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Beyond Goldman Sachs' fraud The real crime: CAPITALISM Bankers roll in riches – 30 million workers need jobs

By Fred Goldstein

The Securities and Exchange Commission has leveled sensational charges of multi-billion-dollar fraud against the investment banking firm Goldman Sachs. That this comes just when the bank is reporting a 91 percent increase in its first-quarter profit over last year is sure to inflame even greater public anger at the Wall Street institution.

What every class-conscious worker should be aware of, however, is that the SEC has put the spotlight on only one limited operation by a larcenous, global financial power, while shielding the rest of the banking system and capitalism itself from criticism.

Goldman Sachs is being charged with fraud for selling billions of dollars worth of mortgages, bundled up into bonds, and designing those bonds to fail — without telling its customers. Then Goldman and the clients for whom it designed the bonds turned around and made money betting against the very bonds they had created.

The way Goldman and its clients, in particular a multi-billion-dollar hedge fund run by John Paulson, made money was to insure the bonds with American International Group and then get paid off when the bonds declined in value. Paulson himself made a billion dollars on the transactions.

“According to the SEC filing,” writes Mike Whitney, the banking firm “failed to make material disclosures about the synthetic collateralized debt obligations (CDO) they sold to their clients. These kamikaze CDOs were designed to blow up just months after they were constructed (which they did). According to former regulator William Black, ‘Goldman did not just withhold information, they told people, “Hey, the investment decisions are being made by experts who would only choose good quality stuff,” when in fact, the stuff that was put in was chosen because it was considered the most likely to suffer near-term downgrades.’ So

they deliberately misled investors. That’s fraud. They also never told investors that the securities were selected (in part) by a prominent hedge fund manager, John Paulson, who planned to bet against the same CDO.” (“Goldman Sachs’s Bloody Nose,” Counterpunch, April 19)

One consultant characterized it as like buying fire insurance on someone else’s house and then setting the house on fire.

A falling out among thieves

The headlines blare as if the SEC is preparing an epic battle against Wall Street. But as far as the workers are concerned, this is strictly a dispute among robbers.

To be sure, the struggle between Goldman Sachs and the Obama administration is quite serious on both sides. The context is the fight over financial regulatory reform, over how to stabilize the capitalist financial system. Both sides have much at stake. But the workers must look to their own independent struggle to influence how the financial system impacts them.

The New York Times of April 20 made clear a good part of what this investigation is all about. The accusation is “that Goldman devised a complex mortgage investment that was intended to fall apart and then sold it to benighted investors.”

So the robbers at Goldman Sachs cheated their “benighted investors,” who were seeking to make money from the masses by collecting interest on subprime mortgages. Meanwhile, Goldman was looking to also make money gambling on the failure of the masses to be able to pay these exorbitant mortgages. And Goldman was one of the heavy promoters of

these toxic mortgages in the first place. In either case, Goldman made hundreds of millions in fees for the transactions.

Unemployment amidst fabulous wealth

All the headlines are focused on the SEC charges against Goldman. But as far as the workers, the communities, youth and students are concerned there is a more pressing scandal. Goldman and the other bankers are rolling in riches while 30 million workers need jobs. This is a scandal worthy of investigation.

The real outrage of the moment is that Goldman Sachs made record profits of \$3.46 billion in the last quarter, topping JPMorganChase at \$3.3 billion but still behind Citigroup at \$4.4 billion. Meanwhile, weekly first-time claims for unemployment insurance rose 24,000 to 484,000 in mid-April. There are now 6.4 million workers who have been out of a job for more than 27 weeks.

Among the other scandals that need to be uncovered is how Goldman Sachs and other bankers are milking the cities of billions of dollars in interest. Cities and states across the country are paying hundreds of billions of dollars in interest to banks while schools, hospitals, AIDS programs and SCHIP health care for children are cut, government workers are laid off, and much more.

The capitalist government in Washington does not want to launch an investigation of how banks are throwing millions of workers out of their homes. It is the banks that are behind the millions of foreclosures that have taken place, including

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Two choices for UAW: Class struggle or suicide

By Martha Grevatt

Next year the United Auto Workers union will commemorate its 75th anniversary. Highlights from the union's history — the great sit-downs of 1936-37, the long and bitter General Motors strike after World War II, and subsequent strikes that institutionalized annual wage increases, a cost-of-living allowance, supplementary unemployment benefits, pensions, cradle-to-grave health coverage for autoworkers and their dependents, and more — will feature prominently during the UAW's 35th Constitutional Convention this June 14-17 in Detroit.

Yet while the UAW leadership is attempting to identify itself with the union's heroic past, rank-and-file anger at the International leadership is rising. It has failed to challenge the massive capitalist restructuring that has caused membership to plummet — from 1.5 million in 1979 to 355,200 as of this writing. The numbers have not been this low since the union was young and growing rapidly in the heat of the class struggle.

The UAW leadership is wedded to the strategy of "jointness" — an example of what Marxists call class collaboration — with the bosses of Ford, GM, Chrysler and their independent suppliers. At contract time, and sometimes even between contracts, workers are asked by their union to take concessions to keep the companies "competitive." Job security is promised as a trade-off — a ludicrous assurance given the above-cited statistics. Since the 1980s concessionary contracts have been the rule rather than the exception.

In the past year, however, the UAW leaders have gone to unprecedented lengths to compromise the basic rights of the workers and advance the profit interest of GM, Ford and Chrysler. When Chrysler and then GM went into Chapter 13 bankruptcy, as a condition of the bailout the U.S. Treasury demanded that UAW workers give up cost-of-living increases and annual bonuses, reduce break time, eliminate a holiday, agree to work more than eight hours at straight time, freeze new hire wages at \$14 an hour until 2015, give up dental and vision coverage for retirees while accepting worthless company stock to fund health benefits, limit supplementary unemployment pay, and allow the two companies to close over 20 plants. And, on top of all that, no strikes before 2015! The UAW told the workers to vote in favor of these concessions when it should have denounced the Treasury Department for interfering in the collective bargaining process.

When Ford, which did not receive government aid, wanted the same concessions, UAW President Ron Gettelfinger and his chosen successor Bob King said they were necessary because of Ford's huge debt.

The workers said no. They voted down the givebacks, four to one.

The day after the vote, Ford's return to profitability to the tune of \$1 billion in the previous quarter was front-page news. But profitability does not insure jobs, as was shown earlier this year when Ford laid off 900 workers at a Michigan plant, speeding up the assembly line to reduce the number of workers needed. Under the contract indefinite layoffs are only supposed to be "volume-related," i.e., tied to vehicle sales. Where was the outrage from the UAW?

Since its earliest days, the UAW always insisted on one master contract covering all of a company's plants.

This precedent goes back to 1937 and the Flint sit-down strike. Before the strike GM insisted the union negotiate separately at each individual plant. After the workers sat in for 44 days, the company agreed to a six-month contract covering the most critical plants.

Now that precedent has been undone with the UAW's blessing at five "keepsite" plants that GM has taken back from its former Delphi parts division, which last year emerged from bankruptcy. Workers were recently told to agree to separate concessionary contracts at each plant, all of them containing pay cuts, or risk losing jobs. Workers have so far voted no.

GM has taken its drive to bust union solidarity even further by opening a non-union factory in Michigan. Normally a new plant would come under the master agreement. Why isn't the UAW demonstrating outside the non-union plant? Why isn't there even an organizing drive?

Change the course

Some workers are asking themselves if the UAW has become an out-and-out company union. If the present suicidal trend in the UAW is not reversed — if the UAW does not start fighting back against the relentless attacks from the auto bosses, the government and Wall Street — this once-mighty union will be seen as an obstacle to labor's advancement and will shrink to marginal significance for the working class.

Clearly the class-collaborationist leadership has degenerated. Change will not come from the top. On the other hand, a rank-and-file takeover is not without historical precedent. In the 1930s the longshore workers, the rubber workers, the Teamsters and the autoworkers themselves were able to overcome the craft union bureaucracy that was holding back the struggle. And the 1970 postal workers' wildcat strike won gains for the workers despite opposition from the union officialdom.

A movement to transform the UAW has emerged. Many convention delegates are going to express their dissatisfaction with business unionism as usual. The Autoworkers Caravan and Retirees for Single Payer plan to demonstrate outside the convention.

Some UAW locals have passed a resolution, authored by the Caravan, called "Rebuild Our Fighting Union." It states in part that "this International Union, in contrast to the so-called turnaround plans of the corporations, will launch its own turnaround plan under the theme of 'Rebuild Our Fighting Union.' ... The goal will be to develop a strategy of resistance, which could involve strikes (including a general auto strike), in-plant actions, outside economic pressure such as boycotts and corporate campaigns, labor-community coalitions and internationally coordinated protests. ...

"This union will not be divided by racism, sexism, gay-bashing or anti-foreign and anti-Islamic prejudice; on the contrary we will work to build mutual solidarity with all exploited and oppressed workers, including immigrants, low wage and unorganized workers, and the unemployed. ... The turnaround plan developed will conclude in a rectification campaign to be debated and approved by the delegates at a special convention called for this purpose, leading up to the celebration of the UAW's 75th anniversary in 2011."

Martha Grevatt has worked for 22 years for Chrysler in Twinsburg, Ohio. Her plant will close in July. Email mgrevatt@workers.org.

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RALEIGH, N.C.

Workers' banquet focuses on Haiti

By Monica Moorehead
Raleigh, N.C.

Labor, community, student and political activists packed the North Carolina Association of Teachers auditorium here on April 10 for the 27th Annual Martin Luther King Support for Labor banquet organized by the Black Workers For Justice.

While most of the audience hailed from various cities in North Carolina, some traveled from as far away as Virginia, Ohio and New York. Among the delegations represented at the banquet were the Million Worker March Movement and the Bail Out the People Movement from New York, the Virginia People's Assembly and the Raleigh Fight Imperialism, Stand Together youth group.

The BWFJ hosts this important yearly fundraising event to help keep alive Dr. King's dream of guaranteeing living-wage jobs and social justice for all. BWFJ and its allies, especially the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, UE Local 150, are deeply committed to organizing campaigns for economic and political rights for oppressed workers — Black, Latino/a and women — especially in the “right-to-work” state of North Carolina. North Carolina is one of two states — the other being Virginia — that denies public sector workers the right to collective bargaining with employers.

Since its founding in the early 1980s, BWFJ has expressed its solidarity with the struggles against racism, national oppression, sexism and exploitation at home while building internationalism. To drive this point home, the keynote speaker at this year's banquet was Marleine Bastien, executive director of Haitian Women of Miami and a candidate for the 17th Congressional District. In this district, located in southern Florida, 65 percent of the people are immigrants from Haiti, Cuba and various parts of Central America.

Bastien focused her powerful talk on the heroic efforts being made by the Haitian people to rebuild their country fol-

lowing the horrific earthquake that devastated the capital of Port-au-Prince on Jan. 12. She recently returned from a fact-finding trip to her homeland.

Bastien exposed the fact that mainstream media like CNN have erroneously portrayed the Haitian people as “helpless” and “dependent” since the earthquake in order to justify U.S. military intervention. She went on to say that despite extremely limited resources and underdevelopment, the Haitian people have organized on a grassroots level to pull people from the rubble and to secure makeshift shelters and other lifesaving measures for thousands of earthquake survivors.

Bastien stated that only the Haitian people can decide who should aid them, including those living throughout the diaspora and other supporters. She pointed out that the recently formed Interim Haiti

Recovery Commission, headed by former President Bill Clinton, did not include one Haitian representative on it. The worst immigration policy against the Haitian people was established under the Clinton administration, Bastien emphasized.

