired by the resistance of troops who stood against the war in Vietnam. One of the pre-eminent reasons for the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam was increasing dissent among

the active-duty troops stationed abroad and at home. By the end of the war, there were entire units refusing to participate in combat, many going as far as outright mutiny."

Robin Long asks for clemency or pardon

Robin Long, the first Iraq War resister deported from Canada into U.S. military custody, was sentenced in August 2008 to 15 months of confinement and a dishonorable discharge. He is currently at the Miramar military prison in San Diego.

Long went to Canada in 2005. Last July the Canadian government kidnapped and deported him to U.S. military custody, forcing him to leave behind his 2-year-old son. Long is the first war resister deported from Canadian soil since the Vietnam War.

In November Long wrote a public letter to President-elect Barack Obama, which read in part:

"I am locked up for refusing to participate in the invasion of the sovereign nation of Iraq, a military action I felt was wrong and an action condemned by most of the international community. ...

"I feel, like many others, that a government that punishes its citizens for taking a moral stand for humanity and against injustices will lose the faith of its people. The war in Iraq was a Bush administration mistake and my punishment is a product of that mistake and failed policy. ...

"You may say I signed a contract. I'd

like to quote from a letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote to George Washington in April of 1793: 'When performance, for instance, becomes impossible, non-performance is not immoral. So if performance becomes self-destructive for the party, the law of self preservation overrules the laws of obligations to others.' ...

"In the case of the invasion of Iraq, international law was broken, as well as ... our own Constitution. ... I had a higher international duty supported by our Constitution to refuse service in Iraq. ...

"I ask you to please consider granting me presidential clemency or a pardon. ... I am so happy that you were elected President. I feel real change coming. You are the light after the storm—'Hurricane Bush,' if you will."

To communicate and send support to Long, Lewis and other resisters, write to them c/o Courage to Resist, 484 Lake Park Ave., #41, Oakland, CA 94610. More information about these and other war resisters can be found at CourageToResist.org.

Bulletin

Canada's prime minister, Stephen Harper, announced plans to deport another U.S. war resister on Dec. 24, and one more on Jan. 7. (The Globe and Mail, Dec. 17) The Toronto-based War Resister Support Campaign (WRSC) reports widespread protest of the ruling. A Parliament vote earlier in 2008 called for the government to let the resisters stay. □

Low-Wage Capitalism

A 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.

Order online at www.Leftbooks.com

Anti-repression uprising takes root throughout Greece

By Larry Hales

The uprising in Greece incited by the police murder of 15-year-old Alexandros Andreas Grigoropoulos entered its 13th day on Dec. 19.

The uprising has a spontaneous character, and anarchist and all communist groups to the left of social-democratic Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) have supported, in one way or another, the demands made on the rightist regime.

PASOK, which has alternated running the government with the conservative New Democracy Party, is maneuvering for new elections so that it can take over the government. Yet the government of ND Premier Costas Karamanlis has rejected the demand.

While PASOK has maintained rhetoric that appears to be in sympathy with the uprisings, it is merely a moderate party in the capitalist camp, similar to the Democratic Party in the U.S.

In her Dec. 8 speech, Communist Party of Greece (KKE) Secretary General Aleka Papariga said, "That PASOK and ND blame each other for the deaths caused by violence is outrageous. The fact that during the ND governments more protestors died than during the PASOK governments has no meaning at all. What is important is that they use violence, Legislative Acts and extortion in order to beat down the organized movement and the spontaneous struggles as well.

"When violence targets the struggles, it is for sure that it also affects those who are not at all interested in politics. Violence has no limits, death is thus not accidental." (inter.kke.gr)

The KKE also demanded that all the laws made under PASOK and ND governments that increase repression and surveillance of the population, including those made with the European Union and the United States and including police use of weapons and dogs, be abolished.

Since the Dec. 10 general strike, the



Greek youth rebel.

PHOTO: KOE COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION OF GREECE

mood of the people is still one of open rebellion. Athens and Thessaloniki, the two largest cities in Greece, have both been in a state of siege.

On Dec. 16 Greek youth commandeered a broadcast on the state-run television channel NET and shut off a speech being given by Costas Karamanlis. The young people forced the camera crew to focus on banners that read, "Stop watching, get out onto the streets" and "Free everyone who has been arrested."

Youth also took over radio stations in Thessaloniki and broadcast protest messages.

