

MUNDO OBRERO

Victoria para Simón Trinidad
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EDITORIAL

It's over and we won

It ain't over 'til it's over, said Yogi Berra.

Well, we can finally report that the case of Renco vs. Workers World is over. The time in which this multi-billion-dollar conglomerate could file an appeal has expired and the judge's decision dismissing the charge against us stands.

To backtrack: In February of this year, WW was notified by attorneys for the Renco Group, which at that time owned WCI Steel in Warren, Ohio, that an article we had written about the steelworkers' pensions ("WCI Steel Bankruptcy Robs Workers' Pensions," WW, Feb. 14,

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2 million unite in Beirut Protests demand U.S. puppets out

By Bill Cecil
Beirut, Lebanon

They came by foot and on motorbike or jammed into cars, vans and buses. Women and men, most of them young, some with their children. From the south, east and north they came—from everywhere but the sea. They poured into central Beirut until the parliament building was surrounded by a sea of Lebanese flags.

By 3 p.m. Friday, Dec. 1, nearly half of Lebanon was there. Two million voices roared "America out of Lebanon" and "We want a free government." On Saturday and Sunday they rallied again. As of Dec. 5, tens of thousands remained camped in a giant tent city outside parliament. They are vowing to stay until the U.S.-backed government of Fuad Siniora resigns.

On Sunday night, Dec. 3, the forces of wealth and power struck back in cowardly fashion. Two protesters were shot to death in an ambush as they drove through a right-wing neighborhood on their way home from the rally. Several others were wounded.

On Tuesday, thousands went to Beirut's Martyrs' Cemetery to lay to rest Ahmed Mahmoud, 20, the first martyr of the new struggle for democracy in Lebanon. Mahmoud, a member of the Amal Movement, was one of those gunned down as he returned home from the huge protest rally.

The killers were believed to be members of Saad Hariri's Future Movement, which supports U.S.-backed Prime Minister Fuad Siniora. Informed sources say the army has promised not to act against protesters. But the U.S. is reportedly helping build up Lebanon's Internal Security Force to suppress Lebanon's democratic opposition.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Tom Casey denounced "threats of intimidation and violence ... aimed at toppling Lebanon's legitimate and elected government." He was speaking not of Mahmoud's assassins but of the massive popular protests against Siniora's regime.

Heavily armed soldiers continue to surround government buildings and patrol the streets. But people strongly feel they

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have the soldiers' sympathy and that the prime minister is afraid to order the army to stop the protests.

Unity and diversity

The huge crowd had come out Friday on only 27 hours' notice, after a televised call by Sayid Hassan Nasrallah. Nasrallah is general secretary of Hezbollah, one of the many parties that make up the March 8 alliance, Lebanon's democratic opposition. Hezbollah is based among Shiite Muslims, Lebanon's largest and poorest community. But it is popular in all Lebanese communities because it repelled last summer's Israeli attack while the Siniora regime did nothing.

A majority who came were Shiites. They came from the Dayhe—Beirut's impoverished southern suburbs—and from war-torn villages in the South and the Bekaa Valley. Many had lost loved ones last summer when Israel's U.S.-made bombs and missiles rained down upon their homes. Many had taken up arms against Israel's U.S.-funded war machine.

But they were joined by hundreds of thousands of Christians from East Beirut and from the mountains of the north. And by Sunni Muslims, Druze and Armenians as well. There were Palestinians too, exiled to Lebanon for generations by Israeli apartheid, as well as "guest workers" from Syria, Jordan and Egypt.

All expressed common desires in their conversations with

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Struggle rising:
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Gigantic march from the Zócalo down the Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico City, Dec. 1, to protest the inauguration of Felipe Calderón and in support of the people's president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

PHOTO: ALAN ROTH

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As economic crisis grows

Police repression affects all workers

By Monica Moorehead
New York

The Nov. 25 police shootings of three unarmed young African-American men in Queens, N.Y., continue to evoke deep-seated feelings of righteous anger and distrust towards the New York Police Department and the city administration.

