

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

June 25, 2009 Vol. 51, No. 25 50¢

Facing evictions, repression, no jobs Workers, youth open fightback at Tent City

By Kris Hamel
Tent City, Detroit

June 16—Hundreds of poor and working people have gathered at the National People's Summit and Tent City in downtown Detroit to put forward the people's vision of a future with guaranteed jobs and income, universal health care, housing and utilities, and all rights that working class people are currently denied under the capitalist system.

More than 330 people registered for the four-day event. They have come from throughout metro Detroit and Michigan—even workers from the Upper Peninsula are at Tent City. Workers and activists from Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and more are represented.

The People's Summit and Tent City, based in Grand Circus Park from June 14-17, was called in response to the National Summit of big-business CEOs and executives being held at the General Motors Renaissance Center—GM's world headquarters.

"They're going to regret the closing of 14 plants and the laying off of General Motors workers, because the workers are fighting back!" said Frank Hammer, a retired United Auto Workers International representative and leader of the Auto-worker Caravan, as he opened the rally after a militant demonstration outside the big-business summit today.

More than 500 workers, including many from around Michigan and Ohio, marched in front of the GM Renaissance Center demanding jobs and human needs, not corporate greed. "The workers have spoken—keep the plants open!" was one of many chants that thundered from East Jefferson Avenue as dozens of cops and private thugs stood in formation guarding the privately owned Ren Cen.

As the workers marched and rallied for jobs, Richard Dauch, CEO of American Axle and Manufacturing, Inc., addressed

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Tent City marchers in Detroit.

WW PHOTO: LEILANI DOWELL

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At historic hearing

Victims tell of police terror

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Against a background of epidemic police brutality across the country, the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Action Network convened a Community Public Hearing on Sunday, June 7, to examine the conduct of Philadelphia police and the Office of the District Attorney.

This hearing was historic in many ways. It took place at the African-American History Museum. For the first time, the stories of victims of Philadelphia's rampant police brutality were video recorded for presentation to the federal government.

For more than seven hours, individuals and even entire families gave accounts of their experiences at the hands of police that frequently turned deadly. The picture that emerged was one of systematic

violation of human and civil rights by Philadelphia police, particularly in five police districts with a heavy concentration of Black residents.

Two days earlier, NAN chief counsel Vivienne A. Crawford and other members of the organization had traveled to Washington

with 23 complaints from Philadelphians about the police and the district attorney's office. They hand delivered them to the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.

Crawford and Paula Peoples, chairperson of Philadelphia NAN, facilitated the hearing in Philadelphia before a panel of Black jurists who took turns questioning the testifiers. Panelists included activist attorney Michael Coard; professor and journalist Linn Washington, Jr.; former Newark, N.J., police officer and author Sam Clark, himself a victim of police brutality while on the force; and Marc Parsons, a former City Hall law enforcement officer.

The stories presented a picture of police acting with impunity to unleash terror against residents of Philadelphia's Black communities. They also portrayed a situation getting worse, in light of the growing economic crisis, despite previous efforts to rein in the police.

Melanie Hurly from the Parkside area described carloads of white police officers driving through her predominantly Black neighborhood harassing residents to the point where she and others had taken to carrying video cameras to document the assaults.

Hurly described a recent incident: po-

lice with no cause broke up a gathering of neighborhood youth for a rapping contest. Residents who had been videoing the youth then recorded the police attack, only to have police grab and smash their cameras.

'Police do whatever they want'

Last Jan. 11, undercover police in the Germantown area shot Timothy Jerome Goode, a grandnephew of former Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode, twice in the back. Both bullets pierced his heart, killing him. Several of his family members spoke at the hearing.

While the police claim Goode was selling drugs and pointed a weapon back at them as he ran, no weapon was found and the autopsy report does not support the police charge. The bullet entry wounds were in the middle of Goode's back, not his side. The family interviewed witnesses who said the plainclothes police never identified themselves as officers.

The Philadelphia Police Department's Rules on Deadly Force state that, "police officers shall not discharge their firearms to subdue a fleeing individual who presents no threat of imminent death or serious physical injury to themselves or an-

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The Nazi & the admiral

By Stephen Millies

On June 10 there was a fascist attack on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. African-American security guard Stephen Johns was shot and killed by long-time Hitler worshipper James von Brunn, who was wounded and then disarmed by another guard as schoolchildren visiting the museum scattered in terror.

The atrocity follows the May 31 assassination of abortion provider Dr. George Tiller in Kansas after a long campaign in the right-wing media against the doctor.

In the U.S. corporate media, the fascist right is seldom linked to anti-Semitism and terrorism. The term "terrorist" is used overwhelmingly to slander Muslims, who are also depicted as against all Jewish people.

However, MAS Freedom, a sister organization of the Muslim American Society, immediately condemned the attack on the Holocaust Museum as "not only an affront to the memory of millions of victims of Nazi genocide, but an attack on the values that all civilized peoples and nations hold dear. We offer our heartfelt condolences to the staff and supporters of the Museum, to the Jewish people, and especially to the family of Stephen Johns."

On Dec. 7, 1981, the same James von Brunn had taken a sawed-off shotgun to the headquarters of the Federal Reserve Bank and attempted to kidnap board members. He spent six-and-a-half years in jail for that act, which could have turned out to be as bloody as the attack on the Holocaust Museum.

Compare this with what happened to Leandro Andrade under California's "three strikes" law. He was sentenced to two consecutive prison terms of 25 years to life. His crime? Shoplifting nine videotapes.

Two days before security guard Johns was killed, FBI Director Robert Mueller said his agency would continue to infiltrate mosques—not Nazi training camps, mosques. Targeting Muslims is a hate crime. But even the organizers of a Muslim charity can be framed. Five leaders of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development were recently sentenced to from 15 to 65 years in prison.

Von Brunn is a notorious figure. How was he able to stage his attack on the Holocaust Museum, just a mile from FBI headquarters?

James von Brunn may be loathsome but he's got connections. He worked with former Reagan aide Todd Blodgett to raise money for the fascist British National

Party, which just won two seats in the European Parliament. (Washington Post, June 11)

Like Karl Rove, Blodgett was a protégé of Lee Atwater, President George H.W. Bush's 1988 campaign manager. (Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report, Fall 1999)

Brunn's web site, since taken down, featured a letter from the late U.S. Navy Rear Adm. John G. Crommelin. This retired brass hat had written that von Brunn deserved "the gratitude and assistance of every White Christian citizen" for his armed attack on the Federal Reserve.

Crommelin, who died in 1996, was a member of the violent National States Rights Party and was its vice-presidential candidate in 1960. The leader of the NSRP, J.B. Stoner, who called Hitler "too moderate," was found guilty of the June 1958 bombing of Bethel Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala.

Another five NSRP members were convicted in the bombing in October of that same year of an Atlanta synagogue with 50 sticks of dynamite. ("The Temple Bombing" by Melissa Fay Greene)

The FBI never harmed Stoner. Nor did FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover do anything when another NSRP member, Joseph Milteer, told FBI informant Willie Somerset on Nov. 9, 1963, that President John F. Kennedy was going to be shot.

Adm. Crommelin was never stripped of his rank for being a Nazi. Instead, the U.S. Navy named one of its ships after him and his four brothers. After the shooting at the Holocaust Museum, the Navy actually changed the ship's web site to claim its guided-missile frigate was named for only three of the Crommelin brothers.

While Crommelin was able to keep his cushy rank, hundreds of thousands of veterans have been put out of the military with dishonorable or less-than-honorable discharges. It's hard for them to get jobs and they're not eligible for medical care at Veterans Administration hospitals.

So where does anti-Semitism really come from? It should be remembered that Henry Ford helped finance Hitler at a time when anti-Semitism was rampant in the U.S. and Europe. (New York Times, Dec. 10, 1922) But in recent years the ruling class has lowered its support for anti-Jewish poison.

Still, this poison is kept on the shelf. And attacks on Black, Latina/o, Asian, Arab, Native peoples, immigrants and Muslims continue and can grow in a period of economic crisis unless progressives counter them with strong efforts to build working-class solidarity. □

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Demand parole for Peltier!

By Caleb T. Maupin

Leonard Peltier, a fighter for the liberation of the Indigenous peoples of North America and the world, has been locked away in federal prison for more than three decades.

A participant in the American Indian Movement, Peltier was wrongfully convicted in 1976 of the death of two Federal Bureau of Investigation agents in a shoot-out at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

For 33 years, Peltier has languished in prison, despite revelations of coerced testimonies, fabricated and suppressed evidence, and federal officials' statements that it is unknown who fired the shots nor what role Peltier may have played. Peltier is now 64 and suffers from diabetes.

Despite his imprisonment, Peltier has never wavered

in the struggle for Native rights, for his own freedom, and for an end to racist oppression and repression at the hands of successive U.S. administrations.

Peltier has a chance at freedom with an upcoming parole hearing on July 27. Those associated with his defense are calling for petitions, letters and messages supporting his release to be sent to: United States Parole Commission, 5550 Friendship Boulevard, Suite 420, Chevy Chase, MD 20815-7286.

Send all letters and messages before June 26 in time for the parole examiner to review them before the hearing. For a sample message calling for Peltier's release, see www.whoisleonardpeltier.info.

Let the movement of the people make it clear that we demand freedom for Leonard Peltier and all political prisoners. □

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.
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Despite broad support

Supreme Court refuses to hear Cuban 5 appeal

By Alex Mujamder

The Supreme Court has confirmed the U.S. legal system's ongoing hypocrisy in the treatment of the Cuban Five. The court on June 15 made public a list of what cases it will hear during its coming term—and the appeal of the Cuban Five was left off the list, with no explanation.

The Five—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González—were falsely convicted of committing espionage conspiracy and other related charges. In re-

ality, they were monitoring Miami-based groups known to have carried out terrorist attacks against Cuba. In fact, the reason they were arrested in the first place was that the Cuban government presented to the FBI some evidence they had collected, in hopes the U.S. would be compelled to stop the Miami-based terrorist groups. This led the Feds to the Five.

The lawyers for the Five presented strong arguments to the Supreme Court on why it should hear an appeal. Among the reasons cited were racial discrimination during jury selection and the right to

a trial in a venue outside Miami, the heart of the right-wing Cuban-American community where so many anti-Cuban terrorist organizations operate.

Their position was further supported by 12 amicus curiae (friends of the court) briefs submitted by 10 Nobel prize recipients, with the endorsement of hundreds of parliamentarians and numerous U.S. and international jurist organizations.

Despite this groundswell of international support for the Five, and the fact that their trial was the only in the U.S. ever condemned by the U.N. Human

Rights Commission, the court turned down the request for a hearing.

The court's decision was met immediately by protests in cities across the U.S. and the world. There had even been demonstrations earlier, in anticipation of the court's action.

It reminds us that the U.S. judicial system has a long history of meting out punishment, not justice. Without the presence of a grassroots movement, willing to struggle in the streets, the courts reinforce the violence of the state and reactionary elements of society.

If the courts, or any other branch of government, act in a progressive manner, it is always in response to pressure from below. That has been the consistent lesson of the women's, civil rights, LGBT and labor movements.

We must remember these lessons as we continue to seek justice and freedom for the Five. The government didn't want the court to hear the case because that would require the authorities to present their untenable position in a greater public forum than before. Merely hearing this case in the highest court of the U.S. would expose millions more to the hypocrisy of their own government.