Banners were hung from the Acropolis—the historic building from ancient Athens—calling for demonstrations throughout Europe.

Another youth, 16-year-old Giorgos

Paplomatas, was shot Dec. 18 in Peristeri, a working-class neighborhood of Athens. Paplomatas was a member of the Communist Youth of Greece (KNE) and the son of a KKE activist, who is also a member of the Teacher's Federation and of the All Workers Militant Front (PAME).

A day earlier, PAME had led demonstrations in 51 cities in opposition to the EU Working Time Directive, which allows a workweek of up to 78 hours. Communist parties across Europe have mobilized against the directive and issued a joint statement against it.

The struggle continues to advance daily in Greece. Teachers and doctors have walked off the job. Public transportation in Athens has been shut down, and air traffic controllers at Athens' International Airport walked off the job for a few hours,

demanding greater job protection and a pay raise. Farmers with small- and medium-sized land holdings have called for another mass demonstration for Dec. 20, which is reportedly gaining wide support.

The militancy displayed there is inspiring solidarity actions and other struggles throughout Europe and even in the U.S. as youth and students take bold actions in their interests. One example is the takeover of the New School in New York City by the Radical Student Union.

The latest shooting has touched off more rebellions where youth battle police in the streets. All signs point to a deepened and prolonged struggle in Greece, which has already weakened the bourgeois state, and could collapse the rightist government.

Hales is a national FIST organizer.

IAC/FIST letter to Greek gov't:

'Drop all charges against protesters'

In coordination with worldwide protests in solidarity with the people of Greece, activists delivered a protest letter to the Greek Consul General in New York on Dec. 18, from which we print excerpts:

Here in the U.S. the specter of police brutality is all too familiar and for every case that makes national attention there are hundreds more that aren't reported. The International Action Center and the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together [FIST] have both shown solidarity with the families and victims of police brutality and have helped mobilize for rallies and protests against police brutality. So we understand very well the sentiments of the people of Greece who have taken to the streets in mass numbers in response to the police killing of Alexandros Andreas Grigoropoulos.

The protests and rebellions that have erupted around the country in Greece are about more than just the fatal shooting of unarmed 15-year-old Alexi Grigoropoulos. They are because of the actions of the conservative government of the New Democracy under Kostas

Karamanlis, which include increasing the powers of police forces in the country for surveillance, for the use of weapons and for expanding the reach of the secret services.

Also, like many governments that support the rich, super-rich and employers, the government of Greece is heaping the burden of the general economic crisis on the backs of the workers and youth. Poverty and unemployment are increasing in Greece as they are around the world.

It is these things that have led to the uprisings, the general strike, the protests and mass sentiment of the people of Greece. We support their actions and call on the government of Greece to not only fully prosecute the cop killers of Alexandros Andreas Grigoropoulos, but to stop the attacks against protesters and to release without charges all who have been detained and to observe the right of people to express their dissent.

We stand with the people of Greece and the demands they have raised for economic justice and against the brutal actions of the state forces. □



Delegation in front of Greek Consul General office in NYC, Dec. 18.

WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Iraq now, Vietnam then

The news from Iraq is starting to remind veteran political analysts of the events four decades ago in South Vietnam as successive U.S. puppet governments disintegrated under the weight of tremendous popular sentiment, with a liberation war knocking at the door.

The U.S. secret services then hatched and executed coups to remove some discredited, inept and well-hated puppet leaders. Their replacements had not yet exposed to the world their own corruption, favoritism and brutality that would soon make them just as inept and well-hated. Only 500,000-plus U.S. troops could keep them in power for more than a week.

Now in Iraq, with the continued U.S. occupation up for debate, cracks are exposed in the puppet regime. Bush's surprise visit humiliates him, the occupation and the puppet leader, Nuri al-Maliki. Within days, the Maliki faction arrests 24 high-level military security figures.

Al-Maliki's regime leaks charges to the New York Times that those arrested are secret Ba'athists—the ruling party in Iraq before the U.S. invasion—who were plotting a coup.

It's true that enough agents of the Iraqi resistance have infiltrated the regime to track military maneuvers. But the Ba'athists, who are part of the resistance, have said they don't believe a coup could succeed against the will of the U.S. occupation forces. They expect the resistance to wear down the U.S. until its forces leave. The "plot" story, then, is far-fetched.

