

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

workers.org

MARCH 12, 2009

VOL. 51, NO. 10

50¢

Obama tries reform but Economic chaos hits workers

By Fred Goldstein

The aim of the \$3.5 trillion budget submitted by President Barack Obama is to slow down the massive income inequality in the country and deal with multiple crises which have accumulated for years and are now in the acute stage, such as health care, global warming and education.

The budget is a reversal of a 30-year trend in which the capitalist budget was used as a blunt instrument to carry out blatant transfers of wealth from the masses to the rich, while cutting back on every form of social spending. Its aim is to carry out long-term reforms of a progressive but limited character that include, among other things, taxing the rich, cutting taxes on the workers and the middle class, aiding students, establishing a fund to improve the health-care system and taxing polluters.

Just days after the administration presented the budget, the capitalist economic crisis showed in various ways that it is deepening dramatically. The giant insurance company AIG announced the biggest quarterly loss in corporate history: \$61.7 billion. Washington had to come up with another \$30 billion in bailout money for AIG, bringing the total to \$180 billion. The world's biggest insurer, AIG is in crisis because it insured so much of the bad mortgages and other bad debt floating around the globe.

A few days prior to the AIG announcement, General Motors announced it had lost \$30.9 billion in 2008. The Big Three auto bosses went into negotiations with the White House to get \$20 billion more in bailout money. Together, GM, Ford and Chrysler lost \$53.4 billion in 2008. Meanwhile, U.S. demand for vehicles fell to its lowest level in 25 years.

Citigroup, the largest private bank in the U.S., had to come to Washington for its third bailout. This time the government had to buy a 36 percent stake in the bank to keep it afloat.

Profits and production swoon

On March 2, the Dow Jones average on the stock market hit its lowest point since 1997, dropping below 6,800. This drop directly reflected the economic situation. Profits are sinking. Profits in the fourth quarter of 2008 fell 37 percent at the 457 companies in the S&P 500 that have reported quarterly results. The 74 financial companies reporting lost a combined \$50.5 billion. Business investment in equipment and software fell 28 percent in

CAPITALIST CRISIS SPURS FIGHTBACK

Mumia takes on Wall St. 3
Boston conference 4
Detroit summit 5

the fourth quarter and exports declined. Manufacturing declined for the 13th month in a row in February.

The government also revised its estimate of how steep the downturn was in the fourth quarter of 2008. It now estimates that the gross domestic product (GDP) dropped 6.2 percent, rather than the 3.8 percent originally stated. This was the biggest drop in any quarter since the fall of 1982, when a drastic downturn saw unemployment rise to more than 10 percent. Although the total number of jobless for February has not yet been announced, there was a sharp rise in weekly unemployment claims to 600,000 new claims each week. This indicates that the overall figure will rise by even more than the half-million-plus jobless added in each of the previous three months. (Wall Street Journal, Feb. 28)

The U.S. numbers were in synch with the global picture. The big capitalist powers in Europe and Japan are all in crisis and their economic decline is steeper than that of the U.S. To make the crisis of the European capitalists even worse, their governments cannot agree on measures to fight the downturn.

The capitalist economy worldwide is clearly out of control, not only of the bosses but of all their financial officials and government institutions. It is no wonder that the word "depression" is creeping into the descriptive terminology more and more.

Obstacles to even limited reform

The Obama reform plan, limited as it is, is up against the economic crisis, which threatens to overwhelm it. But it is also up against the right-wing opposition led by Rush Limbaugh and Newt Gingrich, which is openly trying to sink the Obama program. Sections of the Republican Party have called it "class warfare," which means instead of giving every nickel to the rich while trying to get the capitalist economy back on its feet, it contains programs that may reduce some misery for

Continued on page 4

Int'l Working Women's Month

Activists unite struggles

By Monica Moorehead

March 8, International Women's Day, is not only an important time to reflect on women's resistance to all forms of injustice and oppression from the past, but also to help inspire a fightback for the important struggles that lie ahead. And inspiration is needed now more than ever as women bear a significant burden with the deepening capitalist economic crisis. This includes foreclosures and evictions; lack of health care, education and child-care; war and occupation; sexual harassment; attacks on reproductive rights; incarcerations and more. These problems are devastating not only for women, but also for their families and class brothers.

During March, International Working Women's Month, as activists and a growing sector of the masses gear up for the April 3-4 national march on Wall Street to demand a bailout of the people, not the banks and CEOs, women organizers around the country are taking a big step forward to link the struggles at home with the struggles abroad in meeting halls, on the airwaves and in the streets, to illustrate that every issue is a woman's issue.

In Atlanta on March 7, the International Action Center, Georgia Detention Watch and Human Rights Atlanta are planning a visit to immigrant women being held at the Gadsden Detention Center

WOMEN RESIST

- Foreclosure fighter speaks
- Anti-lesbian slur protested 6-7

in Etowah, Ala. According to leftinAlabama.com, there are close to 140 mostly non-English-speaking women from Latin America, Vietnam, Cambodia and Caribbean islands being imprisoned there by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, part of the Department of Homeland Security.

The organizers plan to have women lawyers visit the detainees who have been denied any legal representation. They will bring the women personal hygiene products, get information about their inhumane conditions and circumstances, and express opposition to U.S. immigration policies.

On March 8, the IAC is coordinating a six-hour **International Women's Day radio program on WRFG**, the local community radio station in Atlanta, where a wide cross-section of women will be participating. E-mail atlantaiac@aol.com for more information.

In New York City, the **International Women's Day '09 Coalition will be holding a rally on March 8 at 1 p.m. at Union Square** to demand that the government bail out women and their

Continued on page 6

IMMIGRANT STRUGGLE Racist Arizona sheriff protested 3



Sahar Abusada (holding flowers) returns to Houston after delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza. WW PHOTO

Houston activist returns from Gaza

7

Subscribe to Workers World

Eight weeks trial: \$4 One year: \$25 www.workers.org

NAME

PHONE

EMAIL

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

WORKERS WORLD 55 W. 17 St., 5 Fl., NY, NY 10011 212-627-2994

A critical look at the Academy Awards

By David Hoskins

The 81st Academy Awards show on Feb. 22 opened with its typical pomp and circumstance despite the current recession. Host Hugh Jackman's song-and-dance routine provided a little levity for the country's somber mood and some relief from the media's sexist obsession with the newest designer outfits and multi-million-dollar jewelry worn mainly by women actors. Oscar night, however, was an interesting cultural study of class and national oppression—both for what the awards show recognized and for what it overlooked.

Racism was an undercurrent before and up until the Oscar show, from the choice of nominations to the selection of the winners. Irish director Danny Boyle emerged as the night's biggest winner after the British-produced film "Slumdog Millionaire" took home eight Oscars including the awards for best picture and directing. The film itself continues to be the target of anger on the streets of India where demonstrators protest the use of the pejorative term "slumdog" in reference to impoverished Indians and the film's promotion of slum tourism. Boyle's appropriation of Bollywood's right to portray the poverty of its country's slums to the world was also criticized.

The film's British producers were further castigated for the treatment of the film's child actors, whose compensation included placement in a local school, a book stipend and a few thousand dollars at most. The payments were not enough to support the families of actors Azharuddin Ismail and Rubina Ali, who were only able to leave the Garib Nagar slum in Mumbai when the city government moved their families to public housing in late February.

While the "Slumdog Millionaire" producers and Boyle won Oscars, the film's Indian actors, including main characters Dev Patel (Jamal) and Freida Pinto (Latika), did not receive a single nomination in any of the acting categories. While India won its formal independence from Britain in 1947, if "Slumdog Millionaire" had been Indian-produced, would it have gained the same kind of worldwide audience and recognition, including inside the U.S.?

The best supporting actress nominations of Viola Davis for her portrayal of the mother of a gay student who may have been the victim of a suspected molestation by his priest in "Doubt" and Taraji P. Henson for her role in "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" were the Academy's only attempt to recognize the talent of Black actors. Neither woman won the award. Many other actors of color were overlooked, such as Danai Gurira, Hiam Abbass and Haaz Sleiman in the critically acclaimed movie "The Visitor."

The deserved attention given to "Milk," the compelling story of California's first openly gay elected official, San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk was a bright spot for the awards. The film accurately captured Harvey Milk the man and the movement that propelled him to elected office before he was assassinated by former supervisor Dan White. The film was nominated for eight awards and took home the Oscars for best actor and original screenplay.

In his acceptance speech, gay writer Dustin Lance Black assured gay and lesbian kids across the country that they are beautiful human beings of value. It should be added that bisexual and transgender youth are equally valuable.

Sean Penn's acceptance of the best actor Oscar for his



COMMENTARY

role as Harvey Milk provided a balance of humor and political awareness. Penn lambasted those who supported the California ban on same-sex marriage as shameful in his call for equal rights. He playfully referred to the audience as "commie, homo-loving sons-of-guns." Penn's light-hearted connection between LGBT rights and communist politics provides an interesting segue to one of the Academy's biggest oversights.

The epic depiction of the life and contributions of communist revolutionary Che Guevara was ignored entirely, as the Academy failed to nominate Stephen Soderbergh's "Che" for a single award. The Academy-Award-winning Puerto Rican actor Benicio Del Toro, whose brilliant portrayal of Che himself won the best actor award at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival, summarized the real reason this film was overlooked.

"Look, 'Che' is a Hollywood movie, any way you want to cut it, it is a Hollywood movie. But it is a Hollywood movie that takes the position of another country, in the language of that country, and makes a criticism of the United States government. I don't know any other movie that has done it that clear. This movie is as good as any movie that got nominated for an Oscar—better. But we got zilch all through the Oscars." (Huffington Post, Feb. 2.)

Ironically, Sean Penn, during his best actor acceptance speech at the January Screen Actor Guild Awards show in January, gently chastised his fellow actors for not recognizing Del Toro's acting in "Che."

The same Academy that shunned Del Toro gave Kate Winslet a best actress Oscar for her disturbingly sympathetic portrayal of an unapologetic SS guard at a Nazi concentration camp during World War II in "The Reader."

The Academy's choice of nominees and winners was illustrative of Hollywood's limitations in promoting progressive struggle. The same Academy that strongly upheld the notion of LGBT equality in marriage was also guilty of institutionalized political censorship and racism in its choices. □

★ In the U.S.

- Economic chaos hits workers 1
- Int'l Working Women's Month 1
- A critical look at the Academy Awards 2
- Calif. budget cuts provoke resistance 3
- Thousands march in Phoenix 3
- Mumia on 'Wildin' on Wall Street' 3
- Boston activists map fightback strategy 4
- On the picket line 4
- Detroit People's Summit June 14-17 5
- The UAW at the Crossroads, Part Two 5
- Women lead foreclosure struggles 6
- Houston activist delivers aid to Gaza 7
- Union protests Harvard boss's anti-lesbian jibe 7
- New Yorkers rally to support Cuba 7
- Leader of Republic sit-down interview 8
- AIM warrior Robert Robideau, 1946-2009 8
- Anti-war forces denounce troop plans 9
- MTA foiled: The shoe didn't fit 9
- Black History forum 10

★ Around the world

- Movement spreads to boycott Israel 9
- Unions in Ireland call general strike 10
- Guadeloupe strike's shock waves hit Paris 11
- U.S. threatens to expel 30,000 Haitians 11

★ Editorials

- U.S. still perpetuates racism 10

★ Noticias En Español

- Editorial: Corea 12
- Entrevista con Luis Barrios 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. 10 • March 12, 2009
Closing date: March 3, 2009

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 Martínez, Carlos Vargas

Copyright © 2009 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.

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
www.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

California budget cuts provoke resistance

By Cheryl LaBash

Workers and communities throughout the U.S. already facing record unemployment are now being pressed to bear the brunt of state and local budget shortfall “solutions.” However, resistance is bubbling up as workers push back with demands for foreclosure and eviction moratoriums, house take-backs, labor union civil disobedience, marches and non-cooperation.

Nationally the focus against Wall Street is sharpening with the Bail Out the People demonstrations called for April 3 and 4—the anniversary of the day Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King gave his life defending Memphis sanitation workers.

California, the state with the eighth biggest economy in the world, is a snapshot of this crisis and response.