Gerardo Hernández stated in 2008, on the heels of another legal setback at the 11th Circuit Court, that their freedom would be won only by the hard work of activists who continue to spread their story. He stated that "Our hopes are not placed in any court. Ten years are more than enough to have cured us of any such naïve notion." □

Free the Cuban 5!



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, René González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez and Fernando González Llort.

One week before the Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal of the Cuban Five, a press conference outside the Federal Building in San Diego, Calif., demanded freedom for these five political prisoners unjustly held in the U.S. on trumped-up charges. Demanding freedom for the Five, who came to the U.S. to defend the Cuban people from terrorist attacks launched from Miami, speakers also brought up the government's denial of family visits. Speakers represented Cuba Sí, the Raza Rights Coalition, the Free Mumia Coalition, Friends of Cuba, the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, the International Action Center and Border Meetup. The Obama administration had filed a brief urging the court to deny the Five a hearing, which it did on June 15.

—Report and photo by Bob McCubbin



A billionaire's coup in Albany

By G. Dunkel
New York

It was a coup. Even the New York Times, one of the most influential and authoritative voices of the ruling class in the United States, used this word to describe how the Republican Party, with two disaffected Democrats, tried to seize control of the New York State Senate on June 8.

A week later, the issue of who controls the Senate is still not settled. However, the leading role of Thomas Golisano, a billionaire from Rochester, in organizing and financing this coup is clear.

According to a number of newspapers in New York, Albany and Buffalo, the plotting for the coup began with a secret meeting between Steve Pigeon, Golisano's top political adviser, and Republican Senators George D. Maziarz, Tom Libous and Dean Skelos, the Republican leader, at a rock club in Albany.

After a preliminary agreement was reached, the Republican leaders met with Golisano at his Rochester home and the plot was sealed.

Pigeon and Golisano were in the Senate balcony when the vote occurred.

Golisano is no stranger to politics. He spent \$93 million of his own money running for governor of New York in 1994, 1998 and 2002 as candidate of the Independence Party. He gave the Democrats \$4 million to run their 2008 campaign, which wrested control of the State Senate

from the Republicans.

Under the pressure of the economic and budget crises, however, the Democrats passed a budget in March that didn't cut spending and slash public services, as Golisano had wanted. Instead, it raised taxes somewhat on the rich. Golisano's reaction was to move his official residence to Florida and issue a statement saying the move would save him \$5 million a year.

Most of the articles and media coverage about the struggle in the Senate have focused on skullduggery, maneuvering and attacks on the individuals involved. When Golisano was asked about the legal problems of the two Democrats whom he had helped strong-arm to switch over and support the Republicans, he replied with a personal attack on President Barack Obama. One of the Democrats has since switched back.

The real political issue is how the state of New York is going to respond to the current capitalist financial and economic crisis.

The Republican approach, which billionaire Golisano clearly expressed in a May 26 interview with the Niagara Falls Reporter, is to slash spending, which would mean cutting social services, aid to education and public transportation and funds for the cities, especially New York. There is a Republican bill to weaken rent control in order to protect landlords and the big real estate interests. They would

also deny farm workers the protection of labor laws that mandate overtime pay and lunch breaks and are bitterly opposed by agribusiness. Domestic workers would also be shut out from the protection, such as it is, of labor law.

The Democrats say it is important to maintain government spending to help stimulate the economy, especially since the state of New York has a \$131 billion budget. They are concerned about alienating their political base among the poor and workers, but are also pressuring the unions to take cuts.

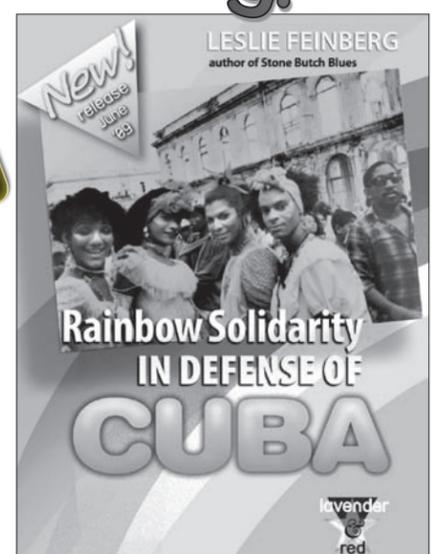
For example, Gov. David Paterson, a Democrat, used the threat of laying off 8,000 state workers to get the unions representing them to agree to reduced pensions. This won't save the state money in the short run but will down the road. The State Senate has to approve the deal but has not because of the deadlock.

California, Michigan, Illinois and many other states are feeling the lash of the economic crisis, but it is in New York where disunity and disagreement in the ruling class parties is the most open. □

Rainbow Solidarity: in defense of CUBA

This ground-breaking book is a compilation of 25 articles about how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love from the colonial and imperial eras. This never-before-compiled information offers a factual vista on the trajectory of progress of the Cuban Revolution. It's a must-read to understand the revolutionary process required to uproot prejudice.

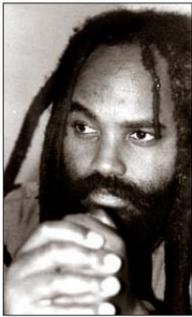
Available in bookstores soon; for individual orders online go to www.LeftBooks.com



By Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

GM—gone?

From a June 6 audio column at www.prisonradio.org. Go to www.millions4mumia.org for legal and political updates on Mumia's case.



Having entered bankruptcy court (even a so-called 'structural' bankruptcy), General Motors is making history. It was once the titanic behemoth of American business, making more money than any other business.

In 2006, GM reported revenues of \$207 billion, yet profits were minus \$1.9 billion. As we know, even a titanic can sink.

Three years ago, GM was the third-largest U.S. corporation in revenues. Today it has been de-listed from the Dow Jones Industrial Average, as its stock price fell below \$1 a share.

The U.S. government is now loaning billions to GM, totaling almost \$50 billion in taxpayer dollars, without any assurance that it'll be repaid.

GM was the nation's largest automaker, manufacturing Chevrolet, Pontiac, Cadillac, Buick, Saab and Saturn. Some models are being discontinued, while others will be sold. They also made the Hummer, a gas-guzzling SUV that has reportedly been sold to a Chinese manufacturer.

Critics in Congress and in the corporate media have blamed GM's problems on their payroll and so-called "legacy" costs, meaning retirees' benefits.

Even after the crumbling of the business model, the anti-union animus of such critics remains a central concern of the political and propaganda elites, many of whom praised the passage of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) as "good for business" and therefore "good for America."

But only a numbskull believes those on the assembly line designed or decided which kind of cars would be built or sold.

GM suffered from managerial myopia, which could not adapt to changing market conditions.

Thirty years ago, when the U.S. faced an oil crisis, small cars began to appear on the roads. As oil prices stabilized, U.S. car makers built fleets of SUVs, which sold quite well to Americans who wanted the civilian equivalent of a tank in their garage.

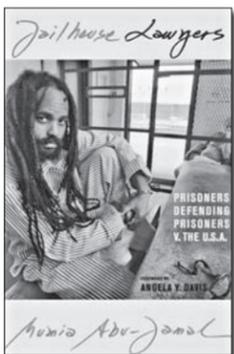
But the gas crisis of 2007 put an end to that idea. U.S. automakers couldn't give these things away.

In the meantime, car makers in Korea and Japan, which built safe, affordable cars with extended warranties and polite customer services to Americans, are GM's lunch. Other Asian companies are joining the club. India's Tata Motors, makers of the cheapest car in the world—the \$2,000 Nano—has just acquired Jaguar and Land Rover.

Being "too big to fail" is a political judgment, not an economic one. In classic capitalist theory, a business survives if it sells products and makes a profit.

We are beyond that point now. Politics may disguise the problem, but it can't solve it. □

Mumia's new book: **Jailhouse Lawyers Defending Prisoners v. the U.S.A.** is available at Leftbooks.com



Chrysler workers are not 'leeches'

By Martha Grevatt

The Tea Partiers are at it again. Having failed on tax day to mobilize "grassroots" support for cutting taxes on the wealthy, Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck, Newt Gingrich and company have found a new reason for existence. They're bound and determined to unravel what they're calling—believe it or not—another Teapot Dome scandal.

Teapot Dome was an oil-rich expanse of land in Wyoming. Oil tycoon Harry Sinclair won the exclusive right to drill in the Dome after he made a small gift of \$269,000 and several prize head of cattle to Albert Fall, President Warren Harding's secretary of the interior. Eventually, both Fall and Sinclair were fined \$100,000 and sentenced to prison.

What's the latest scandal? The United Auto Workers union has given a substantial amount of money to the Democratic Party and its candidates and in return, Gingrich says, has received "hefty kickbacks."

"Against law and precedent," Gingrich charged, "the unions were moved to the front of the line when it came to who would benefit from the [Chrysler] bankruptcy. The Obama Treasury Department strong-armed Chrysler's creditors into a deal in which the UAW was given 55 percent ownership of the company while Chrysler's secured creditors—investors who would have received priority in a non-political bankruptcy proceeding—were left with just 29 cents on the dollar."

The truth is that the union would have done much better to have spent that money on organizing the workers and their communities for a real fight against the layoffs, cutbacks and union-busting efforts of the big corporations. But would Gingrich and his friends prefer that? Hell no. It would send them ballistic.

The actual legal challenge to the terms of Chrysler's bankruptcy came from the state of Indiana, one of the few "right-to-work" states in the North. The state's teachers and police pension funds took their case all the way to the Supreme

Court. The motivation was not to protect the workers' retirement income but, as Indiana State Treasurer Richard Mourdock stated: "The issue of secured creditors' rights is bigger than Chrysler. It's an essential foundation of our capital markets. And fundamentally, this is about the law."

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg rejected the funds' arguments and allowed the "leaner, meaner" Chrysler to emerge from bankruptcy.

The attorney for the pension funds, Thomas Lauria, also represented a small group of hedge funds that raised the same arguments against the government-brokered agreement because it "only" paid secured bondholders 29 cents for every dollar of Chrysler debt—which is actually twice the current market value of Chrysler bonds. Lauria has also represented the tobacco industry.

A union-bashing crusade

Right-wing talk radio is on a union-bashing crusade. "The clear winner is the UAW, which gets 50 cents on the dollar even though they are junior creditors," argued Glenn Beck.

"The truth of the matter is that Ron Gettelfinger and anybody at the UAW don't have a clue how to run a sustaining, profitable business," ranted Rush Limbaugh. "It's about benefits. ... They just want the business to be around to be able to leech off of it."

So the autoworkers, who spent their lives building the auto industry, are "leeches," while those who've been comfortably receiving profits from their labor all these years are victims. Sean Hannity has called for a boycott of General Motors and Chrysler because "the ramifications of this Socialist experiment are too great."

These loudmouths, who also called Barack Obama a fascist and displayed rude dishonesty in labeling Sonia Sotomayor a "racist," have no shame when it comes to twisting facts and law.

The much-maligned "50 cents on the dollar" needs to be explained. Last year, when George W. Bush was still in the White House, the U.S. Treasury agreed to lend Chrysler and GM \$25 billion from the

Troubled Assets Recovery Program. In exchange the Treasury demanded huge wage and benefits concessions from the UAW.

One was that the union agree to a 50-percent reduction in the cash payments GM and Chrysler were required, by contract, to put into a fund for retiree health care.

The other half was to be paid with company stock—of questionable value.

