

MUNDO OBRERO

Petróleo de Venezuela con descuento 12

Sobre los despidos a GM 12

EDITORIAL

Transit workers need a decent contract

Contract negotiations between New York's Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) and the Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, representing over 33,000 members, are headed for a showdown on Dec. 15. The seven million daily riders on area trains and buses are being barraged with an anti-strike frenzy orchestrated by the MTA, its political cronies and the capitalist media. It is a sinister plot to break the

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Bolivarian Revolution advances as Pro-Chávez parties sweep Venezuela vote

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Once again, an election in Venezuela has confirmed deep popular support for the policies of President Hugo Chávez and his Bolivarian Revolution, which has channeled revenues from the country's oil wealth into extensive programs to provide education, housing, health care, jobs and land to the poor.

On Dec. 4, parties supporting Chávez won a clean sweep in parliamentary elections. These were the first elections held since Chávez publicly announced that the Venezuelan Revolution was taking a path toward socialist construction.

The opposition, which represents the oligarchy that traditionally collaborated with U.S. imperialism and its giant oil companies, has suffered defeat after defeat at the polls since Chávez was first elected president in 1998. This time it tried a new tactic: boycotting the election and then claiming the government lacked support, pointing to the low turnout as proof.

Four days before election day, Acción Democrática pulled out of the contest. AD is the main opposition party that shared political power for decades with the social democratic COPEI, allowing the capitalist class to marginalize and exploit the Venezuelan masses. Four other opposition parties, which together with AD represented 10 percent of the candidates, then dropped out. The number of candidates running shrank from 5,500 to around 5,000.

On election day, BBC News reported long lines of voters in poor neighborhoods, but nearly empty polls in more affluent areas.

New automated voting machines were used in the election, allowing the votes to be tallied that night. They showed that about 25 percent of the electorate had voted. The numbers remained the same after the final tally.

This was seized upon by the bourgeoisie that still controls much of Venezuela's media and by much of the international capitalist press as proof of "the end of democracy in Venezuela," because there would no longer be a significant opposition in the National Assembly. This was the spin put on by the Organization of American States, which together with the European Union sent observers to the election.

The opposition had shot itself in the foot and was blaming

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WW STATEMENT

Power to the people of New Orleans

What took place during Hurricane Katrina, and has been playing out ever since, is nothing less than an attempt to wipe out the historic African-American community of New Orleans, which has survived slavery, segregation, the Great Depression, the Ku Klux Klan and every form of racism and repression for generations.

The ruling class of New Orleans is trying to utilize the Katrina crisis for a vast and brutal program of urban removal and racist gentrification. This must be stopped. The struggle for the right of return of the survivors, and for self-determination in rebuilding the Black community of New Orleans, is a vital cause which deserves and requires the full and determined support of all progressive and revolutionary forces throughout the country—from the anti-war movement to the labor movement and every sector of society fighting for social and economic justice.

What began as a natural disaster, when Hurricane Katrina first hit the Gulf Coast on Aug. 31, ended up as an unnatural social catastrophe for the African-American population of New Orleans. Racist authorities sat by as flood waters from broken levees trapped tens of thousands of people.

The Katrina crisis became an international event of great magnitude as the world watched U.S. racism in action. Thousands of African-American men, women and children in the first days of the crisis were stranded on rooftops, herded into the Superdome and the Convention Center and left without food, water, clothing, medicine or any means of escape.

The U.S. government, which has the resources to build vast military bases overnight and can move armies across the globe, did not move rapidly to the rescue. Instead it sent in the 82nd Airborne, the National Guard, and Blackwell mercenaries—

Continued on page 4

Rosa Parks LIVE LIKE HER



See pages 6-7



Boston Dec. 1, 2005 on the 50th anniversary of the day Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of the bus.

WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Pandemic flu

Poor would suffer most, but rich worry, too

By Hillel Cohen

Poor people die sooner than the rich. In the United States today, race and class are almost always among the top predictors of who gets sick and who dies of infectious diseases—like flu, tuberculosis and AIDS—or chronic illnesses such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

People of color and people with low incomes live in environments with the unhealthiest conditions and work in the most difficult and dangerous jobs, when they can get work at all. Poor diet and unhealthy conditions over a lifetime lead to weaker immune systems. In addition, those who have the least economic resources are the most challenged in trying to cope with the physical and emotional crises of everyday life or the social crises of emergencies and disasters.

Workers and the oppressed have the least access to health information, preventive care, medical services and medications.

Racism and discrimination compound the differences between rich and poor in the United States and in many countries where national oppression goes hand in hand with economic exploitation. With few exceptions, differences in income and wealth have allowed the rich to live longer than the poor wherever class divisions determine access to the necessities of life. Some have noted that inequality itself, in addition to the lack of resources, adds to the anxiety and stress that in turn take a toll on health.

The rich, however, are not immune to infectious disease.

During the plagues in Europe, the rich would flee from the cities where the outbreaks occurred. But if the plague was widespread enough, there was nowhere to hide.

Even before the germ theory of disease was widely accepted, a public-health movement known as the “sanitarians” campaigned against the open sewage and lack of clean water that were particularly intense in workers’ neighborhoods.

The progressive public health movement finally got support from the rich and powerful, who realized that they too were vulnerable to disease. Government action finally made improvements in water supply, waste disposal and general sanitation.

To some extent, the current concern about pandemic flu in the big-business media reflects similar anxiety that even the rich might not escape a very widespread outbreak.

The emphasis on developing vaccine and antiviral medication as the main line of defense against pandemic flu also reflects the bias toward measures that will be available to the wealthier residents of the wealthier countries. But there is another fear that haunts the capitalist class: loss of profits.

Public-health specialists have been expressing concern

about pandemic flu for decades and about the most recent avian flu for years. But the big-business media began only paying attention when economists started to point out a pandemic’s potential economic fallout.

If workers fall sick by the millions around the world, who will run the factories, the transport, the offices and the shops? No matter how hard they try to hide it, the bosses know that their profits depend on exploiting workers. If the workers are at home sick, or are afraid to go to work, profits will go down.

A few years ago, there was an outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome—SARS—primarily in Asian countries. Relatively few people actually got sick or died. But the fear of SARS, even more than the deaths and illness, cut travel and commerce and really hurt the Asian economies. A worldwide outbreak of a serious influenza would be much worse, because flu is passed along much more easily than SARS.

Some establishment economists have noted that the global economy, so highly praised by apologists for capitalism, may be particularly vulnerable to a pandemic. An outbreak in any corner of the world will rapidly spread elsewhere.

Even if severe outbreaks are localized, almost every aspect of production in every part of the world depends on imports and exports of raw materials and intermediate components that are “outsourced” all over the globe.

Further, the “just-in-time” method of production has sharply reduced inventories of parts and products. Computerized inventory control and modern communication and transportation have made production and distribution more “flexible” with regard to the fluctuations of supply and demand. But they have also made them all much more vulnerable to even short disruptions.

If any link of the complex globalized chain of production is even temporarily broken by a flu pandemic, the whole inter-related system could break down with it.

Currently, the avian flu epidemic is confined to birds and poultry. Nevertheless, it is having a serious effect on food production in several Asian countries. The giant agribusiness companies in the industrialized countries are very, very worried that they too could be affected.

The world capitalist class is also afraid that the intense hardships and suffering from natural disasters can threaten their rule. Severe earthquakes have literally shaken workers and oppressed people out of the routine of submitting to exploitation. Desperate circumstances can on occasion lead to an anger that fuels revolt.

Although it is much more common for the terrible death and destruction of tsunamis, typhoons, earthquakes and disease epidemics to lead to despair and demoralization, the outcome can be more positive when these disasters happen in areas where there is a revolutionary leadership.

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WW CALENDAR	
LOS ANGELES	NEW YORK
Fri., Dec. 16 Eyewitness report from the Dec. 10 Right to Return march in New Orleans. Hear Gloria Verdieu, Jefferson Azevedo and John Parker report from their trip to the strategy conference for Katrina survivors and their supporters, and the march in New Orleans. 7:30 pm, 5274 W Pico Blvd #203. (Between Fairfax and LaBrea) 323-936-7266	Fri., Dec. 9 Workers World Party Meeting: Arturo Pérez Saad on "Venezuela election: A victory for the revolutionary process;" Heather Cottin on "India: Eyewitness report on anti-imperialist conference;" John Catalinotto on "Iraq war: From 'Mission Accomplished' to 'Plan for Victory.'" 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info phone (212) 627-2994.

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As executions pass 1,000

Capitalist economic decline criminalizes workers

By Larry Hales

Early in the morning on Dec. 2, the day after thousands of activists around the country had commemorated civil rights hero Rosa Parks by expressing righteous outrage to the war against the Iraqi people and the war being waged against workers and oppressed communities here, Kenneth Boyd was executed in North Carolina. Boyd became the 1,000th person to die since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976. The majority have been poor, and disproportionately people of color.

So far this year there have been 57 executions in the U.S. Since 1999 there have been 501, with 1999 peaking at 98 in a single year. The state of Texas has led the way every year.

The death penalty and the booming growth of the prison-industrial complex symbolize how brutal the United States is to poor workers and people of color. This is being especially illuminated as the pressures of the capitalist market keep driving wages down. The growing competition among the imperialist powers shows no end in sight, and this will lead to more wars for profit for which workers will shoulder the brunt more and more.

The poor are left with few ways to make a living and must fend for themselves. It is especially poignant to highlight how thousands of poor, mostly Black, citizens of New Orleans were left to bear the brunt of Hurricane Katrina. As these residents commandeered vehicles and goods off store shelves, they were threatened with death and imprisonment by Gov. Kathleen Blanco of Louisiana, as well as local and national authorities.

With just 5 percent of the world's population, the United States has 25 percent of the world's prison population. The U.S. also has the highest incarceration rate, with 701 incarcerations per 100,000 people. (World Prison Population List) The majority of those incarcerated are people of color, mostly Black. People of color are far more likely to receive jail time and the death sentence than whites who commit the same crimes.

A glance at prison growth in the United States and the economic decline since the late 1970s shows a significant leap in incarcerations. The U.S. prison population jumped from 200,000 in 1970 to 2.1 million in 2002, and continues to grow.

This decades-old trend can be seen most notably in what has become known as the Rust Belt, which stretches from Western New York as far west as Kansas. The flight of well-paying jobs, scant social services, and a failing

public school system has left inner-city areas, heavily populated by people of color, nearly unbearable for millions.

Add to the above the realities of an inadequate health system and the dire circumstances of life in the U.S. for poor workers and people of color becomes incandescent. At last count 45 million Americans were without health insurance, and millions more have poor health insurance coverage.

The United Nations released a report earlier this year detailing how the world's wealthiest nation has a woefully inadequate health care system. Racism and class oppression can glaringly be seen in life expectancy and infant mortality.

Of the 215,000 jobs created in the month of November, 144,000 were in the food service industry. Real income continues to fall as the prices of goods outpace what little growth there is in wages. A new bankruptcy law puts Chapter 7 bankruptcy, which wipes away all debt, out of reach for many in a country where 70 percent of the people owe upwards of tens of thousands of dollars.

Manufacturing jobs that paid decent wages with benefits are disappearing. This decline is partly due to advanced technology, allowing manufacturers to replace live workers with machinery, and to the movement of capital to other countries.

Corporations like the auto manufacturers are closing factories and laying off workers here, looking to exploit workers in other countries where labor laws are weak at best and wages are super low. Recently, both GM and Ford, the first and third largest automakers in the world, respectively, announced layoffs. GM will eliminate 30,000 jobs and close down 12 factories across the U.S. Ford is planning massive layoffs as well. Nearly 100,000 jobs in the auto industry have been lost this year alone.

Auto-parts maker Delphi, in bankruptcy, has demanded its workers take a severe cut in wages, lower cost-of-living increases, and higher insurance premiums. This trend is happening in the airline industry as well, as three major airlines have filed for bankruptcy in order to dump workers' pensions and health care benefits.