Sure enough, two days after the Times story ran, the Iraqi military dropped the charges against the 24, calling them "patriotic officers." It turns out a Maliki-appointed security agency had charged and arrested the "patriotic officers." Instead, al-Maliki himself is now under suspicion.

Because of his friendly relations with Iran, al-Maliki has lost favor in Washington. If there is a "coup plot," maybe the U.S. is behind it.

Speculation aside, there are some points—which were also true in South Vietnam—that these events have underlined:

The puppet regime is unstable, even more than it appeared up to now, and is torn apart by internal contradictions.

Despite all the propaganda about the U.S. "surge" working, there is no feasible pro-imperialist government than can run Iraq without large numbers of U.S. troops as an occupation army.

One way or another, Iraqi sovereignty will assert itself. There is no way the Iraqi people, even though horribly damaged by the U.S. invasion and occupation, will submit.

It is impossible for the U.S. to find an Iraqi political leader who is honest, courageous and capable to direct the puppet government. Any Iraqis with those characteristics joined the resistance long ago.

For the U.S. anti-war movement, it is time to move more forcefully into action. There is no way out except for the total withdrawal of U.S. forces, the recognition of the Iraqi resistance and payment of adequate reparations to the Iraqi people. □

Cutbacks threaten public education across U.S.

Continued from page 6

pitals by \$24 million.

The New York State Legislature is contemplating a freeze on universal pre-kindergarten funding through 2011 and a cut in full-day kindergarten and preschool funding. (Internal document from New York State United Teachers, Dec. 17)

Students, parents say: 'Fight for us!'

While many people are still waking up to the juggernaut of budget cuts coming at them, the fightback has already begun in some areas.

Hundreds of CUNY students and teachers responded to attacks on their city university system with a rally in front of the governor's New York City office on Dec. 16.

In Richmond, Calif., a largely African-American, Latin@ and immigrant school district, the threatened closing of several elementary schools and two high schools led to a mass turnout of students, parents and teachers of the West Contra Costa Unified School District at a Dec. 10 school board meeting.

Richmond faces declining enrollments because evictions and foreclosures have forced people to leave the district.

When the school board announced cuts to make up for what it called a budget shortfall, state budget cuts and "under-enrollment," more than 500 parents,

teachers, community activists and children tried to get into the meeting room chanting, "Save our schools!" "Save our community!" and "We want justice!" They appealed to the board to "Fight for us!"

Pixie Hayward Schickele, teachers' union president from United Teachers of Richmond, urged the board to "Stand in solidarity with all of us: teachers, parents, students, all the people who work in our schools and who keep our schools safe. We need to let Sacramento [the state capital] know that we have had enough!"

A youth from Pinole Valley High said: "If you close our school, then we have no future. Keep all our schools open." She was supported by William Haines, the sophomore class president from Kennedy High School. "The people have spoken. You must find a way to keep the schools open!"

Judy Greenspan, a nontenured teacher, challenged the board: "You can sit by and close the school or you can join the community to fight, go to Sacramento. Because if the bankers got all the money, auto companies got the money, then the people deserve it too."

Many called on fellow community residents to do what the people did at Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago and sit in for their schools, their community and their children.

The struggle for the right to adequate public education is just beginning. □



World's people rally to defend Iraqi journalist

By Cheryl LaBash

What sound do falling shoes make? How far can they be heard? Around the world is the answer in the case of the shoes hurled at outgoing U.S. president George W. Bush on Dec. 14 by Iraqi journalist Muntadar al-Zaidi.

The determination of the Iraqi peoples' resistance could not be denied, not even in a press conference held in the U.S.-fortified "Green Zone" in Baghdad where Bush and U.S.-puppet Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki performed a ceremonial signing of the Status of Forces Agreement.

Al-Zaidi shouted, "This is for the widows and orphans and all those killed in Iraq," as he flung his second shoe, projecting an extreme insult and expression of contempt in Arab culture. A global outcry is hailing his courageous act and demanding the safe release of the 29-year-old reporter, who has not been seen since his arrest.

On Dec. 19 thirty members of the al-Zaidi family, joined by a woman member of the Iraqi parliament, gathered to ask for his release outside the Green Zone, where both the Iraqi government and the prison holding the journalist are located.

His brother, Uday al-Zaidi, refuted a reported hand-written letter of apology from al-Zaidi to al-Maliki requesting a pardon. "This apology is not a real one. If they (the government) want an apology, they must first release him so he can do it freely and not under pressure." (www.middle-east-online.com, Dec. 19) Unable to visit the detained journalist to confirm his condition, family members charged that he had suffered torture and beatings.