Several undercover police officers emptied 50 bullets into a moving car at 4 a.m., resulting in the death of 23-year-old Sean Bell and the wounding of two of his friends: Joseph Guzman, shot 11 times, and Trent Benefield, shot three times. The three men were leaving a bachelor party for Bell, who was scheduled to be married later that same day, when they were confronted by plain-clothes police.

Guzman and Benefield were reportedly handcuffed to their hospital beds before they were operated on for their wounds.

These tragic shootings are the latest in a long list of deadly police shootings of Black, Latin@ and Asian people in New York over several decades. Similar to many other urban areas, the police in this city are viewed as a repressive, occupying force that follows up racial profiling with terror, especially in the working-class communities of color.

Police who carry out acts of brutality against people of color are very seldom brought up on felony charges, much less indicted. District attorneys put enormous pressure on grand juries to find some excuse to let the police off the hook.

Since the police are central to the criminal justice system, the laws are written to protect them and not the people victimized by them. In the case of the Nov. 25 shootings, the police involved have been put on administrative leave but are still on the payroll.

Black activists call for citywide protest

On Dec. 4, leaders of the Brooklyn-based December 12 Movement along with City Councilperson Charles Barron held a press conference at One Police Plaza, the headquarters of the NYPD. The main purpose of this event was to announce the first in a series of protests to “Resist Fascism and the Rise of the American Police State,” to be held Dec. 6 at One Police Plaza.

Attorney Roger Wareham from D12 stated that the protest had been planned for a month in response to increased complaints of police abuse. He characterized Bell’s death as an “execution.” The protest will demand the firing of Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly and Assistant Police Chief Anthony J. Izzo, head of the NYPD’s Organized Crime Control Bureau.

Councilperson Barron spoke on how the city is running out of chances to stop an angry explosion of Black people, who are fed up with police brutality. Barron recalled the many Black people who have been killed by the cops but never received any kind of justice—that is, no police were sent to jail—including Eleanor Bumpurs, Malcolm Ferguson, Timothy Stansbury Jr., Amadou Diallo and Patrick Dorismond.

Barron answered critics who stated that the shootings of Bell, Guzman and Benefield were not racially motivated because two of the cops involved were also Black. “The victims’ having Black skin makes the shootings racist.



Charles Barron speaks to the media Dec. 4 on rampant police brutality in NYC. Viola Plummer is to his left.

Race is alive and well in New York City,” he said.

He went on to say that just because certain Black people hold high positions, like U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas or former NYPD Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward, doesn’t mean that institutionalized racism is over. Barron called for all grand juries that focus on police killings to be made public.

Viola Plummer, a leader of D12 and a former political prisoner, stated, “Unless the people take over the reins of power on a federal, state and local level, the fascistic nature of the state will not abate.” She also talked about how the so-called war on terror was just another excuse to target Muslims, Arabs and South Asians along with Black, Latin@, poor and working people.

Police repression and economic crisis

The Nov. 25 shootings not only impacted the lives of Bell, Guzman and Benefield and their families and friends but the larger Black community throughout every borough in New York.

Gentrification is deepening in Harlem and Brooklyn, driving out the poor to make room for the wealthy and affluent; unemployment and underemployment are intensifying poverty and despair, especially for young people, with the unemployment rate for young Black men in New York close to 50 percent; students of color are dropping out of school at astronomical rates while the police treat them like criminals; hospitals and clinics are closing their doors, especially in the poorest areas. It is no coincidence that police brutality and occupation have become even more omnipresent.

These deplorable conditions are part of the overall assault on workers’ rights, including low wages, disappearing pensions, little to no health care, speed-ups, layoffs, the demonizing of immigrant workers and much more.

The police exist as an armed force separate and apart from the people to keep order on behalf of the wealthy owners of industry, banking and commerce. Maintaining “order” means using all kinds of repressive measures to keep the masses down and divided.