Haiti's local economy had been decimated and controlled by the U.S. capitalist market even before the recent earthquake. Fifty thousand Haitians who have already been granted Temporary Protective Status are still denied entry to the U.S. Bastien commented that the TPS should be extended to all Haitians.

For more information on Bastien's bid for Congress, go to www.votebastien.com. □



Marleine Bastien: Haitian people must make the decisions on aid.

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Activists plan struggle for jobs

Raleigh, N.C. — On April 11, Black Workers For Justice hosted an activists' brunch here featuring a presentation by Larry Holmes, a leader of the Bail Out the People Movement from New York.

Holmes motivated the upcoming May 8 Jobs rally and strategizing meeting in Washington, D.C. A main purpose for the D.C. action is to help ignite a national grassroots movement to demand a new government-sponsored Works Progress Administration jobs program for the 30 million people currently unemployed and underemployed. BOPM is putting a big emphasis on bringing unemployed people to the May 8 action to show that they are not invisible in the midst of this devastating economic crisis.

The May 8 initiative is timed to coincide with the historic signing of the WPA

on May 6, 1935. This legislation created more than 8 million jobs financed by the federal government. It followed a tumultuous period of labor struggles in response to the Great Depression.

Ajamu Dillahunt from BWFJ opened the discussion with a report on a local mass campaign involving BWFJ, statewide people's assemblies, the People's Empowerment Movement and others in support of a “Jobs for America” bill demanding 1 million jobs. The discussion ended on a high note as Angaza Laughinghouse, president of the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union,



Larry Holmes speaks on May 8 national jobs initiative with Southern organizers.

UE Local 150, announced the union's endorsement of the May 8 mobilization.

To hear Holmes' remarks, go to www.workers.tv.

— Report and photo
by Monica Moorehead

Denver meeting builds solidarity with Mumia

By Workers World Denver Bureau

The International Action Center, Denver, in association with Aurora Cop Watch, presented an evening in solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal on April 11. This meeting served to update local activists and the community on recent events in the court case of this famous political prisoner.

The featured guest speaker was Larry Hales, a national leader of FIST (Fight Imperialism Stand Together).

Local criminal defense and civil rights attorney Mark Burton opened the meeting, putting Mumia's case in a historical context. He gave a brief history of the struggle before the Supreme Court for the rights of oppressed nationalities and described how great victories in the courts for the rights of the oppressed were the result of struggle in the streets and workplaces, just as much as courtroom advocacy. Just as a people's movement helped saved the lives of the Scottsboro defendants, said Burton, it was necessary to have a strong people's movement to free Mumia, alongside the struggle in the courtroom.

Hales spoke movingly of visiting Mumia at SCI Greene, the infamous death row prison in Pennsylvania. He described the dreadful, soulless and inhumane conditions that Mumia and

other death row prisoners in Pennsylvania are forced to endure. He also fascinated the audience with his description of Mumia as a humane, articulate and kind person in the midst of this inhumanity. Hales stressed Mumia's determination to continue the struggle for a more just society with his writings and radio commentaries.

Hales also gave an overview of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision to deny Mumia a hearing on the issue of racial

bias in jury selection. Because of this decision Mumia's case has been sent back to the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, where the state is gearing up to try to execute him once again. Hales called on all to organize to defend Mumia, as he is a symbol of resistance to the racist prison-industrial complex.

Shareef Aleem, leader of Aurora Cop Watch and a prominent local anti-police-brutality activist, spoke on the relevance

of Mumia's case to the struggle against police brutality everywhere. He emphasized that Cointelpro still exists in substance if not in form, and it was crucial to be vigilant and continue to fight police brutality wherever it raises its ugly head.

The audience was asked to join the campaign to free Mumia and a collection was taken up for his campaign. Many vowed to take part in future actions in solidarity with Mumia. □

LORETTA CAMPBELL		NDIGO
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For more information contact WRITERS FOR MUMIA through the IAC, 212-633-6646; the NY Chapter of the NWU at 212-254-0279 ext. 18; or the Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition (NYC), 212-330-8029.

WRITERS FOR MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

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Program starts promptly at 3
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As foreclosure crisis spreads

Struggle intensifies to save workers' homes

By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

A report released April 14 by RealtyTrac reveals that the foreclosure crisis is deeper and broader than ever. Another report by the Congressional Oversight Panel formed to oversee the government's response to the crisis, which harshly criticized the Treasury Department's efforts as "ineffective," shows that some in the capitalist class are very worried.

According to RealtyTrac, 932,234 homeowners either received a default or auction notice or were repossessed by banks in the first quarter of this year — 16 percent more than the first quarter of 2009. Scheduled auctions totaled 369,491 — the largest number ever. (realtytrac.com)

More statistics were offered up by the Congressional Oversight Panel report: There have been 200,000 foreclosure starts per month; a whopping one in four homeowners are now "underwater"; and 6 million borrowers are more than 60 days behind on mortgage payments. (cop.senate.gov)

The unusually critical tone of the Congressional Oversight Panel report reflects not only the growing angst of a section of the capitalist class, but also rising frustration with the banks. "For every family that Treasury has helped into a sustained

modification, 10 other families have lost their home," chided Elizabeth Warren, the panel's chairperson. "Treasury's response is lagging behind the pace of the crisis, and it also seems clear that Treasury's programs will not reach the overwhelming majority of homeowners in trouble," she added. (Washington Post, April 15)

But the banks don't want to lower the value of the mortgages they own, which is now part of the Obama administration's program to resolve the crisis. And the top officers of the U.S. Treasury Department are former big bankers. It should be no surprise to anyone that giving them the responsibility of getting the banks to make sacrifices in the interest of the capitalist class as a whole would yield results that are ineffective.

Any truly effective strategy will involve pushing back the giant banks and mortgage companies through a mass struggle in the streets.

In Baltimore, Detroit, Los Angeles and other cities, grassroots organizations have been working against foreclosures and have had some real success. In many cases they've forced banks and mortgage companies to adjust mortgages by having demonstrations and press conferences that exposed their illegal practices and embarrassed them. In quite a few cases

they've managed to stop foreclosures and evictions.

In Detroit, activists with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs also lend their legal expertise to help individuals wade through the necessary steps of getting a mortgage adjusted.

In Los Angeles, Martha Rojas, a longtime union and community activist, has dedicated herself to helping people in the largely Mexican and Spanish-speaking communities of the region to get through the arduous process.

Organizers are also working to popularize a three-point program that demands city, state and federal governments declare a state of emergency, impose a two-year moratorium that forbids banks and mortgage companies from foreclosing, and fund a massive Works-Progress-Administration-style jobs program. These demands distinguish a working-class approach from one that favors Wall Street and big banks.

The Detroit organizers have gotten a resolution through city council for a moratorium. They have also bused activists to the capital city of Lansing two years in a row to demand the governor declare a state of emergency in order to gain the legal wherewithal to impose a two-year moratorium.

Recently activists and organizations in Los Angeles, including Gloria Saucedo, the leader of Hermandad Mexicano Trans-Nacional; Rosie Martinez of the Labor Community Coalition of Local 721 SEIU; John Parker of the Bail Out the People Movement; and organizers from BAYAN-USA have taken note of the campaign in Michigan and adopted similar demands as the basis for their ongoing campaign.

They've elicited the help of a progressive city council member to begin the process of getting a resolution at the city level and have taken a busload of activists — many facing foreclosures — to Sacramento, where they demonstrated in front of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's office to demand that he declare a state of emergency.

On April 29 these activists will protest in Norwalk, Calif., on the plaza in front of a Los Angeles County courthouse. This is the site of an outdoor auction of foreclosed properties, where hundreds of homes that have been seized by the banks are sold to the highest bidder.

This crisis is not because the banks gave mortgages to people who didn't deserve them. The racist subprime mortgage crisis gouged workers in order for banks and lenders to maximize their profits. Creative and militant working-class actions that confront the banks are the real solution. □

Beyond Goldman Sachs' fraud

The real crime: CAPITALISM

Continued from page 1

a record 250,000 in the first quarter of this year. They stubbornly refuse to give aid to homeowners, many of them unemployed workers and their families whose income has been cut during the economic crisis. The bankers will let the sheriffs and marshals throw families in the street while they sit comfortably in their plush offices and live in the lap of luxury.

The SEC charges do not carry criminal penalties.

If Washington were genuinely interested in how the banks attack the people, it would launch criminal charges against the bankers for actions like charging outrageous interest on credit cards and reaping close to \$40 billion in additional fees last year alone.

It could cancel the debt on escalating student loans that have turned a generation of students into indentured servants to the banks for years after they graduate.

The banks are rightfully hated by the people. That hatred must be directed not just at the banks alone but at the banks as the summit of all capitalism. It is capitalist exploitation that is the foundation of the banks, the corporations and all the problems of the workers.

Bankers' profits come from workers

The profits made by the banks come from the wealth created by the workers in the first place. Mortgage interest and credit card interest are nothing but a claim on workers' wages after they leave the place of work where they are exploited by an employer.

The taxes used to pay the bankers interest on municipal or state bonds are taken from workers' paychecks and recirculated into the vaults of the banks. The corporate taxes that get paid to the government come out of profits created by workers. The foundation of all profit

is unpaid labor.

Banking and capitalism

In fact, the banks dominate industry and are merged with the corporate boards and directors. The banks and financial houses that float the stock of the corporations have quarterly phone calls with the top executives of the big corporations. They want to hear only good things about the profit on their investments. The bankers and financiers can force the corporations into plant closings, crackdowns on wages, cutbacks in the work force and implementation of new technology that destroys jobs.

The banking industry is inseparable from capitalism itself. This scientific truth based on a Marxist analysis was elaborated by V.I. Lenin in his work "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism," written in 1916.

When the Republic Windows and Doors workers from United Electrical Workers Local 1110 in Chicago fought to keep their boss from running out without paying them their benefits and severance pay, it was revealed that it was Bank of America that held the strings to the company's finances. Only after taking over the factory were the workers able to get their benefits — from Bank of America.

When Enron collapsed in the biggest bankruptcy in history, destroying the pensions and savings of thousands of people because the executives had engaged in a big pyramid scheme, the executives went on trial and some even went to jail. But behind the scenes, financing this criminal enterprise, were JPMorganChase, Bank of America, Morgan Stanley, USB and all the same names later connected to the financial collapse and the subprime mortgage scams.

Put bosses and bankers on trial!

It is capitalism that should really be on

trial. For example, it was the profit system that led to the murder of 29 miners in the Massey mine in West Branch, Va. The capitalists of the mine industry own the regulatory agencies and the Congress members who are supposed to enforce safety. But production and profits come first.

Capitalism is behind the deaths of thousands of undocumented workers desperately trying to cross the desert to get to the U.S. because the North American Free Trade Agreement, which benefited U.S. agribusiness, destroyed their economy. And it is the profit system that preys on vulnerable workers without papers in order to squeeze every ounce of cheap labor out of them.

Now that their labor is not needed as much because of the economic crisis, capitalism unleashes Homeland Security ICE raids to hunt down and terrorize the undocumented and scapegoat them for the crisis.

It is capitalism and the profit motive that bring together the oil industry, the coal industry, the utilities and the big industrialists to stop any and all attempts to put limits on their right to pollute the atmosphere, the soil, the water and the very air humans need to breathe. Profits are endangering the environment of the planet.

The investigation of Goldman Sachs is significant politically for the Obama administration and for the struggle inside the ruling class over how to make the system more stable. But as far as even reforming the system, it is a mere sideshow.