Iraqi magistrate Dhia al-Kinani, who is responsible for the initial investigation of charges against al-Zaidi, has opened an investigation into visible face and eye injuries suffered by him.

Demonstrations for al-Zaidi's release began in Iraq immediately as the video of his protest zipped through cyberspace. Demonstrations erupted in Baghdad, Nasreya, Falluja and Kirkuk in Iraq and Gaza City in occupied Palestine. On Dec. 16 a large group of students and teachers demanded his release in the Baghdad neighborhood of Amiriya. (www.menasat.com, Dec. 17)

Demonstrations continued Dec. 17 in Karachi, Pakistan, and at the Iraqi embassy in Ankara, Turkey. In Caracas, Venezuela, protesters targeted the U.S. embassy. Students at Lebanese University in Beirut burned Bush in effigy. The Sudanese Journalist Union issued a statement on Dec. 17 affirming al-Zaidi's "vehement rejection of the occupation his country has been subjected to." It held

the Iraqi government responsible for any harm to him. In Washington, D.C., Code Pink bashed a Bush effigy with shoes.

In New York City on Dec. 17, Bail Out the People activist Steve Millies spoke out against a proposed MTA fare hike, especially for disabled riders, and was swarmed by police when he reached down to take off his shoe. "I wanted to show the sole of the shoe as a sign of contempt for someone who makes so much money and yet wants to raise fares on the disabled," he told Workers World.

Millies' gesture was planned with al-Zaidi in mind. "I was very much inspired by that courageous Iraqi journalist who was protesting the occupation of his country by the American and British oil companies and their governments," Millies said.

On Dec. 18 support actions for al-Zaidi hit New Delhi, India; Sidon and the Iraqi embassy in Beirut, Lebanon; and Ankara, Turkey. In Cairo, Egyptian journalists held up shoes in solidarity.

In London on Dec. 19, Media Workers Against the War from the Stop the War Coalition shook shoes and piled them at the U.S. Embassy. Their call stated, "The swift incarceration of this journalist contrasts sharply with the treatment of war criminals Bush and Blair. Their decision to go to war in 2003 has led to the deaths of up to a million Iraqi civilians."

"Palestinians in the West Bank village of Bilin threw shoes protesting the apartheid wall. (www.thestate.com, Dec. 19)

Al-Zaidi's threatened prison term has decreased from 15 years to two years. But as the BRussell's Tribunal (Belgium) pointed out, the journalist remains in grave danger and needs protection:

"International humanitarian and human rights law outlaws torture and summary execution, incommunicado detention, the ill treatment of detainees, or denial of access to legal counsel. The U.S. occupation is directly responsible for Al-Zaidi's welfare and must guarantee his security. As a journalist, he must be afforded extra protection.

"Appeal for action: Following Al-Zaidi's action, thousands have taken to the street in his support and countless statements are being written in his defense. We salute his courage, demand to know his exact location, and join millions in demanding his immediate release. ...

"We call upon all human rights organizations and bodies, including responsible organs of the United Nations, along with journalists' syndicates and associations, to defend the right to security and life of Muntadar Al-Zaidi and work to ensure his immediate release." (brusseltribunal.org, Dec. 15) □

Amid continuing attacks from imperialists

Sudan maintains defiance

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir has refused to cooperate with the so-called International Criminal Court, which has indicted him and other leaders of Africa's largest geographic nation-state.

In a Dec. 17 speech, Al-Bashir said he had been offered immunity from ICC prosecution if the Sudanese government would agree to hand over two ministers, Ahmed Haroun and Ali Koshab. The president ridiculed the offer, saying he would not turn over a cat to the ICC.

Al-Bashir also took credit for the last decade's growth in Sudan's oil industry. He said that the Salvation and Revelation government "succeeded in freeing Sudanese oil from the domination of American companies." (Sudanese Media Center, Dec. 18)

Al-Bashir went on to point out that despite the sanctions imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, many of the goals set by the government have been realized. "We have to depend on our own resources, because we firmly believe that the main priority is to feed and take care of ourselves as a nation," he said.

An international conference held in late November in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum supported the government's position toward the ICC. The Committee of Intelligence and Security Services in Africa sponsored the gathering, which drew 150 security and intelligence experts from throughout the continent.