As this crisis continues to deepen, workers, especially those from oppressed nationalities, will be even more criminalized in what amounts to a war in this country as well as abroad. Part of that war against workers and people of color is the use of the death penalty and the criminalization of poverty. A united front must be forged between the anti-imperialist movement and anti-racists to call for an end to imperialist plunder, no more prisons and abolition of the death penalty. □

By Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

TOOKIE: From Chaos to Consciousness

The name Stanley Tookie Williams is both famous and infamous.

Infamous because of his multiple murder convictions in California, which led him to death row; famous because of his works while there and the growing movement to spare his life and perhaps achieve his freedom from California's notorious San Quentin prison.

Those works include the writing of several award-winning, anti-gang and anti-violence books, many of them written especially for young folks, which have turned many away from the perils and pitfalls of gang life.

They respond to Tookie, because they know that he knows what he's talking about. Tookie is one of the founders of the Crips gang, which has spread all across the nation. As one of the founders of Cripdom, his words have a resonance that others, either in government or the church, simply can't match.

Tookie's life example is also known to us through the acting of the Oscar-winning Jamie Foxx, who portrayed the muscular former gangbanger in a teledrama called "Redemption." Foxx, the man and celebrity, has joined the call to California's governor, fellow actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, to commute his death sentences to life. Just recently, Foxx was joined by his fellow actor, Will Smith, and rapper Snoop Dogg, who has echoed Foxx's call.

Several months ago, the anti-death penalty publication The New Abolitionist (published by the Chicago-based Campaign to End the Death Penalty) published a brief letter from Tookie in which he addressed the issues of both his innocence and his sincerity. He wrote:

"My detractors in the media and elsewhere have questioned my redemption. Their doubt is driven largely by my open apology (at www.tookie.com) to Black folks and others who might have been offended by the fact that I helped create the Crips youth gang in Los Angeles 34 years ago. My detractors argue that I could not be redeemed because I have not apologized to the family members of the victims that I was convicted of killing.

"But please allow me to clarify. I will never apologize for capital crimes that I did not commit—not even to save my life. And I did not commit the crimes for which I was sentenced to be executed by the State of California.

"Being a condemned prisoner, I am viewed among the least able to qualify as a promoter of redemption and of peace. But the most wretched among society can be redeemed, find peace and reach out to others to lift them up. Redemption cannot be faked or intellectualized. It must be subjective, experienced and shared. In the past, redemption was an alien concept to me. But from 1988 to 1994, while I lived in solitary confinement, I embarked on a transitional path toward redemption. I underwent years of education, soul-searching, edification, spiritual cultivation, and fighting to transcend my inner demons.

"Subsequently, the redeeming process for me symbolized the end of a bad beginning—and a new start." (From The New Abolitionist, Aug. 2005, p. 2.)

Stanley Tookie Williams has been nominated several times for the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize for his work in support of street peace and in anti-gang efforts. He has written nine anti-gang and anti-violence books and created the Internet Project for Street Peace, which connects youth globally in support of that end.

That said, Tookie has a date with death: Dec. 13, 2005!

What makes Tookie's case doubly disturbing is that the state played fast and loose with jury selection by kicking off three potential Black jurors, resulting in a virtually all-white jury to decide both his guilt and whether he should live or die. (There were 10 Caucasians; one Filipino and one Latino.)

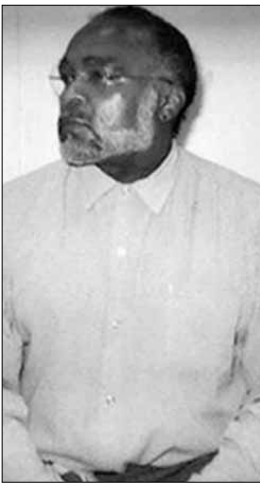
Is racial jury-rigging a "minor" thing?

Just recently, in Philadelphia, a man who had been on death row for over a decade for multiple murders had his retrial. His original conviction was tossed because of a violation of the Batson rule (which forbids the removal of Black jurors). A racially mixed jury acquitted him of all charges.

It can be said that Tookie didn't receive a fair trial, by any standard. How can he then face death?

The death penalty has been losing steam for years, largely because of cases which were "won" by unfairness.

With the support of the people, that may be ending, as the fight for the life of Tookie begins! □



Legal breakthrough in Mumia Abu-Jamal's case

The lead attorney for Mumia Abu-Jamal, Robert R. Bryan, has sent out an e-mail concerning developments in the death row prisoner's appeals. Excerpts are below. To read the entire court ruling, visit www.millions4mumia.org or www.iacenter.org. It is being circulated on several list serves.

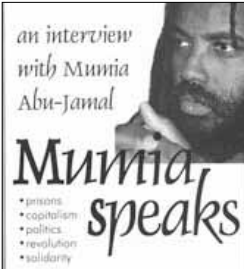
Today the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit issued the most important decision affecting my client, Mumia Abu-Jamal, since the lower federal court ruling in 2001. An order was issued this morning that the court will accept for review the following issues, all of which are of enormous constitutional significance and go to the very

An interview with Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Columns by the Black journalist on prisons, capitalism, politics, revolution and solidarity. Additional essays on the prison-industrial complex by Monica Moorehead, Larry Holmes and Teresa Gutierrez.

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To hear an interview with Mumia Abu-Jamal by Monica Moorehead go to www.prisonradio.org/Farrakhan.htm

FREEDOM FOR MUMIA NOW!

essence of Mumia's right to a fair trial, due process of law, and equal protection of the law under the U.S. Constitution:

Claim 16 concerns the prosecutorial use of racism in jury selection. The record establishes beyond question that racism is a major thread that has run through this case since Mumia's 1981 arrest, and continues to today.

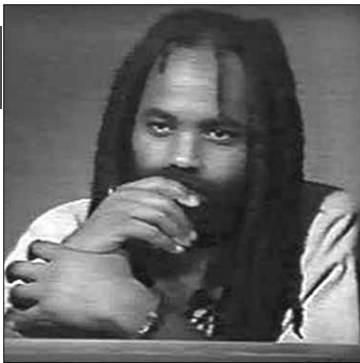
Claim 14 includes the prosecutor's argument that if convicted Mumia would have "appeal after appeal." That comment effectively lessened the burden of the jurors [to find him guilty].

Claim 29 is about the bias and incredible racism of Judge Albert Sabo, the trial judge.

The opening briefs are due to be filed by Jan. 17, 2006.

Today we achieved a great victory in the campaign to win a new trial and the eventual freedom of Mumia.

Your support, and activism, is badly needed and appreciated. □



Labor & campus unite to support NYU strikers

By Sue Davis

The strike at New York University heated up significantly on Nov. 28 when NYU President John Sexton issued an ultimatum to striking graduate employees: either stop the strike by Dec. 5 or risk losing stipends and teaching assignments for the next two semesters.

“Sexton’s e-mail made it absolutely clear that this fight is not about student rights or academic affairs but about the rights of workers. You simply don’t fire students,” said Maida Rosenstein, president of UAW Local 2110, which represents the 1,200 striking Graduate Student Organizing Committee, at a rally

on campus on Dec. 2.

The GSOC has been on strike since Nov. 9 after the university refused to negotiate a second contract with the union. The first contract, signed in 2002, expired Aug. 31.

In a last-minute attempt to sideline the union, NYU’s Graduate Affairs Committee proposed on Dec. 4 that the GSOC call off the strike on Dec. 6, the administration postpone implementing its ultimatum until Dec. 7 and a new organization be set up to speak for the graduate employees. Sexton accepted the proposal.

But the GSOC didn’t. GSOC Chair Michael Palm affirmed that the strike will continue until the university recognizes the graduate employees’ union.

“We’re not on strike for a voice in the university; GSOC is not about to become another university group,” he said in the Dec. 5 issue of NYU’s student newspaper. “GSOC was formed to represent ourselves as university employees. Nothing the proposed group can do will include protecting students on strike. The recent threats of blacklisting are the strongest indication yet that we need a union in order to protect ourselves.”

Support is widespread

Support for the striking workers has come from NYU undergraduate students, alumni and faculty. On Nov. 30 about 150 undergrads organized by Graduate Undergraduate Solidarity staged a protest in the lobby of Bobst Library while a group of students tried to deliver a letter to Sexton demanding he negotiate with the GSOC. Other GUS solidarity events that day included a class boycott and a student speakout.

Several recent NYU graduates attended an alumni function on Dec. 1 and urged attendees to withhold donations until the university recognized the union. They also asked alums to send letters telling Sexton to stop union busting, recognize UAW Local 2110 and negotiate now.

A coalition of nearly 200 professors passed resolutions on Dec. 1 stating that they will do everything they can—including canceling recitations, withholding grades, refusing to take part in the graduate admissions process and telling prospective faculty members that faculty rights are not respected at NYU—to defend the graduate employees. They also issued an open letter to the university calling the ultimatum “an encroachment on faculty rights” and saying that it would “destroy the graduate studies programs.”

But support for the striking workers extends far beyond the campus. On Dec. 2 more than 20 union leaders, both national and local, joined strikers and federal and city politicians at a rally to defend the right to organize and the right to strike. Speakers included UAW President Ron Gettelfinger, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, New York City Central Labor Council President Denis Hughes and a representative of the Change to Win Coalition. This is the first struggle where the two national groups have joined forces.

“NYU claims it doesn’t have a problem with unions or the labor movement—that it only has a problem with GSOC,” said Palm. “But all these unions are here today to say that labor has a problem with NYU.” GSOC spokeswoman Susan Valentine added, “This is an attack on all workers.”

The GSOC picket line swelled on Dec. 5, the original date of NYU’s ultimatum, as droves of supporters showed solidarity with the strikers.

Another rally, called by the New York City Central Labor Council as part of the nationwide commemoration of International Human Rights Day, is planned for Dec. 7.

Calling Sexton’s ultimatum a “lock-out” and a direct challenge to the right to strike, Shelley Ettinger, a member of NYU’s clerical staff and its union, AFT Local 3882, spoke about the importance of the strike both for the ruling class and for organized labor at a Dec. 2 meeting of Workers World Party. Noting that the NYU board of trustees is made up of Wall Street tycoons and real estate moguls, she called the strike a “show-down” for the East Coast ruling class. To hear her report, listen to the podcast posted on WW’s Web site: www.workers.org.

WW STATEMENT

Power to the people of New Orleans

Continued from page 1

fresh from the battlefields where they had been fighting to colonize the people of Afghanistan and Iraq—to the streets of New Orleans to protect the property of the wealthy, to keep people from taking food and the necessities of life, and to treat the victimized, suffering Black population as the enemy.

The media reinforced the state with false reports of gunfire directed against “rescuers.” It also inflamed racism with charges of “looting,” directed against African-Americans trying to survive, while describing white people doing the same thing as merely trying to provide necessities for themselves in an emergency. The most outrageous, totally unverified reports of violence in the Convention Center and at other locations, later shown to be totally false, were reported as hard facts by the racist media in order to justify the state repression.

When transportation finally came, families were forcibly separated and herded onto buses without knowing where their relatives and loved ones were being shipped. Such scenes were painfully reminiscent of family separations during slavery.

Today, more than two months after the disaster, there are still over 6,000 people officially listed as missing, many of them children. Families are still separated. Hundreds of bodies have not been identified. The callousness and racism of the authorities knows no bounds.

The intentions of the rich in this disaster were made clear early on when Joseph Canizaro, one of the biggest developers in New Orleans and close to the political power brokers, indicated that Katrina presented New Orleans with a “clean sheet to start again.” And James Reiss, who serves the shipbuilding industry, told the Wall Street Journal: “Those who want to see this city rebuilt want to see it done in a completely different way: demographically, politically and economically.” Reiss emphasized that he was “not just speaking for myself here” but for the New Orleans ruling class.