Actually, the SEC should investigate itself for dereliction of duty, as it closed its eyes while every financier on Wall Street and beyond was gambling with an estimated total of \$600 trillion (!) worth of derivatives, selling toxic mortgages, peddling them around the globe, and devising ever more creative schemes to fleece

the public and each other.

There should be an investigation of Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and all the rating agencies that stamped junk bonds as triple-A so they could be sold. The Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve, including Alan Greenspan, should be in court answering charges of abetting the massive casino speculation that burst and cost millions of workers their homes and their jobs.

And, along the way, Bill Clinton, Robert Rubin and Larry Summers — all pawns of the banks — should be indicted for opening the floodgates in 1999 to this orgy of speculation when they overturned the Glass-Steagal Act. This New Deal legislation was designed to keep commercial banks, which loaned to corporations, from trading in corporate stocks.

In short, the entire capitalist establishment, the government and the financiers were in a broad collaboration to fan the flames of speculation. The entire system rests upon the exploitation of the workers, who create all the wealth. The lion's share of that wealth is siphoned off in profits by the owners of the economy — of the factories, mines, fields, hospitals, stores, etc. They use it to make more profit.

If there were an investigation of how the capitalist economy could "recover" for six months while the crisis of the workers and the communities deepens, it would show that capitalism is a bankrupt system that cannot meet the needs of the vast majority of the people.

The results of a workers' investigation could only conclude that the profit system must go. The resources and the means of production and services should be taken over by the mass of the people, socially owned, and run in a planned, organized way to distribute the wealth based on human need and not on profit. This lays the basis for real socialism. □

Striking nurses, community join forces against scab outfit

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

Support for striking Temple University Hospital nurses and professional staff is gaining momentum among community-based organizations, which will be holding a benefit on April 29 to collect supplies needed by the strikers' families.

Philadelphia International Action Center, Jobs with Justice, Bail Out the People Movement and the A-Space are sponsoring a happy hour and dance party featuring DJ Phantasma Rojo in West Philadelphia. Admission will be a donation of diapers, non-perishable food, shampoo, soaps and other items requested by striking nurses. For more information on the benefit, email phillyiac@peoplesmail.net.

As the strike enters its fourth week, negotiations seem to be at a standstill. In September 2009 the hospital administration presented the nurses with a contract that would double health premiums for nurses and triple them for the professional/technical staff. It would freeze wages for year one of the contract and reduce hard-won wage differentials for undesirable shifts and 24-hour on-call rates.

The hospital is also attempting to im-

pose a "non-disparagement" clause — basically a gag order that would prohibit the nurses and other staff from voicing their concerns over patient safety or making any other statements that management found "derogatory of Temple."

TUH also refuses to reinstate a longstanding tuition reimbursement benefit for employees' dependents that the hospital eliminated with no notice in 2009, even though the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board ruled the hospital's action illegal. The hospital administration has not moved from this concession-laden contract, which it termed its "last, best offer."

To put added pressure on the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, the union representing 1,500 nurses and professional staff at the hospital, the administration engaged a notorious California-based strike-breaking company, HealthSource Global Staffing, to provide over 800 scabs.

To date the hospital has spent more money to pay strikebreakers than it would have cost to cover the additional costs of contract provisions sought by PASNAP.

In week one alone it paid more than \$5 million for scabs secured by HSGS, cover-

ing salaries, transportation including airfares, food and accommodations at luxury hotels. HSGS also received more than \$1 million in profits during this time — an amount equal to the yearly cost of the tuition reimbursement benefit for employees' dependents that the hospital cut.

On April 16 the union's bargaining committee offered compromises on wages, benefits and the tuition reimbursement program, seeking to move negotiations off square one and end the strike. After a 15-minute face-to-face session, the hospital management refused to budge from their "last, best offer" and even consider the union's new proposals. "They are recklessly stubborn," the union's executive director, Bill Cruice, said later.

Concern continues to grow that TUH administration's refusal to negotiate while squandering millions of dollars on scab replacements will damage the hospital's reputation for years and may also be putting patients' health at risk.

According to one observer, "Inside the hospital, things do not appear to be going quite as management planned. The Emergency Department has been diverting more patients in the last few weeks than it has in the last year. Every day, physicians

and staff not represented by PASNAP relate incidents of labs not drawn or results delivered hours late, agency staff unable to work complex machinery, and problems with computer documentation." (Marty Harrison, www.labornotes.org)

Meanwhile more information has surfaced on HealthSource Global Staffing, the strike-breaking specialist engaged by TUH in the hospital's obvious effort to bust the union.

On April 14 Philadelphia City Controller Alan Butkovitz asked for clarification about the employment status of the replacement workers, noting that HealthSource Global Staffing had never filed for a business privilege license from the city. Butkovitz estimated that the company should owe \$190,000 a week in wages taxes, since the scab workers were considered their employees.

In 2009, California's state compensation insurance fund sued HSGS to collect more than \$1 million in taxes owed that state. On April 16, HSGS applied for and received a Philadelphia business privilege license. Union executive director Bill Cruice said, "It's par for the course for HealthSource Global. They have a sordid history." □

Another sign of anti-corporate wave

Students demand 'No banker at commencement'

By **Minnie Bruce Pratt**
Syracuse, N.Y.

Syracuse University students marched through the center of campus on April 16, banged on pots and pans, drummed and chanted to oppose a corporate "takeover" of their commencement. The SU administration has invited CEO Jamie Dimon of JPMorgan Chase, the second-largest bank in the U.S., to speak to the 2010 graduating class on May 15.

"We are the students, we're the ones who pay, and we don't want to hear what Dimon has to say!" they chanted. The campus chapter of Students for a Democratic Society coordinated the protest, which was attended by students, faculty and community members, including the Bail Out the People Movement, the Green Party, the Syracuse Peace Council and Workers World Party.

Major U.S. media outlets, including CNBC and ABC News, rushed reporters to cover the protest rally. CNN interviewed organizer Adrienne Garcia live. Major financial news sources — Bloomberg News, the Guardian, MSNBC, the Financial Times and the Wall Street Journal — have run stories. And the liberal opposition Huffington Post trumpeted, "SU Students Speak for the Nation."

Student-led petition gives voice to anger

The student-organized "Take Back Commencement" online petition overflows with anger at Dimon's presence. Matt Sheehan, one of over 1,100 signers, said: "This is a slap in the face to us students. As we enter the work world in this economy, it is an insult to have as a speaker one who bears the responsibility of why we will struggle to gain employment."

Other signers, like R. Joseph, indict the

role of the banks in home foreclosures: "I work hard in college. Chase is taking my parents' house — one they owned for over 20 years. Corporate criminal!" A former employee of Chase, Grace Wojcik, lists herself as "strongly opposed" to Dimon speaking.

Other reasons cited for opposing a banker CEO as an "inspirational" speaker are the homelessness, suicides and family suffering from foreclosures, crushing student debt, predatory credit card practices, job cuts and the role of JPMorgan Chase in destroying the environment. Some parents, as well as students, say they are boycotting the graduation and SU as a college choice for their children altogether.

To view or sign the SU Take Back Commencement petition, go to www.petitiononline.com/SUGRADUA/petition.html.

Anti-capitalist education

Two young women in orange SU t-shirts kept energy high during the rally by leading the crowd in a satiric musical spoof, "Jamie, won't you buy me a college degree" — to the tune of an old Janis Joplin song. An undergraduate degree at SU can cost more than \$200,000. Four years ago, the average debt carried by an SU graduate was \$27,455. (collegeconfidential.com)

One guest rally speaker, local Green Party activist Howie Hawkins, stressed the role of Dimon's bank as a key underwriter for catastrophic mountaintop-removal practices by coal companies that are devastating to the Appalachian environment and the global atmosphere.

The bank has been lead bond manager for the safety-violation flaunting company Massey Energy, according to ourfuture.org. Natasha Chart, in "This Mine Explosion Brought to You by JPMorgan



WWW PHOTO: LESLIE FEINBERG

Chase," further argues the complicity of the bank in the recent death of 29 miners at the West Virginia mine owned by Massey.

Other speakers exposed JPMorgan as having profited from chattel slavery and from current Pentagon wars. Between 1831 and 1865 its predecessor banks held as collateral or in actual possession more than 14,000 human beings, amassing wealth from kidnapped, forced, unpaid labor. Lawyers working on a class action suit against Morgan and similarly implicated U.S. banks and corporations estimate that their total profits from the slave trade would amount to over \$2 trillion today. (Millions for Reparations)

The bank has garnered undisclosed millions from managing the Trade Bank of Iraq in the wake of the U.S. invasion of that country, forcing the mortgaging of the country's oil revenues in exchange for overseas credit. (CorpWatch.org)

JPMorgan reaped \$3.33 billion in profits during the first quarter of 2010 — a 57 percent rise over the same period in 2009. A worldwide series of trials have recently begun against the corporate giant

for fee padding and fraud. Charges have been filed against the bank by prosecutors in Sydney, Australia; Milan, Italy; and San Francisco. (Asia Times)

Student signs critiqued the corporatization of education. One cartoon showed the SU mascot and the Chase bank logo happily hand in hand. In 2007 the bank gave SU \$30 million to "enhance the university's financial service technology curriculum." (ABC)

Students applauded a rally speaker who praised them for rejecting "the banking theory of education" — a concept spotlighted and denounced by Brazilian educator and socialist Paulo Freire. A recent student opinion poll shows that the SU students are part of a huge majority: only 11 percent of students surveyed said they trusted Wall Street bankers to "do the right thing all or most of the time." And 84 percent worried about getting a job after graduation. (Harvard Institute of Politics)

The writer, an untenured teacher at Syracuse University, spoke at the April 17 rally. Her remarks can be read at minniebruce.blogspot.com.

ANTI-RACISTS UNMASK TEA PARTY

Workers stand up to screaming racists

BOSTON

By Steve Gillis
Vice President, Steelworkers
Local 8751

The corporate media may give it a different spin, but for Sarah Palin and Wall Street's Tea Party, Boston was a bust.

April 14 started with immediate tension as Bail Out the People Movement activists and the mostly Haitian-origin staff of Steelworkers Local 8751 unfurled a banner in the middle of the Tea Party's rally reading: "Union jobs & healthcare for all! Stop the pro-war, racist, sexist, anti-LGBT Palin/Tea Party attack!"

At the Park Street subway station on Boston Common in the heart of downtown, the anti-racist union members were immediately surrounded by screaming white men, some wearing hardhats and carrying U.S. flags. Police dressed for battle looked on, smiling at the Tea Party gang.

The protesters got out their bullhorns and took the racist forces on politically. They said that unions are in favor of free health care for all people and want a government-sponsored jobs program for the millions of unemployed sisters and brothers.

Within minutes, passersby were stopping to say, "Right on!" Some asked for signs and joined. For 20 minutes the anti-racists took turns talking into the loudspeakers, telling the truth about the corporate-sponsored Tea Party. They told how Tea Party followers had spit on Congressional Black Caucus members in Washington, D.C., a few weeks earlier, hurling racist epithets at Rep. John Lewis, a hero of the Civil Rights movement. They told how Tea Party members had thrown anti-gay invectives at Rep. Barney Frank.

Class program wins support

The anti-racists made it clear that the union movement supports government-sponsored health care for all people. It wants a massive program of job creation for public projects to put all people back to productive work. By then, their ranks had tripled.

It was hugs all around when a transgender activist stopped on his way to the statehouse to demand transgender inclusion in anti-discrimination legislation. Thousands of thumbs-up and vocal support from folks on the street emboldened



WW PHOTO: MAUREEN SKEHAN

the group to march toward the Tea Party stage.