Sudanese Minister of the Presidency, Lt. Gen. Bakr Hassan Salih, opened the conference, saying that the African continent is witnessing crises in most of its regions that adversely impact its security and stability, therefore leaving it behind other developed parts of the world:

"The peoples of Africa are looking forward to this workshop to come up with recommendations that endorse political and legal stances that reject domination in the name of justice. Most significantly among these is the stance adopted by the African Union summit earlier in the year at Sharm-al-Shiekh, Egypt." (Sudanese Media Center, Nov. 26)

Chief of Security and Intelligence Services, Lt. Gen. Sala Abdallah Goush, also spoke, explaining that "the activities of the ICC in targeting some countries in Africa exacerbated conflicts and therefore halted development." He went on to say that "the steps taken by Sudan to restore stability after signing the peace agreement with Darfur rebels did not please the colonial powers, so they used the ICC to pressure the government through baseless allegations."

ICC efforts against Sudan continues through UN

Chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, in an effort to curb opposition to the indictments leveled against the Sudanese president and two ministers, has also proposed

to pursue cases against three Darfur rebel leaders in connection with the killings of 12 African Union peacekeepers earlier in 2008.

Ocampo noted in his Dec. 13 statement to the U.N. Security Council that "the Nazi regime invoked its national sovereignty to attack its own population." By drawing an analogy with German fascism, the ICC is seeking to build international support for a regime change policy toward Sudan.

The ICC accused President Al-Bashir of genocide in July 2008, though the charges have yet to be confirmed. The ICC actions evoked strong opposition from both the African Union and the Arab League, which have called upon the U.N. Security Council to use its special powers under Article 16 of the ICC constitution to suspend the threatened prosecution against Al-Bashir.

This suspension of charges against the president, however, is being linked to the prosecution of the other high-level Sudanese officials. Nonetheless, the New York-based Human Rights Watch agency rejected even such a compromise. HRW spokesperson Sara Darehshori told the BBC in November that "An article 16 deferral will send a message to human rights abusers around the world that justice can be bargained away."

These Western-based groups and institutions say that making an exception for Sudan would send the wrong message to other leaders in Africa that the ICC has threatened. Former leaders and rebel groups from the Central African Republic and Uganda have also requested the suspension of prosecution because prosecution would only serve as a major impediment to the overall peace processes taking place in these countries.

Nonetheless, Louise Arbour, a former United Nations human rights monitor, has said that "to put ICC proceedings on hold in Darfur would send a dangerous signal to would-be war criminals that justice is negotiable." (BBC, Nov. 20)

Richard Holbrooke, the former United States envoy in the Balkans and an advisor to President-Elect Barack Obama, wrote in the Sept. 21 Financial Times that "Suspension may seem a safer course to follow in the short run, but it will embolden him [President Al-Bashir] and other future suspected war criminals."

In a report on Sudan, the Bush administration has claimed that genocide is being committed inside the country. Inside the United States, the main support for the campaign on Darfur comes from right-wing evangelicals, pro-Israeli organizations and some pro-imperialist liberals.

In Darfur itself, the rebel movement has split into at least 12 identifiable factions. According to the Sudanese government, these rebel groups are the ones committing most human rights violations taking place in this region in the western section of the country.

Sudan's government has issued six reasons why it will not cooperate with the ICC. These include the fact that "Sudan is not part of the Rome Statute and hence

the Court has no jurisdiction over the situation in Darfur." (Sudanese Media Center, July 26)

Additional reasons cited are related to the deliberations of the African Union, where former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, on behalf of the AU, based opposition to the ICC prosecution on attempts aimed at winning a "secure peace without sacrificing the need for justice."

Also, according to the Sudanese government, "the prosecutor is working very hard to criminalize the government and working in contradiction to Article 31 of the Rome Statute, which is governing his actions."

In addition, "the prosecutor has totally politicized the process. For instance, in his last address to the Security Council on 5th June, 2008, the prosecutor stated that he 'collected evidence of a criminal plan based on the mobilization of the whole state apparatus, including the armed forces, the intelligence services, the diplomatic and public information bureaucracies, and the justice system.'"

Darfur consortium report refuted by government

A report released on Dec. 17 by the group known as the Darfur Consortium has once again leveled unsubstantiated charges against the Sudanese government and makes a direct appeal for greater Western imperialist involvement inside the country.