Since then Gov. Kathleen Blanco and Mayor Ray Nagin have created commissions stacked with bankers, real estate developers, corporate managers, investment firms, shipyard owners, energy and chemical companies, restaurant owners and all manner of rich capitalists who are poised to take over the reconstruction effort.

These forces want to see to it that the

hundreds of thousands of survivors remain scattered across the country. They want to keep the African-American community weak and fragmented while they take over their neighborhoods and rebuild them with condominiums and high-income developments of all types. While wealthy and middle-class white areas and tourist centers are coming back, the Black community is being left to further deteriorate.

The bold attempt by the Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund & Oversight Coalition to convene an emergency conference and Survivors General Assembly and to organize a march on New Orleans must be applauded and supported. It is a step forward in the struggle for self-determination of the African-American community and it points the way to the creation of an independent, self-acting mass organization, which is the only real basis upon which the community can be defended.

The emphasis on the right of return is fundamental. The need to reach out nationally and find ways to reconstitute the community is a first priority. This is a direct repudiation of the right of FEMA, which is a subdivision of the Department of Homeland Security, to run the assistance program. How can this repressive police agency possibly be left in charge of helping the people of New Orleans?

It is a repudiation of the right of the corporations to design the programs and control the billions of dollars that are going to flow into reconstruction. The community must be in control of the rebuilding.

The government must be investigated and charged with crimes of neglect, criminal indifference and negligence, and reparations must be paid to victims and survivors, as called for by the Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund.

Finally, it must be said that the anti-war movement and the labor movement should have done a great deal more much earlier in this crisis. Up until now they have hung back. But now that the organized effort to build solidarity and support for self-determination is taking shape, the opportunity arises to catch up. Nothing could be more vital to build unity in the movement than to forge solidarity between the oppressed African-American people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast and the anti-war and working class movements.

All support to the Survivors General Assembly, to the march on New Orleans, and to the struggle for the right of return and self-determination in New Orleans. □

Pro-Chavez parties sweep

Continued from page 1

the Venezuelan government for it.

What they did not say is that the 25 percent voter participation was actually an increase for an election when there was no presidential race.

Nonpresidential elections in Venezuela have always had a much lower voter turnout. Jesse Chacón, minister of the Interior and Justice, said that in 1998, a year when the presidential and legislative elections were held separately, 11.24 percent of the electorate voted for representatives to the National Assembly. At that time, the AD came out ahead. Two years later, in July 2000, the Movement of the Fifth Republic (MVR), President Chávez’s party, won its first legislative majority. Turnout that time had risen to 17 percent.

Chacón added that “any number above 11.24 percent and 17 percent makes the National Assembly an institution much more legitimate than the ones of 1998 and of 2000.”

After receiving reports from hundreds of its observers, the EU declared the election to be “fair and transparent.” Even a statement by the OAS showed the capricious nature of the opposition’s decision to boycott: “In spite of the important guarantees offered by the National Electoral Council (CNE), to the petitions of a significant sector of the opposition, they decided not to participate.”

“Among these guarantees,” continued the OAS statement, “it is noteworthy to mention the elimination of the fingerprint

taking and the majority of electronic voting books, an increase of the audit at closure time, the increase of space in the media for election propaganda, and the presence of witnesses and international observers in every phase of the electoral process.”

These changes had been made in response to criticism from the opposition.

The electronic voting machines used were like those now being introduced in the United States—with this exception: voters also filled out paper ballots in case a recount was needed.

Nevertheless, a deliberate campaign continues to destabilize the election process and declare the new National Assembly an “undemocratic” and “illegitimate” body, and the whole Venezuelan Revolution a “farce.” This is the message that the bourgeois press, dominated by U.S. news agencies, has circulated throughout the world.

This comes after the failed coup of 2002, the oil sabotage of 2002-03, the “guarimbas” (violent road and street blockages), and the presidential referendum of August 2004—all sponsored by the Venezuelan oligarchy and U.S. imperialism.

Washington openly hostile

Washington’s hostility to the Bolivarian Revolution is now well known. It backed the Venezuelan opposition by funneling funds through the CIA-sponsored National Endowment for Democracy and USAID, particularly to the newly set up

Bronx, N.Y., workers benefit from Venezuelan oil

By Fred Goldstein
New York

The profit-gouging U.S. oil giants made \$33 billion in profits in the last quarter. But so far they have not given one dime to help the people weather the coming winter.

The revolutionary government of Venezuela, headed by President Hugo Chávez, on the other hand, is helping the poor in the Bronx, N.Y., and in Massachusetts to heat their homes with discount oil supplied by CITGO, the Venezuelan-owned oil company that has outlets all over the United States.

U.S. Congress member Jose Serrano and Venezuela's ambassador to the U.S., Bernardo Alvarez, announced a plan on Dec. 6 in which CITGO will supply 8 million gallons of fuel at a 40 percent discount to 75 apartment buildings in the Bronx, benefiting 8,000 people.

The heating oil is being provided to three nonprofit housing corporations: Mount Hope Housing, Fordham Bedford Housing and VIP Community Services. The subsidies are being given to nonprofits to ensure that landlords don't swallow up the savings.

According to Serrano, CITGO officials insisted that all fuel contracts stipulate how individual residents would benefit. The money saved gets to the tenants by reducing their monthly rents and by providing money for social programs, according to the arrangement worked out between CITGO and the housing companies.

Shaun Belle, president of Mount Hope Housing, "wants to find a way to generate much-needed funds that, in recent years, have been diverted to pay for the ever-

higher price of heating fuel," wrote the Daily News of Dec. 6.

"This allows us to save \$400,000 to \$500,000 for the winter," said Bell. "We can pass the savings along to our tenants, who are very much under financial pressure."

Serrano said that more schools, churches and nonprofits will soon be eligible for similar aid. Many have applied.

Last month CITGO made its first delivery in Massachusetts as part of 12 million gallons of oil that will benefit 40,000 households there.

President Chávez, according to Juan Gonzalez in a Dec. 6 column in the Daily News, vowed during an interview last month to set aside 10 percent of CITGO's U.S. production to aid poor people.

Democratic senators recently held a

hearing with the top oil executives in this country and chastised them for having excessive profits. That was for the television cameras. But when it comes to forcing these profit-gouging monopolies—who live off the suffering of homeowners, tenants and workers who have to drive to work every day—to give back some of their stolen profits, nothing is done.

But the Chávez government, which the Bush administration has been trying to overthrow, has come through with concrete aid. This aid to the workers and oppressed in the U.S. flows from Chávez's policy of empowering the workers and the poor of Venezuela.

The head of the Petroleum Industry Research Foundation, Larry Goldstein, denounced the fuel discounts as propaganda "designed to embarrass us," according to the News. But Serrano said he is not bothered by that charge.

"If people think that the Venezuelan government and Chávez are trying to score points in my district, as a Congressman from the district, I welcome that.... And I welcome any other American corporation that wants to come here and score points." □



Dec. 6 press conference announces heating oil discounts.

Students, activists link JPMorgan Chase to slavery

By U-Savior
New York

Students and activists held a lunchtime press conference and rally on Dec. 5 in front of JPMorgan Chase headquarters on 47th Street and Park Avenue to demand reparations for the ravages of slavery.

Heading the rally was the Restitution Study Group, which has been at the forefront of the struggle to hold JPMorgan Chase—among other banks, including Wachovia, Bank One and Bank of AmericaFleet Bank—accountable for its profit from and ownership of slaves during its formative years. The group claims that multibillion-dollar banks like JPMorgan Chase and Bank One have had the benefit of the wealth that enslaved laborers generated, while enslaved

Africans and their descendants have suffered the loss of the fruits of 450 years of labor.

Activists are urging students to seek their student loans elsewhere.

Says spokesperson and founder Deadria C. Farmer-Paellmann, "Right now, JPMorgan Chase controls over 15 percent of the \$45 billion student loan industry. Historically, JPMorgan Chase and its subsidiary Bank One used over 13,000 enslaved Africans as loan collateral, and owned another 1,250. The United Nations declared that slavery and the transatlantic slave trade are and always have been crimes against humanity and that slavery was institutionalized terrorism, genocide, kidnap, rape, torture and robbery of humans for corporate profit and greed."

Although lawsuits are pending to hold JPMorgan Chase accountable—there is significant documentation of the company's role in the enslavement of Africans—the bank refuses to settle the lawsuits.

One lawsuit calls for the creation of a humanitarian trust fund to heal the injuries caused by JPMorgan Chase and other tainted banks, such as urban poverty, inadequate health care, and lost housing, employment, educational and business opportunities.

Carl Mayer, counsel for the plaintiffs, expressed his disgust at JPMorgan's response to the lawsuit. "They refused to settle. What they offered was a pittance: five million dollars to be put into a scholarship fund for Black students. This amount is not even 1/100th of one percent of the net profits of this mega-corporation."

Representatives of the Restitution Study Group assert that enslaved Africans and their descendants have been demanding justice for over 150 years. They have never given up this struggle. They further state that undergraduate students have the power to command justice from JPMorgan Chase and other tainted banks.

The rally, which included performances by cultural artists such as singer/activist Nana Soul of Black Waxx and Spiritchild of Mental Notes, opened with prayer and a libation ceremony directed by Queen Mother Dr. Delois Blakely.

Other organizations present included the Louisiana Center Against Poverty, the National Reparations Convention, NCOBRA of Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Ga., and the National Coalition for Reparations and Economic Wealth.

The Restitution Study Group can be contacted at (917) 365-3007, www.ones-tudent.us. For information on the lawsuit, contact (609) 462-7979. □

Venezuela vote

group Sumate. Corina Machado, Sumate's executive director, was invited to the White House to meet with President Bush this past summer. Machado was quite active during the elections, calling on people to abstain from voting and instead go to church. Her organization has alleged widespread irregularities, despite contrary reports from international observers.

Sumate seems to have gained U.S. favor once it was clear that the old opposition parties, AD and COPEI, were losing credibility even among their constituents. Their votes in recent elections, including the last regional elections in October 2004, had been dwindling. It was predicted that this time the numbers would be even smaller. Pulling out of the elections was a way to avoid that.

The sentiment of the U.S. ruling class in favor of abstaining was made clear both before and after the elections. Steve Johnson from the Heritage Foundation said that "there is no transparency in the Venezuelan electoral process. To participate will only legitimize the triumph of Hugo Chávez. Not participating at least will generate doubts about his victory and will provoke international scrutiny."

U.S. Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere Tom Shannon said after the election that "Venezuela is a step closer to totalitarianism" and that "Democracy is at risk."

Cuba's Prensa Latina observed that the decision by AD to withdraw from the election, which "leaves AD as a great loser, fol-

lows denunciations by Vice President José Vicente Rangel and National Assembly president Nicolás Maduro, regarding pressures from the U.S. Embassy in favor of abstentionism."

Beaten at polls, rightists are planting bombs

In the buildup to these elections, a bomb exploded on Dec. 2 behind the attorney general's office, injuring the daughter of one of the department's workers. The Bolivarian government considers this one of several phases of a plan to destabilize the elections.

The last phase was the most severe. In Guarico state, a big cache of weapons and more than 48 pounds of C-4 explosive were confiscated, but not before two explosions had happened. One was meant to damage an oil pipeline carrying crude oil to the most important refinery in Venezuela, the Paraguaná. The other was against a natural gas pipeline.

'Live like Rosa Parks—Fight pover

By Dustin Langley

Activists in dozens of U.S. cities honored Rosa Parks on Dec. 1 by continuing her legacy of struggle.

The Troops Out Now Coalition issued the call in June to mark the 50th anniversary of the day that Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus as a National Day of Absence Against Poverty, Racism and War.