The multimillion-dollar, multimedia outdoor stage was surrounded by television trucks and a police cordon. When the nearly 100 protesters reached the stage perimeter, they hooked up a more powerful mobile sound unit and started a program of speakers and chanting.

Special Operations police soon shut it down, threatening arrests for permit violations and complaining that the Tea Party speakers couldn't be heard over the noise. A young Asian woman from the Coalition for Equal, Quality Education urged protesters to march. They began moving through the outskirts of the crowd, discovering hundreds more who had come to oppose the racists.

The bullhorns went back on. The march began snaking through the lemonade and pretzel stands where people were selling hate literature, buttons and T-shirts at tables paid for by Wall Street contributions. Plenty of middle fingers, spittle-covered curses, shoves, blocks, taunts and ear-splitting whistles from red-faced haters greeted the anti-racists, whose numbers continued to swell.

There were a few thousand in the Tea Party crowd, not the 10,000 to 20,000 predicted by Fox media, Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh and the front page of the Boston Herald. The master of ceremonies announced Palin's entrance for what was to be a vicious anti-immigrant speech.

Action disrupts Palin's delivery

The marching protesters took a left into the crowd, rolling around the police line directly toward stage right. As Palin opened her vitriol, the people on the move chanted, "Racist, sexist, anti-gay, Palin/Tea Party go away!" while fending off punches, kicks, body blocks and other violence.

Not 20 yards from the stage, completely surrounded by and face to face with screaming, violent Tea Partiers, the anti-racists were able to keep their formation moving and message blaring, with the people's union security fending off the blows and pushing forward.

Palin appeared dumbfounded, standing there for the longest time speechless and wide-eyed in front of the corporate media — perhaps gazing over the horizon to see Russia.

The protesters fought their way back to the perimeter. Hundreds of young women and lesbian, gay, bi and trans anti-Tea Party people were in that part of the crowd. They cheered the marchers, who then started their own rally. People took turns on the bullhorns, supporting a woman's right to choose, denouncing U.S. wars and occupations, and declaring homophobia a crime. Others carried placards against the Afghan war and a large blue banner reading "Tea Party = Racism."

The protest was a step forward for people ready to fight the capitalist system's tricks, diversions and violent organizational maneuvers. □

Nazis routed in L.A.



PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA

Nazis felt the people's anger despite being protected by hundreds of police.

By John Parker
Los Angeles

On April 17, the openly Nazi group NSM held a rally at Los Angeles City Hall. Many groups, including socialist, anti-war and anti-racist organizations, mobilized to challenge their so-called right to free speech that motivates violence, racism and genocide against non-European peoples and the LGBTQ community.

The anti-fascist demonstrators, numbering about 1,000, were also protesting the city government's decision to allow the Nazis the use of public property and resources, especially the hundreds of police, who threatened protesters while serving as bodyguards for the Nazis as they tried to incite the largely Latino/a crowd by stepping on the Mexican flag.

Early in the demonstration two Nazis trying to egg on violence marched into a crowd of protesters, who warned them to go back. One decided to do just that, but the other stayed. Defending themselves against his violent threats and actions, protesters pushed him to the ground and convinced him not to come back.

During the rally, the 20 or so Nazis were drowned out with bullhorns, speakers and shouts like "Nazis go home," "No Nazis, no KKK, no fascist USA," and "Somos los pueblos sin fronteras" (We are the people without borders). The very

multi-national crowd of Asian, Latino/a, Black and white participants and the unity they portrayed were a stark contrast to the white-supremacists' messages of division and hate towards working people of color and immigrants.

Although the well-armed, SWAT-like police presence was heavy and menacing, after the rally many demonstrators managed to circle around to where the Nazis were parked and began pursuing them, catching some and making others get out of town fast.

Whatever message they were hoping to get out in Los Angeles, the primary message the Nazis received from the angry demonstrators was that attempting to bring fascist ideology to Los Angeles will not be met kindly and the unity and determination of working and poor people and immigrants will prevail.

Just days before the rally, a press conference announcing the protest was held by Anti-Racist Action, Black Riders, and IWW at City Hall. Other participating organizations in the Saturday protest included the Southern California Immigration Coalition, BAYAN-USA, Bail Out the People Movement, International Action Center, FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together), Workers World Party, All African Peoples Revolutionary Party, Freedom Socialist Party, Bus Riders Union, ANSWER and CISPE. □

Toe-to-toe with Lou Dobbs


NEW YORK

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

'Lou Dobbs, you're an anti-immigrant racist demagogue!'

By John Catalinotto

On the pretext of opposing paying taxes, a right-wing rally was organized by the Tea Party on April 15, Tax Day, at Manhattan's main post office across from Madison Square Garden.

While there had been no publicity about the rally until that day, the New

York chapter of the Bail Out the People Movement quickly called a counter-protest. Following similar anti-racist protests in Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, N.Y., and Boston, it was important that a political center like New York also respond to what was in reality a racist mobilization.

Media hack Lou Dobbs was the keynote speaker for the Tea Party, giving the rally

Anti-immigrant terror unleashed in Arizona

By Paul Teitelbaum
Tucson, Ariz.

In the early morning hours of April 15, agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the FBI and other Homeland Security agencies launched a military operation against Tucson's mostly Latino/a and Indigenous south side neighborhoods.

The operation included military helicopters and agents in black ski masks carrying assault rifles and high-powered pistols. Simultaneous raids took place in parts of Phoenix and Nogales, Ariz., but the main focus of the 800-plus-agents operation was Tucson.

The invasion and occupation of the community terrified residents. Lynda Cruz, a Tucson activist, was notified by south side residents of the raids and immediately went to see what was going on. "We got calls saying there were raids here,

raids there. I have never seen anything like this before. Men with AK-47s and black masks covering them. I was threatened by an ICE agent that said I would be arrested if I interfered in any way," stated Cruz.

Kat Rodriguez, another activist, said: "What we have experienced for the last six hours is the terrorization of our community. People are afraid to leave their home, afraid to go shopping, afraid to go to the hospital, afraid to go anywhere."

There were reports of ICE agents targeting children on their way to school. "One family called," said Cruz, "and told us that their two sons, two young Latino boys, were taking a Suntran bus to school and were taken off the bus by ICE agents. Classmates had to call the parents to tell them ICE had taken their children."

The stated purpose of the raid, dubbed "Operation in Plain Sight" by ICE, was to target "human smuggling operations" in southern Arizona. ICE targeted four small

shuttle companies that provide transportation between Tucson and the border town of Nogales. It seized 40 vehicles and other assets of the companies and arrested 51 employees.

There were additional arrests of 17 undocumented persons the agents came across during this operation. (Arizona Daily Star, April 16) In Arizona, if you do not have documents and you pay someone to assist you across the border, you are considered guilty of human smuggling. Essentially, the law says that you have smuggled yourself; that by paying someone else you are a co-conspirator in a human smuggling operation.

This military operation occurred just days after the Arizona legislature passed a racist anti-immigrant bill that requires all police to demand proof of citizenship in any situation that presents a "suspicion of unlawful presence in the United States." If you cannot produce a document to prove

your legal status, you are automatically arrested. This bill also makes it illegal to stop traffic in order to enter a vehicle for the purpose of seeking work, a direct attack on day laborers.

On the heels of this law is a bill outlawing ethnic studies programs and another bill requiring schools to report the legal residency status of all K-12 students. It is expected that Gov. Jan Brewer will sign these bills when they arrive on her desk.

A few hours after the raids, more than 100 people rallied at the federal building in downtown Tucson demanding that the Obama administration and Homeland Security Director (and former Arizona governor) Janet Napolitano stop all raids and deportations and keep the military out of our communities. A youth group has formed to discuss strategies for combating this racist state terror. Other Tucson activists have called for planning sessions to develop a response for future ICE invasions. □

Los Angeles — On April 15 the Southern California Immigration Coalition and the United for Immigration Reform Coalition held a public press conference in downtown Los Angeles. All of the major coalitions in Los Angeles came together in a historic show of unity to invite the community to one united march and rally on May 1, International Workers Day. The May Day action in downtown Los Angeles will demand immigration reform in 2010.

Included among the member organizations were BAYAN-USA, International Action Center, Union del Barrio, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, County Federation of Labor AFL-CIO, SEIU Local 721 Latino Caucus, Full Rights for Immigrants Coalition, Korean Resource Center, Multi-ethnic Immigrant Worker Organizing Network, Peace and Justice Committee of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Reform Immigration for America and Hermandad Mexicana.

In the photo, youth and student organizer Larry Hales of FIST — Fight Imperialism, Stand Together — gives a solidarity message from the New York May 1st Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights.

— Report and photo by John Parker

an anti-immigrant character. With BOPM and others interrupting the TP speakers and challenging them politically, they tried to deny that the group was racist, sexist or anti-gay.

When Dobbs walked near the counter-demonstration, Fred Goldstein, a Workers World contributing editor, got up close and called him an "anti-immigrant racist demagogue." BOPM organizer Tony Murphy yelled out that Dobbs was "a racist for the bankers." They had him pegged correctly.

The TP had gathered about 1,000 people. Active counter-pickets numbered about 30 or 40 scattered around the edges of the barricaded rally, including a group of young people from Sisters and Brothers United from the Bronx and many individuals.

Some of the progressive activists distributed Workers World newspaper, with a lead article exposing the Tea Party as racist. One of the TP speakers quoted from the article, trying to discredit it.

Another TP speaker thanked the New York Police Department for helping out by supplying sound equipment — a collaboration that is unheard of at progressive demonstrations. □



UNITED MAY DAY 2010



RALEIGH, N.C.

Youth vs. 'new KKK'

In Raleigh on Tax Day several dozen people protested Tea Party bigots, who were spreading their racist, sexist, homophobic and anti-immigrant message.

Tea Party organizers wore shirts that read, "Tea Party Militia-Staff," perhaps a reference to Tea Party members' recent efforts to form a right-wing armed militia in Oklahoma.

The Tea Party invited Wake County School Board member John Tedesco to speak. Tedesco is known for pushing a policy that amounts to a resegregation of Raleigh's public schools. He thanked the crowd, whom he credited as the people who got the school board majority elected to challenge Raleigh's diversity policy. His collaboration with the TP exposes

the racist ideology of the school board majority and the TP.

The youth organization Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) and other anti-racists from the Bail Out the People Movement in North Carolina shouted out chants of "Racist, sexist, anti-gay — Tea Party bigots, go away!" and "El pueblo, unido, no human is illegal."

The Tea Party speakers vehemently denied they were the "new KKK." Some held signs that on the surface appeared similar to the anti-racists' signs, including opposition to bank bailouts and the war in Afghanistan. The TP leaders appealed to people's economic insecurities, twisting this sentiment by scapegoating immigrants and building opposition to universal health care.

Several demonstrators were also able to get a positive message into the media.

Vidyar Sankar of Raleigh FIST contributed to this article.

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Five decades after its 'year'

Africa still struggles against imperialism

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

The year 2010 is the 50th anniversary of the Year of Africa, when 17 former colonial territories gained their national independence during 1960.

The liberation movements in Africa had gained momentum after World War II, when the European colonial powers were weakened by their mutual destruction from 1939 to 1945.

Colonialism was a vicious system of national oppression and exploitation with origins in the Atlantic Slave Trade starting in the 15th century. After four centuries of enslaving Africans in Western Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, North America and on the African continent itself, the imperialists solidified their colonial system with the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference.