The most provocative of the charges made in the report is the allegation that widespread abuses are taking place against children, women and civilians in the Darfur region of Sudan. A Dec. 17 BBC article announcing the release of the report is headlined: "Thousands Made Slaves in Darfur."

According to the BBC article: "Kidnapped men have been forced to work on farmland controlled by Janjaweed militias, a coalition of African charities says. Eyewitnesses also say the Sudanese army has been involved in abducting women and children to be sex slaves and domestic staff for troops in Khartoum."

The Sudanese government, however, has rejected the claims made in the report, saying that the allegations are "naive" and that the authors for the Darfur Consortium are "ignorant."

"The government does not condone abductions and it is not government policy. We are working hard to stop such violations. The rebel factions are mostly to blame for abductions in Darfur," a government spokesperson told the BBC.

The co-chair of the Darfur Consortium, Dismas Nkunda, was quoted in the same BBC article as saying that "Urgent action is clearly required to prevent further abductions and associated human rights violations, and to release and assist those who are still being held."

According to the consortium's website: "The Darfur Consortium is a coalition of more than 50 Africa-based and Africa-focused NGOs dedicated to working

together to promote a just, peaceful and sustainable end to the ongoing humanitarian and human rights crisis in Darfur.

"The Consortium came together in September 2004 as concerned NGOs gathered on the fringes of the third extraordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Pretoria, South Africa. The Consortium reflects the unique perspective of African civil society and provides a forum for unified action, particularly through sustained engagement with the institutions of the African Union."

However, key elements in this consortium are based in the Western-backed east African nations of Uganda and Rwanda. The use of so-called civil society groups in Africa in recent years has been largely designed to promote imperialist foreign policy aims and objectives. Criminal actions carried out by the various Darfur rebel groups were absent from the Darfur Consortium's report. Neither was there any analysis of which political interests and states support the Darfur secessionist movements.

Anti-imperialists must reject efforts to destabilize Sudan

An escalation of attacks on the African nation of Sudan must be viewed within the context of the waning influence of United States and other Western imperialist states within the international community. Even the U.N. Security Council has rejected several attempts during 2008 to isolate both Sudan and Zimbabwe and intensify political and economic pressures against these two states that the Bush administration and the Gordon Brown government in London have targeted.

A Dec. 18 Sudanese Media Center news report points out that "A sea change in the balance of power in favor of China, India, Russia and other emerging states is wrecking European and U.S. efforts to entrench human rights, liberties and multilateralism." Also: "Western policies in crisis regions as diverse as Georgia, Zimbabwe, Burma or the Balkans are suffering serial defeats. ... The hemorrhaging of western power, as reflected in longer-term voting patterns in key UN bodies, is mirrored by the increasing clout of China, Russia and the Islamic world, according to an audit of European influence at the UN by the European Council on Foreign Relations."

Consequently, there will be an intensification of the efforts to further destabilize and occupy states that take a political and economic course independent of the United States and other imperialist countries. The role of anti-imperialists based in these Western states will be important in regard to providing solidarity with the peoples of the targeted areas in order to expose the true nature of the foreign policy objectives of world capitalism in the present period.

Abayomi Azikiwe is the editor of the Pan-African News Wire and has delivered several talks on United States-Sudanese relations over the last two years.

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:
Racism, national oppression and self-determination by Larry Holmes
Black youth: repression & resistance by Leilani Dowell
Black & Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice! by Saladin Muhammad
Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion by John Parker
Racism and poverty in the Delta by Larry Hales
Domestic Workers United demand passage of a bill of rights by Imani Henry

Order online at www.Leftbooks.com

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

M★NDO OBRERO

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Análisis de la lucha de Republic Windows and Doors

Por Sharon Black
Chicago

No hay suficientes adjetivos para expresar la gratitud debida a los/as valerosos/as trabajadores/as de la fábrica Chicago Republic Windows and Doors.

Han encendido una antorcha para mostrar el camino en medio de una creciente crisis económica. La historia bien podría distinguir su acción como la primera batalla significativa en la lucha creciente que debe ocurrir y ocurrirá entre el capital y el trabajo.

La mayoría de los/as trabajadores/as en la fábrica son inmigrantes de Centro y Suramérica que quizás lo tienen todo por perder. Como muchos/as otros/as trabajadores/as con baja paga, viven de cheque a cheque. Pero a diferencia de los/as trabajadores/as nacidos/as en los EEUU, llevan la carga de una posible deportación, y como todos/as los/as trabajadores/as, extranjeros/as y nacidos/as en EEUU que sean latinos/as o negros/as, enfrentan una batalla diaria contra el racismo.