The day took on greater urgency with the continued occupation of Iraq, the government's blatantly racist response to Hurricane Katrina, and the death of Rosa Parks. Larry Holmes of the Troops Out Now Coalition said, "We felt that, now more than ever, it was important to honor her by attempting to relaunch that movement, and to push the antiwar movement forward by linking the struggle against the war with the struggle against racism and the struggles of working people."

BOSTON

The streets of Boston were alive with chants, music and speeches. Students were joined by teachers, school bus drivers and monitors, union members, community organizations, LGBT activists, anti-war, women's rights and anti-police brutality activists, political and religious leaders. There was even a delegation of youth from Montgomery, Ala.

The day started with a rally in the heart of Boston's African-American community. Representatives from the Somerville 5 Defense Committee spoke of the case of five young Black victims of racial profiling. City Councilor Chuck Turner spoke of the Fund the Dream Coalition/Organizing Committee for the Workers Alliance. Other speakers included City Councilors Felix Arroyo and Charles Yancy.

During the march to City Hall, numbers swelled to over 2,000. When the march approached Boston's largest high school complex, students poured from the building while others crowded the windows, raising fists and shouting out solidarity.

At Dudley's bus station, a makeshift people's memorial to Rosa Parks was dedicated. Dorothea Peacock of the Women's Fightback Network said, "We pause for a moment at this bus stop as a symbol to thank you on this 50th anniversary to remind some and teach others that freedom is not free.... Rest, Rosa, for today the youth are walking."

NEW YORK

Students from several high schools kicked off the day with a walkout organized by Mia Cruz of FIST (Fight Imperialism—Stand Together). Speakers included Hector Rivera of the Welfare Poets, LeiLani Dowell of Queers for Peace



NEW YORK

WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

and Justice, spoken word artist Khalil Khan, Larry Holmes of the Troops Out Now Coalition, youth activists, cultural performers and spoken word artists.

At 2 p.m. people began to fill the streets at Broadway and Wall Street in the downtown financial district. The sidewalks were packed as passersby stopped to listen, take literature and cheer.

New York City Council member Charles Barron spoke of the appropriateness of the venue, saying, "We're bringing our message right here to Wall Street, to the center of capitalism, to the people who are profiting from war and oppression."

Even the Wall Street Journal was forced to take note, reporting, "The increasingly vocal war protest crowd has come to Wall Street itself to sound off on peace and social justice in the midst of a stock market rally," and quoting railroad worker and labor activist Steve Millies describing the passersby: "The majority of the people that we're getting through to here aren't traders. They're the people who build the buildings around here, push the carts and clean up the mess. These are the people who understand what we're getting at here. There's no even playing field, and the people at the top are trying to make it as uneven as possible." (Wall Street Journal, Dec 1)

Speakers included Brenda Stokely,

NYC Labor Against the War; Chris Silvera, Teamsters National Black Caucus; Nana Soul, Black Waxx Recordings; a message from political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal; Tiokasin Ghosthorse, host of "First Voices" on WBAI-FM; Rev. Herbert Daughtry, National Pastor of the House of the Lord Church; Viola Plummer, December 12 Movement; Larry Holmes, Troops Out Now Coalition; Nellie Bailey, Harlem Tenants Council; Eric Anders-Nilsson, Jersey City Peace Movement; Samia Halaby, Al-Awda; Teresa Gutierrez, New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five; Prachi Noor, World Can't Wait; and Clarence Thomas, Co-chair, Million Worker March Movement.

LOS ANGELES

Activists rallied outside the downtown Federal Building in Los Angeles. Speakers included Kelly Hayes-Raitt, a progressive anti-war activist who went to Iraq and is a State Assembly candidate; Don White, CISPES-LA; Harold Green, Coalition for Liberation of West Papua; and Sydney Ross-Risden, Global Women's Strike.

John Parker of the Los Angeles International Action Center led the press conference, citing the Katrina disaster, attempted state murder of Stanley Tookie Williams and the FEMA hotel deadlines as

evidence of the need for a movement that can change the direction of politics in the U.S.—the type of movement sparked by Rosa Parks and the women around the Montgomery bus boycott.

Rufina Juárez of the South Central Farmers, representing 350 families on a communal farm in South Central Los Angeles that is under attack by the city, spoke of how Rosa Parks' ideals and struggle paralleled their ideals and the challenges facing them:

"Here in Los Angeles, for two and a half years the South Central Farmers have also refused to give up their seat and relinquish their land to a greedy real estate developer.... A major lesson that Rosa Parks taught us is that to eliminate poverty, racism and oppression we have to stand up and fight. ... Aqui estamos y no nos vamos—We are here and will not leave. We are not moving to the back of the bus!"

BALTIMORE

Baltimore marked Rosa Parks Day with a march through the city, followed by a dinner and reception at the UNITE-HERE union hall. Speakers included Andre Powell, Denise Lowery and Sharon Black of the All Peoples' Congress; City Council members Belinda Conaway and Mary Pat Clarke, who introduced the



ATLANTA

PHOTO: GLORIA TATUM



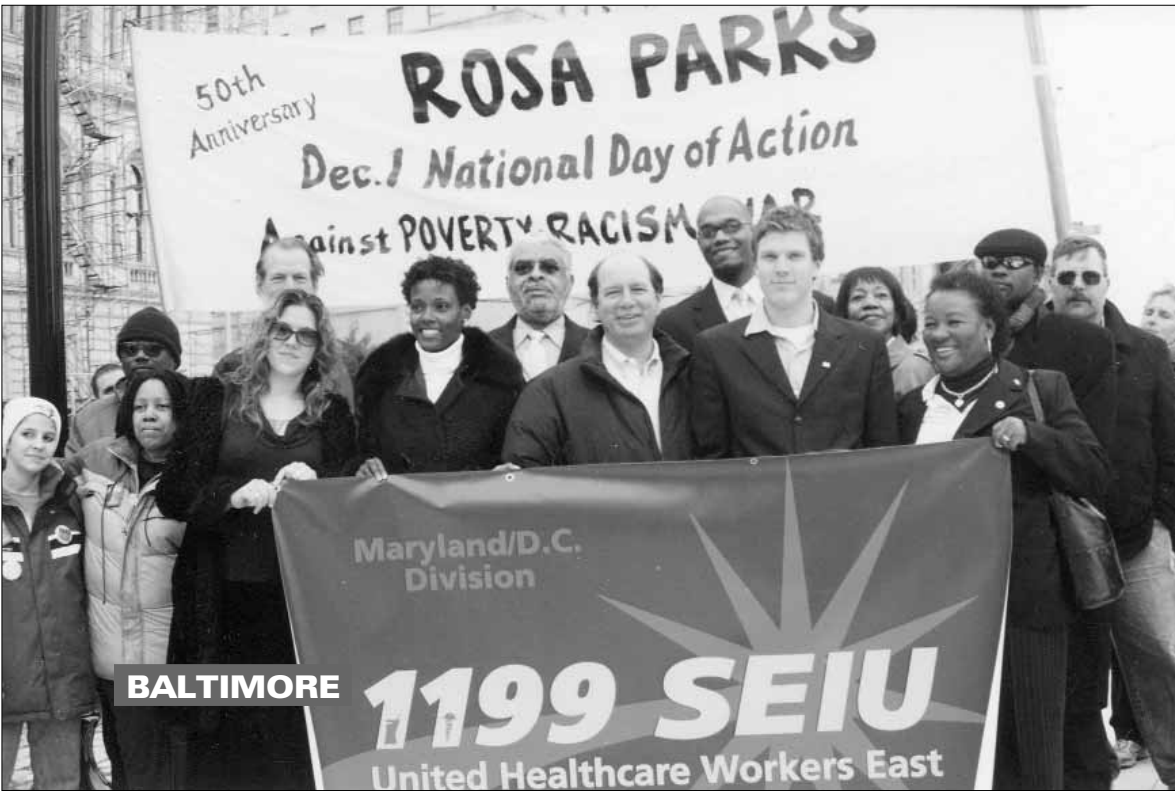
BUFFALO

WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITTE

ty, racism and war'



WW PHOTO ABOVE: CHERYL LABASH, AT RIGHT: SHARON BLACK



Baltimore Rosa Parks Day Resolution; Lena Redmon, president of the UNITE-HERE executive board and community action director of the AFL-CIO; and John Reid, SEIU division director of Maryland and D.C.

PHILADELPHIA

In Philadelphia, activists held a speak-out at City Hall which included Brother Rob Gray, African American Freedom and Reconstruction League; Haitian activist Ernst Ford; Michael Berg, whose son died in Iraq; Ray Martinez, president of SEIU/PSSU Local 668; Alicia Rivera, Philadelphia International Action Center; lesbian activist Jessie Cocks; Tracy Jordon, African American Heritage Coalition; Elizabeth Fattah, Suburban Greens and Brother Fred, Avenging the Ancestors Coalition.

Members of the Millions More Movement and the National Million Woman March announced their campaign for the Rosa Parks National Holiday. Youth and survivors of Hurricane Katrina addressed the gathering.

Speakers were frequently interrupted by horns honking in response to "Honk against PGW [Philadelphia Gas Works] rate hikes" and "Honk against the war!" signs. Many passing by City Hall stopped to get leaflets, listen and join in the speakout.

Protesters marched by the offices of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, where speakers denounced the agency's racist plans to evict Katrina evacuees from hotels where they are currently sheltered, to end up at the federal building.

SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

In the city described by civil rights leaders in the 1960s as "the Selma of the North," a teach-in was held at Springfield Technical Community College (STCC) in the heart of the African-American community.

The overflow crowd of students, faculty and community members listened to prominent Springfield African-Americans active in the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, among them State Rep. Benjamin Swan, Chair of the Massachusetts Black Legislative Caucus, and Ruth B. Loving, who was part of a delegation that welcomed Rosa Parks to Springfield in 1956.

STCC student Andrea Walker, who organized a protest against police brutality last year, told attendees to "get on the bus" for future anti-war and anti-racism protests. Solobia Hutchins of Arise for Social Justice noted Dec. 1 was World AIDS Day, and raised the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on people of color throughout the world.

SAN DIEGO

San Diego activists held a street meeting at the corner of Euclid and Imperial, in the center of a mainly Black and Latin@ working class community.

Protesters marched to the Malcolm X Library for a rally and film showing. Speakers included longtime community activist Minister Joe Williams; FIST leader and Chicana and border activist Ruth Vela; Brother Eddie Muhammad, Nation of Islam; Tukufu Kalonji, Seruj Institute of Effective Socialization; Justino Jiménez, political rap artist and FIST activist; and John Parker, West Coast coordinator of the International Action Center.

Gloria Verdieu of the San Diego Action Center noted, "The diversity at the meeting confirmed the possibilities. The atten-

tion and support that everyone gave showed how we can link all of our struggles together. This was truly a day to be proud of."

Actions were also held in Detroit, Atlanta, Durham, N.C., Bremerton, Wash., Bow, Wash., Cedar Falls, Iowa, Imperial Beach, Calif., and as far away as Auckland, New Zealand.

Contributors: Rachel Nasca, Steve Kirschbaum, John Parker, Maggie Vascassenno, Dianne Mathiowetz, Gloria Verdieu, L. Denis, Sharon Black and Betsey Piette.



WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN



WW PHOTO: SHARON DANANN



WW PHOTO: JOAN MARQUARDT



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

The trial of Saddam Hussein

Anti-war movement must reject colonial ‘justice’

By Sara Flounders

The trial of Saddam Hussein, which has opened with much international publicity, is a desperate attempt to justify and convey some legitimacy on the criminal U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. It is an effort to demoralize and divide the resistance to the occupation. It has nothing to do with justice or truth.

All the political forces internationally that have opposed the 15-year-long U.S. war on Iraq—which has included starvation sanctions, bombing and invasion—should also oppose all the efforts to justify the continued occupation, including the present trial of the former Iraqi leader and seven members of his government.

Regardless of the wide spectrum of political views on the character of Saddam Hussein’s government, it is essential to oppose this U.S. justification for the war. To be silent on this issue is to give credibility to a U.S.-created phony court at the giant U.S. command center called the Green Zone.