African people resisted the rapacious slave trade and colonialist encroachment for centuries. Beginning in the late 19th century, anti-colonial revolts and movements blossomed throughout the African continent and other territories throughout the world.

Despite the two inter-imperialist wars in the first half of the 20th century, as of 1945 colonialism in Africa remained largely intact. To justify their crimes, the European colonialists claimed that their presence in Africa spurred economic development and prepared African states for eventual independence in the 20th century. The introduction of capitalist systems of production and trade, however, only managed to maximize profits and maintain political control for the imperialists.

For example, in the West African state of Ghana, which was called the Gold Coast during the colonial period, British rule established a one-cash-crop economy of cocoa, providing the British ruling class with an effective means of exploiting the African territory.

Gold mining provided an impulse for the territory's first railway, which extended from the gold-mining district of Tarkwa to Sekondi by 1901. After the railway line's construction in the Gold Coast, the rate of profit extracted from gold mining grew quickly. Gold exports expanded from £22,000 (all numbers in pound sterling) in 1897 to £255,000 by 1907 and £1,687,000 by 1914, the beginning of World War I.

The railway extended to Kumasi in 1903 in order to ensure the political and military dominance over the Ashanti nation. This factor led to the penetration of the forest areas where the British carried out the process of rubber-tapping. The expansion of cocoa farming brought about another round of windfall profits for the British colonialists.

In 1901, the value of cocoa exported from the colony was £43,000, £515,000 in 1907 and £2,194,000 in 1914, when cocoa amounted to 49 percent of all exports, and cocoa alone paid for all the Gold Coast's imports.

The railway also expedited the export of timber, worth £169,000 in 1907. Cocoa, gold and timber made the Gold Coast, by 1914, the most prosperous of all the African colonies.

Rise of African nationalism

As World War II ended, the only nominally independent African states were Egypt, Liberia and the reconstituted nation of Ethiopia. Nonetheless, in 1945 these states in actuality were firmly under the yoke of imperialism.

Pro-British King Farouk I's monarchy controlled Egypt until 1952, when the Free Officers' Movement seized power in a popular coup. In 1956 when Gamal Abdel Nasser became president of Egypt and nationalized the Suez Canal, Britain, France and the state of Israel invaded. After this imperialist invasion failed, Egypt became a leading proponent of the independence movements that swept other areas of the continent during the 1950s and 1960s.

Liberia had been established as a settlement for formerly enslaved Africans from the United States beginning in 1822. Granted nominal independence in 1847, it remained under the U.S. yoke and after the 1920s became Firestone's private rubber plantation.

After the defeat of Italian fascism in 1943, the restored Ethiopian monarchy of Haile Selassie fell under U.S. political, economic and military domination. In Southern Africa, three other monarchies in Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland were under protectorate status by the British and were limited in regard to political and territorial sovereignty.

Nonetheless, beginning in the late 1940s, anti-colonial movements arose throughout the continent. In 1956 Sudan gained its independence from Britain, followed in 1957 by Ghana.

In 1958, Guinea became the first French-occupied territory in Africa to opt out of the colonial system. In 1954 Algeria had embarked upon an armed struggle and finally won its freedom from French imperialism in 1961-62.

1960 became a watershed year because a cluster of states, many of them former French colonies that did not join Guinea in its demand for liberation in 1958, along with British and Belgian colonies, became independent. These included Cameroon, Togo, Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Senegal, Mali, Nigeria and Mauritania.

Ghana became a republic in 1960 and moved further away from British imperialism. In 1961, Ghana's leader Kwame Nkrumah initiated a political program he said was aimed at building socialism inside the country. Ghana in 1960 had formed an alliance with both Guinea under Sekou Toure and Mali under Modibo Keita, aimed at building a political union which pursued direct trade and economic links among newly independent African states.

Neo-colonialism stifles national independence

Despite the African peoples' tremendous achievements, the Western imperialists devised methods to maintain economic and political control over the newly independent states and to stifle the process of liberation in the still-existing colonies. The most notable of these efforts was the reversal of the independence process in the former Belgian Congo.

On June 30, 1960, the people of Congo proclaimed their independence under Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and the Congolese National Movement. Within three months, however, the U.S.-led imperialist states had reoccupied the country under the banner of the United Nations and used a secessionist movement in the Congo's south to undermine the new nation's sovereignty.

By September 1960, U.N. forces had put Patrice Lumumba under house arrest. He would later escape and flee to the east-

ern region of the country, where he was kidnapped, tortured and executed by U.S., Belgian and Congolese agents. Over the next five decades, Congo has remained a reservoir of mineral resources and cheap labor for the imperialist states.

Nkrumah in his book "Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism," published in 1965, stated: "The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside."

The independent states of Africa suffered numerous setbacks between the 1960s and the 1980s. Along with the assassination of Lumumba in Congo, the revolutionary government of Nkrumah was overthrown in a reactionary military and police coup that was backed and engineered by U.S. imperialism in 1966.

These coups would continue in Nigeria in 1966, leading to a civil war between 1967 and 1970. In Mali, the progressive government of Modibo Keita was overthrown in 1968. In 1984, after the sudden death of President Ahmed Sekou Toure in Guinea, a Western-backed military coup took place.

Starting in the mid-1980s, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, both U.S.-dominated financial institutions, insisted that African states institute structural adjustment programs, which undermined the governments' role providing social services and education to their populations.

Victories over imperialism

Despite these efforts by imperialism, led by the U.S. ruling class, victories in Africa provide hope and profound lessons for the future. In Southern Africa, after years of protracted struggle, the racist settler-colonial regimes in Rhodesia, Namibia and South Africa were eventually overthrown through a combination of mass struggle, armed resistance and international solidarity during the 1980s and 1990s.

Cuba's revolutionary government under

President Fidel Castro deployed 250,000 troops to Angola to fight the racist South African Defense Forces from 1975-1989. In Mozambique FRELIMO and in Angola the MPLA, the ruling parties that fought for national independence in their respective countries, defeated efforts by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and the former apartheid regime in South Africa to topple them.

In Zimbabwe and Sudan, the imperialists have attempted to institute a policy of regime change to reverse the independent course of their domestic and foreign policies. In Somalia, the people have effectively resisted two U.S. military occupations and remain steadfast in their determination to defeat the imperialist aims of domination in the Horn of Africa and the surrounding waterways of the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.

The U.S. Africa Command or AFRICOM has attempted over the last two years to establish a military base of operations on the continent. The African Union, regional organizations and most individual states have opposed these plans, viewing AFRICOM as a danger to the independence and sovereignty of the continent.

Nonetheless, the U.S. maintains a military base in the Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti and is engaged in numerous war games and training programs with various states under the guise of fighting "terrorism" and enhancing regional security. Even though a few puppet regimes welcome U.S. military assistance, the masses in Africa and their popular organizations continue to strive towards genuine independence, unity and non-interference in the internal affairs of the continent.

In light of the current global economic crisis, the desperation of U.S. imperialism pushes the ruling class toward engaging in continued military adventures in Africa. Nevertheless, if the history of the last five decades is an indication of what is to come, the African workers and farmers will continue to fight against outside Western intervention and strive to determine the destiny of the continent's people based on their own national and class interests. □

Free Fahad Hashmi!

Faces 70 years for 'socks

By **Sara Flounders**
New York

Here in New York City a young man is being held under conditions that are described in international law as severe torture. This prisoner, named Fahad Hashmi, has not been convicted of any crime and has no prior criminal record. Yet he has been held in almost total extended isolation for the past three years.

Hashmi is 29 years old, a U.S. citizen, a graduate of Brooklyn College, a Muslim and originally from Pakistan. He is being held on the flimsiest possible charges at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in lower Manhattan.

Hashmi is scheduled to go on trial on April 28 at Federal Court. He is charged with two counts of providing material support and two counts of making a contribution of goods or services — to al Qaeda.

The government case and charges against Hashmi are surreal. Supposedly he allowed an acquaintance, who had

waterproof socks and ponchos in a duffel bag, to stay at his apartment for two weeks. The government alleges that the acquaintance later delivered the socks and ponchos to a member of al Qaeda.

Blocks from the busiest, most densely occupied corner of Manhattan, blocks from Wall Street, Chinatown and major court buildings, this young man is being held in total pre-trial isolation in a small cell with 24-hour video surveillance.

According to the Special Administrative Measures imposed on him, he does not have a right to a lawyer of his choice, cannot write letters to friends, make calls or participate in group prayers. He must eat alone and cannot see or communicate with other prisoners. He cannot listen to the radio or even read a current newspaper.

Bill Quigley, legal director of the Center for Constitutional Rights, writes that, "Once accused of connections with terrorism or al Qaeda, the U.S. Constitution and international human rights appar-

Cuba helps Haiti remodel health care system

By G. Dunkel

Washington's response to the earthquake that devastated Haiti in January was to send 10,000 troops to occupy the country and repress its population. Revolutionary Cuba's response was to send more medical care workers. Now the Cubans are helping Haiti remodel its national health care system to provide care for the poorest three-fourths of the Haitian population.

To imagine the earthquake's impact on all of Haiti, consider that at least 250,000 people died in a very short period of time, an unimaginable tragedy. Proportional to its population, that's equivalent to losing 8 million people across the United States. Even before the earthquake, Haiti had the least effective health care system in the Western Hemisphere.

Now, drawing on their deep and extensive involvement assisting Haiti's medical care, Cuban medical experts have prepared a plan for a new health care system. It was adopted at a joint meeting of the Haitian, Cuban and Brazilian health ministers in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince on March 27. (Havana Times, March 31) The public ceremony announcing the plan took place at a Cuban-Haitian field hospital in Croix des Bouquets, a community a few miles due east of the Port-au-Prince airport.

In front of 400 Cuban medical staff and graduates of Cuba's Latin American Med-

ical School (ELAM), the Brazilian government announced that it had pledged \$80 million to help build the health care system in Haiti. Brazil has commanded the U.N. forces in Haiti since soon after the 2004 coup that ousted elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Haitian underlines importance of plan

Haitian Health Minister Alex Larsen stressed the importance of the plan: "This accord complements the trilateral pact signed among Haiti, Cuba and Venezuela, putting us on the right track to rebuild our public health system." Minister Larsen also expressed gratitude for the Cuban doctors who on Jan. 12 "responded immediately, offering medical services and attending our dead. I truly don't know how to thank the Cuban medical team for their extraordinary work during those days."

Before the earthquake struck, Cuban medical personnel were already playing a huge role in Haitian health care. They were present in 127 of the 140 communes found in Haiti. Some 344 Cuban doctors were working in Haiti the day the earthquake struck.

Cuban medical staff had been helping Haiti ever since Hurricane George struck the island in 1998, concentrating their efforts in the poorest areas of this country, which lies just to Cuba's east across the Windward Passage.

Cuba provided not only medical services but medical training. Instead of

a "brain drain," Cuba has promoted a "brain gain" by structuring its program at ELAM in Havana so that its graduates, drawn from the poorest communities in Haiti, returned home to practice. Cuba has trained 550 Haitian doctors and is currently training 567 more. (Prensa Latina, Jan. 18)

Before the quake, Haiti had the fewest doctors and nurses per 100,000 people in the Americas. Over half the Haitians got inadequate food and half had no regular access to clean water. In most rural areas, home to 52 percent of Haitians, they had no ready access to health care, meaning that sick people there died from preventable diseases.

Now, with more than a million people homeless, living in tents if they are lucky, and thousands needing rehabilitation because limbs were amputated to save their lives, health care has gone from a crisis to a catastrophe.