Es doble la gratitud que todos/as los/as trabajadores/as deben expresar de nuevo a los/as trabajadores/as inmigrantes y a su comunidad. Como las históricas protestas y el boicot que sacudieron al país el Primero de Mayo de 2006 que restableció éste día histórico de los/as trabajadores/as, la victoria de éstos/as trabajadores/as es una victoria para todos/as.

Si hubiera una gran lección para aprender de esta lucha ésta sería la importancia de la solidaridad. La contribución hecha por los/as trabajadores/as de Republic Windows a toda la clase obrera es el argumento más fuerte que se puede hacer en contra de la división y la violencia contra los/as inmigrantes.

La ocupación: Una táctica necesaria

La ocupación de fábricas y lugares de trabajo no es una táctica nueva. Para quienes están familiarizados/as con la historia del sindicalismo, fueron las ocupaciones militantes de las plantas de auto en los años 30 lo que comenzó una ola a través del país de organizar a los trabajadores industriales con pocas destrezas. Era una táctica tan popular que muchas canciones fueron escritas sobre ella.

Esta táctica no había sido empleada, especialmente por el movimiento sindical oficial, durante un largo periodo en los EEUU a pesar de los muchos esfuerzos por explicar su utilidad.

En el libro "High Tech, Low Pay" (Alta Tecnología, Bajos Salarios) escrito en el 1986, en la sección de "Estrategias Ofensivas: el Control por los/as Trabajadores/as", su autor Sam Marcy explica: "Hay medios por los cuales los/as trabajadores/as pueden ir más allá de la relación establecida del capital-trabajo que es el marco de la explotación capitalista. Pueden incautar y ocupar las plantas y de ese modo forzar un nuevo y diverso tipo de crisis en la clase dominante, en vez de quedarse en una estrecha y a menudo frustrante competencia de resistencia entre los patronos



MO FOTO: SHARON BLACK

Armando Robles, presidente de la UE Local 1110: 'Es una victoria para todos/as los/as trabajadores/as'.

y los/as trabajadores/as."

Cada organizador/a comunitario/a, estudiante o sindicalista debe aplicar esta táctica y abogar por ella de una manera popular y audaz. Si su vivienda está siendo desahuciada, quédese, no se vaya. Si su planta se cierra-entonces siéntese y permanezca en ella. ¿Por qué no deben los/as trabajadores/as o la comunidad demandar lo que legítimamente es suyo?

Pre-notificación y el derecho al trabajo

La lucha de los/as trabajadores/as de Republic también plantea un concepto muy importante por el que se necesita luchar enérgica, poderosa y ampliamente por la comunidad en general y por el movimiento sindical, y este es el de la "pre-notificación".

La Ley federal de Notificación sobre Reentrenamiento para el Ajuste del/la trabajador/a (WARN) requiere de los patronos que emplean a más de 100 trabajadores/as, 60 días de aviso o el pago de indemnización por cese del trabajo en caso de despidos o cierre del lugar de trabajo. Esto es inadecuado, aún cuando los patronos con frecuencia violan la Ley WARN sin ninguna consecuencia. Además, no cubre los lugares de trabajo en donde la compañía se declara en bancarota. En el caso de Republic Windows and Doors, tomó una lucha audaz para ganar lo que de otro modo se hubiese perdido en un largo y tedioso enredo legal.

Una pre-notificación sería significaría seis meses de aviso. Solamente con ese tiempo se puede establecer la lucha necesaria para prevenir el cierre. Esto también es cierto con respecto a la demanda para una moratoria en las ejecuciones de una hipoteca sobre la vivienda.

Lo que los/as trabajadores/as de Republic Windows demostraron en la práctica y lo hicieron público en ruedas de prensa, era que su ocupación era en defensa de preservar sus activos. Durante el período en que permanecieron, la compañía no pudo remover el equipo. Esencialmente, salvaron su derecho a la propiedad de su trabajo.

Este concepto, el de que los/as trabajadores/as tienen el derecho a su tra-

bajo y que es tan fuerte como cualquier otro derecho de propiedad, debe profundizarse y popularizarse en la mente de cada trabajador/a durante este período en que los despidos están sacudiendo al país.