With workers already reeling from record mortgage foreclosures, unemployment in California officially surged to 10.1 percent in January, up nearly 1.5 percent in one month and increasing by 257,000 workers from a month earlier. Cuts in crop planting due to a persistent drought in the state will cost 70,000 additional agricultural jobs hitting migrant workers, and likely raising food prices.

With both tax and fee increases across-the-board, the California state budget signed on Feb. 20 hits the poorest hard. On April 1, the sales tax will increase by 1 percent. Personal income tax goes up a quarter percent and the dependent credit is reduced, thereby siphoning off the federal stimulus income tax reduction that promised some relief for paycheck-to-

paycheck workers struggling to cover basic living costs. The Vehicle License Fee nearly doubles, making it harder to get to work in a state with limited mass transit.

California-based banks slurped up \$27.6 billion in the direct Troubled Asset Relief Program bailout, but no shift of these funds to the state deficit is planned. However, the budget reduces taxes for multi-state corporations, movie production and purchase of newly constructed homes.

The state’s strategy, aimed at increasing production, ignores a fundamental global crisis of overproduction, while failing to implement a direct jobs program at a real living wage. A May 19 special election puts some features of the new budget to a vote.

John Parker, an organizer of the Bail Out the People Movement Fightback Conference held Jan. 24 at the SEIU Local 721 hall in Los Angeles, said: “None of the ballot proposals address the basic issue. All working-class people are suffering, including immigrant workers who are among the lowest paid and most exploited. None of us are getting a bailout, not for our homes and communities shattered by foreclosures, not for the epidemic joblessness, not for health care or education so essential for the future of our youth.”

“We support the April 3 and 4 march on Wall Street to demand the bailout for the people, where it is needed the most. The banks are not only getting the federal bailout, but debt service from state and local borrowing.”

Parker continued: “Although the focus has been on the California budget,

Los Angeles, like city and county governments across the country, has a projected \$1 billion deficit. Why? The city worker pension funds are being looted by Wall Street’s economic crisis so more tax dollars need to be poured in to guarantee the benefits workers paid for and earned. In so many ways the working class is underwriting the banks and corporations. We say, ‘Enough!’ and call on people to stand up and resist.”

California spending cuts hit transportation, cost-of-living increases to supplemental income and other low-income-directed programs, education funding from pre-school to university, and more. California’s public schools, colleges and universities are facing more than \$11 billion in state budget cuts, and teacher layoffs and school closings are already sparking resistance.

The United Teachers of Los Angeles stopped proposed health benefit cuts, but the union is still in contract negotiations. Teachers plan civil disobedience at the school board meeting on March 10, and a Pink Friday action on March 13 to protest more than 16,000 preliminary statewide teacher layoffs.

On March 16 UTLA members are marching on the state capitol in Sacramento with other public service unions, students and community organizations. This protest will follow a March 15 statewide conference organizing to stop the attacks on public workers, students and the people using public services at Sacramento City College supported by UTLA, AFSCME D.C. 57, AFT Local 2121, the San Francisco Labor Council and more. □

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

‘Wildin’ on Wall Street’

Taken from a Feb. 23 audio column. Go to www.prisonradio.org to hear Abu-Jamal’s political recordings.



For years now, banks, investment houses and brokerage firms have engaged in a feverish dance of hustling from homeowners; using devices like ARM’s (adjustable rate mortgages); offering loans at low or no interest which balloon into traps; forcing foreclosures that insured new properties could be sold, with the hustle being hustled anew.

You know what these hustlers think of the economy that they’ve brought to the brink of disaster? You needn’t look far, for cable systems were ablaze with the video of a “reporter” on the trading floor of the stock exchange going full tilt over the alleged misdirection of monies going to homeowners struggling to make their mortgages.

It looked like a pig fighting for more slop in his trough, upset that he couldn’t get it all. They were angry that the other pigs of Wall Street couldn’t get more, while standing amidst the economic wreckage.

The nation’s economy is falling not only because of the epic greed on Wall Street—the long Iraq debacle, with its “lost” billions, certainly didn’t help—but also these princes of capital certainly played a pivotal role.

And the irony isn’t that they want more. It’s that these pigs will probably get it, for if capital is anything, it is hopelessly amoral. Its only interest is gain.

If any people in America know this, it’s African Americans, whose grandparents were capitalist-owned chattel like horses or swine.

Except for a tiny band of radicals called abolitionists, many of whom were driven by deep religious fervor, few in American life considered slavery wrong. Many considered it as natural as grass growing on the lawn in spring.

The reason the economy is still stuck in idle isn’t because of a lack of stimulus. It’s the tremendous distrust on both sides. Bankers are afraid to lend lest they won’t be repaid; lenders are afraid they’ll be trapped and tricked by slick language hidden in loan agreements. Meanwhile, the house of capital crumbles from within and without. □

Thousands march in Phoenix

Sheriff Joe has got to go

By Paul Teitelbaum
Phoenix

Many thousands of people—young and old, Black, white and Latina/o—packed downtown Phoenix on Feb. 28 for an all-day rally and march protesting the racist actions of Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

The protest made a stop at the Wells Fargo building, which houses Arpaio’s office, before proceeding to the Federal Courthouse. The crowd demanded the ouster of Arpaio and the end to Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which allows Arpaio and his deputized thugs to enforce federal immigration law. Arpaio has created a posse comitatus—a paramilitary group of sorts—to act as his deputies and terrorize people of color in the Phoenix area.

The rally began with a blessing ritual and a speech from leaders of the Tohono O’odum nation. The Tohono O’odum’s land is located in both the U.S. and Mexico. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security plans to extend its border wall onto Tohono land, thus dividing the nation into two separate entities and disrupting the lives and culture of its people. In fact, eight nations of Indigenous peoples that have existed for thousands of years have been divided by the U.S.-Mexico border.

Arpaio’s racist history and abuse are well documented. At his “Tent City” jail, temperatures can reach a deadly 150 degrees in the summer. His practice of feeding prisoners just twice a day with spoiled



Left, Isabel Garcia speaks at March 1 ‘Stop Sheriff Arpaio’ protest. Below, Shacked detainees on forced march to segregated Tent City.

LEFT, WW PHOTO: PAUL TEITELBAUM
BELOW, PHOTO: PHOENIX NEW TIMES

food, his reinstatement of the chain gang and his cruel treatment of inmates—including those awaiting trial who have not been convicted of any crime—have cost Maricopa County more than \$46 million in lawsuit settlements.

There have been numerous deaths at the hands of Arpaio’s prison guards, often when using what they call a “restraint chair.” In July 2008, the ACLU of Arizona filed a class action suit accusing the Maricopa County Sheriff of illegally profiling Latina/os. On Feb. 11, the Federal District Court for Arizona ruled that the lawsuit could proceed.

On Feb. 4 Sheriff Arpaio marched 200 “suspected” undocumented workers, all shackled and dressed in striped prison clothes, from the County Courthouse to Tent City. This public humiliation, reminiscent of slaves being paraded to the auction block, was the latest outrage and

prompted the call for the demonstration.

At the end of the rally near the Federal Courthouse, speakers from various organizations connected the struggle to oust Arpaio to the struggle against racism in general. Isabel Garcia of Tucson pointed out how Arizona is being used as a testing ground by the so-called Department of Homeland Security.

Janet Napolitano, now DHS chief, was governor of Arizona when the criminalizing of an entire population began: the militarization of the border and the steady movement of Border Patrol presence northward, the implementation of Operation Streamline—a federal program that detains approximately 70 undocumented workers per hour, then turns



them over to privately run prisons to serve their sentences—and the so-called Employer Sanctions law, which is really aimed at workers.

“These programs started in Arizona and are exported to other states,” Garcia explained. “We in Arizona need to fight back the hardest against these atrocities.”

This day of protest against Arpaio and what he stands for was also a day of support for immigrant workers and Indigenous peoples. The people are ready to unite and fight back. □

'Class conflict on the horizon'

Boston activists map fightback strategy

By Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston

There's a lot of talk and confusion about Main Street versus Wall Street these days. But there was no confusion on Feb. 28 at the Boston fight-back conference about what side people need to be on. The 60 leaders, all veterans of many years of struggle, came to organize a response to the unprecedented crisis of capitalism ravaging their communities.

Frantz Mendes, president of the hosting Boston School Bus Drivers Union, Steelworkers Local 8751, welcomed the multinational assembly to the union hall. "I don't understand why there is any confusion about how wrong it is to bail out the banks and not the people. We are here to battle the government," declared Mendes.

The conference was co-chaired by Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner, Miya X from the Women's Fightback Network, and Bob Traynham, a longtime Boston school bus driver and member of Local 8751.

Larry Holmes, a national leader of the Bail Out the People Movement, opened the meeting with an analysis of the current crisis: "The banks have money but they don't want to lend it out because they can't get the level of profit that they want. They are holding us hostage. Class conflict is right on the horizon.

"Obama got elected because the establishment knew that it was in serious trouble and that the people were angry and wanted changes," said Holmes. "The system is actually afraid of the people! They are afraid the people will stop fighting over inadequate 'stimulus' crumbs and focus on the trillions of our dollars that the banks are sitting on. That is why we want to focus on the Wall Street demonstration on April 3 and 4."

City Councilor Chuck Turner exemplified this new approach. Because of four



From left, Padma Balasubramanian, Ahmad Kawash, Sandra McIntosh, Dorotea Manuela, Chuck Turner, Larry Holmes. Above, Miya X.

decades of fighting for the needs and rights of all of Boston's oppressed communities, Turner was prosecuted by the Bush Justice Department last year and indicted by U.S. Attorney Michael Sullivan in a racist frame-up based on testimony of a government informant, Ron Wilburn, who recently declared he would not cooperate with the FBI investigation.

The heavy weight of this unjust and retaliatory prosecution has had no repressing affect on Turner's fighting spirit, however, as he declared to his fellow activists: "There are two Americas and our people have been in a depression for decades. The founders of this country created a system that worked for white males of property. The stimulus is about propping up businesses to keep the system alive. We need to organize the unemployed and cut \$100 billion out of the war budget every year!"

In the free-flowing discussion and exchange of views that followed the opening panel, all agreed on the need to band together the various struggles and focus on

the trillions of dollars going to the banks.

Participants talked about their own experiences of being homeless, unemployed or unable to work because of discrimination based on past conviction records. They told of losing their homes and of homeless people not being able to get into HIV housing programs because of budget cuts and lack of resources.

The gathering heard from students and workers fighting massive layoffs at Harvard University and the Harvard bosses' anti-lesbian/gay/bi and trans harassment. Leaders from the Boston School Bus Drivers Union described the Boston city workers' fight to resist a wage freeze. They talked about a struggle against the Harbor charter school, which is forcing seventh graders to perform lavatory cleanup jobs, displacing union custodians, as a condition to remain in school.

All agreed to meet again and to mobilize for a demonstration at that charter school on March 5, at school hearings

Continued on page 8

ON THE

Tomato pickers to march on Tallahassee

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers is planning to march on the Florida state capitol in Tallahassee on March 9 to protest the "modern-day slavery" that tomato pickers are forced to endure in the state's tomato fields. To show your support for these workers, predominantly Latina and Latino immigrants, and to demand an end to their brutal working and living conditions, sign the petition on www.ciw-online.org, which will be delivered to Gov. Charlie Crist during the protest. Before that on March 4, CIW is hosting a delegation of top food authors who have written in gourmet magazines about the workers' despicable slave-like conditions. The delegation was organized by Just Harvest USA, a national organization that aims to build a more just and sustainable food system, with a focus on establishing fair wages, humane working conditions and fundamental rights for all farm workers.

Grocery workers get their \$1.5 million

In 2008 grocery workers at Amish Markets and related stores met with Food and Commercial Workers Local 1500 because they wanted to form a union. One of their reasons: they were being cheated out of overtime. After the New York State Department of Labor surveyed nine locations and confirmed widespread wage and hour and other labor violations, Amish Markets agreed to pay \$1.5 million in unpaid wages to 550 workers.