Cuban minister explains

Bruno Rodríguez Parilla, Cuban minister of foreign affairs, described the details of the Cuban proposal in a speech at the Donor Conference held at the U.N. on March 31. (Granma, April 1)

He said: "Generosity and political will are needed. Also needed is the unity of that country instead of its division into market plots and dubious charitable projects.

"The program for the reconstruction and strengthening of the Haitian national

health care system, drawn up by the Haitian government and Cuban governments ... will guarantee wide health coverage for the population, in particular the low-income sector.

"That program is based on 101 primary health care centers which are being created, at which an estimated 2.8 million patients will be treated, 1.3 million emergency operations performed, 168,000 babies delivered, and 3 million vaccinations administered every year.

"These health centers will be supported by the services of 30 community reference hospitals ... equipped with cutting-edge technology for secondary attention, which can treat 2.154 million people per year, perform 54,000 operations ... 276,000 electrocardiograms, 144,000 diagnostic ultrasounds, 43,000 endoscopies, 181,000 x-rays, 107,000 dental examinations, and 487,000 laboratory tests.

"Given the extraordinary number of polytraumatized patients, 30 rehabilitation rooms are likewise being equipped."

The Cubans have calculated the cost for all this construction and all these medical services at \$170 million a year for the next 10 years, at 50 percent of international prices. This plan will benefit the poorest 75 percent of the Haitian people. Rodríguez called on "all governments, without exception, to contribute to this noble effort. For that reason, we attribute particular importance to this conference, and aspire to its success."

U.S. budgets \$20 million for anti-Cuba groups

By Brenda Ryan

For 50 years the U.S. government has tried to develop a counter-revolutionary movement in Cuba. While it has been defeated at every turn, it is once again pouring money into this campaign.

Using deceptive language, the U.S. State Department and the Agency for International Development (USAID) have announced that they intend to direct up to \$20 million in funds "for human rights and civil society initiatives in support of the Cuban people." Washington's real goal is to undermine the Cuban revolution and turn Cubans into U.S. agents.

The funds include \$2.9 million allegedly to "support efforts to promote greater freedom of expression on the island, especially among artists, musicians, poets, writers, journalists and bloggers"; \$2.6 million to increase access to technology and new media to support "the strengthening of independent civil society organizations and networks"; and \$2.5 million to Creative Associates "to reach out to new sectors of Cuban society to expand the network of independent actors working together toward positive, democratic change on the island."

While the U.S. government bars most of its citizens from traveling to Cuba and

spending money there, a select few have been allowed to go freely — in order to deliver money and telecommunications equipment to its collaborators. These trips were cancelled in December after the arrest of Alan Gross by Cuban authorities as he was distributing equipment to such groups. Gross is a contractor with USAID, which has long been used as a front by the CIA. The Obama administration recently allowed these trips to resume.

The funding program also provides \$1.5 million to so-called "political prisoners," those who have been tried and convicted of trying to sabotage the Cuban revolution. A person convicted by Cuban courts of collaborating with the USAID program can receive a sentence of up to 20 years.

This funding is particularly hypocritical considering that the U.S. has more than 2 million people locked up in prisons and jails, many serving sentences decades long. The U.S. also has jailed the Cuban Five for nearly 12 years. The Five, who infiltrated CIA-backed, right-wing terrorist organizations operating in the U.S. in order to monitor and stop their plans to attack Cuba, were given sentences ranging from 15 years to two consecutive life terms.

The program also provides \$500,000 to assist "independent" labor unions — meaning anti-socialist organizations — and to publicize any problems with Cuban labor conditions internationally. This is ludicrous. Anti-union legislation exists in much of the U.S. and workers pay the price: 29 miners in West Virginia just died because of preventable hazards in a non-union mine. While unions are on the defensive in the U.S. because of mass layoffs and lack of legal protection, they play a central role in Cuban society, which in turn provides free education and health-care for everyone.

Women are trafficked and abused in the U.S. every day, yet the USAID program sanctimoniously budgets \$350,000 for "women's rights and to combat commercial sexual exploitation of women

and girls."

On April 15, President Barack Obama attended a Democratic Party fundraiser in Miami Beach hosted by pop singer Gloria Estefan, a well-known opponent of the Cuban government. Estefan's father was one of the anti-communist Cubans involved in the failed April 1961 U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. Estefan asked for Obama's help to get counter-revolutionaries out of prison in Cuba.

Luis Posada Carriles brags of masterminding the destruction of a civilian Cuban airliner. The Venezuelan government is trying to get him extradited from the U.S. to stand trial in Caracas. The Venezuelan lawyer in this case, Jose Pertierra, reported that the U.S. budget for creating a social opposition allied with the interests of Miami and the White House escalated under George W. Bush, growing from \$3.5 million in 2000 to \$45 million in 2008. (machetera.wordpress.com)

Pertierra noted that the State Department froze the funding program last year until an investigation of the project was completed. The investigation was initiated after the General Accountability Office reported that groups in Miami had misused millions of dollars. Sen. John Kerry, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, put a temporary hold on the funding program pending an investigation of its effectiveness.

The renewed funding program shows that the Obama administration continues U.S. hostility toward Cuba. While Obama eased restrictions on travel to Cuba and on money remittances for Cuban Americans, he has done nothing to lift the blockade. And instead of freeing the Cuban Five, he has spoken out on behalf of those jailed in Cuba for working with the U.S. to destroy the Cuban revolution.

Kerry may well be right, however, to question the program's "effectiveness." Cubans for over 50 years have shown they are determined to remain independent and socialist, whatever Washington does. □

in someone's luggage'

ently do not apply. Torture by the U.S. is allowed. Pre-trial punishment is allowed. The presumption of innocence goes out the window. Counsel of choice is not allowed. Communication with news media is not allowed."

Faisal Hashmi, Fahad's brother, said regarding the charges: "My brother is facing 70 years for socks in someone's luggage."

A determined group of primarily students and young people called Theaters Against War — Thaw Act holds a bi-weekly vigil on Mondays from 6 to 7 p.m. in front of the MCC at 150 Park Row, where Hashmi is being held. At each vigil a rotating group of artists and actors gives a presentation. The next vigil is Monday, April 26 — two days before Hashmi's trial is scheduled to begin.

The International Action Center is mobilizing to attend the trial starting on Wednesday, April 28, at the Federal Court Building at 500 Pearl St. and is urging solidarity with the Monday vigil in



Fahad Hashmi

front of MCC prison on April 26.

For more information on Fahad Hashmi's case, see www.freefahad.com.

For information on the bi-weekly Monday vigils, see www.thawaction.org. □

Solidarity with all immigrants

It is now of utmost priority for all class-conscious workers to show solidarity with immigrants, documented and undocumented.

The Arizona State Legislature has passed an anti-immigrant law that surpasses all past ones in viciousness — the most repressive action since the 1920s Palmer raids and the 1940s internment of Japanese-origin people. Few immigration laws could be more destructive of class solidarity than Arizona's.

Gov. Jane Brewer's signature will now turn Arizona from the Grand Canyon state to the state of totalitarian intolerance and xenophobia. Arizona was already headed there, with Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio ready to take his place in the Pantheon of world-class villains, alongside Sheriff Bull Connor of Birmingham, Ala., infamy. Connor turned attack dogs on Civil Rights demonstrators. Both are criminals in uniform.

This Arizona about-to-be-law is reason enough to awaken a call for solidarity among all U.S. workers. But the actions of the federal government have taken it even further. Helicopters whirring overhead, some 800 masked agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the FBI and other misnamed Homeland Security, some armed with assault rifles, launched a military operation against Latino/a and Indigenous neighborhoods in Tucson, Phoenix and Nogales.

Arizona is re-enacting the Nazi days of Hitler's Third Reich. Arpaio supplies the know-nothing Storm Troopers. The feds supply the professional Gestapo. By wearing masks to hide individual cops, the federal officials tore the mask away from U.S. imperialism's steel-toothed apparatus of state power. Like the Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib and Bagram prisons, like the leaked videos from Iraq and the civilian slaughter in Afghanistan, the raids in Tucson show the real face of the U.S. ruling class.

They also make this year's May Day demonstration of vital importance. The marches will be the immigrant community's show of strength. They will also be an opportunity. All workers in the U.S. — especially those who don't need to fear the immigration Gestapo — can and must show the strongest solidarity. Above all this must be solidarity to stop the raids. And it must be solidarity to win legalization for all workers in the U.S. and reinforce the unity and solidarity among all workers.

Unity, unity, unity

Legalization of all workers was the demand of the grassroots immigrants at the huge rally in Washington on March 21. This demand is just and right for undocumented workers. Winning it would strengthen the hand of the entire working class in this country against the rapacious capitalist class that is attacking workers' rights and income every day in every way. Workers World newspaper supports the demand for legalization 100 percent.

Thus we are opponents of the "immigration reform" promoted by Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and supported by President Barack Obama. This "reform" is completely inadequate for winning the legalization that immigrant workers want and need. On top of this, it imposes oppressive biometric identification procedures on all workers.

Nevertheless, we applaud the decision of the immigration coalitions in Los Angeles to hold a united May Day march even while they may hold different positions on this question. Unity in action strengthens solidarity within the immigrant community. It also makes it possible for non-immigrant workers to demonstrate solidarity without backing one march over another. The different leaderships can argue their respective positions while marching together. This should happen in every city where May Day is celebrated.

In New York, the May 1 Coalition, led by immigrant workers and some others, is calling an action in Union Square on May Day for the fifth consecutive year, demanding legalization. Another group from some of the trade unions is calling its first action further downtown, demanding reform. The initiative of these trade unionists, with the announced goal of revitalizing May Day as a workers' holiday, would be completely progressive — if it did not counterpose itself to the May 1 Coalition march.

By calling a separate rally and march, the second group unnecessarily risks dividing the working class. We hope its leadership will make use of the remaining 10 days until May Day to find a way to agree on a united action that all progressive and class-conscious workers in the city will want to join. Solidarity and unity are both important this May Day. □

LETTERS

On the Tea Party

With a corporate-run media we will not get the full story. Instead the media is constantly perpetuating an angry and hostile organization with no substance in their agenda. Or do they even have one? I am stumped as to why the Tea Party leaders will not meet with President Obama directly. Instead they are cashing in on their victims. Thank you for what you are doing. The opposition far outweighs this group. But until the public receives the true story the sad saga will continue until it erupts and someone gets hurt. After all, people enjoy reality shows and want to become one.

Thank you for your efforts as we watch this unfold and continue to strive against it.

Cheryl W.

More on the Tea Party

Where have you been all my life? Just finished reading about the anti-racists in Boston on your website. It's about time someone answered these people and let them know we oppose them and the message they carry. It's about time someone did some truth telling at these events.

Are you nationally organized? I'm in Birmingham, Ala. How can I participate?

Glenda D.

On closing of Twinsburg plant

I both sympathize & appreciate your heartfelt article regarding the unfortunate, but all too common shuttering of the Twinsburg plant. ["Workers, communities devastated as — Auto plants closed, sold off and destroyed," by Martha Grevatt, WW, April 15.]

AFGHANISTAN

U.S.-NATO occupiers withdraw from Korengal

By Caleb T. Maupin

In one remote region of Afghanistan, the Korengal Valley, the Pentagon has decided to close down its embattled outpost, seeing that its efforts are useless and that the people of this region will not submit to occupation.

Forty-two U.S. troops died there, most between 2006 and 2009, and hundreds more were injured. Many more Afghan troops were killed in fighting, probably because Afghans hired to enforce Western domination are routinely not provided with as much protection and body armor as their Western paymasters and counterparts.