Much to workers' disappointment, Obama's Auto Task Force called for the same concessions as the previous administration. Under pressure, the workers voted in favor of these givebacks. Chrysler and GM were thus legally obligated to give the Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association a stake in the company.

Another Teapot Dome here? It makes you wonder what else the Tea Party set is drinking.

Of course, none of these bogus legal experts questioned the legality of Treasury interfering with the collective bargaining process. When Chrysler announced plant closings that violated the UAW contract, there were no charges of illegality coming from the right.

They act as if the union, which has a legally binding contract with Chrysler, is just another moneylender trying to minimize losses. Actually, the workers have made an investment of a different kind—the best years of their lives. Retirees actually worked for their pensions and health care. The "benefits" derided by Limbaugh are in reality deferred wages—unpaid labor—that they are legally entitled to.

Under the recently modified contract, wages of future workers are frozen at \$14 an hour for the next six years. That's just one-and-a-half times the federal poverty rate for a family of four. Meanwhile, executives at the newly formed Chrysler Group LLC and the now separate Chrysler Financial, who have never built a car or even a roller skate, resent the fact that TARP limits their salaries to \$500,000 per year.

How loud will Limbaugh & Co. howl when the workers start demanding the right to control these companies and save their jobs? □

Providence, R.I.

Women lead march for better world

Holding a banner calling for "Jobs & Human Needs, Freedom, Equality, Peace," a multinational group of women led a spirited march through downtown Providence, R.I., on June 12 to the site of the National Mayors Conference. Called by Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE), the demonstration confronted the mayors with concrete demands addressing the economic crisis, continued war, and repression at home against immigrants and the poor generally.

Through their banners and chants, the marchers expressed their belief that "Another world is possible—but we have to fight for it!" That world, they said, will have jobs for all at living wages; affordable food, housing and utilities; free, universal national healthcare; freedom, equality and justice; global solidarity and peace. A flyer given out called on people to



fight for a world without unemployment, low wages and benefits, poverty, hunger, homelessness, racism, sexism,

homophobia, anti-immigrant attacks, war or occupation. —Report and photo by Bill Bateman

Facing evictions, repression, no jobs

Workers, youth open fightback at Tent City

Continued from page 1

the capitalists inside, along with former Michigan Gov. John Engler.

Dauch wrested tremendous concessions from striking UAW workers in 2008, cutting wages and benefits in half. Workers were promised their jobs would be saved, but now Dauch has broken that vow and the American Axle plant in Hamtramck, Mich., located within the city of Detroit, has closed.

Engler was rewarded for his gutting of welfare and education in Michigan with his appointment as president and CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers.

The People's Summit and Tent City opened with a dynamic State of Emergency Fightback Rally on June 14. A host of speakers reiterated the theme that workers and poor people must fight back to reclaim their right to jobs, homes, equal quality education, and social and economic justice. "I declare a state of emergency!" said state Sen. Hansen Clarke, sponsor of a bill in the state legislature for a two-year moratorium on foreclosures and evictions.

Other speakers included Detroit Councilperson JoAnn Watson; the Rev. Ed Rowe of Central United Methodist Church, a base of many struggles for social and economic justice; Maureen Taylor of Michigan Welfare Rights Organization; Teresa Gutierrez of the May 1 Coalition in New York City; foreclosure-fighting attorney

Vanessa Fluker; Sandra Hines of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions; Marguerite Maddox of Paws with Cause, a disability-rights organization; youth and union organizer Dante Strobino of Durham, N.C.; recently-convicted people's journalist Diane Bukowski, who was charged with felony counts while trying to report on pedestrian deaths resulting from a police chase; and Baldemar Velasquez of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee.

Special sessions at the People's Summit on June 14 discussed the immigrant rights struggle. Organizers with Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST), a militant national youth organization, talked about the problems facing students and young workers today. Another special session heard from Dieter Ilius of the German Metalworkers Trade Union.

June 15 started with a mass leafleting outside 36th District Court, three blocks from Tent City. Activists distributed hundreds of "Know Your Rights" leaflets to homeowners and renters facing foreclosures and evictions. 36th District Court is the busiest foreclosure court in the United States. A militant picket line and demonstration demanding a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions took place outside the court at lunchtime.

A "Corporate/Banker Devastation Tour" caravan departed Tent City for the GM Ren Cen to pick up big-business meeting participants who were "cordially invited" to see the real Detroit and what corporate greed has done to the city's people. None of them had the guts to board the van and face reality. Neverthe-

less, many out-of-town People's Summiteers and some media joined the tour and viewed foreclosed homes, abandoned neighborhoods and closed plants.

A special session on organizing mass protests outside the G20 summit to be held in Pittsburgh heard from dozens of people with ideas on how to build a broad-based coalition to challenge the mass meeting of capitalists from the richest countries on Sept. 24-25. Special sessions on the crisis in education and how to fight foreclosures provided an opportunity for activists to exchange ideas on furthering these struggles.

Hundreds of People's Summiteers marched from Tent City down Woodward Avenue to the GM Ren Cen on June 15. "Bail out the people! Not the banks!" and other chants echoed loudly through-



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH
Right, disabled contingent.
Below, American Axle workers.

WW PHOTO: KRIS HAMEL



facing lesbian, gay, bi and trans people.

June 16 began with a militant demonstration led by people with disabilities in front of the Grand Circus Park station of the Detroit People Mover, an elevated rail system that is inaccessible to people in wheelchairs. Participants marched and wheeled down Woodward Avenue to the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, where they spoke out at a session of City Council. Councilwoman JoAnn Watson commissioned the council's research department to begin an immediate investigation into the lack of elevators at the Detroit People Mover stations so as to implement meeting the needs of Detroiters with disabilities.

Musicians, poets and spoken-word artists have rounded out the days at the Tent City with performances after each evening's rallies. A delicious dinner has been prepared by volunteer activists and served every evening to more than 300 people at Grand Circus Park.

The People's Summit and Tent City has received widespread coverage by the big-business-owned media. Every day the people's struggle has been highlighted on local television, radio and in newspapers.

The strength and success of the People's Summit and Tent City, the feeling of fightback and solidarity expressed by all its participants, will not end when the final tent is taken down on June 17. There is the sense here that this is the beginning of a mighty struggle to reorder the priorities of society, to demand and fight for jobs and all human needs and to put corporate greed and the profit system into the dustbin of history where they belong. □

Black journalist fights retaliatory charges

By Caleb T. Maupin
Cleveland

On May 7 and 8, African-American reporter Kathy Wray Coleman was tried in Municipal Court here on trumped-up charges of resisting arrest, sounding a false alarm, disrupting court proceedings and aggravated disorderly conduct. A jury found her not guilty on all except the resisting charge.

The charges arose from an incident after a tense foreclosure hearing on Coleman's home on Aug. 7, 2008. As she walked out of the court, two deputies threw her to the floor. The court hallway then filled with more than 20 officers.

Coleman began to panic as a crowd of police swarmed down on her.

Coleman was arrested and chained to a hospital bed for several days before being taken to Cuyahoga County Jail. She was drugged with sedatives, kept in a cell nude, and watched constantly by a male officer.

Coleman, a journalist with two masters' degrees, wrote about conditions at the jail in a series of articles entitled "Jailed Reporter Tells Her Story," which appeared in the Cleveland Call & Post, an African-American weekly.

Coleman had previously written articles exposing racism in Cleveland schools and reporting on the foreclosure crisis.

Her articles were critical of the very judge who later ordered her arrest. She said that a relative of this judge greeted her in jail with, "We've been waiting for you."

Assistant City Prosecutor Lorraine Coyne invoked a racist stereotype, accusing Coleman of "playing the race card" to avoid taking "personal responsibility."

Only one of the 20 deputies who had intimidated Coleman shortly after her arrest testified at the trial. This deputy met Coleman outside of the courtroom, hugged her and said, "I just did it to keep my job."

Prosecutor Coyne tried to dismiss the abuse, drugging and sexual degradation in the jail by saying, "Jail isn't supposed

to be nice." She said that if jails were "spas" or "country clubs," they would not be effective in deterring crime.

The prosecutor also argued that no "responsible" citizen would have had any reason to flee from the police and compared Coleman to her child in elementary school.

Five other prosecutors sat in during the proceedings, perhaps hoping to learn from Coyne's tactics.

Coyne lectured Coleman and the jury about personal responsibility and tried to dismiss all of the corruption charges against the city prosecutor's office as

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Protest erupts after

Suspects set free in dragging case

By Gloria Rubac

“A Black man’s life is still not worth a white man’s life in Paris, Texas,” said activist Anthony Bond. “I am 55 years old and I know racism when I see it. Paris, Texas, is eaten up with racism.”

Bond was among 300 people who protested June 8 at the courthouse in Paris after the special prosecutor suddenly dropped murder charges against two white men accused of murdering a Black youth last September.

The New Black Panther Party, the Nation of Islam and Concerned Citizens for Racial Equality organized the rally.

Brandon McClelland’s mangled body was found on Sept. 16, 2008, on a country road. Authorities estimated that it had been dragged more than 70 feet.

McClelland’s family and members of the Black community who attended the protest stressed that the dismissals were the real injustice, and another example of racial inequality in Paris, a town with a long history of violent racism.

Shannon Finley and Charles Crostley, the two white men who had been arrested for McClelland’s murder, walked out of jail on June 4 with no restrictions.

At the courthouse rally, where a monument to the Confederacy dominates the lawn, McClelland’s mother and father spoke to the crowd through tears. Jackie McClelland said the dropped charges show that the justice system treats Blacks and whites in Paris unequally.

“I said from the start they were going to sweep this under the rug,” she said. “And nine months later, that’s exactly what happened. This was a hate crime. We couldn’t even have an open casket for my son.”

“What if it was your son? Would you fight for your kid?” said Bobby McCleary, McClelland’s father. “I miss that one word my son used to say: Pops. He didn’t call me Dad. He called me Pops.”

Rock Banks, who said he was a “grand

titan” in the East Texas Ku Klux Klan, angered the crowd during the rally. He held up a small patch displaying a Nazi-era Iron Cross. After a near confrontation, he was forced to leave.

Activists vowed to get the Department of Justice to take an interest in the case. They have begun writing letters to the White House and Attorney General Eric Holder. “It’s going to be a huge campaign to get the attorney general involved,” said Deric Muhammad of the Nation of Islam in Houston. “They released two killers on a maybe. They released two killers on a might be. They released two killers on an if.”

The district attorney released Finley and Crostley after defense attorneys suddenly produced a truck driver who said he may have accidentally hit McClelland. The district attorney had given the truck driver immunity for his statement.

Protesters carried signs saying, “We Want Justice,” and “Where is the Justice for Brandon?” Using a bullhorn, organizers led chants of “Black Power,” and “No Justice, No Peace.”

A national rally to protest the dragging death of McClelland is planned for July 21, the day that the murder trial had been scheduled to begin.

Paris also made national news in 2007 when an African-American student, Shaquanda Cotton, was sentenced to seven years in a Texas Youth Commission jail for pushing a teacher’s aide. Months earlier, the same judge had given a white teen probation for burning her family’s house down.

Cotton was finally freed after a national campaign on her behalf.

Paris is located in East Texas, known for its long history of racism and Ku Klux Klan activities. In 1998 another Black man, James Byrd Jr., was dragged to death in Jasper, 200 miles south of Paris.