SAG rejects 'last, best, final offer'

After three days of intense negotiations with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, the board of directors of the Screen Actors Guild voted 73 percent to reject the AMPTP's "last, best, final offer" dated Feb. 19. Even though SAG was "ready to make a deal," the AMPTP threw a curve ball, issuing a new

Obama tries reform but Economic chaos hits workers

Continued from page 1
the workers.

The budget calls for a rise in taxes for those making over \$250,000 a year—the top 5 percent of the population. The Bush tax cuts for the wealthy would be allowed to expire next year. The plan would raise taxes on the super-rich who run the private equity funds and hedge funds. Right now much of their profit is taxed at 15 percent, which is lower than the tax rates for their employees.

The budget, if passed as is, would wipe out \$4 billion in subsidies to banks that give student loans. These funds instead would go to bolster Pell grants for students. In addition, Pell grants would be indexed for inflation and the maximum would be raised on July 1 to \$5,350.

There would be increased money to detect, prevent and treat HIV-AIDS. There is \$4 billion to expand health care for Native people and for the Indigenous of Alaska. There are also funds to provide food stamps to low-income elderly, to rehabilitate low-income housing, to increase allocations for Head Start and Early Head Start, and to improve health care in rural

communities. (New York Times, Feb. 27)

Restores family planning funds

This budget would restore money for family planning for low-income women through Medicaid, which was removed from the stimulus package earlier under right-wing pressure.

Health-care reform is predicated on savings and on squeezing money out of the medical-industrial complex—the HMOs, insurance companies and hospitals—to create a \$634 billion fund over 10 years to finance various measures. It envisages savings based on improved preventive care and a number of other measures, such as common computerized data bases for medical records.

Obama's attack on global warming is based on forcing polluters to pay for permits giving them permission to pollute up to a given amount. These payments would fund weatherizing housing, green construction and many other projects.

But the budget, despite its reversal of the Reagan-Clinton-Bush emphasis on taking from the masses, is cautious and minimal, given the magnitude of the

problems it seeks to address.

The working class, especially its most oppressed sections, and the middle class need universal, affordable, quality health care now. The trillions going to the banks in bailouts instead could be used to fund the system. The cost could be drastically reduced by cutting out the pharmaceutical industry, the insurance industry, the for-profit hospitals, the HMOs, and all the parasites that use health care as a way to line their pockets.

Setting up a 10-year fund or convening a health-care council that leaves the private capitalists in place guarantees that the health-care crisis will drag on and will result in a rotten compromise. Health care for all should be a right.

There are millions of homeless people, millions more who must live crowded together, often two or three generations in one unit, and millions who are in danger of losing their homes. To overcome this housing crisis requires the investment of hundreds of billions of dollars to insure everyone's basic right to a livable, affordable space for themselves and their families. Housing should be a right.

Gives more money to Pentagon

One outright reactionary provision of the budget is a 4 percent increase in the Pentagon budget with new emphasis on weapons to counteract resistance movements. The military budget would rise to \$534 billion from \$513 billion. That would be enough to put millions of workers back to work, millions of people back in their homes, or to serve as the beginning of a national health plan.

In the midst of this terrible economic crisis, Washington is planning to keep 50,000 troops in Iraq while it escalates the war in Afghanistan and spreads it to Pakistan.

But most telling about the Obama budget are its projections regarding the tax increases for the rich and its economic predictions. The tax cuts for the rich are not scheduled to go into effect until 2011. The reason, according to the administration, is that this is when the economy will recover.

The two-year wait is bad enough. But even more important is the definition of "recovery" in the budget. It projects that the capitalist economy will grow by 3.4 percent in 2010. Most experts consider this a wildly optimistic estimate. But even if that were to come true, the budget forecasts that after the recovery there will still be 7.9 percent unemployment—higher unem-

PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

DETROIT

People's Summit June 14-17

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

demand that wasn't part of its June 30, 2008, final offer or federally mediated talks last November. The AMPTP wants to extend SAG's contract a year longer than those with other industry unions so it can try to leverage SAG against the other unions. The primary issue in the negotiations involves money: the AMPTP does not want to pay actors additional fees for work posted on the Web that was originally created for TV. (SAG press release, Feb. 21)

Hotel workers demand pay

For three full weeks starting on Jan. 30, workers at the Detroit Riverside Hotel were not given paychecks. The hotel is owned by the Boca Raton-based Shubh Hotels which operates luxury hotels throughout the U.S. On Feb. 18 the workers—clerks, maids, janitors and laundry workers represented by UNITE HERE—held a press conference to expose and protest this situation. Several of the workers are in danger of being evicted, and many cannot afford groceries. The next day the hotel fired the head shop steward Shirley Mealy for speaking to the press. The union called another demonstration that day to expose this blatant attack on workers' rights.

Calif. caregivers sign first contract

After 10 months of negotiations with Kindred Healthcare, more than 900 caregivers at 10 nursing homes in Northern California signed a contract Dec. 22 with substantial raises, organizing rights and a voice to improve care. Certified nursing assistants represented by United Healthcare Workers will earn \$2.33 an hour more by the end of the three-year contract. Kindred agreed that UHW may try to organize workers at its 10 non-union nursing homes and that it will set up quality of care committees where workers can advocate for residents. Altogether over the last six months of 2008, UHW won decent contracts at 32 nursing homes in California. □

ployment than during the present crisis.

No recovery foreseen for workers

In short, the budget is looking to bring about a recovery for the capitalist class. It expects an increase in production and in profits, but leaves the working class with massive unemployment, which is especially severe in the Black, Latin/o, Asian and Native communities. Right now a total of 24 million people are either unemployed or underemployed, according to the Center for Labor Market Studies and Northeastern University. Official unemployment was 7.6 percent as January ended, and is expected to reach 8 percent at the next announcement. So this budget means that a "recovery" of the capitalist economy in terms of economic growth could leave more than 20 million workers unemployed or underemployed.

This is a recovery strictly for the bosses. The multinational working class should take a look at these projections and see what the government and the financial experts have in store. The only way to get a working class recovery is to open up a mass struggle for jobs—not in 2010 or 2011, but right now.

Goldstein is author of "Low-Wage Capitalism." For information, see www.lowwagecapitalism.com or contact fgoldstein@workers.org.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions voted unanimously on Feb. 28 to call a People's Summit in Detroit from June 14-17. Organizers will begin widespread outreach to garner endorsers and draw other organizations into building for the June activities. These actions will include a march along Woodward Avenue for jobs and housing and a tent city in Grand Circus Park of the foreclosed-upon, jobless, underpaid, homeless and all who struggle for social and economic justice.

The People's Summit will occur simultaneously with the National Business Summit, sponsored by the Detroit Economic Club, taking place at Ford Field in downtown Detroit. Millionaire and billionaire capitalists, including the heads of Conoco-Phillips, Dow Chemical, General Motors, Chrysler, Humana Inc., Ascension Health, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, BNSF Railway Co. and PVS Chemicals, will gather at this

event June 15-17. The presidents of the National Council on Competitiveness and U.S. Chamber of Commerce will also be attending.

Calling it "a Gathering to Define America's Future," the business summit's Web site states: "Participants will have direct access to ... top business, government and academic leaders and a voice in shaping the outcome of the discussion." In order to have a voice, however, a registration fee of \$1,495 per person is required.

Those who can afford this exorbitant registration fee will be putting their heads together to discuss "innovation and policy ideas in technology, energy, environment and manufacturing." In other words, they will be strategizing on how to further increase their profits at the expense of the ever-shrinking middle class, the vast working class and the growing millions living in utter poverty.

These business tycoons will gather in a city reeling from rampant foreclosures and evictions, record unemployment, plant closings, mass layoffs, school clos-

ings, cutbacks, union busting and other forms of devastation.

President Barack Obama and cabinet members have been invited to this gathering. Will these business tycoons allow Obama's economic stimulus plan to proceed? Will they create jobs at living wages? Will homeowners have real opportunities to avoid foreclosure? Or will the suffering and misery continue?

Only a mass struggle of those most affected by the capitalist economic crisis will turn the tide. The Moratorium NOW! Coalition organizers note that so far only the banks and mortgage lenders have been bailed out, to the tune of trillions of dollars of workers' tax money—money sorely needed to rebuild the lives of the people.

Organizers hope that the People's Summit will attract everyone struggling for social and economic justice, not just in Detroit and Michigan, but on a national level. Everyone involved in any progressive struggle is urged to organize for the June 14-17 event. □

The UAW at the crossroads

By Martha Grevatt

"I'd say you've got to give Ford a lot of credit. I do." Any one of Ford's workers would have to wonder, credit for what?

In 2008 the company had the biggest loss in its 105-year history: \$14.6 billion. As of March 1 Ford stock is worth \$2 a share. Vehicle sales are down 40 percent from February 2008. The company's assets were put up as collateral in 2006 to obtain \$23.4 billion needed for a "restructuring" that has cost 50,000 jobs.

The source of the quote in the Feb. 27 Automotive News, Ford CEO Alan Mulally, isn't exactly objective. Mulally is patting himself on the back because Ford has not had to ask for federal government assistance. This means that he, unlike GM's Rick Wagoner and Chrysler's Bob Nardelli, will not be working for an annual salary of \$1.

Mulally's "voluntary" 30-percent pay cut leaves him making "only" \$15.96 million, based on his 2007 compensation. That's "only" \$15.9 million more than a Ford production worker makes putting in a 40-hour week with no layoffs.

Mulally is also feeling perky over Ford being the first of the Detroit Three to squeeze precedent-setting concessions out of the United Auto Workers. The cost of living allowance—pioneered by the UAW in 1946 and standard since—is gone. So is the eight-hour day.

In 1938 the Fair Labor Standards Act made employers pay time-and-a-half after 40 hours worked in one week. The UAW contracts went further by mandating premium pay after eight hours in any single day. Now hourly workers will work longer days for straight-time pay.

Ford workers are voting by March 9 on whether to go along with the contract revision, which also cuts pay, break time, holidays, and Supplemental Unemployment Benefits, and further endangers retiree health benefits. As of March 1, one UAW local accepted the concessions, but with a significant 41 percent voting no.

It's assumed that UAW members at Chrysler and General Motors will be asked to approve the same deal. They

might as well be voting with a loaded gun to their heads, considering the number of bankers, politicians, and so-called "economists" and "analysts" who are demanding union-busting-by-bankruptcy.

The latest is New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman. "It is time that [GM] and Chrysler were put into bankruptcy so they can truly start over with ... new labor agreements," Friedman argues, although he adds, "We have to shore up the banking system, which underpins everything." Friedman isn't just speaking his own twisted opinion. What Wall Street thinks, Friedman puts into writing and the Times prints as economic gospel.

The bankruptcy's impact on workers and retirees is of

PART 2

no concern to finance capital. They probably cheered on Feb. 24 when federal bankruptcy Judge Robert D. Drain allowed Delphi, formerly GM's parts division, to end all health-care coverage for 15,000 non-unionized retirees. Retirees' hardships were weighed against the \$70 million annual savings to the company.

Meanwhile, GM's pension fund is reportedly under-funded by \$12.4 billion. Gambling on the stock market has put workers' deferred wages in jeopardy. Adding to the shortfall was GM's use of almost \$3 billion from the pension fund for buyout programs to entice employees to retire or quit, thereby shrinking the work force through "special attrition."

The companies have been demanding lower prices from their parts suppliers, which have in turn sought pay and benefit cuts from their union employees. Auto suppliers have posted big losses. Lear, Visteon and others are on the verge of bankruptcy—from which Delphi has acknowledged it may never emerge, despite huge concessions. Delphi has even suspended production in Souzhou, China.

Competition versus solidarity

Everywhere they turn, auto workers are bombarded with the message that they must make sacrifices so Ford, GM and Chrysler can be "competitive." That same capitalist competition is driving GM to consider eradicating Saturn—once

hailed as a "new kind of company." GM is dumping Saab and likely will shed part of GM Europe's Opel division.

With whom are UAW workers supposed to be "competitive?" Nearly every auto company in the world is watching sales fall. Toyota, now the world's biggest automaker, lost \$4 billion in 2008, its first loss since 1950. All of Japan's car companies have slashed production worldwide: 39 percent at Toyota, 33 percent at Honda, 54 percent at Nissan and Mitsubishi, and 63 percent at Mazda. GM Europe, which includes Saab, Opel and the British brand Vauxhall, has demanded \$1.2 billion in "cost cutting," while at the same time asking European governments for financial assistance. European car companies also want government help and are laying off workers.