Poverty, racism and suffering have sown the seeds of rebellion, as history has shown. The police and the class interests they protect fear the rebellions that are sure to come—whether they are in the oppressed communities or during a strike. This makes it even more important for working people and progressive movements to come out in solidarity with the oppressed communities to fight against police brutality wherever it rears its ugly head.

E-mail: mmoorehead@workers.org



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SPRINGFIELD

Niece of Rosa Parks honors legacy

By Catherine Donaghy
Springfield, Mass.

A multinational crowd of more than 300 students, some from area high schools, as well as faculty members and local elected officials filled Scibelli Hall at Springfield Technical Community College on Dec. 1 to commemorate the legacy of Rosa Parks, legendary civil rights leader.

Dr. Arlene Rodriguez, the first Latin@ dean of the college, moderated the second annual Rosa Parks Day celebration and expressed her belief that the event “was likely to become a tradition” at the college.

Keynote speaker Rhea McCauley, the niece of Rosa Parks, declared her hope that Dec. 1 would become a national holiday in recognition of her aunt. Reflecting on her recent trip to Boston, she said that the Boston Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee, along with the STCC annual event, made Massachusetts “a spearhead for what will be a movement against racism and social and economic injustices across the country.”

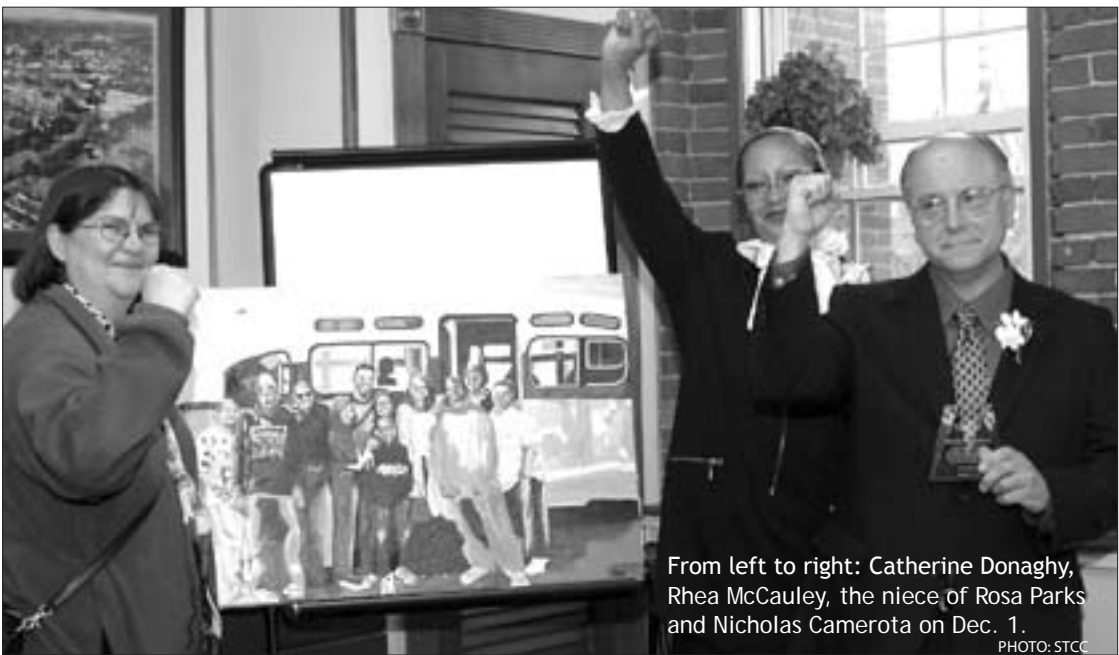
Nicholas Camerota, vice-president of the STCC Professional Association and co-chair of the Springfield Rosa Parks Day Organizing Committee, addressed the “heavy burdens placed on the students as they struggle to pay their bills while studying to earn their diplomas,” and stressed the need for more funding for public education. The committee is a partnership between the college and the community.

E. Henry Twiggs, co-chair of the committee, received an award for his efforts from the campus union. He stated

that the committee was attempting to have Dec. 1 observed annually by the college as Rosa Parks Day.