According to the Dallas Morning News, Paris was the site of one of the country’s most notorious “spectacle” lynchings in



PHOTO: BOBBY HATTON

Jacqueline McClelland, mother of the dragging victim, speaks to rally. She is surrounded by members of the New Black Panther Party, Nation of Islam, Tarrant County Local Organizing Committee and the NAACP.

1893, when 10,000 people gathered to watch the torture and burning of Henry Smith, a Black man who was accused of killing the 3-year-old daughter of a white policeman.

Smith had fled to a small town near Hope, Ark., but was caught and brought back to Paris by train. Word traveled that he had been brought back and spectators came from miles around, using “special excursion trains” to travel from Dallas.

Smith was placed on top of a wagon and paraded around the town square, then taken to a prairie south of the Texas & Pacific railroad depot, where scaffolding had been built for the occasion.

Ida B. Wells cited this case in “The Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States,” printed in 1895, which documented her re-

search on and campaign against lynching.

Three decades later, in 1920, a Paris mob killed brothers Herman and Irving Arthur, Black sharecroppers, who were accused of killing their white landlords.

The brothers, who claimed self-defense, were taken from the Lamar County Jail to the fairgrounds where, according to the Dallas Morning News, they were chained to a flagpole and burned. The mob then dragged their bodies through the Black neighborhood of Paris.

New Black Panther Party organizer Sister Krystal Muhammad told Workers World the group is getting endorsers and organizing around the state for the demonstration on July 21. “We will not stop organizing until there is justice for Brandon. Racist murderers cannot be allowed to kill with impunity!” □

Texas gov makes history with 200th execution

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Chanting “Perry says death row, we say hell no,” Texas activists gathered in Austin, Huntsville and Houston on June 2 to protest Gov. Rick Perry’s 200th execution since he was elected in December 2001. Perry has surpassed the previous record of 152 executions set by the former governor—George W. Bush.

In Houston they went to the site of the Old Hanging Tree, where the county courthouse stood at the end of the 1800s. The historical marker in front of the 400-year-old oak tree reads: “It is rumored that 11 criminals were hung here.” A speaker told the crowd: “Those of us who live in the South know who was hung in the trees outside of the county courthouses or on the town square—it was Black people who were lynched.”

In all three cities, the 200 names of those put to death were read aloud. In Europe on the same day, protesters gathered outside U.S. embassies. In Montreal a large die-in was held by activists dressed in black, wearing white plastic face masks and holding signs with the image of the state of Texas on them.

In Huntsville, where prisoner Terry



WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Sister Krystal Muhammad: “We must stop these lynchings.”

Hankins was strapped that day to a gurney and lethally injected at 6 p.m., Kids Against the Death Penalty chanted, “What do we want?” The crowd responded, “Abolition!” “When do you want it?” “Now!”

Sister Krystal Muhammad with the New Black Panther Party told the Houston crowd, “This execution tonight is nothing but a legal lynching. We know

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Victims of police brutality

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other person present.”

However, Timothy Goode Sr., the victim’s father, pointed out, “The police do whatever they want. I have had numerous incidents with the police myself. Eight months ago, I went around a police car, which then followed me eight blocks. The officer pulled me over, searched my car with no warrant and put me in his car.”

There has been no response to the Goode family’s efforts to get a hearing with the police Internal Affairs Division about their son’s death.

Family members tell of attacks

Darias Chavis from West Philadelphia, along with three of his stepchildren and a neighbor, described a brutal attack on two young women, Nadia Bent and Naja Garetson, by cops from the 19th Police Precinct on June 3.

Garetson got a call from her cousin, Bent, that police were chasing her brother. She drove to the neighborhood, near 63rd and City Line Ave., to see what was going on. She found police cars surrounding the area and over a dozen, mainly white officers combing the grounds, sorting through trash and shrubs.

Garetson described approaching a Black officer to ask if her brother had been locked up; he then pushed her back against the curb. When she tried to step away, police pulled out metal sticks and began beating her. She had been carrying a dog as well as her cell phone, which she attempted to hand off to a neighbor, only to have police pick her up by her arms and

bounce her head against their car before pushing her inside.

When Nadia Bent walked over, police began hitting her as well, beating her in the ribs. They then cuffed her, claiming she was “resisting arrest.” Bent had lost her shoes in the scuffle and asked police to get them. She testified, “The officer responded ‘F*** you and your f*** in shoes. What were you doing – fighting each other? That’s all you Black girls do.’”

Garetson noted, “I’ve never had any trouble. I actually wanted to be a cop, but not now. This ain’t right!”

Tracy Battle reported that police stole her car from in front of her house with no warrant or property receipt because they claimed her son had been driving it and was involved in an accident. Twenty-three days later, after tests disproved the police claim, Battle, whose husband has cancer, still had no car. The child hit by the car was a police officer’s son.

Karen Mack described police breaking down her son’s door at his home in Southwest Philadelphia without a warrant, only to learn they had the wrong house. “My son thought someone was breaking into his house. If my son had gotten to his ‘protection,’ they would have killed him,” Mack concluded.

Senior Harold Sheppard, who grew up in Philadelphia and remembered being harassed by police as a child, described his encounters with police brutality as “part of the rights of passage—the experience an African-American male will go through from toddler age on.”

Sheppard said that recently he was the

Supporters pack court as

Rev. Pinkney barred from his own hearing

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Grand Rapids, Mich.

A new episode has opened in the defense campaign for Rev. Edward Pinkney, a Benton Harbor, Mich., clergyman and leader of the Black Autonomy Network Community Organization (BANCO). Pinkney had been sentenced to three-to-10 years in prison for quoting Bible scriptures.

Pinkney served one year, during which he was moved to at least six Michigan prisons. Now at home but restricted by an electronic “tether,” he was not allowed to be present at his June 9 hearing before the Third District Court of Appeals in Grand Rapids, Mich. There, a team of defense lawyers sought to have the court overturn four felony counts and a revocation of probation sentence, which had been handed down by Judge Dennis Wiley of Berrien County.

An initial trial in which Pinkney was charged with voter fraud ended in a hung jury in 2006. However, the charges were re-filed in 2007 and he was convicted on four felony counts and one misdemeanor in what many claim was a sham trial.

BANCO had carried out a successful recall campaign against a city commissioner in Benton Harbor in 2005. Later, a judge threw out the recall election results and placed the commissioner back in office. The felony and misdemeanor charges were then filed against Pinkney.

Supporters from various cities throughout Michigan and Illinois packed the courtroom on June 9. Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, came from Chicago. A group of clergymen traveled from Detroit, including Rev. Ed Rowe of Central United Methodist

Church and Pastor Bill Wylie-Kellerman of St. Peter’s Episcopal Church. They were not able to enter the courtroom because it was packed to capacity.

The court’s security personnel informed the approximately 100 people who stood outside the courtroom that only 48 people were allowed inside at one time.

Numerous organizations were represented in the courtroom and outside including Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice; Michigan Welfare Rights Organization; Green Party of Michigan; Michigan Coalition for Human Rights; ‘Call Em Out’ of Detroit; and People’s Tribune newspaper.

In the hearing’s aftermath, attorney Michael Steinberg, the Legal Director of the Michigan American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), spoke on legal developments surrounding the case. He said, “In America, a person cannot be thrown in prison for speech.”

However, this is exactly what happened when Pinkney published an article in the People’s Tribune in December 2007. Under house arrest at the time and on a tether, Pinkney was then arrested and sentenced to prison for allegedly threatening the life of Judge Alfred Butzbaugh, the original trial jurist, and his family in Berrien County, Mich.

Steinberg said Pinkney “expressed frustration and used harsh language to criticize the judge. However, individuals can criticize government officials.”

The ACLU filed an appeal after Pinkney’s sentencing by Judge Wiley. The underlying conviction and the sentence are both being appealed, along with the three-to-10 year imprisonment for the newspaper article that quoted the Bible.

Pinkney is currently out on a \$10,000

bond; however, he is still confined to his home in Benton Harbor. He remains on a 24-hour tether and has been prohibited by Judge Wiley from leaving his house, preaching and engaging in politics.

Benton Harbor: The struggle continues

The majority African-American city of Benton Harbor has been severely affected by the current economic crisis. A plan to create a development project is slated to take large portions of lakefront property for the construction of luxury homes and a golf course.

BANCO and other organizations are opposed to the project because they perceive it as a mechanism for forcing African Americans from Benton Harbor.

Steinberg said the ACLU has been involved in Benton Harbor since 2003, when a rebellion erupted after the death of an African-American motorcyclist chased by police. The civil disturbances in Benton Harbor lasted for three days and attracted national attention to this southwest Michigan city.

Pinkney had become a staunch critic of Berrien County’s political and legal system. His organization, BANCO, carried out regular demonstrations against racism and injustice there. BANCO members also monitored county courts and openly criticized judges for the disparate sentencing of African Americans.

According to Steinberg, “The criminal justice system in Berrien County is broken and must be changed. The public defenders system is contracted out to the lowest

bidder and there is inadequate counsel for defendants brought before the courts.

“The state provides no money for indigent defense. We [the ACLU] have filed a class action lawsuit to address the issue of the justice system in Berrien County.”

Dorothy Pinkney, Rev. Pinkney’s spouse, attended the hearing on June 9 and spoke to the crowd outside the courtroom. She brought a message in which Pinkney thanked his supporters and said, “Victory is ours—we have shown the people in Berrien County that we have support.”

Later at the St. Mark’s Church in downtown Grand Rapids, Pinkney said via a cell phone: “We not only showed up but we showed out.” His tone was optimistic and he said that he felt the convictions would eventually be overturned.

Several members of the clergy and law professors from many universities in Michigan have filed amicus briefs on Pinkney’s behalf.

Steinberg said that the State Appeals Court would issue a written decision in Pinkney’s case.

Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam also spoke in Berrien County on June 5 at Lake Michigan College. He expressed support for Pinkney, saying, “Jesus was an activist and a revolutionary.”

Abayomi Azikiwe is editor of the Pan-African News Wire and has followed developments in Benton Harbor since the rebellion occurred there in 2003. He has traveled several times to Berrien County to cover meetings, demonstrations and court hearings surrounding the Pinkney case.

ty tell their stories

passenger in a friend’s pick-up truck when police drove by and nearly cut them off. Sheppard stared at the officers. Later, after his friend dropped him off for a doctor’s visit, police followed him into the waiting room, dragged him out and arrested him. The case was dismissed when no officer came to court.

Local anti-racist activists Ernest Ford and Theresa Shoatz, who is the daughter of political prisoner Russell Shoats, both told of their own encounters at the hands of Philadelphia police. Ford, a Haitian immigrant, was brutally beaten while participating in an anti-police brutality rally in West Philadelphia in 2005.

On April 24, Shoatz had taken former Angola 3 prisoner Robert Hillary King to the airport and was driving home with Mumia Abu-Jamal supporter Pam Africa in her car. Police followed them and pulled them over. The police claimed Shoatz was missing her registration tag. However, she kept it in her car to avoid the common problem that these small stickers are frequently stolen.

The police impounded her car, rather than allowing Shoatz to produce the tag, or simply giving her a citation, which they routinely do. “You’ve heard of ‘driving while Black,’ but this was a case of ‘driving with Pam Africa,’” Shoatz said.

Left to bleed to death

The family of Daniel Giddings described events which lead up to his death at the hands of Philadelphia police after an altercation in September 2008 in which police officer Patrick McDonald was also killed.

Several times prior to this incident, family members reported police coming to their house looking for Giddings.