The U.S. government has no right to have even one soldier in Iraq. It has no right to bomb, sanction or starve the Iraqi people. It has no right to impose a colonial government or to establish courts in Iraq. It has no more right to decide the fate of Saddam Hussein than it does to control the oil and resources of Iraq.

The detention of Saddam Hussein and his co-defendants, along with tens of thousands of other Iraqis, is all based on a criminal, illegal war of aggression.

The Iraqi Special Tribunal and the trial of Saddam Hussein are also a violation of international law. The Geneva Convention, to which Washington is a signatory, explicitly forbids an occupying power from creating courts. In addition, the trial itself, along with the total isolation of the defendants and denial of all visitation and legal rights violates the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

The defense lawyers who have stepped forward have been threatened and intimidated. Two lawyers on the defense team have been assassinated.

Today in Iraq there is no judicial system. There are no codes, no laws, no courts. There still is no agreement on a constitution. The entire structure of the Iraqi state was destroyed. In its place is only the most brutal form of outright military domination.

The Iraqi Special Tribunal has been illegitimate since its very formation. It is a creation of L. Paul Bremer III of the U.S., former head of the Coalition Provisional Authority—the illegal, occupying power. Bremer initially appointed Salem Chalabi, the nephew of Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Chalabi, to organize and lead the court.

Chalabi had returned to Iraq from exile with the aid of U.S. tanks in April 2003. He opened a law office to draft the new laws that have reopened Iraq to foreign capital, in collaboration with the law firm of former Defense Undersecretary Douglas Feith, a war profiteer, an ideologue of the Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld cabal and a principal architect of the war.

Bremer also appointed the tribunal judges. The funding and the personnel are totally controlled by U.S. forces. The U.S. Congress has appropriated \$128 million to fund the court. Of course, the court has no jurisdiction over crimes committed by U.S. forces in the invasion and occupation!

Role of demonization

The trial underway now is part of the sustained U.S. effort to totally demonize Saddam Hussein. This has been an essential part of the 15-year war on Iraq.

U.S. propaganda has relentlessly described Hussein as an evil madman, a brutal dictator and a threat to the entire planet who was poised to strike with nuclear, chemical or biological weapons within minutes. He was charged with having a role in 9/11 and being in league with al-Qaeda.

Both Republicans and Democrats knew this was a fraud. U.S. bombs had destroyed Iraq’s entire industrial capacity. But no politician was willing to challenge the demonization.

Every U.S. war against oppressed peoples and nations has begun with saturating the entire civilian population with war propaganda that so demonized the leader of the targeted population that any crime was treated as acceptable and beyond question. This has been true since the wars against Native populations and the demonization of Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Geronimo and many, many other Indigenous leaders, up to the leaders of every progressive or revolutionary struggle over the past 50 years.

It doesn’t matter how mild or committed to non-violence the leader is. Consider the case of the kidnapped former priest, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti,

who was charged with corruption, drug running and gang violence. Today President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran are increasingly portrayed as madmen, dictators and evil incarnate.

Since the days of the Roman Empire, victor’s justice has meant humiliation, degradation and placing the defeated leader in the dock in order to establish a new order. It hides the brutality of overwhelming force and gives legitimacy to the new rulers.

The trials of Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner in the antebellum South were the slaveowners’ way of cloaking the violence and degrading brutality of slavery in “god-given” property rights. The kidnapping and trial of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic after the 78-day U.S./NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, in which hundreds of civilians died, was a similar case of victor’s justice.

U.S. and WMDs

While the U.S. demonizes Saddam Hussein, it should be remembered that the Pentagon has used weapons of mass destruction not only in Iraq but against countless other defenseless populations, from Korea and the Philippines to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Grenada, Libya, Lebanon and Yugoslavia.

It is the U.S. military machine that should be put on trial for having used the most horrendous weapons, from nuclear bombs to napalm, white phosphorus, anti-personnel weapons, so-called bunker busters and radioactive depleted-uranium weapons.

In Iraq intentional civilian destruction was calculated, photographed and studied. The infrastructure was consciously targeted. Reservoirs, sanitation and sewage plants, chlorine and water pumping stations were bombed. The electrical and communications grids were destroyed. Food production was targeted, from irrigation, fertilizers and pesticides to processing, refrigeration and storage. In the 1991 bombing more than 150,000 Iraqis died. There were 156 U.S. soldiers killed.

Year after year international delegations that had been to Iraq, including many organized by the International Action Center (IAC) and led by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, reported on the impact of the 1991 bombing and the years of U.S.-imposed UN sanctions. The sanctions created an artificial famine. Imports of food, medicine and civilian necessities were withheld.

By the UN’s own estimates, over 1.5 million Iraqis died of preventable diseases. Half a million children under the age of 5 years died between 1991 and 1996. Both the sanctions and the bombing, begun

under George H.W. Bush, continued through the eight years of the Clinton administration. U.S. bombing continued at an average of 25 raids a day for 12 years.

Clark, founder of the IAC, has courageously challenged the legitimacy and legality of the Iraqi Special Tribunal as a legal adviser to Saddam Hussein.

As an international human rights lawyer, his position is entirely consistent with his 15 years of opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq—from his visit to Iraq in 1991 when the U.S. bombed every 30 seconds for 42 days, through the 12 years of starvation sanctions, to his opposition to the 2003 invasion. It is consistent with his principled opposition to other U.S. wars and interventions in Vietnam, Nicaragua, Grenada, Iran, Libya, Lebanon, Panama and Yugoslavia.

Standing up to demonization is part of standing up to the U.S. war and its propaganda machine.

Target is Iraqi sovereignty

The agents of U.S. imperialism have established corrupt and brutal dictatorships and trained and funded military rule from one corner of the globe to the other—from Indonesia to Chile to Congo.

Their problem with Saddam Hussein was not that he was a dictator. It was that he refused to surrender the sovereignty of Iraq. He refused to give U.S. corporations control over Iraqi oil, nationalized beginning in the 1960s. His worst crime in their eyes was that he refused to bow down to the New World Order.

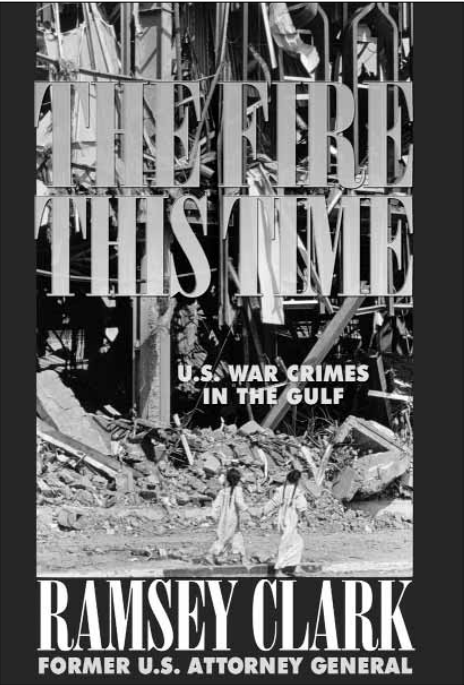
It is Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Blair who should be on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The global movement that opposes the U.S. occupation in Iraq must seriously consider its responsibility to oppose every aspect of the U.S. war—especially the phony courts and staged elections that seek to legitimize and legalize this piracy.

Implicit in the call to bring the troops home now is the demand to stop the whole brutal process of recolonization. This means cancellation of the U.S. corporate contracts that have privatized and looted Iraqi resources, closing the hundreds of U.S. bases and the thousands of U.S. checkpoints, canceling the “search and destroy” missions and closing the secret prisons where tens of thousands of Iraqis are tortured and humiliated.

And closing the illegal, U.S.-created courts.

Sara Flounders is co-director of the International Action Center. She has edited five books on Iraq and coordinated several delegations, headed by Ramsey Clark, that visited Iraq to challenge the U.S. bombing and the sanctions.



The Fire This Time

U.S. WAR CRIMES IN THE GULF

By Ramsey Clark

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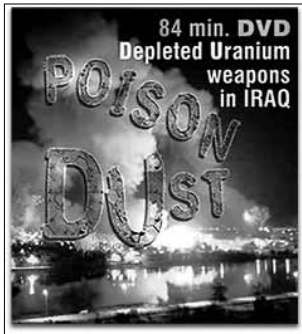
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Iraqi resistance sets back Bush’s ‘plan for victory’

By John Catalinotto

What will George W. Bush’s “Plan for Victory” speech and his promise to stay in Iraq mean? Iraqi resistance forces have given their answer. On Dec. 2, they set off a roadside bomb that killed 10 Marines on foot patrol near Falluja, the city U.S. forces virtually destroyed in November 2004 with troops, aerial bombs and heavy artillery.

One Marine corporal commented, “Sometimes it seems there is no point anymore.... If we were to stay till we’re finished, we’d probably never leave.” (New York Times, Dec. 3)

The next day, Dec. 3, Iraqi resistance fighters ambushed a unit of the puppet Iraqi army, the one Bush claims will take over control of the country as U.S. troops leave. Nineteen Iraqi army soldiers were killed as the resistance unit exploded a roadside bomb to trap an army convoy northeast of Baghdad and then opened fire on the patrol, according to police in the area. The media described this as a “carefully coordinated attack.”

Rumsfeld attacks media

Following a weekend that contradicted Bush’s confident words, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld focused a Dec. 5 talk at Johns Hopkins University on criticizing the media—for reporting only battles and bombings instead of alleged U.S.

“progress” in Iraq. He wanted more positive reporting, perhaps of the kind the U.S. is getting in the puppet Iraqi media when the Pentagon pays to have articles published there.

Rumsfeld was probably trying to counter the report by Rep. Jack Murtha, who said on Nov. 17 that “the number of attacks in Iraq has increased from 150 a week to more than 700 a week in the past year.” Murtha, a Democrat from Pennsylvania who is close to the Pentagon, had asked for a plan to rapidly withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq in order to save the Army from disintegration.

Many from the anti-war movement would agree that the establishment media has gaps in its reporting. Unlike Rumsfeld, however, they would be thinking of what really gets underreported: the jailing and assassination of Iraqi intellectuals, the increased use of U.S. air power to back up assaults on Iraqi towns, the torture of Iraqi captives.

Rumsfeld also claimed that Iraqi security forces were improving and that 214,000 Iraqis have been “trained and equipped.” Other U.S. and Iraqi analysts disputed this assessment. Iraqi Vice President Ghazi al-Yawer told the Associated Press on the same day that the training of Iraqi security forces has “suffered a big setback in the past six months, and that the security forces increasingly are being used to settle old

scores and make political gains.”

Rumsfeld used his talk to warn that sinister al-Qaeda-like forces were poised to set up a “super-caliphate” of Islamic countries, should the U.S. leave Iraq. This particular outcome, something nobody even mentioned as a remote possibility before the illegal U.S. invasion of Iraq, has now become Rumsfeld’s main excuse for continuing the war.

The “weapons of mass destruction” excuse has been completely discredited, and “democracy in the Middle East” is quickly losing credibility. Rumsfeld is scraping the bottom of the oil barrel, which is probably a good place to look for the real reasons the Bush gang insists on keeping U.S. troops in Iraq.

Rumsfeld completely misrepresented his earlier opinions on the expected outcome of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. “There is no question there were people who believed that they would be met as liberators,” he said in response to a question, “but anyone who had an optimistic view, I think has confronted reality. And it is clearly not easy. War is never easy. And you never heard a word like that out of my mouth, I don’t believe.”

Rumsfeld had championed the “shock and awe” strategy that was supposed to bring a quick military capture of Baghdad—which it did—and lead to Iraqis there greeting the U.S. troops as liberators—which they didn’t.