Remarks were made by the spouse of Massachusetts governor-elect Deval Patrick, attorney Diane Patrick, who was invited by the STCC Professional Association to speak at the event. Showing their support and participation in the event, nearly 1,000 STCC students had signed a statement supporting the campus union’s invitation.

Both Patrick and McCauley related personal incidents of racial bigotry, and Patrick urged the audience to “not remain silent in the face of hate anymore. ... This is the lesson that history has taught us.” □



From left to right: Catherine Donaghy, Rhea McCauley, the niece of Rosa Parks and Nicholas Camerota on Dec. 1.
PHOTO: STCC

Youth fight back on Rosa Parks Day

A march was held in New York to commemorate Rosa Parks Day, Dec. 1, and continue that legacy of struggle. Organized by FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) leader and high school student Mia Cruz, the march focused on the criminalization of youth, demanding removal of the roving police scanners recently implemented in New York City schools. Students have suffered physical and emotional abuse at the hands of the cops who enforce the scanners, as well as have had their personal property, such as cell phones, markers and iPods, confiscated.

—Report and photo by LeiLani Dowell



Remembering Fred Hampton

By Steve Millies

Dec. 4 is the 37th anniversary of the assassination of Black Panther Party leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in Chicago. In the early morning of Dec. 4, 1969, Chicago police attacked a house on the city’s West Side where several Panthers were living.

Hampton was killed while sleeping in his bed. There is a well-known picture of a Chicago cop grinning as he’s wheeling out Hampton’s corpse.

The police fired close to a hundred bullets. The Panthers opened up their house to the community to show what really happened.

This didn’t prevent the Chicago Tribune from printing pictures of a door that was riddled by “bullet holes” from shots allegedly fired by the Panthers. These “bullet holes” were actually nails.

The documentary “The Assassination of Fred Hampton” helped to expose this lie.

Today the Chicago Tribune controls a media empire that includes Newsday, the Baltimore Sun and the Los Angeles Times. In 1983 the Tribune repeated racist slander that Harold Washington, then campaigning to be Chicago’s first Black mayor, was a child molester.

Members of the McCormick family, which controlled International Harvester, continue to be the largest stockholders in the Tribune Company. The 1886 workers’ rally at Chicago’s Haymarket was called because strikers at McCormick’s factory were fired upon by cops.

Fred Hampton was only 21 years old when he was murdered. He was an extremely talented organizer. Hampton built the Black Panther Party not only in Chicago but throughout Illinois.

Fred Hampton was the quarterback of his high school football team in Melrose Park, Illinois, just outside Chicago. His father was a worker at International Harvester.

Even though he died so young, Fred Hampton did so much. The Young Lords were a street gang in Chicago’s Puerto Rican Community. When Fred Hampton was in jail with the leader of the Young Lords, he won him over to revolutionary politics. The rest is history.

Fred Hampton is best known for

saying “You can kill a revolutionary, but you can’t kill a revolution.” This shows his courageous determination. Yet the murder of Fred Hampton—like the death of Che Guevara in combat—did set back the struggle temporarily.

The assassinations of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were among the most notorious atrocities committed by the FBI’s COINTELPRO program. But at least another 25 Panthers were murdered as well. The assassination of Malcolm X was also linked to COINTELPRO.

Along with other Workers World Party



members, I attended the funeral of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. The same Chicago police framed up Fred Hampton’s son—Fred Hampton, Jr.—and jailed him for years for “robbing” an ice cream truck.

Long live the memory of Fred Hampton and Mark Clark! □

A Commentary

Legal update for Mumia Abu-Jamal

The following letter was sent out on Nov. 14. Go to www.millions4mumia.org to read the response and to read other legal updates. Read more on Mumia Abu-Jamal on page 9.

Dear Friends:

Two weeks ago the district attorney of Philadelphia filed a brief in reply to our most recent brief filed on behalf of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Even though this was to be the last of the briefs before oral argument, we felt obligated to respond due to the complexity of the issues and the government’s factual misrepresentations. Attached is the Response of Appellee and Appellant, Mumia Abu-Jamal, to Sur-Reply Brief, submitted this week to the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, Philadelphia.