Police physically and verbally assaulted his mother, brother and other family members during these visits, according to their testimony. During one visit, police said they were going to kill Giddings when they caught him.

In September, when family members arrived at the scene where Giddings had been shot, they heard he was still alive but injured. For several hours, police would not allow ambulances to attend to Giddings. They reportedly let him bleed to death at the scene.

When Giddings was first arrested 11 years ago, his mother paid \$1,500 against a \$13,500 bond for her son. Giddings failed to appear at his hearing because he was hospitalized from a gunshot wound. He was subsequently convicted and jailed. Now Giddings’ mother is being asked to pay the remaining \$11,500 in bail money.

Giddings’ sister, Latanya Baskerville, gave one of the most poignant statements of the hearing. “The media has tried to make my brother out as a monster, but we don’t know for sure that he killed this cop. Bullets were flying everywhere. We have only to go on what the police and the news says.

“What we do know is that the people in blue killed my brother. What do you want from the Black community? The police are targeting my children right now. It’s no wonder our young Black men are starting to shoot first,” Baskerville concluded. □

Excluded from courtroom Hundreds demand, ‘Drop charges on SF 8!’



Former Panthers Richard Brown, Ray Boudreaux and Hank Jones.

WW PHOTO: MAGGIE VASCASSENNO

By **John Parker**
San Francisco

More than 300 protesters crammed the steps of the San Francisco Court House June 8 demanding that bogus charges, manufactured over 36 years ago against eight former Black Panthers, be dropped. At the beginning of the supposedly “open” session of the court hearing, as the many supporters began to pour in to the chambers, the judge ordered everyone out and proceeded with no one there except the defendants, attorneys and court officers.

The hearing is to be continued on July 6. The charges come from “confessions” extracted in 1973 in New Orleans. Three Black activists were tortured by local and San Francisco police detectives over several days. They were interrogated after sessions of suffocation, battery, electric shock to their genitals and more.

Statements resulting from the New Orleans tortures were used to bring charges against Panthers in the mid-1970s in several jurisdictions. All these charges, including murder charges, were dismissed in 1975 when the judges learned that the confessions had been coerced under torture.

In spite of this, the case was reopened by the government in 2003 and eight former members of the Black Panther Party were arrested in 2007.

“This is harassment meant to simply wear us down. So we would like everyone to come and double the size of the protest at the next preliminary hearing,” said Hank Jones, one of the eight.

“We’ll be there on July 6 to help pack the courthouse,” said Maggie Vascassenno of the International Action Center, which had mobilized members from San Francisco and Los Angeles to attend. □

World capitalist crisis demands bold initiatives in Africa

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

What distinguishes the contemporary economic crisis within global capitalism from other downturns over the last three decades is that the rapid deterioration of the social conditions of working people and the oppressed is taking place simultaneously all over the planet.

Since late 2007, the banking and manufacturing industries in the Western industrialized states have laid off millions of workers and further impoverished tens of millions more as a result of over-production of consumer goods, real estate and terms of credit.

Within the Western imperialist states and Japan, the main employers have downsized their workforces and transferred trillions of dollars of the social wealth of the working class to the financiers and industrialists. Pension funds, health care plans, public education, cultural programs and social services have been eliminated or vastly reduced for large segments of the population.

Considering that development within the imperialist countries is based largely upon the super-exploitation of the labor and natural resources of people in the colonial and neo-colonial countries, it is not surprising that the economic crisis is having a far more dramatic impact on the masses of workers and farmers in Africa and other so-called developing regions. The export prices for raw materials and agricultural commodities produced in Africa have been greatly reduced, dragging down the real incomes of workers in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors there.

It is with this background that the recent 19th World Economic Forum on Africa met in Cape Town, South Africa. It drew the participation of representatives from various states on the continent.

Some 800 people from approximately 50 countries took part in the conference. Five African leaders attended and delivered speeches: Kenya Prime Minister Raila Amolo Odinga, Lesotho Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili, Rwandan President Paul Kagame, South African President Ja-

cob Zuma and Zambian President Rupiah Bwenzani Banda.

According to the Xinhua press agency from the People's Republic of China, "The meeting came as the global economic meltdown has sucked the growth and strength of many African nations, weakening the economic drivers like foreign investment, the demand for raw materials and monetary remittances from the industrial countries." (Chinaview.cn, June 11)

On June 10 the annual African Competitiveness Report for 2009 was issued. This document analyzed the present economic situation on the continent from the standpoint of capitalist economic and social relations.

A leading newspaper in the west African state of Nigeria indicated that the continent could increase its competitive edge, although several impediments continue to exist. "Limited access to financial services remains a major obstacle for African enterprises, but underdeveloped infrastructure, limited healthcare and educational services and poor institutional frameworks also make African countries less competitive in the global marketplace." (ThisDay, June 10)

Kofi Annan, the former United Nations Secretary General who now heads the Africa Progress Panel, was quoted in the above-mentioned article as saying that "The global economic crisis can serve as a wake-up call for both African leaders and their international partners. Africa has transformed in my lifetime and the progress reached so far is proof that concrete achievements are possible amidst adversity."

However, Annan continues by re-emphasizing his belief in the same capitalistic notions of economic growth. Although Annan realizes that "the economic, climate change and food security crises are all linked" and "cannot be tackled separately," he fails to make a genuine critique of the role of Western economic models in creating and sustaining the ongoing problems of underdevelopment in Africa.

Annan says, surprisingly enough, that "We need a new development model that provides security, stability and addresses people's needs. Everyone needs to contribute." Yet under the imperialist-

dominated global economy, decisions are often made which benefit the centuries-old structures of dominance and relations that inevitably reinforce the status quo.

Annan then goes on to say that "Business has a key role, as does Africa's trading and donor partners. But the primary responsibility to make it happen rests with Africa's political leaders."

What role for African workers and farmers?

This top-down model that still relies on the same international division of labor and economic power cannot provide any real hope for genuine development on the continent. The economic statistics released by imperialist-backed institutions like the World Bank clearly reveal that the global crisis in capitalism has in fact dramatically increased the number of people living in poverty.

According to World Bank Managing Director Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the present economic meltdown has thrown another 53 million Africans into poverty. However, in the next breath, she goes on to stress the purported necessity of Africa becoming more "competitive."

This is the same rhetoric that is heard even within the dominant capitalist states like the U.S. These ideas are utilized to demand even further concessions from workers, who are accused of failing to produce enough at lower wages which would attract greater capitalist investment.

Moreover, this economic rationale has led to complete disaster for workers in both the Western capitalist states and the continent. In Africa over the last two decades the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have demanded greater privatization of services, including education and health care. The result is the loss of tens of thousands of government jobs and far less access to schools and medical services.

In the United States, since December 2007, more than 4 million workers have lost their jobs while millions more have seen their homes, apartments and pension funds evaporate, along with their health care. At the same time \$10 trillion in tax revenue and Federal Reserve funds,

which by rights belongs to working people, has been handed over to the banks and the industrial magnates. Not one cent has been returned to workers, who have suffered the most under the crisis after creating all the wealth and value in capitalist society.

Even though African governments have been pressured into accepting the terms of the Western financial institutions and their consultants, the overall conditions for the masses of workers and farmers have worsened during this time period. Reported quantitative growth within the last several years has been eroded due to the symbiotic relationship between the imperialist states and their former colonies and current neo-colonies.

In Africa's most industrialized state, the Republic of South Africa, which is considered the continent's economic powerhouse due to the legacy of white settler colonialism and its complete integration into the world capitalist system, workers have responded to the present crisis with strikes and other mass actions. Unemployment is rising and the value of the national currency has declined because of the unequal terms of trade inherited from the former apartheid system, which has dominated economic relations within the entire subcontinent of southern Africa.

The newly elected president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, who hosted the WEF conference in Cape Town, said in his address that "the continuation of the current crisis will mean increased starvation, poverty and child mortality. We view the economic downturn as providing both challenges and opportunities for the continent and the developing world in general." (Xinhua, June 11)

Nonetheless, the capitalists and their surrogates in developing countries are presenting no new ideas in relationship to the current crisis. Workers and farmers will have to develop their own political and economic program to deal with the worldwide recession.

Abayomi Azikiwe is the editor of the Pan-African News Wire. The author has been following the current economic crisis and its impact on the African continent.

GM 'jobs bloodbath'

South African workers fight back

By **Martha Grevatt**

In Britain and Ireland it's called a redundancy and in South Africa it's called a retrenchment, but a layoff by any other name is still a layoff. On June 11 the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa issued a statement announcing a court action and possible strike over what they call a "jobs bloodbath."

"General Motors South Africa (GMSA) destroyed over 1,300 jobs since 2007," the union charged, "through retrenchments and worthless separation packages. This worst employer in the South African automobile assembly industry has found its jobs bloodbath not enough. It enhanced this by adopting George W. Bush's style of unilateralism. Without consulting with the union, GMSA issued more workers with letters of unemployment creation, instructing them that they have been retrenched."

"GMSA had also insincerely assured the South African public that the bankruptcy

protection processes in its headquarters, the United States of America (USA), will not affect the South African-based production operations. But this company has since shut down the production lines of Hummer in Port Elizabeth, thereby forcing more retrenchments without regard to alternatives. It is a widely publicized fact that the Hummer brand is part of those being sold consequent from GM's global management failure."

Hummer production is being consolidated under one roof in Shreveport, La.

"GMSA cannot be left continuing its psychopathic attitude to workers and taking the public of South Africa for granted," continued Alex Mashilo, NUMSA spokesperson. "It needs help before worsening the harm it had been causing. The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) is determined to execute this task until the company is completely healed. As part of this the union is preparing for a strike that GMSA will never forget after recovery."

"Reasonably, we are starting in the Labor Court of Johannesburg today, Thursday, June 11, 2009, to seek relief."

"NUMSA is demanding that GMSA must reinstate all the workers that it wrongfully retrenched since April 2009, place a moratorium on retrenchments and consult in good faith so alternatives to retrenchments can be adopted."

"The union would also like to issue an early warning to other employers like Ford and Volkswagen which are seeking to join GMSA in implanting a culture of unilateralism. We will not tolerate any unilateral behavior and changes to terms and conditions of employment. We therefore call upon these and other like-minded companies to reverse any such changes and practices with immediate effect. Failure to heed this call shall lead to NUMSA adopting drastic measures in the interest of order."

Over 100,000 South Africans work for U.S., European and Asian auto companies, which, as in other countries, have

received government assistance. Earlier this year, NUMSA took the position that any firm taking bailout money should be barred from laying off workers, and that cuts in executive bonuses should be used to offset the cost of assisting workers who are laid off.

NUMSA was formed in 1987, eight years before the fall of apartheid, through the merger of four formerly segregated unions. On its web site the union states its commitment "to close the apartheid wage gap between the skilled and the unskilled" and that "NUMSA is not an office. It is an organization where each and every member does their bit to make NUMSA into the giant that it is."

Autoworkers everywhere should be inspired by the "giant" African union that refuses to be pushed around by another giant, one now crumbling: General Motors.

Martha Grevatt has been a UAW Chrysler worker for 22 years. Email her at mgrevatt@workers.org.

Lebanese elections

Resistance holds its own as tensions grow

By John Catalinotto

U.S. imperialism and its Middle East client states carried out heavy-handed interventions in the June 7 Lebanese elections and Hezbollah's electoral ally in the Christian community there suffered some setbacks. However, the resistance forces were able to maintain the strength they have shown since 2006, when they repelled Israeli military forces that had carried out a murderous and destructive invasion and bombing campaign against Lebanon.