Coalition grows unwilling

The U.S. troops are not only hated by the Iraqis but are being abandoned by their alleged allies. Fewer armies remain in the “coalition of the willing,” and fewer troops are with each of these armies. At one point, the U.S., relying especially on arm-twisted client countries like Poland and South Korea, had troops from 38 countries in Iraq. Now there are under 24,000 mostly non-combat personnel from 27 nations.

Last spring, the Netherlands had 1,400 troops in Iraq. Now there are 19. Ukraine as of November had 876 troops in Iraq, but these are due home by Dec. 31. Even the U.S.-backed president there, Viktor Yushchenko, has to promise a pullout to his population. Bulgaria is set to pull out its 380 troops after Dec. 15 parliamentary elections in Iraq. The coalition grows increasingly unwilling.

There are still 160,000 U.S. troops in Iraq, many for their third tour. Many of these troops are reservists who had no idea when they joined up years ago that they would be expected to subdue an extensive uprising of a population fighting for the sovereignty of their nation. New recruits for both active and reserve military units, especially in the U.S. Army, still number way under quotas.

Meanwhile, students are trying to keep military recruiters off their campuses and away from high schools across the country. □

The Internet

Will there be a regime change?

By Gary Wilson

The U.S. was able to block a challenge to its control of the Internet at the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis on Nov. 16-18. “The U.S. can claim a short-term victory but faces a long-term war of attrition that will gradually erode its position,” predicts Milton Mueller of the Internet Governance Project.

The challenge was directed at ICANN—the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers.

ICANN was set up in 1998 by the Clinton administration at about the same time Vice President Al Gore was telling Wired News that he’d invented the Internet. ICANN was set up to move direct control of Internet names and addresses from an office in the U.S. Department of Commerce into the hands of a private, non-profit corporation.

ICANN was really an attempt to hide U.S. government control of the Internet behind the façade of an independent agency, while at the same time privatizing the lucrative Internet domain-name business. Domain names are the easy-to-remember names found on the Web, like www.cnn.com. When a user requests a page by the domain name, the name is looked up on a Domain Name Server. The name is matched to a numbered address used by the computer to reach the requested Web site.

Network Solutions, under contract to ICANN, was allowed to control the new, privately owned billion-dollar domain-name business. Network Solutions immediately engaged in price-fixing, setting a minimum price to be charged for names and putting a toll on every name change.

Network Solutions is now owned by Verisign, which altered the domain-name system so that all Internet users who might get lost on the Web are redirected to its own advertisement-filled search site. Verisign was also behind the Crazy Frog scandal, a marketing scam that bilked tens of millions of dollars from cell-phone users, mostly in Britain. Under pressure from the U.S. government, ICANN has agreed to give Verisign total control of .COM, including steep price increases.

When the Clinton administration created ICANN, the claim was made that ICANN would only temporarily be a private, U.S.-controlled corporation and that control of Internet names and addresses would be turned over to an international, non-governmental organization by the year 2000.

That never happened, although in each succeeding year pronouncements were made that said the goal was to turn control over to an international agency. But in June of this year, the U.S. Department of Commerce reversed that statement and said unequivocally that the U.S. intends to keep control of the Internet through

A People's History of Science

MINERS, MIDWIVES, & "LOW MECHANICKS"

By Clifford D. Conner

Science has always been a collective endeavor. In A People's History of Science the attention is at last turned to hunter-gatherers, peasant farmers, sailors, miners, blacksmiths, folk healers, and others who wrested the means of their survival from an encounter with nature on a daily basis.

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ICANN. Period. As one might guess from the fact that the Commerce Department is calling the shots, U.S. business interests are dictating this policy.

The Commerce Department statement opened up the battle that played out in Tunis in November. The European Union, Brazil, China, Iran and Pakistan were the leading challengers to U.S. unilateralism.

The Bush administration also made it clear that ICANN is not an independent organization when, in August, it overruled an ICANN decision to set up a new .XXX domain. As ICANNWatch reported at the time, “It is now clear that by sending its letter of Aug. 12 blocking approval of the .XXX domain, the U.S. government has done more to undermine ICANN’s status as a non-governmental, multi-stakeholder policy body than any of its Internet governance ‘enemies’ in the ITU, China, Brazil, or Iran.” The ITU is the International Telecommunications Union.

At the Tunis summit, Communications Minister Ignacio Gonzalez Planas of Cuba summarized the issues differently from what is heard from the European Union or other business rivals of the United States:

“The new information and communication technologies, far from becoming a means to move towards a fair world, and a more harmonic and equitable development, have contributed to deepen inequality and injustice, and have become an additional obstacle for the progress of the poor countries.

“The promising technological scenario which is being predicted is framed by the existing unfair international economic order and the neoliberal nature of the current globalization process, turning extraordinary achievements of people’s

intellect into privileges which are enjoyed by just a few countries.

“A few examples confirm these realities: In the United States and Canada there are 74 computers and 60 fixed phone lines per 100 inhabitants. In Africa there are 1.76 computers and 3.09 fixed lines per the same amount of people. Only 15 percent of the 6 billion inhabitants of the planet have Internet access. Out of them, 51.9 percent belongs to the United States, Canada and Europe, and only 2.5 percent to Africa.

“More than half of the world’s population does not have telephone access, which was invented more than a century ago. Forty percent of the telephone lines are found in just 23 developed countries, where less than 15 percent of the world population lives.

“More than 50 percent of the clients of the cell phone services and the Internet servers are found in developed countries. Without the actual democratization of the access to technological development, all the predictions regarding a new global economy, based on informatics and communications, and the transit towards the so-called ‘Information Society,’ will continue to be impossible for the vast majority of humanity.”

Gonzalez concluded: “Moving towards the so-called ‘Information Society’ requires, first of all, a world free of hunger, ignorance, unhealthiness, discrimination and exclusion. The hungry, sick, illiterate and excluded will never be able to understand the use of new technologies. We want to have a world in which the benefits of science and technology can be real tools to achieve progress for all the inhabitants of the planet.” □



Transit workers need a decent contract

Continued from page 1

union's will and its demand for a decent contract.

The TWU is fighting back with informational picket lines and is gathering community support. On Dec. 10, members will gather at New York's Javits Convention Center to vote on "future action."

The non-elected MTA Board, most of whose members are hand-picked by billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Gov. George Pataki, are soul mates of Wall Street bankers and bondholders who pocket the interest from the MTA's huge debt at exorbitant rates. Along with well-heeled vendors, they are the primary beneficiaries of the MTA budget.

Feeding on taxes from the working public, constantly increasing fares and real estate and other investments, the MTA has accumulated assets worth tens of billions of dollars, but its true worth is concealed behind the inscrutable language of chief financial officers. Holding vast and valuable property, the MTA is a big-business operation, Wall Street-style.

The subways and buses should be owned and operated by representatives of the transit workers and the public, elected from their communities. They have created the value and wealth of this giant enterprise. MTA property includes huge revenue-producing bridges and tunnels. Recently, State Comptroller Alan Hevesi reported a growing surplus of around \$1 billion from fare hikes on MetroCards, bridge and tunnel tolls, and exorbitant investment/real estate fees. The MTA had reported a \$76 million surplus—a \$934 million lie. This strategy is borrowed from Wall Street: to cook the books and then cry poverty to defeat the workers' demands for decent wage increases and benefits.

The MTA has no plans to bargain in good faith with TWU Local 100 and its members. It wants to eliminate more jobs. It has already closed booths and eliminated conductors and elevator operators, and is now demanding more productivity from the multinational workforce that labors underground on tracks, platforms and trains in dangerous, unhealthy conditions. Above ground, bus drivers are confronted with congested traffic and demanding, stressful schedules. Yet the MTA wants to attack sick leave and health benefits while extending the retirement age.

Subway workers and bus drivers are responsible for the safety of 7 million workers commuting to their jobs, while their own jobs are overloaded with risks. In contrast, the MTA board and its silk-suited allies dictate the destiny of the transit workers and the riding public from their heated, richly furnished offices.

Behind the lifestyle and arrogance of the MTA, which hypocritically claims concern for the riding public but plans to raise fares and bridge tolls over the next two years, is the role of the state—the legislators and courts. There is the 1967 Taylor law signed by New York State Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, a scion of the billionaire family noted for hijacking property and wealth at the expense of workers and the people for over a century.

The Taylor law prohibits strikes by public workers and imposes severe penalties on unions and members who resist unjust, coercive collective bargaining. It punishes workers with two days' loss of pay for each day on strike, as well as heavy fines on the union.

Since 1967, successor governors and mayors have sought court injunctions to block the transport union from striking. Former Mayor Rudolph Giuliani even used the law to include punishing fines against the TWU for merely advocating and organizing to strike—in violation of free speech rights. The most basic democratic rights to withhold labor and to freely assemble in a quest for economic justice are illegal and punishable. This is unacceptable and must be challenged. The entire labor movement has a stake in the transit struggle.

Negotiations will probably go down to the wire, outcome uncertain. This is truly a crisis for the transit workers and the riding public—victims of the insatiable self-serving interests of a predatory, parasitic class of oppressors. The unity of labor, the riding public and their communities—the millions who are the majority—must change this exploitive relationship of class forces. The struggle is political as well as economic. Public ownership is the answer and public transportation should be free.

The 33,000 transit workers deserve every nickel they're asking for, without concessions and tradeoffs, and a safe work environment. The public demands the right to a safe affordable ride. The millions of straphangers are inextricably tied to the transit workers and their union. The MTA is their enemy, too. □



Heather Cottin fifth from left at anti-imperialist conference in India.

INDIA

Anti-imperialist meeting stresses solidarity

Special to Workers World
Kolkata, India

On the second anniversary of the U.S. attack on Iraq, anti-imperialist groups in India last March mobilized a million people to form a human chain across Bengal, from the hills of Darjeeling to the coastal inlets of the Sunderbans.

On Nov. 24, one of the organizations involved, the All-India Anti-Imperialist Forum (AIAIF), held an international conference in Kolkata that stressed global cooperation in building "militant movements for peace and against imperialist oppression and aggression in all corners of the globe" in order to "thwart the sinister designs of the imperialists."

The AIAIF conference unanimously hailed the valiant struggle of the Iraqi people against the occupation of Iraq and upheld the fight of the Nepalese people against an autocratic, imperialist-backed king. Delegates saluted the resistance of peoples of Latin America, demanding that the U.S. end its economic blockade and all aggressive maneuvers against Cuba. Resolutions condemned the butchery of the Palestinian people by U.S.-supported Zionist Israel. Resolutions also condemned the imperialist powers' exploitation of Africa.

The General Secretary of the AIAIF, Dr. Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, opened the conference with a review of the struggle against imperialism since his group's founding in 1995. "During these 10 years the world has seen the rampant and inhuman demolition of civil and moral rights.... [I]mperialism has spread ... throughout the world using newer, more destructive weapons."

Delegates came from anti-imperialist groups in many countries, including the International Action Center in the U.S. In a videotape made for the event, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, founder of the IAC, told the conference, "Peoples of the world need to work together to overcome the concentrated power of wealth.... The imperative need is that we study hard, analyze carefully, reach out to each other to organize, to plan, to work to bring peace to earth."

The IAC, which has had solidarity relations with the AIAIF since 1995, was represented at this event by Heather Cottin, who was invited to make a 13-day speaking tour that encompassed Delhi, Bangalore, Mysore, Siliguri, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala) and the international conference in Kolkata.

Cottin told the conference that, "Because of the resistance of the Iraqi people, the world's people see that the U.S., while capable of inflicting horrible wounds, is incapable of defeating a people in resistance. This has given heart and strength to ... Syria and Iran as well as Cuba and Bolivarian Venezuela."

North of India is Nepal, an impoverished country of 28 million people where a united left front is struggling against King Gyanendra, an absolute monarch supported by the U.S. and Britain. Sunil Manandhar, president of the

Nepal Progressive Trade Union Federation (NPTUF), pointed out that in his country "an undeclared military autocratic dictatorship is reigning, pushing the nation to the verge of civil war." Manandhar said that for the "working class movement there is nothing more urgent and more important than to internationalize the anti-imperialist struggle."