This case is of enormous consequence. It concerns the political repression of an outspoken journalist known globally as the “Voice of the Voiceless,” the right to a fair trial and the struggle against the death penalty. The authorities want to kill my client in order to silence his voice and pen. We must not let that occur. Racism and politics are threads that have run through this case since his arrest on December 9, 1981, and continue today.

Each of the issues under consideration by the federal court is of great constitutional significance. They include:

- The prosecutor’s exclusion of African Americans from sitting on the jury.

- The bias and racism of the trial judge, Albert F. Sabo, who stated that he was going to “help ‘em fry the n—r.”

- The prosecutor’s “appeal after appeal” argument that essentially called upon the jurors to disregard the right to the presumption of innocence and reasonable doubt, and err on the side of guilt.

- The judge’s unfair and skewed jury instructions and verdict form that resulted in the death penalty, since jurors were precluded from considering any mitigating evidence unless they all agreed on the existence of a particular special circumstance.

We will be presenting oral argument before a three-judge panel in the U.S. Court of Appeals. Even though no date has been set, this will likely occur within the next few months.

My purpose remains to win this life-and-death struggle, gain a new and fair trial and see my client walk out of jail a free person. However, as I have warned, Mr. Abu-Jamal remains in great danger.

Thank you for your concern in this campaign for justice.

With best wishes, Robert R. Bryan
Law Offices of Robert R. Bryan
2088 Union Street, Suite 4, San Francisco, California 94123
Lead counsel for Mumia Abu-Jamal □

North Carolina organizers hold

‘Statewide Day of Action Against Smithfield’



By Dante Strobino
Raleigh, N.C.

More than 700 people gathered in 11 cities across the state of North Carolina on Dec. 2 to support the just demands of workers at Smithfield, the world’s largest hog slaughtering plant located in Tar Heel. The statewide day of action was held at North Carolina-based Harris Teeter grocery stores to demand that they support the largely immigrant workforce by not selling the company’s pork.

Most of the Smithfield plants across the country are unionized through the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). But pork and turkey coming out of the North Carolina plants find their way into several local grocery stores, including Harris Teeter, which uses mostly Smithfield meat for its store-packaged pork.

The USDA requires that codes be placed on all meat designating its origin. Any meat containing codes 18079 or 79c

is processed at the Smithfield plant by oppressed workers.

Demonstrations organized by UFCW and community supporters were held in Asheville, Charlotte, Durham, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Hickory, High Point, Raleigh, Rocky Mount, Wilmington and Winston-Salem. At each site there was a media conference where workers—most of whom were Latin@ or Black—spoke out about the conditions in the plant. After the press conference, workers and union organizers marched into the stores and delivered a statement requesting that Harris Teeter stop doing business with Smithfield.

The biggest demonstration was in Raleigh where almost 200 people gathered, including members of the NAACP, the N.C. Council of Churches, N.C. Public Sector Workers Union (UE local 150), Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST), Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), N.C. State University Student-Worker Alliance, College Democrats, Action for Community



PHOTO: DONALD MINOR

Dec. 2 Raleigh solidarity action with Smithfield workers.

in Raleigh (ACRe), Teamsters, AFL-CIO, and high school students from Raleigh Charter and Athens High, amongst other organizations. Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) also played an important role statewide in mobilizing to support the demonstration.

Participants, stretched at arms length, nearly surrounded the entire parking lot of a Raleigh Harris Teeter and handed leaflets to customers that explained the union’s main grievances are that Smithfield “has used violence, threats and intimidation against workers to suppress their rights; creates a dangerous workplace with fast line speeds and inadequate training; routinely fires injured workers and denies their workers’ compensation claims; and stirs racial tensions among African-American and Latino workers.”

Supporters’ signs read “Power to Immigrant Workers, Union Rights Now” and “Black and Brown Unity—UNIDAD Moren@ y Latin@.”