The election underlined the serious internal political tension that has been ongoing since 2006, which can be characterized as one of dual power. Since the war, Lebanon has been divided in a perilous balance of forces. The government's forces are lined up with Western imperialism. The Hezbollah-led resistance, with a popular-based guerrilla force, has the support of the masses throughout the region.

U.S.-Israeli threats

U.S. strategists know how important Hezbollah's example is to the region. Vice President Joseph Biden visited Lebanon two weeks before the vote and threatened to cut aid to that country if the Hezbollah-led opposition made significant gains in parliamentary voting. "We will evaluate the shape of our assistance programs," Biden warned, "based on the composition

of the new government and the policies it advocates." (Los Angeles Times, May 22)

The reactionary U.S. client state of Saudi Arabia also threatened to cut off funds needed by the Lebanese if the pro-U.S. grouping was pushed out of office.

Hezbollah itself has stated that it does not aim to take control of the Lebanese government, as this would put it in the position of responsibility for all of Lebanese society while the imperialists and their regional clients choked off the economy. Even if it led the government, the real economic and much of the military power would be out of Hezbollah and its allies' hands.

In addition, especially since this winter's devastating attack by Israel on Gaza, some Lebanese fear that if Hezbollah's position in the government is stronger it will make an Israeli attack more likely. Though the Lebanese were able to beat back the 2006 Israeli aggression, Israeli bombing did enormous damage to the infrastructure and killed some 1,500 people.

Right wing 'buys' votes

To prevent the opposition alliance from even making gains—let alone taking a majority—the government forces also used their superior funding to buy votes. They flew pro-government voters back home from the Lebanese diaspora and, in addition, spent an average of \$800 a vote.

All that should be taken into account

in analyzing the June 7 national election results. It is important to separate the actual results from the hype in the U.S. corporate media. While an important Hezbollah ally from the Christian community—the coalition led by Michel Aoun—lost votes and seats in the election, the popular support for the anti-imperialist resistance remains strong.

Hezbollah, which represents the Shiite Muslim community—about half of the population of Lebanon—successfully led the guerrilla resistance to Israel's 2006 invasion. It still has the best-motivated and efficient militia in Lebanon.

The U.S.-backed government coalition won 71 out of 128 seats in Parliament, a gain of one over the last election four years ago. The opposition alliance, in which Hezbollah participates, won the other 57 seats. This left the split in Parliament about the same as before.

Resistance has popular support

Hezbollah ran in alliance with the smaller Amal party in 11 Shiite areas, winning all 11 seats and getting 92 percent of the votes there. It got an almost unanimous vote in the South of Lebanon, where everyone knows it is only Hezbollah and some smaller allies that defend them from an Israeli attack.

The opposition coalition as a whole won more than 55 percent of the popular vote countrywide. The U.S.-backed coalition won only 45 percent, but wound up with 55 percent of the seats.

Lebanon's election laws divide voting results by religious affiliation based on an out-of-date census that severely distorts real proportional representation. That is why it is possible to have such a big difference between the popular vote breakdown and the number of seats.

Lebanon is not the only country whose voting laws distort the popular results. In the U.S., for example, the Electoral College method of electing the president gives greater weight to rural voters in sparsely populated states, so that in 2000 George W. Bush won the election even though John Kerry led in the popular vote.

Of the 128 seats in Lebanon's Parliament, half are reserved for Christians and half for Muslims. These seats are divided within each community, so that, for example, Sunnis and Shiites each get 27 seats, the Druse receive eight and two seats go to the Allevites. On the Christian side, the Maronites get 34 seats, the Orthodox 14, the Catholics eight, the Armenians six and the remaining two go to other Christian minorities.

Difference of one vote

As of now, the opposition coalition is demanding representation in the new government to reflect its popular-vote victory, despite its losing one seat in Parliament.

Despite the interference in the election, Hezbollah quickly conceded. In a later statement, however, the resistance conceded nothing to the U.S. "The U.S. is annoyed by the level of popular support for the Resistance and its choices," Hezbollah said. "That's why it resuscitated its unfair classifications of Hezbollah and invalid accusations against it of terrorism and anti-democracy."

Condemning U.S. intervention, Hezbollah concluded its statement by noting: "The performance of Hezbollah and the Lebanese opposition and their position after the election outcome is a model for Washington and those who claim democracy in the world to follow and to learn from." (Al Manar, June 9) □

Convoy to take aid to Gaza

By Sharon Eolis
New York

Supporters of the beleaguered Palestinian people plan to leave from New York City on July 4 with medical supplies they will deliver to hospitals in Gaza.

This effort has been spearheaded by British MP George Galloway, who heads an international effort called Viva Palestina to break the genocidal blockade that has been imposed upon the people of Gaza by the U.S., the Western European powers and the racist state of Israel. Galloway has been speaking across the U.S. to raise money for the convoy, co-led by Vietnam vet and author Ron Kovic. The U.S. humanitarian organization IFCO/Pastors for Peace is the convoy's fiscal sponsor.

On May 26 nearly 700 people packed a catering hall in Brooklyn's Arab community to welcome Galloway. The Brooklyn meeting alone raised nearly \$100,000. The meeting was organized by Al-Awda NY, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition; the Arab Muslim American Federation (AMAF); and the Break the Siege on Gaza Coalition.

Galloway described the human devastation wrought by the U.S.-funded Israeli attack on Gaza in December and January, including the horrible effects of such U.S.-supplied weapons as white phospho-

rous and DIME (Dense Inert Metal Explosive). Adults and children who inhale white phosphorous literally bake to death from the inside out; DIME tears off human limbs.

The blockade compounds the effect of the destruction. People cannot get materials to rebuild their homes; children who have lost arms and legs cannot get wheelchairs or prosthetics; and hospitals lack basic medicines.

Galloway also described the outpouring of sympathy that met a humanitarian aid convoy he led from Britain to Gaza earlier this year. The 110 vehicles traveled through Europe and North Africa to Egypt, where popular enthusiasm forced the U.S.-backed Mubarak regime to open the Rafah crossing and let the convoy pass into Gaza.

He especially urged people in the U.S. to take action, since the U.S. funds and arms the Israeli war machine.

The meeting also heard poets Remi Kanazi and Salah Tahani, whose words painted vivid pictures of the suffering of the Palestinian people and their determination to regain their land. Other speakers included Wael Mousfar of AMAF and Dima AbiSaab of Al-Awda NY. The event was emceed by Lamis Deek, Al-Awda NY co-chair.

More information about the convoy effort can be found at vivapalestina-us.org. □

Solidarity with Palestine



Hip-hop artist Sellassie performs for Gaza

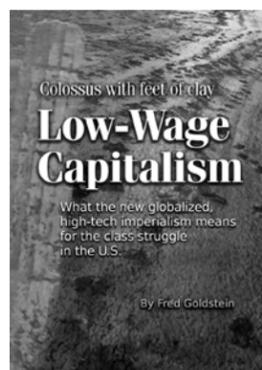
More than 150 people rallied June 6 in San Francisco to demand an end to the U.S.-Israeli war on Gaza. The demonstration was part of a national day of solidarity with the people of Gaza.

June 6 marks the 42nd anniversary of the Israeli seizure of Gaza from the Palestinian people. A broad coalition of organizations came together to organize this protest in support of the heroism of the people of Gaza and against continued U.S.-backed and -financed Israeli terror.

Speakers included Jess Ghannam of the Free Palestine Alliance and the Al-Awda Palestine Right to Return Coalition; Barbara Lubin, Middle East Children's Alliance; Cristina Gutierrez, Barrio Unido for Total and Unconditional Amnesty; Hatem Barzian, University of California-Berkeley activist professor; and Tony Gonzales of the American Indian Movement-West. A highlight of today's rally was a performance by Sellassie, a progressive hip-hop artist.

A small counter-protest by pro-Israeli Zionist forces was easily drowned out by the Gaza Solidarity Day rally.

—Report and photo by Judy Greenspan



Low-Wage Capitalism

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx's law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval, the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

Available at www.Leftbooks.com



Iran: What fraud?

The first thing to make clear about the Iranian election is that the U.S. and other imperialist states have no right to intervene. The media here are now filled with moralizing, even racist scolding of Iran over the election results. Who are they to act so hoity-toity? Remember George W. Bush's open theft of the 2000 election in Florida?

And then there are the self-righteous European imperialists. Only 43 percent of the people voted in the recent EU elections. Compared to that, Iran's 82 percent vote makes it a vibrant capitalist democracy.

The second thing is that absolutely no evidence has been dredged up of significant electoral fraud. Iranian President Ahmadinejad's 62.6 percent total is completely consistent with his 2005 vote total of 61.7 percent. It is also consistent with the only election poll taken. Ken Ballen and Patrick Doherty polled a thousand Iranians and predicted a two-to-one win for Ahmadinejad. (Washington Post, June 15)

Given that the Iranian economy is continuing to grow, despite the world capitalist contraction, it's reasonable that a majority would vote for the incumbent.

The vote breakdown by neighborhood, as provided by the official election authorities, is also consistent with political reality. Ahmadinejad lost in Teheran City, a bourgeois stronghold. He was weakest in the wealthier northern part of the capital. But he swept the rural areas and did well among the urban poor.

All the Iranian candidates—and here we will discuss just the president and his nearest rival, Mir Hossein Mousavi—are part of the Islamic Republic's ruling circle of politicians. It would be surprising if any deviated far from generally acceptable politics in Iran. That means capitalist economic development and projecting Iranian power in the region. And maintaining some independence from the imperialists—not easy if your economy is integrated with the world

capitalist market.

Ahadinejad is closely identified with militant support for the mass-based resistance movements in Palestine and Lebanon, and also with the determined public defense of Iran's nuclear power program. With a high vote for him, the Iranians thumb their noses at the imperialists. This also explains the strong hostility from the U.S. ruling class.

In Iran, the reelected president is also considered a populist who will fight for economic concessions to Iran's poor—which explains his strong popularity outside the middle-class and wealthy districts.

Mousavi was first seen as a reformer who might relax cultural and social restrictions and give more leeway to organize for rights. He got some support from women's organizations, labor and even some progressive circles. By the end of the campaign, however, Mousavi was obviously allied with the power broker and former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, whom Ahmadinejad defeated handily in the 2005 election.

All reports—even from anti-Ahadinejad sources here—describe the Mousavi-Rafsanjani followers as the wealthier, college-educated Iranians who dwell in the cities.

Rafsanjani, who still holds a position of power in the regime, is identified with the wealthiest sector of Iranian society, with privatizing industries, with a more conciliatory approach to imperialism. Mousavi is now linked to him, and it's their grouping that the imperialists either want to win or want to cause enough internal trouble to weaken the government. In the end, what the imperialists want is to reverse the Iranian revolution and get back control over its rich resources.

But 2009 is not 1953, when the CIA overthrew Prime Minister Mossadegh and installed the Shah. The Iranian people have benefitted enormously from their revolution and cannot easily be turned back. □

How N. Koreans view the 'nuclear crisis'

By Deirdre Griswold
New York

Here's how Koreans in the north look at the current situation between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States, based on conversations with a member of that country's leading party, the Workers Party of Korea.