The crisis of capitalist overproduction is worldwide. More has been produced than can be sold at a profit. No wage reduction has ever solved that crisis.

Auto workers can refuse to pay for a situation that they did not create—and some already are doing so.

"Thousands of Opel workers from around Germany took part in a mass rally today at the company's headquarters, demanding that parent General Motors scrap plans for plant closures in Europe. Protests were also planned today at GM factories in the UK, Spain, Sweden, Poland, Russia, France, Austria and Belgium, as well as at other German plants." (Automotive News, Feb. 26)

"Trade unions and globalization-critical protesters are planning demonstrations in Berlin and Frankfurt under the banner: 'We're not paying for your crisis.'" (Spiegel International, Feb. 26).

These well coordinated and quickly built simultaneous demonstrations in nine countries show not only mass anger but tremendous potential. Imagine if this movement were to spread to the U.S., Canada, Mexico, South America, Africa, and Asia. The UAW needs to see that international working-class solidarity is key to protecting workers' rights to their jobs.

E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.org

Women lead foreclosure struggles

By Kris Hamel

The racist, sexist subprime mortgage industry and the crisis it created has especially affected women and their families, so it is no surprise that women are active in the forefront of struggles around the country to stop foreclosures and evictions.

In Detroit, two such women are Sandra Hines, a foreclosure victim herself, and Vanessa Fluker, an attorney who fights the many illegal practices of the banks and mortgage companies on behalf of homeowners. Both are leaders in the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions.

In Los Angeles, Martha Rojas, a Colombian activist and union organizer for home-health-care workers, plays a leading role in the Labor-Community Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions. She and Rosie Martinez, chair of Service Employees Local 721's Latino Caucus, are both outspoken advocates for a moratorium on foreclosures.

Another such woman is Sharon Black of Baltimore, an organizer with the Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions. She also works with the Bail Out the People Movement and is a leader of the campaign to pass Council Bill 09-0289, which would require a 365-day notice before any foreclosure eviction could occur in that city.

Black talked to Workers World about the dynamic struggle in Baltimore to win relief for homeowners facing foreclosure and eviction.

Black: On Feb. 23, after months of struggle to get them to take action, the Baltimore City Council introduced Council Bill 09-0289, which essentially would place a one-year moratorium on



WW PHOTO: GARY WILSON

Sharon Black speaking to the Bail Out the People Movement Conference in New York.

evictions. It would require that a 365-day notice of eviction be given to homeowners in foreclosure.

We launched a concerted campaign both within the progressive movement and in the community. For several months we had been pressuring the City Council and sheriff's office to stop foreclosures. We wanted the sheriff to stop taking part in the foreclosure process just like Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans did when he recently stopped doing sheriff's sales in the Detroit area. We wanted the council and local government to take action to stop this crisis.

Activists put up 800 posters in neighborhoods across the city and distributed leaflets at emergency centers. We also launched an internet petition campaign that definitely resonated in Council as we got a lot of phone calls with complaints about clogged e-mail.

WW: What happened at the City Council meeting?

Black: Before the meeting we had a press conference and rally demanding the Council take action. At the meeting, things suddenly broke open. Council members spoke up and used the same language we've been using, calling this an emergency measure. The bill has 11 sponsors. Only three council members out of 14 did not sign on.

It was an unbelievable night and a big victory for the people! Now, by law, the bill has to go through a process that includes a public hearing set for March 24, before it's voted up or down. The banks were there to oppose it, but we'll be fighting bankers and lenders who want the bill defeated.

WW: What is the next step in this struggle?

Black: We've put out a call to the people of Baltimore and all community leaders to help pass Council Bill 09-0289 and to come to the March 24 Council hearing. It states:

"The Baltimore City Council has heeded the call of community activists who have been working day and night to halt the rising tide of foreclosures and the harm that it is inflicting on our communities.

"Council members Bill Henry and Mary Pat Clarke have courageously stepped up to the plate, along with others, and have introduced a groundbreaking bill that would act as a powerful incentive to banks and lenders to restructure loans and keep families in their homes.

"This bill would require 365 days notice after a foreclosure is placed on the docket before the sheriff can perform the odious job of putting families out of their homes.

"Why is such a bill needed? Because every economic prognosticator clearly indicates that the specter of joblessness and foreclosures will only grow worse. Because those who are losing their homes are not just statistics—they are hard-working families who are suffering through an economic period that some

are saying is as bad as the Depression of the 1930s.

"They are Christina Sumpter, a mom who lost her job and fell behind in her mortgage payments after her interest rates went up. She lives in a modest row home in East Baltimore. She wonders what's going to happen after she exhausts trying to negotiate with Wachovia, which is now owned by the billion-dollar bailed-out Citibank. Will she be in the street?

"Others are like Joe Bullock, who has waited over three months to get foreclosure counseling because the centers are clogged with people waiting to get appointments. He lives on the Westside. Mr. Bullock could lose his home because he became disabled and lost his job. He is now working but doesn't know if tomorrow he'll get the final notice.

"The banks and lenders who have received trillions in taxpayer bailout money are simply not doing what they are supposed to do: making mortgages affordable and keeping families in their homes. Those lenders who do the right thing have nothing to fear from this bill.

"Keeping people in their homes helps everyone. There is nothing worse for a community than boarded-up vacant homes. Vacant homes attract rats. They devalue the entire neighborhood. It becomes a tremendous burden on city tax revenues and services.

"The Baltimore City Council has an opportunity to set a national precedent for cities and people throughout the country who are looking for solutions to this crisis."

The Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions urges everyone in Baltimore and the surrounding area to attend the City Council hearing on March 24, 10:00 a.m. at City Hall, 100 Holliday St., to testify on behalf of Council Bill 09-0289. Call 410-218-4835 or email apcbaltimore@pipeline.com to add your name to the growing list of supporters.

On International Working Women's Day Uphold the legacy of women's resistance

BAIL OUT WOMEN & our communities

SUNDAY MARCH 8

RALLY 1 pm
Union Square
14th & Broadway
Everyone is welcome

MARCH at 2 pm

at 3:30 pm
Kimmel Building—
site of recent, heroic
NYU occupation
@ Washington Square South
& LaGuardia Place

**Ending Ceremony
Triangle Shirtwaist
Fire Memorial
at 4 pm**

Site of 1911 fire that killed
146 women workers and girls
Corner of Washington Sq. Place
& Greene St.



For information & leaflets call **212.633.6646**
Sponsored by Int'l Workin Women's Day '09 Coalition
c/o Solidarity Center
55 W. 17th St., 5th Fl., NY, NY 100

Women activists mobilize nationwide to unite struggles

Continued from page 1

communities. At the rally, a women's bill of rights will be presented. Participants will be encouraged to sign it and add their own demands as well.

Following the rally, there will be a march throughout the Greenwich Village area that will be led by Palestinian, Filipina, Black, Latina and other women activists. The march will make a stop at the **Kimmel Building, part of New York University**, one of the largest private universities in the U.S. In February, a two-day sit-in took place at the Kimmel Building led by women students of color, to demand the school's divestment from Palestine and more local community access to the school's facilities.

The marchers will also hold a ceremony at the **Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Memorial**. It was at this site on March 8, 1911, where more than 140 young, superexploited, immigrant women workers, including girls, tragically lost their lives after the bosses locked the emergency exits when a fire broke out.

Call 212-633-6646 for more information about the New York City

International Women's Day activities.

The Women's Fightback Network in Boston will be sponsoring a "Women Rise Up Sistas Summit" on March 14, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., at Roxbury Community College. The main goals of the summit, according to WFN literature, are to "build a united fightback agenda against racism, sexism, LGBT oppression, budget cuts, layoffs, poverty and war; money for schools, health care, childcare, youth programs and our communities ... jobs and income for all!" Call 617-522-6626 or e-mail wfn@iacboston.org for more details.

The Detroit branch of Workers World Party will host an International Women's Day program on March 14 featuring Martha Grevatt, the author of the forthcoming book, "In Our Hands Is Placed a Power: The Flint Sit-Down Strike."

Grevatt, a 21-year Chrysler worker and executive board member of United Auto Workers Local 122 in Twinsburg, Ohio, is also a founding member and former executive officer of Pride At Work, the AFL-CIO's LGBT constituency group. Grevatt writes frequently for Workers World newspaper, particularly on labor issues.

Continued on next page

'A one-woman demonstration for Palestine'

Houston activist delivers aid to Gaza

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Palestinian-American activist Sahar Abusada returned home and was greeted by a welcoming crowd at the airport in Houston Feb. 28. Abusada had raised money in Houston to buy 140 large tents and 280 blankets for families in Gaza who are homeless due to the recent Israeli bombing.

When Abusada came through customs she was greeted with cheers and bouquets of flowers given to her by family and fellow activists.

Abusada flew to Cairo to purchase the tents and blankets and coordinated the delivery of the supplies with the Palestinian Red Crescent. She had hoped to be allowed into her homeland to follow the aid to its destination in the north of Gaza.

However, when she attempted to enter Gaza from the Rafah border, Abusada, who was born in Gaza, was twice denied entry by Egyptian government officials despite having an "official permission letter" from the U.S. Embassy.

"One thing worth noting is the contrasting sentiments of the Egyptian people and the Egyptian government with regard to the Gaza issue," said Abusada. "From the

moment I arrived in Cairo I felt nothing but support for Palestine on all levels, ranging from the tent merchant who sold the tents to us at cost, to the workers loading the trucks who refused to be paid, to the inspectors at the check points who did everything possible to facilitate our safe passage. Their warmth and encouragement was truly a sign of the support of the Egyptian people."

Abusada, frustrated at not being allowed to visit her family and other Palestinians so she could assess their humanitarian needs through first-hand discussions, took out the banners she had brought and began chanting and having a one-woman demonstration right on the border.

Abusada spoke with many Palestinians while on the border. "They are well aware that even with the new president in the U.S. there is still total and endless support for Israel in the U.S. government. This is clear to everyone in Palestine," she said.

"There is no doubt to the people of Palestine that Israel won a lifetime lottery from the U.S. and receives its payoff of \$1.5 million every day," Abusada told Workers World. "People understand that the white phosphorous and other illegal weapons used on our people are funded by the U.S. government, yet we see the

U.S. acting like it does not know of the war crimes being committed by Israel on our people."

"Gaza can be described as being like an open-air jail," Abusada said. "The Israeli blockade continues to leave Gaza's 1.5 million inhabitants without sufficient food, water, fuel, electricity, shelter or medicine. There has been a complete blockade of Gaza for over a year. Life there is like being in a huge jail."

Abusada was met in Cairo by Naser Ashour, who is also from Gaza and now lives in Houston. Both activists work with the Houston Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine, formed after the Israeli air attacks began in December.

"When we finally made it to the Rafah border, I was very touched to see people from all over the world standing together in solidarity with the people of Palestine. From a distance I could see a group holding a Canadian flag, and once we got closer it became apparent that there were people from all over the world: France, Canada, Egypt, Germany, many of whom were doctors or activists waiting for days for just a chance to get through the border and help in any way possible," Abusada explained to Workers World.

A full account of this woman's journey



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Sahar Abusada back in Houston.

to the Palestinian border, made despite the worries of her teenage daughters and family in Houston, can be found at gazawarewithyou.blogspot.com.

The Houston Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine demonstrated every day for a week when the bombing of Gaza began, drawing crowds of more than 1,000 people. They also led the annual Martin Luther King Parade in Houston on Jan. 19. They have 10 billboards up on Houston freeways and have sent hundreds of thousands of dollars of medical aid to Gaza. □

Union protests Harvard boss's anti-lesbian jibe

By Ed Childs and Phebe Eckfeldt
Cambridge, Mass.

When a Harvard University dining hall manager called two women workers "lesbians" in an attempt to intimidate and insult them, the response from the workers, their union and students was to mount a fightback.