More and more Afghans have joined the resistance and are fighting with the hope that the U.S. occupiers will be driven not just from this forested valley by the banks of the Pech River, but from their entire homeland.

Some historical background can help explain this resistance. After the 1979 revolution led by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, the mountains and valleys of the Afghan countryside became economically prosperous. Philip Bonosky, a reporter from the U.S. who resided in Afghanistan during that time, describes this in his book, "Afghanistan: Washington's Secret War."

At that time, the PDPA government worked to provide employment for the residents of the rural areas as part of its efforts to assist the people of the coun-

try, the majority of whom were peasants, along with a few low-paid industrial workers.

With Soviet material aid, the PDPA government provided employment for youth throughout the countryside, mobilized to teach them to read, and offered medical care and other necessities unknown to many Afghans during the preceding years of Western domination of the country's government and economy.

Bonosky notes how much of Afghanistan's great forests had been decimated through years of unregulated harvesting by foreign capitalists. However, young people organized under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Democratic Youth League attempted to reforest the countryside and heal the ecological damage the capitalists had inflicted in order to build a sustainable environment for the Afghan people.

The revolutionary regime carried out a massive Soviet-funded jobs program, which helped improve life for millions of Afghans who dwelled in the mountainous regions and had previously barely survived.

When U.S.-sponsored mercenaries defeated the PDPA government after a lengthy war, the victors sold off vast natural resources of Afghanistan to those who had collaborated with the West. Many of those who profited from the removal of the popular regime were not themselves even born in Afghanistan. Many had been hired with CIA funds to wage war against the democratic government and its Soviet defenders.

Class war in the countryside

Once the PDPA government was driven out in the 1980s, the Korengal Valley, like many other areas, was run by a class of Western-backed "timber lords," capitalists in the lumber industry who often employ their own private armies. These lords rule without question in a totally "free market" where no government intervention exists and money is the only law. It was only in 2006 that government forces of any kind re-entered the region. (New York Times, Feb. 24, 2008)

The people of the Korengal Valley have shown they will not submit to Washington's wishes. Many villagers live in houses embedded into the sides of mountains. They have loudly refused to recognize the pro-U.S. puppet regime in Kabul or to accept Western "aid" meant to buy their compliance. (New York Times, April 14)

Even after Oct. 20, 2007, when 2,000 pounds of bombs were dropped on the village of Yaka China in the valley, turning five innocent civilians into "collateral damage," the will of the people to resist did not dry up. (uruknet.info)

Despite nine years of occupation, thousands of deaths, bombings and other brutality designed to force the Afghan population to submit, it seems that the U.S. has been unable to "stabilize" even this single wooded valley. □

I live in Kenosha, WI (home of Chrysler's Kenosha Engine, Local 72), and I'm the president of Local 75, the Milwaukee National Parts Distribution Center (Mopar), in Milwaukee. I can't help but question the logic behind the demise of TSP, Kenosha Engine (KEP), St. Louis N & S, as well as the many other facilities including parts depots.

I am well aware of TSP's many accomplishments and dedicated workforce. KEP was named manufacturer of the year, twice. They have a great workforce, and an incredible history in this city.

At one time, over 14,000 people worked at the assembly plant. But later the "lake front" facility was destroyed, through the Chrysler/AMC tie up, around 1988.

My Grandfather (retired/deceased) and my Father (retired from Milw) were both a part of UAW Local 72 leadership in Kenosha. Other family members of mine worked hard and earned a good wage as Kenosha workers at one time. The plant provided a solid and successful middle class in Kenosha.

I am disappointed that it will not continue and ask many of the same questions you mention in your article.

I don't have an answer.

Good luck with whatever path you may take as a displaced Union Auto-worker. I wish you the best and thank you for sharing what so many of ours will face in the coming time.

Feel free to keep in touch.

In Solidarity,

Peter J. Raith
 President, UAW Local 75
 Milwaukee Natl. Parts
 Depot

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The Pope, pedophilia & the class struggle

By Sara Flounders

More than 150 years ago Karl Marx explained that “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Patrician and plebian, lord and serf, in a word oppressor and oppressed.” The struggle is an “uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight.” With modern society come “new conditions of oppression and new forms of struggle.”

A fierce struggle has gripped the Catholic Church for the past 25 years as some of the most oppressed survivors of childhood sexual abuse have increasingly demanded an accounting against individual priests and ultimately against the powerful church hierarchy, including bishops and cardinals who consistently protected the abusers.

This demand for justice erupting from below has now done the unthinkable. It has exposed the role of the present pope, Pope Benedict XVI, in a monstrous international criminal cover-up.

Marxism is a science for understanding the class issues that underlie social developments which can seem obscure and far from the immediate workers’ struggle. The present controversy, although hidden in clerical garb, is in every way a class struggle within the Catholic Church. It is one small part of a global class struggle for full equality, rights and empowerment.

What was once accepted, because there seemed to be no recourse, has become intolerable. Thousands of the survivors raising the charges of pedophilia were loyal working class believers who were utterly powerless until years later to resist or even tell their own families of the crimes being committed. They were abused as children in orphanages, reform schools, schools for Deaf and disabled, local parish schools and churches.

This challenge from below against secrecy and repression was a sharp break from the past. Abuse had been unchallenged because religious authority was unchallenged. In many parish schools, although sexual abuse was hidden, physical and psychological abuse and humiliation were so routine that they seemed part of the curriculum.

As survivors began to speak out, any priests who sided with the abused were silenced and removed from teaching or positions of authority. But the church hierarchy, a small grouping that holds absolute religious authority, has not been able to silence or stop this movement.

Almost every exposé has come not from the outside or from secular authori-

ties, who were fearful of offending such a powerful institution, but from presumably powerless Catholics within the church who refused to remain silent. They filed grievances, depositions and finally lawsuit after lawsuit. They called press conferences, set up websites, organized demonstrations and support groups, and leafleted Sunday services. Whether they see themselves as part of the larger struggle for rights and dignity or not, they have used many of the same tactics that countless other struggles have used.

The church hierarchy, in fighting to defend its undisputed authority, wealth and privilege, has demanded absolute silence, threatened excommunication of those raising the charges and demanded that secular officials comply. This effort to maintain the absolute authority of the priesthood is part of a larger internal struggle over whose interests this powerful religious institution should serve.

This international scandal rocking the Catholic Church now involves detailed evidence of tens of thousands of cases of child rape and sexual abuse, committed by thousands of priests. The charges span decades. The struggle erupted in its fiercest form in cities that previously had the strongest religious believers in the U.S. Next it broke out in Ireland, followed by Italy and then parts of Germany with large Catholic populations.

What is new and now receives almost daily media coverage is the evidence seeping out from every side showing the personal responsibility of the present Pope Benedict XVI in decades of suppression, cover-up and quiet reassigning of sexual predators. The strongest condemnations are coming from those who still consider themselves part of the Catholic Church.

Liberal Catholic theologian Hans Keung described Pope Benedict XVI’s role in allowing the abuse to flourish, covering it up and ordering silence: “There was not a single man in the whole Catholic Church who knew more about the sex-abuse cases than him, because it was ex officio (part of his official role). ... He can’t wag his finger at the bishops and say, you didn’t do enough. He gave the instruction himself, as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and repeated it as Pope.”

The National Catholic Reporter editorialized on March 26: “The Holy Father needs to directly answer questions, in a credible forum, about his role — as archbishop of Munich (1977-82), as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1982-2005), and as pope (2005-present) — in the mismanagement of the clergy sex abuse crisis.”

Before his elevation to the top of the Catholic hierarchy in April 2005, Pope Benedict XVI was known as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. His opponents referred to him as a pit bull and as “God’s rottweiler.” Ratzinger was an extremely right-wing po-

litical appointee of Pope John Paul II, who was determined to enforce discipline, conformity and church authority in an institution in the midst of a profound upheaval.

For 24 years Ratzinger headed the most powerful and historically repressive institution in the Catholic Church, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This body was known for centuries as the Holy Office of the Inquisition. It was the church institution responsible for establishing religious courts for the charging and torture of tens of thousands of people accused of witchcraft and heresy. It led the pogroms and mass expropriations of Jews and Muslims. Through this office within the church Pope John Paul II tried to install a modern-day Inquisition.

Documents expose vast cover-up

The scale of the criminal international conspiracy of silence to protect serial molesters and to put church interests ahead of child safety and well-being was fully revealed over the past year in the handling of sexual abuse in Ireland, an overwhelmingly Catholic country.

After years of demands by abuse survivors for church action and government prosecution, and a series of exposes in the Irish news media, the Irish government commissioned a study that took nine years to complete. On May 20, 2009, the commission released a 2,600-page report.

The report drew on testimony from thousands of former inmates and officials from more than 250 church-run institutions. The commission found that Catholic priests and nuns had terrorized thousands of boys and girls for decades and that government inspectors had failed to stop the chronic beatings, rapes and humiliation. The report characterized rape and molestation as “endemic” in Irish Catholic church-run industrial schools and orphanages. (www.childabusecommission.com/rpt/)

The scale of the abuse in Ireland and the force of the movement demanding an accounting forced Pope Benedict to issue a weak apology on behalf of the Catholic Church that blamed local Irish bishops. This abdication of all responsibility for his own well-known senior role that had insisted on silence enraged millions of sincere and believing Catholics and further inflamed an opposition that has grown inside the church for decades.

Preaching in Springfield, Mass., a longtime critic of the church cover-up, Rev. James J. Scahill, responded to the weak apology by describing some in the clergy as “felons” and calling for the resignation of Pope Benedict.

“We must personally and collectively declare that we very much doubt the veracity of the pope and those of church authority who are defending him or even falling on the sword on his behalf. It is beginning to become evident that for decades, if not centuries, church leadership

covered up the abuse of children and minors to protect its institutional image and the image of priesthood,” said Scahill. (New York Times, April 12)

Scahill said he began to speak up after his own parishioners came to him in 2002 during the exposure of decades of sexual abuse in Boston and told him that something had to be done.

Cardinal Bernard Law of the Boston Archdiocese clearly played a role in protecting child-molesting priests from punishment by religious or secular authority and quietly transferring them. This became a national scandal in 2002 when a judge in Massachusetts permitted the release of thousands of pages of documents, memos and legal depositions. The documents showed a clear pattern of cover-up, protecting perpetrators and marginalizing victims, revealing that more than 1,000 children had been abused by 250 priests and church workers in the Archdiocese since 1940. Cardinal Law was forced to resign his post in disgrace and the Boston Archdiocese was ordered to pay a settlement of between \$85 million and \$100 million to settle 552 cases.

This multi-million-dollar settlement, growing scandals in other cities and the media coverage forced the U.S. bishops to issue a “Charter for the Protection of Children and the Young People” that declared a “zero tolerance, one strike and you are out” policy for offending priests. It did not propose any action against bishops who covered up the crimes.

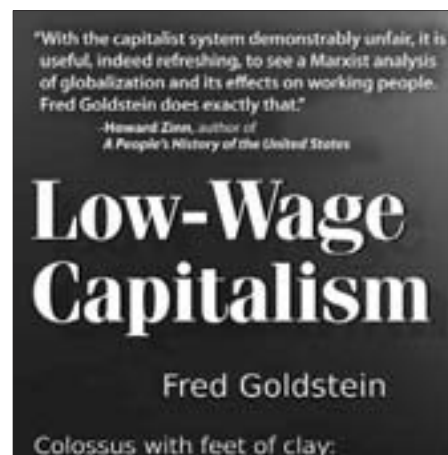
Even this modest effort to develop a clean-up policy by U.S. bishops was opposed by then-Cardinal Ratzinger at the Vatican. He demanded that all abuse charges be referred to the office he headed — the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith — before priests could be expelled from the priesthood. One of his first acts as Pope was to elevate Cardinal Law of Boston to a prestigious Vatican post.