The Korean people want to live peacefully, more than anybody else. Our country has experienced the horrors of war several times. It is not an abstraction to us, not something played out on computer screens. Every Korean family has been touched by war.

Today, when there is no longer a Soviet Union or an Eastern bloc of socialist countries, the Cold War remains for Korea. The DPRK is its target. South Korea is a colony of U.S. imperialism, and has been ever since U.S. troops took over there after the defeat of Japan in World War II. They occupied south Korea in 1945 on the pretext of disarming Japanese troops, but their real aim was to take over all of Korea and turn it into a bridgehead for the domination of Asia.

From 1910 to 1945, Korea was a colony of Japan. The U.S. drew heavily on those who had collaborated with Japanese rule when it set up an occupation government in the south. However, it was the resistance fighters against Japan who formed the DPRK in the north.

For five years, the U.S. prepared for a war in Korea, which broke out on June 25, 1950. From 1950 to 1953, the U.S. committed one-third of its ground forces, one-fifth of its air force, and the greater part of its Pacific fleet to the war. Together with troops from its satellite countries and the south Korean army, which included remnants of the former Japanese Imperial Army, a total of more than 2 million troops were thrown against the DPRK. The U.S. used up 73 million tons of war materiel—11 times more than in the Pacific war—and spent \$165 billion, a huge sum in those days.

The DPRK was only two years old when

the war started. It was mainly an agricultural country with very limited material resources and armaments.

Nevertheless, contrary to all its expectations, the U.S. could not win the war and sustained great losses. The fighting stopped in 1953 after an armistice agreement, or ceasefire. A demilitarized zone between north and south was set up. Below the DMZ, the U.S. kept more than 40,000 of its troops poised to resume the war.

Since then, there has been no peace agreement between the two countries. While the Koreans have tried many times to put peace talks on the agenda, the U.S. has refused. This means the war could be resumed at any moment. Ever since its founding in 1948, the DPRK has been exposed to the threat of a nuclear attack by the United States.

The Korean people are very proud of our history of struggle against foreign domination. We are proud of our independence and are determined to develop our country according to our own wishes, on a socialist path, not in a direction dictated to us from outside.

It is because of these never-ending threats of another war in Korea that the DPRK is determined to develop our own nuclear defense. For this we are being attacked as a "threat to world peace." Such a charge is ridiculous. Since the U.S. opened the era of nuclear testing in 1945, there have been 2,054 tests of nuclear weapons. All but a handful of these tests have been conducted by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. Only two of the 2,054 tests have been carried out by the DPRK—and these are the only tests to be taken before the Security Council for sanction.

This shows the high-handedness and unilateralism of the imperialists and the strong powers against smaller nations. There is no justice. Small, weak nations must obey the big powers.

But today no nation wants to be treated that way. In the United Nations, the DPRK has put up a vigorous protest. We will do what we must to defend ourselves, despite any sanctions. □

Texas gov makes history with 200th execution

Continued from page 6

that Blacks and Latinos are the majority on death row, and we know that regardless of color, those on death row are poor. I call on you to each bring five more people with you to the next execution protest. We must stop these lynchings."

Speaking from Montreal, the Amnesty International organizer of that militant protest, Charles Perroud, told Texas organizers that it was "a vibrant success with even the more 'popular media,' the ones never there to cover our events, coming in throngs!! Real strong coverage to say the least."

The death penalty in the U.S. is fraught with corrupt district attorneys, lying cops, faulty crime labs, incompetent court-appointed attorneys and wrongful executions. Governor Perry knows this because 40 people have been exonerated and released from prison after being granted DNA testing. Some of them had served over 25 years for crimes they didn't commit.

Perry knows that intensive newspaper investigations by the Houston Chronicle and the Chicago Tribune have discovered at least three people put to death in Texas who were found to be innocent—Todd Willingham, Ruben Cantu and Carlos de Luna.

Texas leads the country with 439 executions since the death penalty was reinstated by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1976. (amnesty.org) More than 90 percent of all U.S. executions have taken place in former Confederate states. In 2008, 95 percent took place in the South. In 2009, more than half of all executions have been carried out in Texas. (deathpenaltyinfo.org)

However, the struggle to abolish the death penalty is gaining ground. Death sentences are down. Executions are down. Public support for capital punishment is down, even in Texas. And in Harris County, the leading jurisdiction that sends people to death row in the U.S., not a single person was sentenced to death last year for the first time in more than 30 years.

For more information see www.protest2009executions.com. □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & THE BLACK FREEDOM STRUGGLE

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead.

Includes: • Black liberation & the working-class struggle • The material basis for reparations in the U.S. • Brief overview of racist oppression & heroic resistance • What Hurricane Katrina exposed to the world • Africa: A battleground against colonialism and for sovereignty • Justice for the Caribbean • Greeting to the 3rd UN World Conference against Racism from Mumia Abu-Jamal, 2001 • A salute to women revolutionaries • Why fight-back is inevitable • Black labor and class solidarity

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Black journalist fights retaliatory charges

Continued from page 5

"conspiracy theories."

Coleman took the stand in her own defense and testified about how she was drugged, sexually degraded and held illegally in jail.

Presiding Judge Kathleen Keough often interrupted Coleman and told her to stop speaking. Coleman often ignored these orders and continued speaking, turning to Keough afterword with a defiant grin and saying, "I'm sorry, Judge."

Coleman spoke of how a deputy had growled, "We're going to get you in jail if it's the last thing we do," as he forced her into handcuffs.

Prosecutor Coyne and her assistant failed to further their case with cross-examination. Coleman ripped their arguments to shreds, one by one, from the witness stand.

Coyne asked if Coleman had any proof that her journalism had motivated the prosecution.

"Yes, it's related," she said. "You can't separate it." Coleman explained that everything in Cleveland was related, from the foreclosure crisis to the crumbling school system to the racism and violent abuse in the legal system.

"This system is broken at the core," Coleman proclaimed, as Judge Keough's face melted into a grim look of disgust.

"My duty as a journalist," Coleman proclaimed, "is to seek and perpetuate truth."

Coleman plans to appeal her misdemeanor conviction for resisting arrest. Her supporters left the courtroom feeling victorious that the prosecution had failed in its attempt to railroad her back to jail. □

From Amazon to Andes

Indigenous struggle shakes up Peru

By Berta Joubert

On June 5, Peruvian President Alan Garcia unleashed his heavily armed repressive forces against Indigenous people in that country's Amazonian region. They had been defending that enormous source of natural wealth against the voraciousness of transnational corporations. Ironically, that same day had been designated by the United Nations as World Environment Day to motivate awareness of environmental issues and encourage political action.

The attacks took place in the Curva del Diablo (Curve of the Devil), a section of the highway that links the jungle with the northern part of the country. For 10 days, thousands of Awajún and Wampis people had been occupying and blockading the road as a way to put pressure on the government.

At dawn, three Peruvian National Police helicopters flew over the region dropping teargas and shooting at the defenseless multitude. At the same time, police on the ground armed with rifles were also shooting at them. To this day, there is still no final and clear account of the casualties. The capitalist media, which has all along been hostile to the Indigenous people and loyal to the government, echoed Garcia's accusation that the Indigenous are "terrorists" and reported that they had murdered 24 police, while only nine Indigenous had died.

However, a contradictory report appeared June 13 in *Lucha Indígena* magazine, edited by Hugo Blanco, from a person who was in Bagua—the site of the massacre. It replicates what many sources in the area are saying. "The corpses of the Natives were scattered throughout the nearby highway and in the vicinity of the Curve of the Devil. The police took control, imposed curfew, began to pile up the corpses, burning them in the highway, others were transferred to undetermined places, put in bags and transferred to the three police helicopters. Many of the corpses of these humble Peruvians were thrown into the Marañón and Utcubamba Rivers. The mestizos of Bagua Chica and Bagua Grande estimate a minimum of 200 to 300 dead civilians." (www.lucha-indigena.com)

Even though the police refused to allow journalists, relatives and other Indige-

nous persons into the area, an impressive amount of information has been provided by alternative sources, including a Belgian journalist who was present. It includes video footage on YouTube that has been seen around the world.

What caused the massacre?

On April 9, after futile attempts to negotiate with the government, the Inter-ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle (AIDSESEP)—an organization representing 300,000 Indigenous people and 1,350 communities—began mobilizing the Amazonian people. The issue was the government's implementation of several laws that the Indigenous say will privatize and endanger the Amazon and the livelihood of the numerous Native communities.

They started taking over highways, small airports, and gas and oil pipelines and interrupting river transport. These actions effectively paralyzed the region and disrupted the production and transportation of hydrocarbons throughout the area.

The Amazonian people were especially demanding the repeal of the new Law on Forestry and Wildlife and the Law on Water Resources, decrees 1090 and 1064. These laws would open up the Amazon area to increasing mineral, oil, gas and timber exploitation.

To put this into context, the Peruvian people of the Amazon comprise 11 percent of the total population. They reside in the north, center and southeast of the country, in the largest of Peru's three natural resources areas.

These laws were imposed illegally. Under both Peruvian and U.N. laws of protection for Indigenous people, it is required that any regulation that could affect their communities must be negotiated first with those affected communities.

Instead, President Garcia imposed them in order to satisfy the requirements of Peru's Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. This agreement, called the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (PTPA) was signed in 2006 and took effect on Feb. 1. The PTPA website says this agreement will "result in significant liberalization of trade in goods and services between the U.S. and Peru.... Peru immediately eliminated most of its tariffs on U.S. exports.... [It also] includes important disciplines relating to ... trade

facilitation, technical barriers to trade, government procurement, services, investment, telecommunications, electronic commerce, intellectual property rights, and labor and environmental protection." (www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements)

Solidarity brings concessions

An outpouring of solidarity with the Indigenous followed in the form of both statements and demonstrations. This support from all organized social sectors and progressive parties not only in Peru but internationally forced a concession from the Garcia government. On the evening of June 15, it was announced that the government would take measures the following day to repeal decrees 1090 and 1064.

In reaction to this news, the acting president of AIDSESEP, Daysi Zapata, stated that "The government reaction is late. We want to see realities. ... The people are tired of promises ... there is great distrust." She demanded an end to the persecution of the four leaders of the organization and an end to the state of emergency in Bagua. Zapata has been at the forefront of the organization since June 9 when its president, Alberto Pizango, had to take political refuge in the Nicaraguan Embassy because of death threats.

Most likely the government's decision was influenced by the many demands that Garcia and all his administration resign. The rise of general mobilizations throughout the whole country on behalf of the Amazonian people is something

that has never happened before. Probably Garcia thinks that repealing the laws, if in fact it does happen, will exonerate him. However, protests continue to grow daily.

An article by Carlos Quiroz, a bilingual blogger based in Washington who has constant contact with the Peruvian organizations, reported an interview with Zapata on Monday night after the government's decision was known. Zapata says: "They want to silence us by incarcerating us, but that is useless because when one leader goes to prison, many more leaders will rise after them." Referring to the massive character of the protests, she said: "Not a single region is staying quiet; they are protesting for justice after the deaths of our brothers and sisters in Bagua and for the repeal of the Garcia decrees that are so negative to our Indigenous peoples."

In the same article Quiroz mentions that "Indigenous leader Miguel Palacin had previously told me that [a new constitution] is one of the Indigenous movement's goals right now, following the example of neighboring Ecuador and Bolivia." (peruanista.blogspot.com)

Indigenous uprisings in both those countries led to the removal of right-wing neoliberal governments and the installation of progressive presidents who then, together with the input of the people, created new constitutions. Will it happen in Peru?