North Carolina is ripe for class struggle. It is the second-least unionized state in the country and also has the fastest growing immigrant population. Led by two Latina women still wearing their hair nets and

work hats, more than 1,000 workers walked out of the Smithfield plant, shutting down two shifts of production on Nov. 16. Even the private police force could not coerce workers back into the plant as they continued to exercise their class power through unity.

It is only through unity amongst the Black and Latin@ workers that the will of workers will be exercised. The majority Black workforce of city workers across the state continues to organize their union, UE 150, and build their power following the historic strike of Raleigh sanitation workers two mornings in mid-September. Durham city workers later held a two-hour work stoppage on Nov. 27.

UE150 is convening a Statewide City Workers Summit on Dec. 9, drawing union workers from Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Durham, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Greenville, Raleigh, Rocky Mount and Wilson.

The struggle continues as these two strong workforces continue to learn from each other and mutually build working-class power in North Carolina.

The writer is an organizer with Raleigh FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) youth group. Contact fist@workers.org.



Protesters expose Houston janitors’ slave wages Nov. 11.

PHOTO: GISLAINE WILLIAMS

Latina janitors win important contract

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Houston janitors won a union contract in November after a month-long strike. This win marks a major victory for workers in the South as well as for all low-wage workers throughout the country.

Represented by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the 5,300 union workers—most of whom are Latinas—electrified this non-union and right-to-work city with their creative actions every single day of the strike.

They marched in many areas, from the downtown business district to the busiest shopping area, from the wealthiest Houston neighborhood to the police station. They picketed and rallied and did sit-ins and civil disobedience, blocking extremely busy intersections. They were stomped by police horses and spent many nights in Houston jails—locations not known for affording political detainees any of their civil rights.

At the victory rally in the convention center in downtown Houston, striker after striker expressed pride that they had won—and that they had won as a mainly Latina union.

Mercedes Herrera, a janitor for ABM, one of the five companies that signed the contract, said the experience changed her life and added, “I really appreciated the support of everyone and how everyone stayed together.” (Houston Chronicle, Nov. 21)

The workers will earn more than double their current salaries, be given more hours to work each day, will have six paid holidays and two weeks paid vacation. They will also have health care by January 2009. Before

the contract, the janitors made as little as \$20 a day or around \$106 a week.

Even the town’s conservative daily paper, the Houston Chronicle, hailed the contract as “momentous.” It editorialized: “The most obvious beneficiaries are the workers who saw their wages raised from some of the lowest in the nation. But in the long term, Houston residents of all backgrounds will also see improvement—in their wallets and in the city’s well-being.” (Nov. 23)

But janitor Ercilia Sandoval had a more accurate analysis: “This is an incredible victory for our families, and for all families. When I go back to work, I will go back proud of what we have accomplished, not just for us and our families, but for all of the workers in this city who work very hard but are paid very little. We showed what can be done, what must be done.” (ThisTuesday.org)

Sandoval, a member of the union’s bargaining committee, has been diagnosed with breast cancer. She said to a union rally, “My daughters may grow up without a mother because I had no health care, no early detection or other treatment. Houston janitors are fighting for access to affordable health care for all working families in Houston so no one else has to go through what my family and I are facing now.” (Houston Justice for Janitors, Oct. 10)

At the Nov. 21 victory celebration, Flora Aguilar, also a member of the SEIU bargaining committee, told the assembled janitors: “Nobody thought that poor Latinas of Houston would be successful, but today we can stand up and carry our heads very high. We all won today.” □

Fired & fed up at Illinois Chrysler Plant

‘Enhanced’ temporary workers launch ‘enhanced’ fight

By Martha Grevatt

Imagine being one of 10,000 people applying for 1,000 jobs. Imagine passing a five-hour written test, an eight-hour manual dexterity and physical ability test, a background check, a medical exam and a grueling interview. Imagine abruptly quitting your current job because the DaimlerChrysler Corporation has informed you that you must report for work immediately—you are one of “the chosen few.”