In an often quoted, infamous letter sent to bishops in 2001, Cardinal Ratzinger used his position to order that sexual abuse allegations be kept secret under threat of excommunication. Priests accused of sex crimes and their victims were ordered to “observe the strictest secret” and be “restrained by perpetual silence.”

Former Vatican lawyer Father Tom Doyle denounced this top Vatican policy by saying: “What you have here is an explicit written policy to cover up cases of child sexual abuse by the clergy and to punish those who would call attention to these crimes by the churchmen. When abusive priests are discovered, the response has been not to investigate and prosecute but to move them from one place to another.”

The writer attended/survived 14 years in Catholic schools.

Next: What else Pope Benedict was doing while protecting sexual predators in the church.

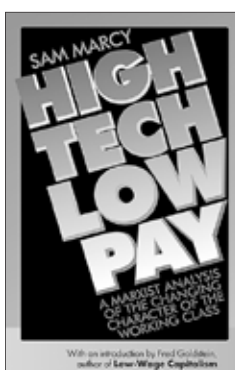


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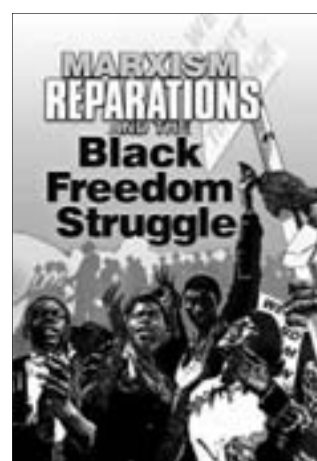


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EDITORIAL:

Día de la Madre Tierra, bombas nucleares, y guerras sucias

Estados Unidos presidió la Cumbre sobre Seguridad Nuclear celebrada en Washington los días 12 y 13 de abril. Los portavoces de EEUU siguen repitiendo que su propósito es mantener las armas nucleares fuera de las manos de los terroristas. Pero el imperialismo estadounidense es el que ha empuñado su arsenal nuclear como una amenaza terrorista, tanto contra la Unión Soviética en los días que existía como contra todo tipo de estados que no tenían armas nucleares. El imperialismo estadounidense es la única potencia que realmente ha utilizado armas nucleares — contra las poblaciones civiles de Hiroshima y Nagasaki en Japón en los últimos días de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Y el Pentágono aún continúa “mejorando” sus armas nucleares.

Después EEUU invita a Israel a esta cumbre. Israel posee armas nucleares pero se niega a firmar el Tratado de No Proliferación. Washington excluye a Irán, que no tiene armas nucleares y ha firmado el tratado. Además de tratar de obtener sanciones contra Irán, Washington está utilizando la cumbre para atacar a la República Popular Democrática de Corea. Como país que ha estado bajo incesantes ataques por el Pentágono durante los últimos 60 años, la RPDC tiene el derecho a equiparse con todas las armas que puedan.

El 22 de abril es el Día de la Madre Tierra. A raíz de las vergonzosas negociaciones dominadas por los imperialistas en Copenhague en diciembre pasado, es un alivio que el presidente Evo Morales de Bolivia haya convocado a otro tipo de cumbre para abril 20-22 en Cochabamba. Hasta su nombre inspira: La Conferencia Mundial de los Pueblos sobre el Cambio Climático y los Derechos de la Madre Tierra. Un comunicado del 11 de abril dice que el presidente Morales propondrá la formación de una Organización multilateral de Naciones Originarias y de Trabajadores/as.

Hay mucho que decir sobre la protección del medio ambiente de las industrias con hambre de ganancias y sobre el cambio climático. Informaremos sobre los resultados de esta conferencia en Bolivia, que seguramente tratará las cuestiones de una manera más eficaz que los explotadores del mundo lo hicieron en Dinamarca.

Mientras tanto, aquellos/as que desean parar el terror, sobre todo el terror más destructivo — el terror de Estado — y los/as que quieren detener el asalto más drástico sobre el medio ambiente pueden dedicarse a ponerle fin a dos guerras sucias de ocupación en Irak y Afganistán. Es difícil imaginar algo más inútil y destructor del medio ambiente que las guerras de alta tecnología del Pentágono contra las masas populares, ni nada tan destructor de la paz y los derechos humanos.

Recientes exposiciones en los medios han demostrado una vez más los repugnantes actos criminales que se producen cuando un estado opresor lanza una guerra injusta de ocupación contra lo que antes eran países soberanos.

En Iraq, algún/a soldado valiente o un/a trabajador/a del Departamento de Defensa filtró un video que ha demostrado cómo eran día a día los asesinatos en Bagdad en el 2007. Para las tropas en el helicóptero, cualquier iraquí era un enemigo, cualquier cilindro era un arma y la matanza no sólo estaba justificada sino que era una orden. En lo que fue un total mal entendimiento de la historia, el soldado del helicóptero hablando por la radio, se refiere a su unidad como “Caballo Loco”. El original “Caballo Loco” era un líder de la resistencia que luchó contra el ejército estadounidense. Búscuelo.

En Afganistán, las tropas estadounidenses cerca de Kandahar donde supuestamente están preparando una gran ofensiva para ganar “los corazones y las mentes”, recientemente atacaron un autobús civil con fuego de ametralladora. Al menos cinco personas murieron y 18 quedaron heridas. En los días siguientes, miles de afganos/as se vertieron en las calles para protestar contra la ocupación estadounidense.

La gente afgana que protestó tuvo la idea correcta. A ellos/as se deben unir millones de personas en los Estados Unidos que también debían irse a las calles y dar el primer paso para salvar el medioambiente y detener el terror al exigir que todas las fuerzas militares estadounidenses — oficiales como mercenarias se salgan de Iraq y Afganistán. □

Rebelión popular en Kirguistán sacude al Pentágono

Por Deirdre Griswold

Durante ocho años y medio, el ejército de los EEUU ha estado librando una guerra en Afganistán — la guerra más larga en la historia de EEUU contra uno de los países más pobres del mundo. El Pentágono ha enviado allí una fuerza cada vez mayor — el número de efectivos se triplicó después de que el Partido Demócrata ganara la presidencia — y construyó bases militares en la región con el fin de mantener el flujo de efectivos y materiales desde los EEUU a Afganistán.

La base de tránsito más grande en los últimos años ha estado en la vecina Kirguistán, una nación del Asia Central con 5 millones de personas que antes era la República Soviética de Kirguiza. Sólo en el mes pasado, cerca de 50.000 militares estadounidenses transitaban por la Base Aérea de Manas en Kirguistán yendo y viniendo de Afganistán. Independientemente de quién esté en la Casa Blanca, quien dirija el Departamento de Estado o el Departamento de Defensa, o lo que las encuestas muestren sobre la actitud del pueblo de EEUU en relación a la guerra, los planes elaborados en el Pentágono para trasladar tropas y suministros a Afganistán han continuado según lo previsto.

Hasta el 7 de abril. Entonces, una reacción casi de pánico reinaba en Washington — lo suficiente para que el Pentágono anunciara que iba a parar los vuelos hacia y desde Manas durante 12 horas. Luego se reanudaron, pero el 9 de abril el mayor John Redfield, un portavoz del Comando Central de EEUU, anunció que los militares de EEUU en Kirguistán habían decidido “desviar temporalmente los vuelos de transporte de pasajeros militares” fuera de la base de Manas. (Reuters, 10 de abril)

Este suceso ha puesto de manifiesto la vulnerabilidad del imperialismo estadounidense y sus planes de guerra en un momento cuando se han desencadenado luchas de las masas en varios países

contra el grave impacto de la crisis económica capitalista mundial.

¿Qué ocurrió en Kirguistán para sacudir al Pentágono? Decenas de miles de personas arriesgaron sus vidas en un levantamiento popular militante. Tumbaron a un gobierno corrupto que había disfrutado de una relación de proximidad con los militares de EEUU, mientras cortaba a nivel de inanición el estándar de vida de la población.

Éstos son algunos de los hechos que han salido a la luz:

* El ahora depuesto presidente Kurmanbek Bakiyev, que llegó a la presidencia a través de una “Revolución de Tulipanes” confeccionada en el occidente en 2005, amenazó a principios de su mandato con rescindir el contrato de la base. Pero EEUU acordó subir el precio del alquiler, de US\$20 millones a \$60 millones. Y en un acuerdo paralelo no hecho público hasta ahora, llegaron a un acuerdo mediante el cual el hermano del presidente vendía combustible para aviones a los ocupantes estadounidenses con una ganancia de \$10 millones al mes — lo que es el doble del dinero que se pagó al gobierno de Kirguistán. Un ex teniente coronel del Ejército estadounidense, Chuck Squires, fue contratado para ejecutar el contrato. (The New York Times, 12 de abril)

* Mientras se enriquecía él y su familia, Bakiyev subió el precio de la calefacción, la luz y el agua caliente, utilidades suministradas por el estado, de 170 a 400 por ciento este enero. En un país donde casi la mitad de la población vive por debajo de la línea de pobreza y las temperaturas caen por debajo de 0 grados F en el invierno, estas subidas fueron como una pena de muerte para muchos/as que tenían que escoger entre la comida o la calefacción. Este gran aumento dejó a algunos/as teniendo que gastar un 80 por ciento de sus



ingresos para luz y calefacción.

Cuando Kirguizia era parte de la Unión Soviética, recibía petróleo y otras necesidades fundamentales a precios subvencionados por el gobierno central. De hecho, Kirguizia y otras repúblicas del sur se beneficiaron de un programa de acción afirmativa que intentaba levantar su nivel de desarrollo económico a uno más cerca del nacional.

Una vez que la URSS fue fragmentada en pequeños países que competían entre sí y el capitalismo fuera restaurado, disminuyó el nivel de vida del pueblo trabajador en estas regiones. Los privilegiados, sin embargo, ahora estaban libres para hacerse “empresarios” lo cual generalmente significaba conectarse de alguna manera a los intereses rapaces de las corporaciones imperialistas que pagaban sobornos a oficiales para que abrieran sus puertas a la explotación desenfrenada de una región rica en recursos naturales. Ésta es la fuente principal de la actual corrupción en los gobiernos de estos pequeños países.

El pueblo de Kirguistán no podía aguantar más esta situación. El 7 de abril rodearon los edificios gubernamentales en la capital Biskek, y se negaron a dispersarse. Por órdenes del Presidente Bakiyev, las tropas dispararon a la multitud, matando por lo menos a 75 personas e hiriendo a cientos más. Sin embargo, la gente no se retiró y terminaron por ocupar los edificios gubernamentales mientras el ejército y la policía rompían filas.

El levantamiento se esparció por casi todo el país, derrocando a los oficiales del viejo régimen.

Un gobierno interino ha sido formado, encabezado por Roza Otunbayeva, ex-ministro de relaciones exteriores. Bakiyev ha huido al sur de Kirguistán y se niega a dejar su puesto.

El nuevo gobierno envió una delegación a Moscú para buscar asistencia económica de Rusia. Dice que su primera prioridad es aliviar las penurias económicas que enfrenta el pueblo y que no tiene planes inmediatos de cancelar el contrato que arrienda la Base Aérea de Manas al Pentágono.

Pero el mandato del pueblo está muy claro — y Washington está muy preocupado. □

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