E-mail: bjceci@workers.org

Next: Who is Alan Garcia?

Washington's silence.

Protest supports Peru's Indigenous



Indigenous peoples, solidarity movement activists and environmentalists filled the sidewalks outside the Peruvian Consulate in New York June 10. Around the corner, three activists chained shut the doors to the building housing Sen. Chuck Schumer's office.

It was New York's turn to join the international solidarity movement that has sprung up since Peruvian President Alan Garcia ordered police to attack a demonstration of 5,000 Indigenous people in Peru's Amazon region. The people had shut off access to transnational corporations that plan to expand logging, oil drilling and gas exploration in the people's homeland. Trying to break their resistance, Peruvian police killed 50 Indigenous people on June 5.

Three of the New York protesters were arrested after chaining themselves by the neck to the doors of Schumer's office at 757 Third Avenue. They targeted the New York senator because he was a main supporter of the U.S. Free Trade Agreement

with Peru. Garcia used the FTA as his excuse to clear the Indigenous people from the roads they were blocking.

Before the FTA vote, members of Tiksigroup, a Peruvian Indigenous cultural group from New Jersey, and of Trade Justice New York, which called the June 10 action, had presented Schumer's staff with reports from the Washington Office on Latin America predicting violence and instability if the agreement passed.

Peruvian Indigenous activist Ana Maria Quispe of Tiksigroup said: "Chuck Schumer, President Barack Obama and other politicians who supported the Peru Free Trade Agreement need to be held accountable for an agreement that they were warned would have disastrous human rights and environmental consequences. Unfortunately, they were more interested in serving the real beneficiaries of this agreement—the same financial industry giants responsible for the current economic crisis."

—Report and photo by John Catalinotto

Thousands mourn Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste

By G. Dunkel

Thousands of Haitians from all over North America traveled to Miami June 5 and 6 to spend hours paying tribute to Rev. Gérard Jean-Juste. They came from Orlando, Fla., Boston, New York, Washington, Chicago, Atlanta and Montreal.

Thousands lined the streets as his cortege went from Notre Dame Cathedral to Veye Yo, a community center he founded there.

Jean-Juste fought with courage, dignity and insistence for justice and the rights of the distressed, in Haiti and in the United States, where he was forced to live during the Duvalier dictatorships.

He had motivated thousands of Haitians, even though they were undocumented, to come out into the streets

and force the United States to change its laws on political asylum. This change improved conditions not only for Haitians but for all immigrants.

After returning to Haiti in the early 1990s after the fall of the Duvaliers, Jean-Juste was a prominent supporter of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and a member of his Lavalas party.

The government arrested Jean-Juste after the 2004 coup against Aristide and jailed him for nearly two years. His supporters in Lavalas tried to register him for the 2006 election but the Election Board refused on the grounds that he was in jail.

After he was diagnosed with leukemia in 2006, the authorities allowed him to leave for treatment in the U.S.

Jean-Juste is to be buried June 19 in Cavaillon, Haiti, next to his mother. □

EDITORIAL

Cuba, Corea y la belicosidad de EEUU

Cuando se hizo obvio que los países miembros de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA)—menos uno—votarían el 3 de junio a favor de la readmisión de Cuba, la Canciller de Estados Unidos Hillary Clinton, representando al país en oposición a la propuesta, se retiró.

Cuba aplaudió los esfuerzos de los países miembros que finalmente revirtieron su expulsión de la OEA, acción diseñada por Washington en 1962 después del fracasado intento de invasión a la isla. Pero la Habana ha dicho “no, gracias” a la admisión en la OEA, organización que por cincuenta años ha trabajado a beneficio de Washington.

La razón que Clinton dio para haberse retirado es que la OEA es una organización de estados “democráticos” y Cuba no es democrática.

Este argumento no importa un bledo en la América Latina de hoy. Es de conocimiento general que Washington ha estado tratando de socavar los gobiernos democráticamente elegidos de Venezuela, Bolivia y Ecuador. La razón es clara: estos gobiernos están luchando por los intereses de sus pueblos en contra de las corporaciones transnacionales basadas principalmente en Estados Unidos.

Hay también suficiente historia para hacer desaparecer el argumento sobre “democracia” de Clinton. He aquí tan sólo un ejemplo: En 1973, un golpe derechista en Chile, liderado por el General Augusto Pinochet derrocó al gobierno progresista del Presidente Salvador Allende y comenzó un reinado de terror. Miles de izquierdistas fueron capturados/as y asesinados/as; otros/as fueron torturados y les hicieron “desaparecer”. Eventualmente, una amplia gama de fuerzas políticas denunció los métodos fascistas de Pinochet y su dictadura.

Sin embargo, la OEA nunca suspendió a Chile.

De hecho, en junio de 1976 el entonces Canciller Henry Kissinger, hizo un viaje especial a Santiago de Chile para una reunión de la Asamblea General de la OEA. En una reunión confidencial con Pinochet el 8 de junio, Kissinger le reafirmó al dictador chileno que aunque el representante de Estados Unidos tenía que decir algo sobre los “derechos humanos” en su discurso a la asamblea de la OEA, Pinochet no debería preocuparse.

“El discurso no está dirigido a Chile”, Kissinger le dijo a Pinochet. “Mis declaraciones y nuestra posición están diseñadas para permitir decirle al Congreso que estamos negociando con el gobierno chileno y que por lo tanto el Congreso no tiene necesidad de actuar”. Si el proyecto de ley que está pendiente en la sala del Congreso, crítico de Pinochet, fuera derrotado, [Kissinger] prometió, Chile obtendría aviones de guerra F-5E.

Para asegurarse que Pinochet le entendiera, Kissinger enfatizó, “Nosotros aplaudimos el derrocamiento del gobierno de inclinación

comunista aquí...No vamos a debilitar vuestra posición”.

Un memorando interno del Departamento de Estado describiendo esta conversación finalmente fue hecho público en 1998. Kissinger desde luego no ha sido procesado por ninguno de sus muchos crímenes.

Apenas un día después de la derrota de Washington en la OEA, el Departamento de Justicia anunció el arresto de un ex empleado del Departamento de Estado y su esposa bajo cargos de espionaje para Cuba—no por dinero, sino porque estaban inspirados por los cambios allá.

En su columna del 8 de junio en el diario cubano Granma, Fidel Castro señaló lo “extraño” del momento de los arrestos, dado que ahora ambos están jubilados/as, tienen más de setenta años, y si la acusación en su contra fuera verdad, pudieron haber sido arrestado/a hace mucho tiempo. Y agregó que “Tal vez influyó en el arresto no sólo el tremendo revés sufrido en San Pedro Sula [lugar de la reunión de la OEA], sino también las noticias de que se estaban produciendo contactos entre los gobiernos de Estados Unidos y Cuba sobre asuntos importantes de interés común.

Mucha gente esperaba que Washington aliviara su implacable bloqueo contra Cuba una vez que terminó la Guerra Fría. Pero no fue así. Luego la elección de Barack Obama como presidente y el regreso del Partido Demócrata al control del gobierno alentaron nuevas especulaciones de que Estados Unidos cambiaría su política. Sin embargo, si algo está empujando a la administración explorar cambios en su relación con Cuba, es el abrumador apoyo que la isla socialista se ha ganado de los pueblos del mundo, especialmente en América Latina, África y el Caribe. Washington está totalmente aislado en su hostilidad contra Cuba.

El ojo de Clinton también está puesto al otro lado del mundo. La Canciller, en una entrevista el 7 de junio en el programa “Esta Semana” de la cadena de televisión ABC, emitió nuevas amenazas contra la República Popular Democrática de Corea, otro país que ha tomado el camino socialista. Ella dijo que la administración está buscando maneras de “interceptar” naves marítimas y aéreas de la RPDC que se sospeche lleven armas o tecnología nuclear.

Para ponerlo claro, Estados Unidos está buscando la forma de cometer un acto de guerra contra Corea. Es un acto de guerra detener o apropiarse del cargamento de otro país.

Clinton también dijo que la administración está buscando una manera de revertir la decisión hecha por George W. Bush el año pasado de borrar a la RPDC de la lista de “promotor de terrorismo”. ¿Más belicoso que Bush? Aparentemente sí. Recordemos que el Partido Demócrata ha presidido durante la mayoría de las guerras del imperialismo estadounidense en los últimos setenta años. □



MO FOTO: IMANI HENRY

Cientos protestan ataques por agentes policiales contra lesbianas

Por Imani Henry
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Más de trescientos miembros/as de la comunidad lesbiana, gay, bisexual y trans (LGBT) junto a sus partidarios/as protestaron el 6 de junio frente al Precinto Policial 77 en Brooklyn para exigir justicia para dos lesbianas de color que fueron brutalmente golpeadas y arrestadas por la policía el 17 de mayo. El Precinto 77, conocido por su brutalidad policial, es también responsable de los ataques y arrestos en junio del 2007 contra dos abogados de derechos humanos, Michael Tarif Warren y Evelyn Warren, quienes son africano/a americano/as.

El reciente asalto tuvo lugar frente a una discoteca, donde Jeannette “JG” Grey de 31 años y Tiffany Jiménez de 19, asistían a una fiesta para lesbianas. Los oficiales, todos hombres, lanzaron las más viles difamaciones sexistas y anti LGBT mientras las golpeaban.

JG, lesbiana negra, dijo a los/as manifestantes cómo los oficiales la golpearon con las porras mientras yacía en el pavimento.

Jiménez, una latina que tiene miembros de la policía en su familia, leyó la siguiente declaración en la protesta: “De repente los policías me empujan. Y después me encontré en el suelo. No tenía mis zapatos y me tiraron por la espalda. Yo estaba gritando y llorando. Tenía un vestido y me dieron vuelta exponiendo mi trasero. Un policía

puso su rodilla en mi pierna y en la espalda, y pesaba por lo menos 200 libras, o quizás más, y yo soy pequeña”. Ambas mujeres viven en Brooklyn.

Los oradores en la protesta organizada por el Colectivo Seguros Fuera del Sistema (SOSC, siglas en inglés), afiliado al Proyecto Audre Lorde y Globe, el proyecto para Lesbianas, Gay, Bisexuales y Trans de Make the Road New York—incluyeron a la Concejal Leticia James; al activista comunitario Kevin Powell; y a la activista por muchos años contra la brutalidad policial y abogada de las dos mujeres asaltadas, Andrea Ritchie.

Un energética marcha siguió al mitin, gritando consignas como “¡Alto a la homofobia!, ¡Encarcelen a los policías culpables!” La protesta cerró con un militante poema por Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etahene, el cual incluye las líneas, “Yo quiero estar a salvo para sostener la mano de mi mujer en las calles a media noche/ yo quiero no tener que esperar hasta junio para poder celebrar mi orgullo”.

Grupos de la comunidad pidieron una lista de demandas, incluyendo el despido de los policías involucrados en los asaltos y la revocación de todos los cargos en contra de las mujeres. Las mujeres están programadas para aparecer en corte a finales de junio.

Para información de cómo ayudar a estas dos víctimas ir a los sitios de web www.alp.org o www.maketheroad.org. □

LIBERTAD PARA LOS CINCO CUBANOS



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

Libertad para los cinco compatriotas cubanos que defendieron a su país del terrorismo y que ahora están presos en EE.UU. por evitar muertes en la isla.