East of India lies another deeply oppressed country: Bangladesh, with 144 million people. Khalekuzzaman, the convener of the Socialist Party of Bangladesh, told the conference that in his country, the "U.S. and India, with the collaboration of our ruling class, are plundering our natural resources, including oil, gas and coal. They are destroying our industries and agriculture. The U.S. is eying our main seaport, which is the lifeline of our economy. This is threatening peace and stability in our region."

Khalekuzzaman commended "the heroic resistance war of the Iraqi masses, Palestinian people, and DPRK, Cuba, Venezuela and Syria at the forefront of the struggle against U.S. hegemonism."

Other international speakers included Nina Andreyeva of Russia's All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, who contrasted socialist international cooperation with imperialist globalization that "sharply increases inequality and destroys the environment," and Nisha, a delegate from Turkey and North Kurdistan's Marxist-Leninist Communist Party, who called for the formation of "institutions that would provide regional co-ordination ... to combine anti-imperialist struggle with the fight against capitalism."

India is one of the major countries providing cheap labor and resources for imperialism. From Starbuck's Tazo tea to tomatoes for Heinz ketchup, from information technology for BankAmerica to hand-crafted textiles, the U.S. is India's number-one trading partner, and the ravages of imperialism are visible everywhere.

Although two of India's states—West Bengal and Tripura—are led by left fronts that include parliamentary-oriented communist parties, which also command huge votes in several other states, even there the rapid spread of privatization and globalization has enmeshed Indian workers in the web of imperialism. Some 65 percent of India's population lives below the poverty level while commercialism is spreading among the middle class.

Nevertheless, at press conferences and meetings where Heather Cottin spoke on her tour, amazement was frequently expressed at how the victims of Hurricane Katrina were left to suffer and die in the richest country in the world.

AIAIF members were keen to maintain an ongoing relationship with the International Action Center to coordinate anti-imperialist activities with comrades in the United States. Cottin explained the significance for the U.S. anti-war movement of the unity between Black, Latin@, Native American, lesbian/gay/bi/trans and international activists in the Troops Out Now Coalition, of which the IAC is a part. □

Iran, the IAEA & U.S.-EU machinations

By Ardeshir Ommani

The Iranian government’s statement earlier this fall that it might withdraw from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) drew immediate threats of force and even war from the U.S. and British governments. It was at this juncture that, according to a Nov. 9 Al-Jazeera report, Iran decided to set up a market for oil and associated derivatives that sends out invoices for energy contracts in euros rather than dollars.

Al-Jazeera wrote, “The contention that this could unseat the dollar’s dominance as the de facto currency” of reserve for oil and major commercial and world financial transactions “may be overstated, but this has not stopped many commentators from linking America’s political disquiet with Iran to the proposed Iranian Oil Bourse (IOB). The plan to set up the IOB was put forward, for the first time, in Iran’s Third Development Plan of 2000-2005. But the depreciation of the dollar since the year 2000 has been one strong reason for the shift to euros.

“It is a general consensus that if the plan is successfully implemented, the IOB will reward Iran with concrete economic benefits, especially if more of the invoices of its energy contracts are issued in euros. From the economic and geopolitical point of view, invoicing in euros is a rational strategy, since 45 percent of its total trade is with the euro zone. Furthermore, Europe is the final destination for one-third of Iran’s oil exports, while the U.S. is not a direct purchaser of Iran’s oil production.

“Every student of economic discipline is aware that the U.S., by fixing the dollar in the position of world reserve currency, has

enjoyed tremendous advantage in international trade and benefited handsomely for more than half a century.”

According to Emilie Rutledge of Aljazeera.net, “George Perkovich of the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has argued that Iran’s decision to consider invoicing oil sales in euros is ‘part of a very intelligent strategy to go on the offensive in every way possible and mobilize other actors against the U.S.’”

The Iranian government’s decision to begin the process of converting yellowcake uranium to the gaseous state of uranium tetrafluoride invited an immediate reaction by George Bush and Tony Blair. Both threatened Iran with isolation and Blair warned that Iran will face “a much more difficult life” if it does not follow the direction set by the Western states, according to ABC Online of Nov. 3.

The response of the Iranian people was to demonstrate by the millions in many cities. Realizing it could not cow them into accepting the language of force and violence, the U.S.-EU coalition of imperialists came up with a new design for a new day. This fresh mirage looked like a compromise that Iran could not reject in the eyes of the so-called international community—another name for the big powers that rule the world.

The new plan proposed to grant Iran the right to continue the conversion process as it has done since August 2005, that is, the chemical change prior to the enrichment of uranium that would be needed to make usable fuel. But the process of enriching uranium would be done in Russia, which would ship the fuel for energy reactors back to Iran.

From the start of this plot, the EU and

U.S. knew that the Iranian people and their government would not accept such a pseudo solution to their inviolable right to determine their own destiny. Meanwhile, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was shuttling between Moscow and Beijing to convince the leaders there to bring pressure on Iran to give up its right to a full-fledged nuclear energy program and accept the solutions of ever-dependency on other countries for the future generations to come. According to the Nov. 10 New York Times, the new proposal is an effort to give Iran a face-saving way out of its standoff, reflecting the views of officials from both the U.S. and Europe.

The Iranian response on Nov. 14 to the fraudulent proposal was a resounding “no.” Iran went a step further and announced that it was ready to cooperate with other countries in a joint venture to produce fuel for its civilian nuclear energy reactors. Both Russian and Chinese leaders have often said that Iran has an inalienable right to the uranium enrichment process within the framework of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. These two countries also disassociated themselves from the new scheme of Washington and London.

On the other hand, Bush and Blair came into possession of a new propaganda tool against Iran, hoping to influence the IAEA board members at their Nov. 24 meeting to refer Iran’s actions to the UN Security Council. The problem for Washington and London was that the composition of the IAEA board was to change by that date; the newcomers are Cuba, Belarus and Syria. In mid-October Condoleezza Rice had admitted that the U.S. might lack the votes to pass a resolution referring Iran to the UN Security Council. No action was taken against Iran by the IAEA during its Nov. 24 meeting in Vienna. (Christian Science Monitor, Dec. 6)

By early November, Iran had invited the IAEA to inspect its Parchin facility, a military base that the U.S. had claimed to be the most intensive Iranian nuclear enrich-

ment plant for the production of nuclear bombs. IAEA spokesperson Melissa Fleming confirmed that the UN inspectors “were allowed to visit everywhere at the complex, do interviews, and take samples.” She reaffirmed that “we are pleased, we got access; it was not restricted. We were allowed to see all the buildings and to take environmental samples.” (New York Times, Nov. 7)

But anytime the imperialist establishments and their henchmen in the U.S. or abroad do not like what they hear from international agencies, they begin discrediting their results and challenging the legitimacy and credibility of their findings. For example, the Oct. 14 Toronto Star tried to discredit the UN agency but said not a word about Israel, which has already amassed a stockpile of nuclear weapons and is not even a party to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Apparently, the newspaper’s editors think that some countries and classes are above the law.

The U.S. has resorted to its old tricks, ones concocted in the laboratories of the CIA and the offices of President George W. Bush and Vice-President Dick Cheney—who defends exempting the U.S. military from the ban on torture of prisoners kidnapped around the world.

For its final act of deception before the IAEA meeting on Sept. 24, the U.S. government publicized that it was in possession of a laptop showing Iran’s “intention” of planning to construct atomic warheads to fit its new missile, called Shahab (Shooting Star). The Bush administration, apparently understanding the width of its credibility gap, discussed the content of the laptop computer in a dozen private and secret settings, including the top of a skyscraper in Vienna. The content of the laptop is not actual data from practical research study or test results, but simply a simulation.

A European diplomat who was privy to the secret meeting said after the gathering, “I can fabricate that data.” □

MUNDO OBRERO

Reporte de una trabajadora de la GM sobre los despidos

Continúa de página 12

pañía; ell@s no controlan la influencia política cuando tiene que ver con las políticas del gobierno como por ejemplo los estándares de eficiencia de combustible o el cuidado nacional de la salud. Pero sí son ell@s quienes sufren más intensamente de este sistema basado en ganancias.

Desde un máximo de empleos, casi 500.000 a fines de los años 70, ahora quedan sólo aproximadamente 110.000 emplead@s de GM en los EEUU. Por medio de la automatización y del equipo de alta tecnología, la exportación de trabajos a subcontratistas y el uso extensivo de partes listas para instalar, est@s trabajador@s, menos numerosos, producen aproximadamente la misma cantidad de vehículos.

Un estudio hecho por el Departamento del Censo, que anualmente hace encuestas de las industrias de manufactura, calcula que cada trabajador/a produce un valor de \$463.000. Tomando en cuenta hasta el costo de salarios y beneficios, horas extras y pensiones, queda claro que cada trabajador/a proporciona a la compañía una ganancia enorme. Sin embargo, GM está tratando de aumentar esta ganancia por emplead@ al competir con las demás compañías que producen carros y dominar el mercado y los accionistas.

GM ha lanzado un asalto sin precedente contra sus trabajador@s y su sindicato. Además de anunciar el cierre de fábricas el 21 de noviembre, la compañía acaba de quitar más de \$1 mil millones de los beneficios de seguro de salud al demandar la renegociación del contrato. La posible quiebra de la empresa implica la amenaza de que la GM va a invalidar totalmente sus

contratos con el sindicato, lo que amenaza las pensiones de cientos de miles de jubilad@s. El liderato nacional de la UAW está apresurándose para defenderse contra los ataques múltiples de la GM.

En este momento, l@s trabajador@s en Doraville tienen posiblemente dos años para decidir sus planes personales para el futuro. Algun@s son elegibles para jubilarse, pero hasta esa opción está llena de incertidumbre. Aquell@s con mucha antigüedad esperan obtener una transferencia a otra fábrica. L@s trabajador@s más jóvenes probablemente tendrán que buscar un empleo en otro lugar por menos salario y menos beneficios.

L@s trabajador@s de base en Doraville y en todas las demás fábricas de montaje, fundaciones de acero y fábricas que producen las partes de acero saben que la UAW fue fundada por las acciones audaces y decisivas, incluso ocupaciones de las fábricas en Flint, Michigan, hace 70 años.

Tod@s l@s trabajador@s, sean sindicalizad@s o no, serán afectad@s por el esfuerzo de la GM para reducir los salarios y beneficios. El movimiento sindicalizado, junto con sus aliados en las comunidades, tienen que desarrollar una estrategia para contrarrestar esta guerra agresiva y preventiva de la América corporativa.

L@s trabajador@s de Doraville quieren saber qué hacer.

Mathiowetz es una veterana con casi 30 años como trabajadora de la GM, primero en la fábrica Lakewood Assembly, ahora cerrada, luego en la fábrica Delphi en Lockport, NY, y ahora en el departamento de recortado de Doraville.

South Africa to allow same-sex marriages

By David Hoskins

South Africa’s Constitutional Court recently ruled that the country’s ban on same-sex marriages is unlawful and gave parliament one year to bring marriage laws into conformity with the constitution. The definition of marriage will be changed from its current formulation of a “union between one man and one woman” to a “union between two persons.”

South Africa’s constitution was introduced in 1996 following the collapse of apartheid. It became the world’s first constitution to explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

The Supreme Court of Appeals had ruled a year before the recent Constitutional Court decision that the existing marriage laws violated the constitution’s ban on discrimination. However, under right-wing pressure, some of it from churches, the Home Affairs Department appealed the ruling on the grounds that only the legislature could modify the definition of marriage.

On the surface the South African struggle for same-sex equality is not all that different from what occurs in the United States with the Christian right and other reactionary elements providing an obstacle to progressive change.