El sindicato United Electrical Workers pudo ampliar y politizar esta batalla generando una campaña popular en contra del Bank of America. El BofA había cortado la línea de crédito a la fábrica Republic a pesar de la infusión de \$25 mil millones del dinero de los/as contribuyentes para el BofA como parte del rescate para el sector financiero por parte del congreso. Enfocándose en el BofA fue una estrategia bien hecha que captó la atención y la simpatía nacional, incluyendo llamadas de los/as concejales de Chicago y de la Junta del Condado de Cook para retirar sus fondos del BofA.

Papel del estado

La policía se guardó de expulsar o de arrestar a los/as trabajadores/as de Republic cuya lucha se convirtió muy rápidamente en un símbolo popular de la lucha contra los grandes bancos. Hubiera sido embarazoso políticamente para el presidente electo Barack Obama, si en su estado la policía arremetía y arrestaba a un grupo relativamente pequeño de trabajadores/as que desafiaban este banco. Obama en cambio, hizo algo sin precedente en décadas por un presidente estadounidense, haciendo una declaración en apoyo de los/as trabajadores/as. Los/as trabajadores/as y el sindicato pudieron utilizar esta declaración para empujar su lucha hacia adelante.

Las fuerzas de la reacción también estaban constantemente trabajando. El gobernador de Illinois Robert Blagojevich fue detenido bajo un cargo pendiente de corrupción inmediatamente después de su aviso de que el estado retiraría sus fondos del BofA. Algunos informes mencionaron a Obama, cuyo puesto en el senado estaba bajo discusión por Blagojevich. El tiempo de la detención no se puede ver como simple coincidencia.

Esto no sólo fue dirigido a los/as trabajadores/as que ocupaban una minúscula planta en el corazón de Chicago, era

también que Obama mismo "no debe dar concesiones" a los/as trabajadores/as. En el análisis final, los amos corporativos que dirigen la escena estaban más preocupados por los problemas más grandes en la General Motors y la posibilidad de que los/as trabajadores/as automotrices y otros se pudieran rebelar también.

La corrupción entre los políticos no es nada nuevo en Chicago. Además, los cargos y rumores en contra del sindicato SEIU (empleados/as del servicio) relacionados con este caso son igualmente absurdos. Hasta los/as comentaristas en los medios corporativos admiten que las alegaciones carecen de sentido.

El hecho de que un líder sindical de alto nivel acuerde una reunión con un político no es nada nuevo.

Es de conocimiento general que muchas campañas sindicales de trabajadores/as del estado se han hecho de esta manera, nada de esto es ilegal. El problema no está en la ilegalidad- el problema es que en la mayoría de los casos estas estrategias no consolidan el movimiento de la clase obrera y generalmente tienden a dejar a los/as trabajadores/as pasivos/as y desarmados/as ante las batallas futuras.

Solidaridad y el movimiento sindical

En el mismo Chicago, la solidaridad fue ejemplar. Trabajadores/as tanto de los sindicatos del AFL-CIO como del Change to Win proporcionaron ayuda. El 10 de diciembre unos/as 1.000 sindicalistas, junto al movimiento progresista, marcharon frente a las oficinas del Bank of America. Mensajes y simpatizantes de la lucha comenzaban a llegar a Chicago desde otros estados y de alrededor del mundo.

Lo que fue desafortunado fue el relativo silencio de la dirección superior de ambas confederaciones de trabajo cuando debieron haber expresado inmediatamente su solidaridad incondicional. Tal declaración de solidaridad habría consolidado el movimiento sindical entero y habría enviado un fuerte mensaje a todas las salas de las juntas corporativas de que los/as trabajadores/as están unidos/as.

El movimiento sindical debe tomar una lección especial de cómo la UE condujo esta lucha. Antes que nada, los/as trabajadores/as de base estaban preparados/as, informados/as y en última instancia hicieron las decisiones sobre lo que fundamentalmente era importante para ellos y ellas. Esto fue crucial en forjar una victoria.

Una observación especialmente importante es que los/as trabajadores/as de Republic probaron que pueden realizar sus tareas sin los jefes y que la hacen bien. Esto quedaba claro para cualquier persona que siguiera los acontecimientos. Los/as trabajadores/as vigilaron la planta, organizaron la alimentación, guardaron orden, limpiaron el piso, y podrían manejar fácilmente la producción. Los/as trabajadores/as no necesitan de los jefes para nada. □