The two women, who are members of UNITE-HERE Local 26, complained that they felt threatened and that the manager was trying to divide them from their lesbian/gay/bi and trans coworkers and the students to whom they serve meals everyday.

The women's LGBT coworkers and the union shop stewards organized the workers in many of the dining halls to wear rainbow ribbons in solidarity with them. Many students also started wearing rainbow ribbons in solidarity with this campaign. Janice Loux, president of UNITE-HERE Local 26, issued a solidarity statement not only in her capacity as president of the union, but also as an openly lesbian union leader.

UNITE-HERE, upon further investiga-

tion, found out from workers that Harvard management has been using anti-LGBT, anti-woman and racist language as well as anti-immigrant remarks. During the Obama campaign when enthusiastic supporters, particularly African-American workers, talked about him or wrote his name proudly on boxes and bags at the workplace, they were called into the office and reprimanded.

"When there is an economic crisis, racism, sexism and anti-LGBT bigotry are used to divide workers at a time when they are being attacked. At Harvard we are being set upon by layoffs and cutbacks. These acts of intimidation are used to divide workers and hinder us from carrying on a struggle to save our jobs and fight the cutbacks," said Ed Childs, a cook and chief shop steward of UNITE-HERE who represents the dining hall workers.

The union currently has strong language in its contract against intimidation and attacks based on sexual orientation and for respect for all workers. This language was the product of talking to many workers, students and faculty at Harvard to get their views.

After this recent incident, the union, in an effort to strengthen and deepen the language, again began meeting with the workers and various student groups that are most affected by these attacks, including the Harvard BGLT Student Association, the Harvard Black Student Union, the Trans Student Alliance, the Women's Center, the Black Women's Association and the Harvard Islamic Society. Four meetings have taken place. They have also joined forces with the Stop the Layoffs Campaign at Harvard.

The view of many groups and workers

is that Harvard management would not have felt emboldened to do these things without outside influence from right-wing movements or currents. These include Prop 8 backers and racist forces opposed to Obama, along with anti-immigrant propaganda spreaders.

"The union is taking these attacks very seriously. They go along with the cuts and layoffs that are already taking place. Harvard hired a guy from Goldman Sachs to run their finances who is a union buster. But all our members are very clear on the old union slogan, 'United we stand, divided we fall,' and we will fight back," stated Childs.

Childs is chief shop steward for UNITE-HERE Local 26; Eckfeldt is a member of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, AFSCME, Local 3650.

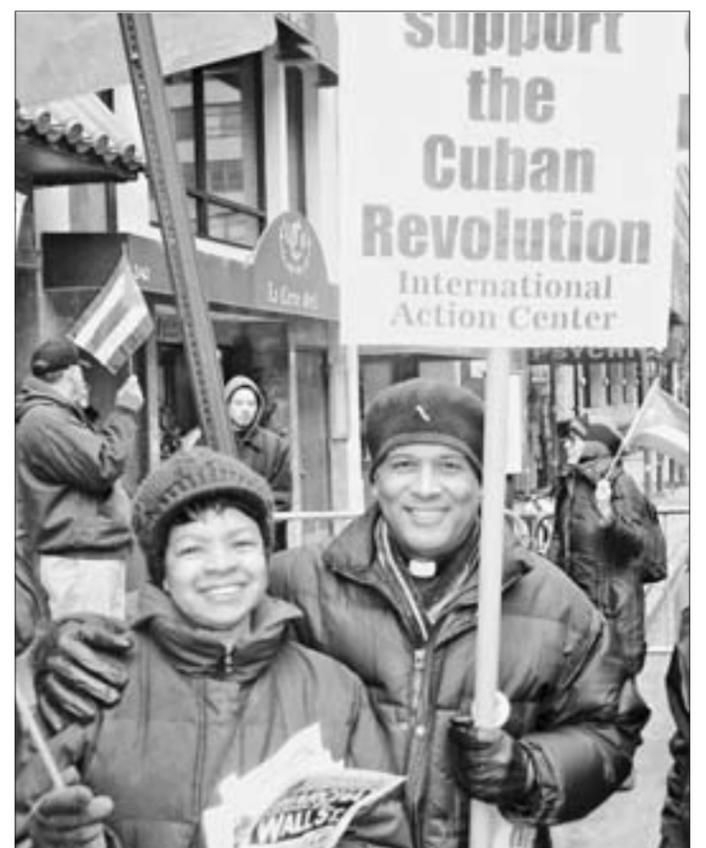
New Yorkers rally to support Cuba

Friends of the Cuban Revolution rallied in front of the Cuban Mission to the United Nations March 1 to counter a simultaneous rally of right-wing Cuban exiles. More than 100 pro-Cuba activists arrived at the mission, alerted on short notice when news came of plans for the counter-revolutionary rally. They chanted "¡Cuba Sí, Bloqueo No!" "Free the Cuban Five!" and "Long live socialist Cuba!" The pro-Cuba demonstrators drowned out the chants of the counterrevolutionaries and infuriated many of the right-wing demonstrators.

The anti-Cuba demonstration was organized by a group called "Cuba: A Cambio Ya!" Right-winger Alex Romay claimed the protest was "in favor of liberty ... and against the Castro regime." The pro-Cuba activists argued that former Cuban President Fidel Castro presided over an unprecedented level of freedom and development for Cuba, a nation that was once virtually a colony of the United States. True liberty for Cuba would mean an end to the U.S. blockade and liberty for the five Cuban heroes trapped in U.S. prisons. In photo, Dolores Cox and Luis Barrios.

—Julie Fry

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO



She will speak on the role of women in the labor struggles of the 1930s.

"With Babies and Banners," a documentary on women in the 1937 General Motors sit-down strike, will be shown. Other speakers will include Sandra Hines, a leader of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions, and Megan Spencer, a Michigan State University activist and feminist.

The Detroit meeting is being dedicated to the heroic Palestinian women in Gaza, who resisted the recent brutal, U.S.-backed Israeli military attacks. The dinner and video will begin at 5 p.m. and the program at 6 p.m. at 5920 Second Ave. Call 313-831-0750 or e-mail detroit@workers.org for information.

E-mail: mmoorehead@workers.org

Leader of Republic sit-down

'We couldn't sleep when this happened'

Following is an interview with Electrical Workers union (UE) Local 1110 President Armando Robles, conducted in Cleveland by Martha Grevatt. Robles was a leader of the successful worker occupation of Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago in December. He and other Republic workers are currently on a 15-city speaking tour organized by Jobs With Justice.

Martha Grevatt: What kind of preparation went into the occupation of the plant?

Armando Robles: Well to start, we found out where they put the trailers [after we noticed that the company was moving equipment out of the plant], southwest of Chicago around 25, 30 minutes away from the company. I phoned Mark Meister, my union representative, because our contract says if they move under a 40-mile radius, they got to respect our contract and give us back our jobs. He said, "You know what Armando? What do you think about the people staying in the plant?" I think it was a great idea!

When Mark told me about it, I didn't know about sit-ins. He sent a video to my cell phone. It's about the steelworkers in Canada, how they broke [open] the doors and entered the company, [breaking the] chains and locks. The company was firing people with no reason, they don't receive any benefits, so that's the reason [they sat in].

So we proposed to the executive board, and then to the workers, and then it was preparation for, like, three weeks, ex-



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Bryan Pfeifer, UE Local 1110 President Armando Robles and Martha Grevatt.

plaining day-by-day how it would be.

When we [received] the last day notice, everybody said, "We don't go, we're going to stay in here 'til we got what we're [entitled to]."

The company works two shifts, but we created a third shift group. That way everybody worked eight hours, go home and sleep and come back. But in reality, we couldn't sleep when this happened.

Grevatt: There are workers of different nationalities and different languages. How did you maintain unity?

Robles: One of the things, we have a democratic union. We run elections every single year. And we have always tried to [have] Afro-American representatives, Latin American representatives. Always we try to [represent] everybody.

Grevatt: How did your union deal with the risk of deportation?

Robles: Well, we explained that if they got a problem with the law, or if they got problems with immigration,

don't run the risk. But we find out that [the closing] was affecting everyone. We decided to stay all together, all united. We don't think about what could happen.

Grevatt: Can you tell more about all of the support that you got?

Robles: We received a lot of support from all the unions around the city, around the state. We received letters from other countries, a French delegation. It was on the first page of Japanese

newspapers. We received a letter from Venezuela and we heard that the guys from the Autonomous University of Mexico City, [if] we occupied one more week, were planning to come to Chicago and give us their support. We received support from Rev. [Jesse] Jackson, from the governor of Illinois, a lot of churches and from President Obama. On Sunday, the second day, we received a lot of letters of support and donations, food, turkeys, toys for our kids. It was amazing.

Grevatt: Why do you think the banks and the company finally agreed to your demands?

Robles: I think they accepted what we demanded, not out of sympathy—it was pressure of the workers, when we sat in. We had a lot of power and a lot of support. And then Obama said we have the right.

I want to tell you something. The bankers, the second day or third day, they said they don't like this m-f guy

[Robles]. They say he create all this. It's our fault. But we have to eat. They want to throw us on the street, but we fight for our rights. They make money for years. So we know, some way or another, they should pay us. I think that's why we got the support from all over the country.

Grevatt: Are other groups of workers asking you for guidance?

Robles: Yes, in a couple of places. One was Providence, Rhode Island. These people came to work, 22, 23 days ago, and found a lock and a paper on the door saying "no more work." The workers told us they went to the company and made a big protest, and it was intensely cold so the company opened the doors and [they] made their protest inside. I told those guys it was a good opportunity to [stay] in there, call the media, and put pressure on the company.

Colibri was the name of the company, they make jewelry. They have two [facilities] in New York City, huge, they got money. So it is not fair that [the workers were] not even given one day notice. We talk to these people and they received a lot of cooperation from us.

Grevatt: What are you hoping to accomplish with this 15-city speaking tour?

Robles: I would like to explain the situation, how we did it. I hope the bankers understand that we did this because we feel mistreated and we feel like they violated our dignity.

I'm learning a lot of things from all over and I feel real good from this tour.

We should keep going all over the country, give our history, search [out] people that need help, and give them real hope. Not just UE, all unions—we should be united, avoid our difference to try to work together for workers' rights.

Grevatt: What was it like for you to meet the original sit-downers from 1937?

Robles: Well, for me it was great. I never thought something like that was going to happen to me. I feel real proud.

Grevatt: Do you have a final message to the working class?

Robles: My message is, stay united, fight back to the company, fight back to the government, and don't let the industries and the government stop us. Keep fighting 'til we get justice. It's for our families. □

AIM warrior Robert Robideau

1946-2009—'A tireless campaigner for freedom and Indigenous rights all over the world.'

Robert Robideau, a member of the American Indian Movement since 1973, died Feb. 17 at his home in Barcelona, Spain, where he was the founder and director of the American Indian Movement Museum. He was a member of the Turtle Mountain and White Earth Ojibwa tribes. Robideau and Darrell (Dino) Butler were acquitted in the deaths of two FBI agents in 1976 on grounds of self-defense. The charges arose from a shootout with the FBI on Pine Ridge reservation in June 1975 that left two FBI agents and a Native man dead. In the aftermath of the 1973 Wounded Knee takeover by AIM, 60 AIM members were killed and hundreds more assaulted in a government-sponsored action to destroy the organization. A third defendant, Leonard Peltier, was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences in a separate trial. Peltier, an internationally known political prisoner, has been incarcerated for 33 years for the same alleged offense of which Bob Robideau and Dino Butler were charged and acquitted. Below is Peltier's statement on the death of Robideau.



It is with a real deep sense of loss that I write this. Robert Robideau, who we called Bob most of the time, was my brother in the struggle for Indigenous rights. He was also my blood cousin and a defendant in the Oglala shootout trials. Bob was a tireless campaigner for my freedom and Indigenous rights all over the world. I can't express enough how greatly his leaving this level of existence will be missed.