What is different is the amount of progress that South Africans have made in

just over one decade of democracy and self-determination. Prior to the Constitutional Court’s ruling, South Africa already had a reputation for being in the vanguard on same-sex rights.

The South African system has now enshrined a greater degree of equality than that which exists in most of the so-called advanced “democracies” in Europe and North America.

The disparity in justice is an indicator of the development gap between the progressive forces in formerly colonized nations and those in the aggressor states. Within powerful capitalist countries with a history of imperialist or colonialist aggression—such as the United States—the peoples’ movements are often less developed and meet with fierce opposition. This hampers the progress of social change.

Progress can occur by comparative leaps and bounds in former colonies where a recently freed people, steeled by their struggle, experiment with new expressions of liberty and radical social policies. The pace of progress is a testament to how anti-imperialist and anti-colonial movements such as the African National Congress are of benefit to all people living in former colonies. Complete liberation for all oppressed people is dependent upon the movement’s ability to carry the struggle through to its logical conclusion—revolutionary socialism. □

En Massachusetts y Nueva York

Venezuela vende petróleo con descuento a pobres

Por Evan Sarmiento y Bryan G. Pfeifer
Boston

En un resonante gesto de internacionalismo humanitario, CITGO, la subsidiaria propiedad de la empresa petrolera estatal de Venezuela, PDVSA, comenzó el envío de 12 millones de galones de combustible para la calefacción doméstica, para 45.000 familias de bajos ingresos y organizaciones de servicios sociales en Massachusetts durante la semana del 27 de noviembre.

Un programa similar está en proceso en el condado del Bronx de Nueva York, y conversaciones preliminares sobre la posibilidad de subvenciones de CITGO para combustible de calefacción doméstica también está ocurriendo en Maine y en otras partes de los EEUU donde regularmente hay temperaturas muy bajas.

Como resultado de los precios artificialmente altos y restricciones en la producción, los costos del combustible para la calefacción doméstica se espera que aumente entre el 30 y el 50 por ciento este invierno. La oferta de Venezuela ayudará a miles de familias de la clase trabajadora y gente oprimida que hubieran sido incapaces de calentar adecuadamente sus hogares y enfrentar el riesgo de morir de frío.

La firma del contrato de Massachusetts ocurrió el 22 de noviembre en la casa de Linda Nelly y Paul Nelly en Quincy, Mass. La pareja tiene tres hijos, uno con diabetes. Linda Kelly tiene esclerosis múltiple. Los Kelly son elegibles para las subvenciones de combustible de la PDVSA porque su asistencia estatal para combustible se acabó el invierno pasado.

“Él está haciendo lo correcto”, dijo Linda Kelly, hablando del Presidente de Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, quien dispuso las subvenciones. Chávez prometió esta ayuda que puede salvar vidas, en una reunión con el Rev. Jesse Jackson en Caracas el pasado agosto. “Había gente que iban a morir de frío... Esto es algo enorme”, dijo Kelly.

El combustible subvencionado estará disponible para hogares de Massachusetts que reciben ayuda federal y quienes han terminado su subvención federal de \$550 anuales. Las familias pagarían aproximadamente \$276 por 200 galones, un ahorro de aproximadamente \$184. El envío duraría alrededor de tres semanas.

La CITGO entregará el combustible, y Citizens Energy, una organización sin fines de lucro que proporciona combustible subvencionado, lo repartirá. Luego aproximadamente 350 negociantes locales entregarán aproximadamente un 75 por ciento del combustible a las familias locales. La Alianza de Consumidores de Energía de Massachusetts repartirá o venderá la cuarta parte que queda, a asilos de desamparados, grupos que reparten comidas y otros grupos con bajos ingresos.

Venezuela ha arreglado el despacho de 285.000 barriles a Massachusetts dentro de las próximas semanas con un descuento del 40 por ciento.

“Este programa representa la ejecución de una promesa hecha al pueblo de los Estados Unidos por nuestro presidente, Hugo Chávez,” dijo el embajador venezolano Bernardo Álvarez Herrera en la rueda de prensa en Quincy. “Nosotros estamos comprometidos a trabajar por un hemisferio con menos pobreza y más desarrollo, ya sea al enseñar a 1.5 millones adultos en Venezuela a leer o ayudar a los residentes de Massachusetts pasar mejor un largo invierno.”

Todas las mayores corporaciones de petróleo estadounidenses fueron invitadas a participar en acuerdos semejantes; todas se negaron a hacerlo a pesar de las ganancias en 2005 que han superado el récord a causa de su decisión de reducir la producción durante y después de los huracanes Katrina y Wilma. Esta decisión resultó en la subida de precios.

Esas compañías también se han beneficiado al recibir subvenciones federales que

valen billones. La mayor parte de las pérdidas del Gran Petróleo que ocurrieron cuando refinerías, conductos y otras infraestructuras fueron destruidas por los huracanes también probablemente será recuperada a través de los seguros.

Según Standard & Poor's, ExxonMobil, la corporación de petróleo más grande en el mundo negociada públicamente en la Bolsa, acaba de tener su más alta ganancia del cuarto del año, \$9,92 mil millones, una ganancia del 75 por ciento sobre su tercer cuarto en el 2004. ExxonMobil también ha batido el récord en la industria con \$100,72 mil millones de ventas. BP-Amoco, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Marathon y Royal Dutch/Shell también tuvieron ganancias récord.

En contraste, el Presidente Chávez ha prometido poner al lado 10 por ciento de todo el petróleo que las refinerías de CITGO produzcan, para el programa de petróleo-para-los-pobres de su propio país. Hasta ahora, Venezuela está suministrando petróleo subvencionado o descontado a más de 20 países en Sur América, el Caribe y otros lugares.

Gran Petróleo saca ganancias mientras muere gente pobre

Es testimonio a la situación miserable en los Estados Unidos donde la ganancia es más importante que los seres humanos, que la gente pobre tenga que mirar hacia un país subdesarrollado como Venezuela, todavía luchando por industrializarse después de décadas de neocolonialismo, para conseguir petróleo a precio reducido.

Cada año en los Estados Unidos un promedio de 689 personas muere de hipotermia, una emergencia medical prevenible, que resulta de la exposición prolongada a temperaturas frías, dice el Centro del Control de Enfermedades (CDC) federal.

Las muertes relacionadas a la hipotermia son prevenibles. Un perturbador

reporte del Southern Medical Journal divulgó que 61,5 por ciento de tales muertes el invierno pasado, fueron entre afro-american@s. El CDC confirmó los descubrimientos del Journal, concediendo que el acceso insuficiente a la calefacción mata a afro-american@s y latin@s en una tasa más elevada que a blanc@s.

El sueño de Bolívar es resucitado

El gesto de genuino internacionalismo de Venezuela, que abarca la clase trabajadora y oprimida de los Estados Unidos, es fundamental a la constitución de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela. Este documento garantiza la economía de solidaridad y la ayuda mutua, en vez de la del comercio libre y el neoliberalismo que están utilizados para saquear a países subdesarrollados, robar sus recursos naturales y poner las ganancias en primera posición, resultando en el empobrecimiento de países enteros.

La ayuda mutua es una parte de la política exterior de Venezuela. Venezuela ha abogado por la Alternativa Bolivariana de las Américas (ALBA) como opositora al Área de Libre Comercio de las Américas (FTAA) auspiciada por los Estados Unidos. El uso internacionalista de la riqueza de petróleo por Chávez amenaza la esencia del neocolonialismo en Sur América porque el ALBA abarca la integración, el desarrollo y la unidad hemisférica en oposición al saqueo del imperialismo.

El gobierno estadounidense y el Gran Petróleo están preocupados, por supuesto, por estos sucesos. Ellos sostienen que Chávez usa “el petróleo como un arma” para socavar la política exterior de los Estados Unidos. Venezuela no está usando el petróleo como una arma, sino está usándolo dentro del contexto de integración sudamericana y “el socialismo del siglo 21”, tratando de alentar a los países clientes de los Estados Unidos a quitarse de la influencia del imperialismo. □

Reporte de una trabajadora de la GM sobre los despidos

Por Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

La noticia se propagó como pólvora a través de la cavernosa fabrica de montaje de la GM en Doraville del estado de Georgia el lunes antes de los días feriados de noviembre: “Estamos en la lista de victimas. Nos van a cerrar.”

De fila a fila, en el primer turno, luego en el segundo, l@s trabajador@s siguieron cumpliendo con sus tareas, fabricando más de mil minivans por día, a pesar de que su mundo acaba de derrumbarse.

El 21 de noviembre, el oficial en jefe de la GM, Rick Wagoner, dio la segunda parte del anuncio que hizo a principios de verano, que el productor de automóviles más grande del mundo planeaba recortar miles de trabajos para el 2008.

En una conferencia de prensa, Wagoner reveló la identidad de las 12 fabricas que iban a ser cerradas. La cifra de trabajador@s afectad@s había subido hasta 30.000.

Desde Oklahoma hasta Michigan y Tennessee, trabajador@s y sus familias están

luchando frente a una avalancha de emociones—ira, preocupación, tristeza, disgusto, resignación y determinación a resistir.

Una docena de comunidades están enfrentando pérdidas económicas que van a impactar sobre escuelas locales y servicios sociales. El Centro de Estudios Automovilísticos, un centro de investigación de la industria, estima que 9,4 empleos en otros sectores de la economía dependen de cada trabajador/a en la industria de automóviles. Todo, desde los repuestos hasta los restaurantes locales y gasolineras sufren cuando se cierra una fábrica de automóviles.

Algunas facilidades se espera que cierren dentro de pocos meses a principios de 2006; otras, como por ejemplo la fabrica de Doraville terminarán con la producción del modelo corriente en 2008.

Propiedades valiosas

Al ser una de las facilidades de producción de la GM más antiguas, Doraville ha sido mencionado a menudo cuando se habla de la posibilidad de cerrar una fabrica de autos. Ocupa 157 hectáreas de ter-

reno muy valiosos dentro del interior del perímetro de la carretera que rodea a Atlanta. Urbanizadores de centros comerciales y condominios lujosos están haciendo cola para comprar la propiedad. GM puede ganar millones de dólares con la venta. Pero para los más de 3.000 hombres y mujeres que construyen automóviles todos los días en Doraville, algun@s durante la mayoría de sus vidas adultas, la pérdida de sus empleos es más que la pérdida de un cheque.

En algunos casos, el/la trabajador/a de hoy es la tercera generación de trabajador@s automovilistas. Sus abuelos estuvieron entre los primeros que trabajaron en Doraville y ayudaron a establecer el local 10 del UAW (siglas en inglés por el sindicato de trabajador@s de la industria de automóviles). Hay muchas familias extendidas con hermanos y hermanas, tías y tíos que han criado a sus familias con los salarios y beneficios ganados en décadas de lucha.

Trabajadores de más antigüedad identifican con orgullo los distintos modelos que han fabricados y los premios otorga-

dos a la fabrica por su eficiencia y calidad.

Dijo uno, “Es como si dejaran caer una bomba sobre nosotros. No les importa cuanto hemos hecho por la GM”.

La fuerza laboral de Doraville incluye centenares de personas que se trasladaron de otras partes del país cuando GM cerró sus fábricas en el pasado. Ya han experimentado el trauma de dejar atrás todo lo que para ell@s es familiar y tuvieron que restablecer sus vidas en un nuevo lugar.

GM afirma que los devastadores cierres de fábricas son necesarios para que la corporación resucite y sea rentable de nuevo. Desea tener el uso del cien por ciento de sus facilidades. En otras palabras, las fábricas actuales son capaces de producir más vehículos, pero GM no puede vender tal cantidad y obtener altas ganancias.

La cruel verdad del capitalismo es que l@s trabajador@s no son responsables por las decisiones que hizo la gerencia en el diseño, el desarrollo o el comercio. Ell@s no autorizaron los bonos multimillonarios que reciben los oficiales más altos de la com-