Bob and I grew up together. We were involved in the 1970s American Indian Movement together. We were shot at together. We were on the run together. Over the 33 years of my imprisonment, Bob was a person I could count on for a lot of reasons. We laughed together, quarreled with one another, praised one another and had strong disagreements at times. Bob was the one person I could truly count on to tell me the straight of it, whether I liked it or not. ... He was sometimes my worst critic and sometimes my best support, but he was always my brother and I loved him dearly. I

wouldn't doubt that wherever he is at, he's organizing a support group of some sort. If I thought there was anything I could say that would bring him back to us, this statement would go on for as long as it took.

I know Bob will appreciate our concerns for the loved ones he left behind and want us to go on and do the very best we can to make this a better and more free, more just world we live in and he would surely remind us that we are the guardians of the future and the keepers of today.

It is always difficult to address the loss of people you knew and cared about, but every once in a while, there is a loss that is deeper than all the rest. In this loss, there is often a loss of words. It is a time when the shock of the situation is so close that you just don't know what to say. One thing I can say for sure is that the loss of Bob Robideau is a loss to all. And to Bob, I don't know how long I'll be here myself, but that doesn't matter. I look forward to seeing you again my brother, some other time, some other place. May the Creator be with you wherever you are and wherever you go.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse, Bob Robideau, Steve Robideau, Joe Stuntz, Bobby Garcia, Roque Duenas, Nilak Butler, Anna Mae Aquash and all the others who gave of themselves for our People.

Mitakuye oyasin,
Leonard Peltier

Boston activists map fightback

Continued from page 4

to save desegregation on March 10, at the WFN's International Women's Day "Sistah Summit" on March 14, and at the April 3-4 march on Wall Street.

Many different community organizations, hit hard by the current economic collapse, sent leaders to the conference. Some of the participants included: Sandra McIntosh of Boston's Work for Quality; Bishop Felipe Teixeira, OFSJC, Catholic Church of the Americas; Dorotea Manuela and Indian activist Padma Balasubramanian of the Boston May Day Coalition; Maggie Brown and Leonora Periere from Boston Workers Alliance; Kathy Riley-Jones of Peoples Assembly, Providence, R.I.; Ahmad Kawash from the Palestinian Club of Boston; Remeilke Forbes of the Harvard Student/Labor Alliance; Josue Renaud, director of New England Human Rights for Haiti; and Brian Majka of Stonewall Warriors and the International Action Center. □

Movement spreads to boycott Israel

By Kathy Durkin

The Palestinian Unified Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel is taking hold and growing in unions, universities and among political forces on many continents.

A worldwide focus is organizing for March 30—Global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Action Day—when progressive forces are being asked to carry out concrete, strong protests to further this key campaign in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Many exciting actions and commitments to the BDS campaign have taken place within the last month.

Inspiring activists worldwide, Basque political prisoners at France's Fresnes jail strongly spoke out for the people of Gaza, despite threats of reprisal. They avowed, "We, Basque political prisoners, refuse to buy [Israeli] products [in the canteen] [to] show our solidarity with [the] Palestinian people." (www.bdsmovement.net)

On Boycott Israel Day, Feb. 14, picket lines circled grocery stores throughout Denmark. Protesters targeted produce sold by Israeli companies, especially Carmel Agrexco, Israel's biggest exporter of fruits and vegetables, which are grown in occupied Palestine.

The city of Stockholm, Sweden, has terminated an agreement with Veolia Transport because it is connected to a

tramway project in Israel.

The BDS call has swept through Norway's union movement. Six top Norwegian unions and many organizations are calling for a campaign to end state investments in Israel. The Union of Trade and Office Workers, Norway's biggest union of store workers, has called on its members' employers to stop purchasing Israeli goods.

The Norwegian Trade Unions confederation, which represents 20 percent of the country's population, condemned Israel's bombing and invasion of Gaza and called for strong protests. (More than 28 cities were sites of protests during the siege.) This union also expressed solidarity with COSATU when South African dockworkers refused to unload an Israeli ship last month.

Italy's largest metalworkers' union, the FIOM, representing 360,000 members, has called for war crimes' trials for Israeli officials for the Gaza siege. The union also demands agreements be terminated between Israel and Italy, and between Israel and the European Union.

An academic boycott of "all Israeli institutions participating in the occupation [of Gaza]" was announced in a call by many French academics, who are promoting a wide scale BDS campaign and want to see war crimes' trials for Israeli leaders.

The Consumers Association of Turkey called for a nationwide boycott of Israeli,

U.S. and British goods that are sold by companies that "openly declare their support and cooperation to Israel [and] the ones that transfer funds to [the] Israeli Army." Among companies listed are Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Starbucks, McDonald's and Burger King. (bdsmovement.net)

The Association of Social Workers of Mauritius has called for the removal of Israeli products, including food and medicines, from store shelves and for a boycott.

University workers' delegates in the Ontario branch of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents 200,000 public sector workers, just passed a resolution which calls for an academic boycott of Israel. It calls for an educational campaign on Israel's "apartheid," asks the union to back the BDS movement, and more.

The Australia BDS campaign has picked up steam, especially in recent weeks in Sydney. There have been direct actions, campus organizing and strategizing on long-term campaigns. A key target is Max Brenner Chocolates, an Israeli-owned company in the transnational Strauss group, which supports the IDF's Golani brigade, notorious for its ruthless offensives in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon.

And as of March 1, the city of Tulkarem, which is in the Occupied West Bank, is



initiating an all-out boycott of Israeli food and other products.

March 1-8 will be the fifth annual Israeli Apartheid Week. It will be commemorated with cultural events and protests in the Occupied West Bank at universities and refugee camps, and in cities worldwide. Activities will help to build the BDS campaign under the theme of "Standing United with the People of Gaza." (stothewall.org) □

Anti-war forces denounce troop plans

By Dee Knight

The announcement that the U.S. government plans to keep an occupation force of up to 50,000 troops—plus countless civilian mercenaries—in Iraq indefinitely as well as immediately send an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan has met a firestorm of protest and opposition. Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) called the announcement "a plan for almost three more years of an unjustified military occupation that continues to claim the lives and livelihoods of our troops and innocent Iraqis."

Anti-war coalitions have called for major national demonstrations against both wars on March 21 in Washington and on April 3-4 at Wall Street in New York City. Regional demonstrations on the West Coast and in the South are also planned for both weekends.

IVAW noted that the war announcement "does not include a timeline for removing the more than 150,000 private defense contractors and mercenaries still in Iraq, nor does [it] address the question of disallowing permanent military bases."

IVAW noted that President Barack Obama "says he understands service members have 'the heaviest burden,' but how is he alleviating that burden by removing troops from Iraq only to ask them to fight in an escalating occupation in Afghanistan? We must ensure that U.S. control of Iraq, which today is accomplished primarily through military force, is not maintained over the longer term through the use of more subtle legal, financial, economic or political means.

"The Iraqi people deserve the dignity of full sovereignty and control of their own nation, and the only way to give this to them is by the immediate and complete withdrawal of all occupying forces from Iraq. This means withdrawing all military personnel, troops and defense contrac-

tors, closing all military bases, ceasing air operations, and removing American interests intent on controlling Iraqi oil resources."

Workers World spoke with Sgt. Selena Coppa in Wiesbaden, Germany, and Jabbar Magruder in Los Angeles. These IVAW leaders focus on outreach to active-duty GIs. Coppa expressed bitter disappointment that peace candidate Obama has morphed into a war president. She said printable words could not express how she and other GIs feel, but she strongly endorsed the IVAW statement.

Magruder said IVAW is focused on using the skills gained in a recent GI organizing workshop at Fort Lewis, Wash., to escalate active-duty outreach. Plans are in motion for similar workshops at other bases soon.

Both expressed concern that the economic meltdown could result in cuts in benefits and services to GIs and veterans

and vowed to push for a new bonus march, like the one in 1932 that brought tens of thousands of veterans to Washington.

In a separate statement, the Troops Out Now Coalition condemned the war announcement. "In November, the people voted overwhelmingly for an end to war and occupation," TONC said. "The majority of the people of the U.S.—and the world—are demanding an end to the war and occupation in Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine. The war against the people of Iraq was launched based on lies about weapons of mass destruction, as a pretext to seize control of the vast oil reserves of the region for the benefit of Wall Street."

TONC noted that the Iraq war has cost \$341.4 million every day, which works out to \$4,681 per household over the six years since March 2003. This does not include the long-term cost of caring for U.S. veterans who have been wounded in the war. More than 300,000 suffer

from traumatic brain injury and another 300,000 are victims of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Nor does it account for the incalculable cost in lives and suffering on both sides of the war.

On Feb. 26 the White House called for an additional \$75.5 billion this year to pay for war and occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq, bringing the total war budget for 2009 to \$141 billion. The overall Pentagon budget for 2009 will be an official \$513.3 billion. This does not include the billions given to Israel every year to continue a brutal war against the Palestinian people.

The demands of the March 21 march on the Pentagon and of the April 3-4 march on Wall Street include:

Bring ALL the troops home now!
End war and occupation—in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine!
Money for human needs, NOT war! □

MTA foiled: The shoe didn't fit

By Workers World New York bureau

Subway-fare activist Stephen Millies created a stir—and got arrested and charged with disorderly conduct—when he reached for his shoe at a December hearing to protest what he and many others considered outrageous New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority fare hikes. On Feb. 23 Millies had a victory in court when the judge threw out the case against him.

Julie Fry, his lawyer, said the charges were "ridiculous" and violated Millies' right to freedom of speech. "When you're speaking at a public hearing and they grab you from behind, that's going to intimidate others," she told the court. She added that Millies intended "a symbolic



Steve Millies promises to continue his fight against a fare increase.

gesture" that's considered an insult in the Middle East especially.

The specific ticket against Millies was that he disrupted "a religious ceremony." Judge Marc Whiten made it clear that he

considered the MTA to be no religious institution.

"We're in a recession. This is the worst time to raise fares," Millies said at a news conference after his acquittal. He called the increase "a tax on working people." Millies had said in December that the Iraqi journalist, Muntadar al-Zaidi, who threw both of his shoes at U.S. President George W. Bush during Bush's last visit to Iraq, inspired his action.

Millies promises to continue to protest the MTA's plans to raise fares. His group, the Bail Out the People Movement, is currently planning protests of the bailout of the banks. It has called for national demonstrations on April 3 and 4 targeting Wall Street in New York City. □



U.S. still perpetuates racism

The Obama administration's recent announcement that Washington will boycott the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance should give pause to anyone who thinks that the U.S. has fundamentally changed its domestic and foreign policy to now provide help for oppressed peoples or nations. The administration has said that it will boycott the Geneva meeting unless its participants change the final document to drop all references to Israel as a racist state, as well as any demands for reparations for slavery.

A number of activists and groups, particularly Black ones, are petitioning the Obama administration to reconsider its boycott of the U.N. conference, which will be held in Geneva from April 20-25. The Geneva conference is a follow-up to the landmark 2001 conference held in Durban, South Africa.

The Durban conference adopted a Durban Declaration and Program of Action that recognized that "slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity ... especially the transatlantic slave trade." This was the first such international acknowledgment, and it sparked a movement for reparations that included class-action lawsuits against several corporate beneficiaries of the slave trade, as well as a 2002 Millions for Reparations rally in Washington, D.C.

In addition, the DDPA recognized "the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination." (www.un.org) U.S. and Israeli government representatives walked out midway through the conference, ostensibly to protest a draft resolution that condemned Zionism for perpetuating racism—a quite correct resolution, in our opinion.

Both governments, accustomed to rewriting history in favor of Wall Street interests, were highly embarrassed that massive opposition countered their racist policies at home and abroad at the 2001 meeting. Now, notwithstanding the election of the first Black president in U.S. history, neither Washington nor Tel Aviv wants to risk facing the same kind

of scrutiny at the Geneva conference.

In the U.S., racism and national oppression have only intensified since 2001—exposed by the disproportionate numbers of women of color subjected to subprime mortgage loans, increased police brutality against and incarceration of Black and Latina/o people, and staggering unemployment levels in communities of color. While Black people suffer disproportionately even more as a result of the financial and economic crises, as detailed in the United for a Fair Economy's State of the Dream 2009 report, the call for reparations is something the ruling class cannot bear.

According to the Washington Post, "U.N. officials have urged the Obama administration to participate in the review conference, saying that the election of the first African American president presents the United States with an opportunity to inspire other minorities around the world and to highlight U.S. progress." (Feb. 20) Yet it is the fear of uncovering just how little progress has been made that has stayed the administration's hand.

Meanwhile, Israel just recently suffered a major political defeat, arising from its brutal attack on Gaza. With massive, worldwide rallies condemning Israel for weeks; Israel's inability to obliterate Hamas after 22 days of genocidal attacks on the Palestinian people; and a growing movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions—the last thing Israel wants is more attention called to the apartheid nature of the Israeli occupation. And the U.S. can't challenge the racism of Israel, its client state, at the same time that it perpetuates that racism with military funding and political support.

The bottom line is that a U.S.-profit-driven foreign policy toward Israel and the Palestinians—not to mention the rest of the Middle East—and its domestic policy toward Black people and other people of color have not just maintained the same institutional racism despite the new administration. This racism has intensified in response to the crisis of capitalism. □

Unions in Ireland call general strike

By Jaimeson Champion

In a stunning display of strength that would have made James Connolly—the martyred Irish working class hero from the early 20th century—proud, more than 150,000 demonstrators surged into the streets of Dublin on Feb. 21 to voice working-class demands.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions called the demonstration. Demonstrators expressed their anger at the Irish government's actions, or lack thereof, during the currently deepening economic recession. Many protestors denounced the government's proposed pension levy and pay cut, which would reduce the wages of more than 350,000 public sector workers.

ICTU Secretary General Sally-Anne Kinahan said, "Our priority is about ensuring that people are looked after, the interests of people are looked after, not the interests of big business or the wealthy," (BBC, Feb. 21)

Across Ireland, there is an intensifying groundswell of popular outrage at the myriad attacks being perpetrated against workers and the oppressed. The public outcry against the bosses, who are slashing thousands of jobs, the banks, which continue to force families from their homes, and the government, which continues to institute draconian cutbacks to vital services, is now reaching a crescendo.

"There is absolute burning vitriol that we feel at the savage way they have hit the most vulnerable in society," said Sheila O'Shea, a public school teacher who participated in the Feb. 21 demonstration. (Reuters, Feb. 21)

The ICTU recently issued a call for a general strike to begin on March 30. The proposed industrial action would involve a countrywide work stoppage aimed at forcing the government to agree to the union's "Social Solidarity Pact." This pact is a 10-point list of demands crafted by the trade unions. These demands include a 48-percent tax on all upper income individuals, complete public ownership of all banks, an immediate moratorium on all foreclosures and increased support for unemployed workers.

Occupation at Waterford continues

While workers across Ireland prepare for the March 30 general strike, hundreds of workers continue to occupy the Waterford Crystal factory in Kilbarry. The occupation, entering its fifth week as of March 1, was launched in response to the

attempted shuttering of the historic factory and visitor center.

The Waterford Crystal company is heavily indebted to a number of transnational financial institutions. The company has been drastically slashing production in attempts to cut costs. When a hired security detail attempted to enforce a lockout on Jan. 30, the workers surged through the gates, took control of the factory and have occupied it ever since.

On Feb. 27, it was announced that KPS, a U.S.-based private equity firm, is slated to purchase the Waterford Crystal Company. Workers at the factory have said that the occupation will continue until job security is guaranteed for all plant workers, irrespective of the pending KPS buyout.

At the turn of the twentieth century, James Connolly, speaking to the nationalist movement in Ireland, wrote: "If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organization of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole army of commercial and individual institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs."

In the dawn of the 21st century, with thousands of Irish workers being summarily fired and stripped of their pensions by the transnational corporations for whom they have been forced to toil, and billions of euros in taxes collected from Irish workers being used to prop up banks like Anglo Irish Bank and Bank of Ireland, it appears that Connolly's warning was dead on.

But the growing fightback movement that is providing a direct challenge to the rule of the bankers and the bosses in Ireland today can provide a roadmap to the socialist future that Connolly always envisioned. The hundreds of thousands of workers taking to the streets in cities and towns across the country are daily demonstrating that the Irish working class is ready to lead the way to a truly free Ireland. While the tricolor flag of the Irish Free State now flies over Dublin Castle, it is Starry Plough, the flag of the Irish working class, flying proudly over the occupied Waterford Crystal factory, which symbolizes the Ireland of the future.

E-mail: jchampion@workers.org

BLACK HISTORY FORUM ON

Zimbabwe, crisis at home

The New York branch of Workers World Party held a special Black History Month forum Feb. 27 entitled, "From Zimbabwe to the U.S., National Liberation and Class Struggle." The speakers shown here from left to right are Monica Moorehead, editor of the book "Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle" and a managing editor of Workers World newspaper, who spoke on why it is important for the U.S. anti-war movement to defend Zimbabwe's right to self-determination; Omowale Clay, a leader of the December 12th Movement and Friends of Zimbabwe, who talked about the impact of economic sanctions, the land issue and the current political crisis in Zimbabwe; LeiLani Dowell, a Fight

Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) organizer and WW managing editor who chaired the forum and also remarked on the depression-like conditions Black people face in the U.S.; Larry Hales, FIST organizer and WW contributing editor, who defended the right of oppressed peoples worldwide to choose their own tactics of winning their liberation; and Larry Holmes, WWP secretariat member and Bail Out the People Movement coordinator. Holmes reminded everyone of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s true fightback legacy and motivated the upcoming April 3-4 march on Wall Street to demand a bailout of the workers, not the banks and CEOs.

—Report and photo by John Catalinotto



Guadeloupe strike's shock waves hit Paris

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

A general strike on the French-controlled island of Guadeloupe has spread to other French possessions and has rebounded back to France. The strike that began Jan. 26 continued into its sixth week after signs that an agreement might be reached proved false.

On Feb. 27, the Collective Against Exploitation (LKP), a coalition of 47 trade unions and political associations directing the struggle, announced that some local business owners had conceded to a pay hike of 200 euros per month.

But the largest employer's group in Guadeloupe, the MEDEF, refused to make the same concessions to the workers. By March 1, the LKP leadership announced that it would be compelled to increase pressure on the business community to sign a deal honoring the demands of the general strike.

"Not only are we going to ask for an extension of the agreement but we are going to go from factory to factory to get it signed," said LKP spokesperson Elie Domota. (France 24, March 2)

In response to the MEDEF's intransigence, the LKP called for a mass demonstration in the main city, Pointe-à-Pitre, on March 2. With regard to the talks on Feb. 27, Domota said, "About 46,000 employees are going to earn an extra 100 euros at least from the state, but we have to get the remaining 100." (France 24, March 2)

Willy Angele, the leader of the MEDEF in Guadeloupe, tried to blame the strikers, saying the action was having a major impact on the country's economic stability. "The liquidation of a number of small companies could mean 10,000 to 14,000 losses," Angele told the *Le Parisien-Aujourd'hui en France*. "The unemployment rate could jump from 23 percent to 30 percent."

But even French Interior Minister Michele Alliot-Marie, no friend of the strikers, cautioned the MEDEF to act re-

sponsibly and make decisions that would benefit the island's economy as a whole.

Additional talks have centered around the need for major improvements in the education system in Guadeloupe. The French government has taken under consideration the demand for the hiring of additional teachers.

In Guadeloupe's capital, Basse-Terre, the leader of the Les Vertes union, Richard Slessel, said on March 1: "Most of the points have been covered. It's going down quite smoothly."

Arrests made in unionist's murder

Meanwhile the French police have announced the arrest of five people in connection with the murder of trade unionist Jacques Bino on Feb. 17. Bino was killed while leaving a meeting of the strike coalition. The French police have denied involvement in the murder even though most of the strikers have blamed the authorities for the escalation of tensions.

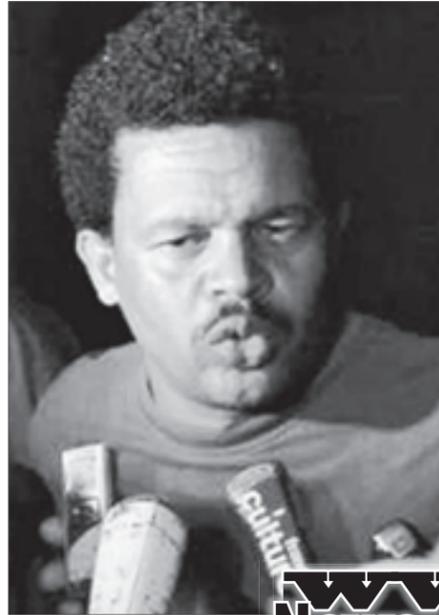
Judicial officials have filed criminal charges against a 35-year-old unidentified man who they claim fired the shots that killed Bino. France's BFM TV carried a story on March 1 which showed the state prosecutor Jean-Michel Pretre saying that the individual was the suspected triggerman in the killing.

Martinique's workers explode in rebellion

In nearby Martinique, another French "overseas department," where workers have also been on strike since Feb. 5, anger over the refusal of the French authorities to meet the demands of the people sparked rebellions on Feb. 25 and 26.

According to the AFP: "Dozens of protesters gathered at city hall Tuesday night [Feb. 24] to demand results from slow-moving negotiations there over demands for pay increases. Around midnight, some began hurling rocks and bottles at police guarding the building, and officers responded by firing tear gas." (Feb. 27)

People attacked stores, burned cars and threw bottles at French riot police.



LKP union leader Elie Domota speaks to the media after a union meeting at the Mutualite hall in Pointe-à-Pitre on the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, late March 1.

News Analysis

Firefighters on the island of Martinique reported on Feb. 26 that there had been more than 14 torched vehicles and 40 garbage bin blazes in the two days, most centered in the capital, Fort-de-France.

Discontent spreads to La Reunion

Another overseas French colony or "department," La Reunion, in the Indian Ocean, is also on the verge of labor unrest. A work stoppage was planned for March 5 over the failure of the French government to implement policies to alleviate the impact of the economic crisis. Unemployment figures in these French-controlled territories are the worst in the entire European Union.

The Indian Ocean island has a population of 802,000 people. French colonial settlers came to the territory in the 17th century and imported Africans who were enslaved to work on the coffee and sugar plantations.

Over the last several months there have been demonstrations against the high rate of unemployment and exorbitant costs of food and fuel. A coalition of trade unions, political parties and mass organizations established Feb. 11 has raised four major demands, calling for higher salaries, increased social benefits, scholarships for students and the reduction in rents and fuel and food costs.

Shock waves from the strikes have been felt in Mayotte, a French territory of 187,000 people in the Indian Ocean, and Polynesia in the South Pacific, with a population of 265,000.

The rightist Nicolas Sarkozy government's failure to resolve the strikes in the Caribbean has weakened his support in metropolitan France. A recent survey conducted by BVA/Orange showed 78 percent expressing sympathy with the LKP in Guadeloupe and finding the LKP's demands justified. Meanwhile Sarkozy's approval rating fell by six points in the last month.

Protests have also taken place in French-controlled Guiana on the South American continent. According to Michel Giraud, a researcher at the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris, "How France handles—or doesn't know how to handle, or mishandles—its colonial heritage, this is the problem afflicting France's suburbs."

Developments in the islands are having a tremendous impact on the consciousness of African, Caribbean and Middle-Eastern communities in the suburbs around Paris. These areas have experienced periodic rebellions since 2005.

A communiqué from residents of the Paris suburbs says: "The people originating from the overseas territories are victims of racial discrimination and are deprived of political representation.

"Because we are Black, Arab or Moslem, our rights are ridiculed, our dignity is crushed, our cultures are scorned. In France, as in the departments and overseas territories, we all carry on the struggle against colonialism." □

U.S. threatens to expel 30,000 Haitians

By **G. Dunkel**

The U.S. government is threatening to expel 30,000 Haitians living inside its borders. Among the millions of undocumented workers in the U.S. who live each day with the fearful possibility of deportation, the Department of Homeland Security has made undocumented Haitians a special focus.

From September to December Haitians had "temporary protected status," which allowed them to stay after four hurricanes washed away houses, bridges, roads, crops and the land on which the crops were growing.

Now, according to Nicole Navas, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman, the 10,000 U.N. "peacekeepers" currently occupying Haiti can guarantee the safety of the returnees. (BBC Monitoring, Feb. 17) At the same time, the U.S. State Department has put Haiti under a "travel advisory" and warns U.S. citizens not to go there.

Randolph McGroarty, executive director of Catholic Legal Services, Archdiocese of Miami, said this decision of Homeland Security "shocks the conscience." He went on, "Deportations at this time are simply inhumane, sending people to conditions of famine and disease."

According to Haiti AlterPress (Feb. 28),

Haiti's National Coordination of Food Supply (CNSA) estimates 3 million out of 8 million Haitians don't get enough to eat. The drought that hit Haiti after the hurricanes will cut into the next harvest, so this number will increase.

People not only need food. They also need homes. The bishop of Cap Haitien in the northern part of Haiti told zenit.org that over 10,000 buildings, which sheltered 165,337 families in his diocese, had been destroyed. (Feb. 25)

Figures of destroyed houses for the rest of Haiti have not been reported in the press. But Google Earth shows that in Gonaïves, which used to be Haiti's second largest city, mudflats have replaced the communities that stretched along the waterfront. These communities were more thoroughly devastated than was the Lower Ninth in New Orleans from Hurricane Katrina. Every single building in Gonaïves was damaged and over 500 people there lost their lives. Over a 1,000 died in all of Haiti.

The Haitian government has refused to issue travel documents to the some 600 Haitians currently packed into U.S. detention centers and 300 or so under house arrest with electronic bracelets. Its position is that it cannot handle a massive influx of 30,000 people when the Haitian economy is in complete shambles. This

decision has caused some grumbling from ICE, which threatens to keep Haitians under indefinite detention if they don't get the necessary documents.

ICE managed to deport 1,024 Haitians in 2008, but now they are using threats of indefinite detention to get large numbers of Haitians to leave voluntarily. Yet this year alone, over 700 Haitians have been stopped on the high seas by the U.S. Coast Guard—men, women and children fleeing Haiti because they couldn't find work to feed and shelter themselves and their families.

Almost all the people that ICE targets are people of color, yet many Haitian activists feel that they have been especially singled out because as a people Haitians have and are resisting the dictates of U.S. imperialism. For example, they elected

Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president in 1990 over the U.S. favorite, Marc Bazin. A U.S.-backed military coup drove Aristide into exile on Sept. 30, 1991. He came back and in 2000 was elected president with 92 percent of the vote.

Another U.S. organized coup-kidnaping sent Aristide into exile again in 2004, but he still has tremendous support in Haiti. Even in protests demanding food and housing, Haitians raise the issue of his return.

Joseph Desmaret, a Haitian activist from Spring Valley, N.Y., told *Haiti-Liberté*: "We are determined to stop this [massive deportation of Haitians]. ... If we must leave for Washington, we will mobilize our resources and we will go to march in Washington for justice for these people." (Feb 25-March 3) □

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

EDITORIAL

A pesar de Clinton, Corea tiene derechos

Es difícil encontrar un reportaje objetivo sobre la República Popular Democrática de Corea en los medios corporativos de comunicación estadounidenses. Cuando la secretaria de estado Hillary Clinton recientemente fue a la China y al Japón en su primera visita oficial en Asia, ella hizo lo que ningún/a diplomático/a debe hacer: lanzó un ataque personal y violentamente especulativo contra el líder de la República Popular Democrática de Corea, Kim Jong Il. En vez de criticarla por haber envenenado la atmosfera y hacer imposible la “apertura” en relaciones exteriores prometida por la nueva administración, los medios de comunicación jubilosamente la apoyaron.

Después de ese ataque surgió un furor en los medios masivos sobre los planes de la RPDC de lanzar un satélite de comunicaciones. Estados Unidos, que constantemente amenaza con su enorme arsenal de armas nucleares y convencionales a este pequeño y acosado país socialista, tiene la osadía de llamar a los logros científicos y tecnológicos de Corea “la amenaza más grande a la paz en Asia.”

Por supuesto, es el imperialista Estados Unidos y no Corea del Norte, quien ha hecho guerras y matado a millones por toda Asia desde que se apoderó de las Islas Filipinas en 1898. Y mientras se enloquece a causa de que la RPDC tenga misiles situados en su propio territorio, es el Pentágono el que está tratando de extender sus misiles a Europa del Este en contra de los deseos de ese pueblo.

La RPDC tiene el derecho a desarrollar sus propias tecnologías, al igual que los demás países del mundo. No va a rendirse a los dictados de los imperialistas que quieren privar del desarrollo y del derecho a defenderse a todo país que no puede controlar.

Como hay poca posibilidad de que nuestro lector@s encuentren en otra publicación estadounidense el punto de vista coreano en cuanto a esta cuestión, hemos reproducido toda la declaración del Comité Coreano de Tecnología del Espacio del 24 de febrero:

“El espacio cósmico pertenece a toda la humanidad y su uso para propósitos pacíficos se ha convertido en una tendencia global.

“La RPDC ha avanzado consistentemente investigaciones y desarrollo para lanzar satélites en órbita por sus propios esfuerzos y tecnología desde los años 80, de acuerdo con la política de su gobierno para el desarrollo del espacio y su uso pacífico.

“En este curso, científicos y técnicos de la RPDC lograron un gran éxito tal como lanzar su primer satélite experimental Kwangmyongsong-1 en órbita en su primer intento en agosto 1998.

“Desde entonces, durante la década pasada una dinámica lucha ha sido forjada para llevar a un nivel superior la tecnología y la ciencia espacial de la nación, resultando en un progreso significativo en el campo de lanzamiento de satélites.

“La RPDC considera el lanzamiento de satélites prácticos para comunicaciones, dependiendo de los recursos naturales y pronósticos del tiempo, etc. necesario para el desarrollo económico del país en los próximos años y poner su operación en marcha en la primera etapa del plan a largo plazo del estado para el desarrollo del espacio.

“Los preparativos para lanzar el satélite experimental de comunicaciones Kwangmyongsong-2 por medio de un cohete de transferencia Unha-2 están avanzando rápidamente en la Zona de Lanzamiento de Satélites Tonghae en el Condado Hwadae, Provincia Hamgyong del Norte.

“Cuando este lanzamiento de satélite pruebe ser exitoso, la ciencia espacial y la tecnología de la nación cumplirá otro enorme paso en construir un poder económico.” □

ENTREVISTA CON LUIS BARRIOS

Sacerdote arrestado por protestar contra la escuela de torturas de EEUU

Por Cheryl LaBash

El 26 de enero el sacerdote Luis Barrios declaró al Instituto del Hemisferio Occidental para la Seguridad y Cooperación, (WHINSEC, siglas en inglés), culpable de entrenar en asesinatos y torturas para avanzar los intereses del imperialismo estadounidense en América Latina. Al mismo tiempo, la Corte de Distrito de Estados Unidos lo sentenció a él a servir dos meses en una prisión federal por haber protestado en el terreno de Fort Benning, localidad de WHINSEC, conocida por su nombre anterior, Escuela de las Américas, (SOA, siglas en inglés).

El padre Barrios es un sacerdote episcopal, profesor y presidente del Departamento de Estudios Latinoamericanos en el colegio John Jay de Justicia Criminal de la Universidad de la Ciudad de Nueva York (CUNY), así como un reconocido periodista y activista antiguerra.

Mientras el padre Barrios se preparaba para lo que él llamó sus dos meses de “retiro”, él describió para Workers World/Mundo Obrero sus razones para unirse a los 20.000 activistas en la sede de Fort Benning el 23 de noviembre y el porqué el sintió que era muy importante cruzar la línea y entrar a la base.

“Como mi hermano Karl Marx dijo, este no es un momento para describir lo que está pasando, sino para actuar. Yo creo que aquí es donde tenemos que ir. ...No es que no estaba haciendo nada, sino que en este momento tomé la decisión de que tenía que hacer algo más drástico.

“Lo primero es que Fort Benning, no es nada nuevo. Hemos estado trabajando por muchos años en cerrar a la Escuela de las Américas. Segundo, la guerra no es un punto aislado en lo que está sucediendo a nombre del gobierno de Estados Unidos. Por ejemplo, ponemos mucha energía en regresar a las tropas a casa, en parar las estúpidas guerras en Afganistán e Irak o en cualquier otro intento de invadir a otro país. Estamos tratando de cerrar la base de Guantánamo, pero necesitamos entender que todos estos son síntomas únicos y particulares de algo que nosotros entendemos como imperialismo estadounidense. Algunas veces se desconectan. Puedo encontrarme luchando por algo en particular pero a la vez tener la capacidad de conectar ese algo con otra cosa más, algo más grande que necesitamos erradicar.”

En su declaración ante la corte el



Luis Barrios

MO FOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

20 de enero, Barrios dijo que él llevaba consigo una fotografía del arzobispo salvadoreño, Oscar Romero cuando cruzaba la cerca de Fort Benning. En su declaración, Barrios explicó que el asesinato de Romero en 1980 fue planeado y ejecutado por graduados de la Escuela de las Américas, con la bendición del gobierno de Estados Unidos, inmediatamente después de su discurso en el cual pedía al ejército que detuviera la masacre contra el pueblo salvadoreño. (www.soaw.org)

SOA entrena el ejército colombiano

La organización para cerrar la SOA/WHINSEC no es solo para justicia del pasado. Hoy, continuó Barrios, “Colombia es el país con el máximo número de graduados de la SOA. La SOA no puede desconectarse del Plan Colombia. [El presidente colombiano, Álvaro] Uribe es el títtere número uno de la ideología de Estados Unidos. Porque él necesita mantenerse en el poder, Colombia es número uno en la SOA y ellos regresan a cometer atrocidades. ...

“Plan Colombia es un plan militar. Hay que entender que es algo más grande que Colombia —para deshacerse de Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales, Rafael Correa, para controlar los recursos del pueblo, como el petróleo y el agua. Si consideras el desplazamiento de personas bajo el Plan Colombia puedes comprender el desplazamiento en Irak porque hay una guerra abierta—Colombia es el segundo en el mundo (en desplazamiento). Cerca de cuatro millones de personas han sido desplazadas de las tierras con reservas de petróleo y de agua. No es accidental. Dicen que ahí es donde está la guerril-

la y las plantaciones más extensas de drogas, pero esto no es cierto.

“Colombia es ya el Israel de América Latina. El dinero de los EEUU gastado en equipo militar en los dos países es parecido. Ambos son capaces de crear un gobierno que responde a los intereses de los EEUU.”

Barrios también anotó que el establecimiento académico estructura la discusión ideológica a favor del capitalismo y hay menos discusión sobre la lucha de clases, tema que junto al análisis económico debe ser plenamente discutido. Dijo que la fuerza militar no es el único método utilizado por los EEUU para invadir a otro país. La dependencia económica es otra de las poderosas armas que permite a los EEUU hacer lo que le venga en gana. Muchos países están controlados todavía por el Fondo Monetario Internacional, el Banco Mundial y los acuerdos de libre comercio —CAFTA, NAFTA y los demás—que no son nada libre. La independencia económica con los mecanismos y estructuras para llegar allí son esenciales.

Preguntado sobre la Alternativa Bolivariana de las Américas (ALBA), Barrios dijo que va en la dirección de desafiar los acuerdos de libre comercio y a favor de los pueblos, y no a favor de las corporaciones. “La cuestión más grande es el sistema capitalista”, declaró Barrios. “Es esto lo que tenemos que eliminar”.

Barrios tiene la intención de dirigirse a las cuestiones más amplias rodeando el cierre de la Escuela de las Américas/WHINSEC tanto en los EEUU como en América Latina.

Además de Barrios, fueron sentenciados a dos meses en prisión federal por sus acciones en Fort Benning, Theresa Cusimano de Denver, Colorado; Kristin Holm de Chicago; la hermana Diane Pinchot, OSU, de Cleveland, Ohio; y Al Simmons de Richmond, Virginia. Louis Wolf de Washington, D.C. fue sentenciado a seis meses de arresto domiciliario. Las multas oscilaron entre \$250 y \$1000.

Para más información vea <http://soaw.org>. □

LIBERTAD PARA LOS CINCO DE CUBANO



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez y Fernando González Llort.