This was the scenario earlier this year for hundreds of workers in Belvidere, Ill., buoyant at the good fortune of getting a job in auto. Their exhilaration was tempered, to say the least, the day of their orientation. There they were informed that they were being hired as “Enhanced Temporary Employees” (ETEs).

An ETE is paid two-thirds the wage of a permanent hourly production worker. An ETE gets no raises, has no dental or vision coverage, no pension credits and no sick pay. There is no health insurance for eight months, and then it is not the same as that of a permanent, UAW-represented employee.

When ETEs are laid off, they cannot receive supplemental unemployment

benefits or be placed in the jobs bank; they have no recall rights; if they work fewer than 40 hours they do not receive short work pay. They have no seniority rights and almost no access to the grievance procedure—and they can be fired for the slightest infraction.

Sexual harassment is rampant; women who complain have been fired. Injuries are commonplace, but injured workers have not been able to collect workers’ compensation, nor can they collect unemployment because they are unable to work. Workers have literally collapsed while working the lines.

The most logical conclusion would be, “They ought to form a union.” Sadly, they are already in a union. They were trapped in a web of deception spun by the DaimlerChrysler Corporation (DCX) with the cooperation of the governor of Illinois and the leadership of the United Auto Workers.

Much media fanfare accompanied the 2005 announcement by DCX that they would be adding 1,000 jobs at the Belvidere assembly plant, with the launch of the Dodge Caliber.

The launch had a hefty price tag—\$416 million to retool Belvidere Assembly for the new model. The cost to DCX was reduced by nearly 25 percent with close to \$100 million in state “opportunity returns

New income figures: richest get even richer

By G. Dunkel

The old Marxist aphorism is being proven yet again. The rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer. In fact, the richest of the rich in the United States are getting wealthier faster than just the merely rich, while people in the bottom 90 percent have basically seen their incomes stagnate over the past 15 years, moving up and down with the economic tides.

The most detailed technical analysis of the income gap comes from two academic economists, Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez, who rely on data released by the IRS. These figures have a two-year lag, but the authors point out that press reports and anecdotal data show the trends established between 1990 and 2004 have if anything intensified over the past two years. (elsa.berkeley.edu/~saez/pikettyqe.pdf)

There was a deep chasm in 2004 between the very wealthy, the people in the top 1 percent whose family incomes averaged \$326,270, and the rest of this country. The median family income that year was \$43,389, meaning half the population earned less than that, and generally reflected the earnings of two or more people working in the household.

In constant dollars adjusted for inflation, the mean income has actually declined slightly since 1990, even as the incomes of the wealthy have vastly expanded. (wikipedia.org)

From 1990 to 2004, according to Piketty and Saez, the average family income of the top 1 percent of the population grew by 53 percent, while the bottom 90 percent saw their total incomes increase by just 2 percent. But the richer people were, the more their incomes increased. So the top one-tenth of 1 percent—with average

family incomes of \$2,018,910—enjoyed an increase of 85 percent over the same time period. And, dividing even further, the top one-tenth of that group wallowed in a jump of 112 percent. These top of the top have an average family income of \$12,775,016.

This data is very broad and doesn't catch income disparities based on gender. It doesn't reflect what has happened to Black people in the United States, who average about 73 percent the income of their white counterparts, according to the Urban League.

It doesn't distinguish between wage income of workers and the income of capitalists, who get their wealth mostly through various forms of profits. Wages alone put very few people into the top 1 percent. And it is not just income, but ownership of the means of production, that defines who become part of the ruling class.

These figures also don't reflect the increased costs of housing, health care and education that are leaving so many workers deep in debt.

What the figures do show, however, is that income disparity in the U.S. in recent years has become greater than at any time since 1929—the year the bubble burst and the Great Depression began.

That disaster laid the basis for a huge working class struggle that spurred the formation of industrial unions and eventually won government social programs to alleviate poverty—like welfare, unemployment insurance, the minimum wage and Social Security. While these programs helped workers survive and get a living wage, they did not change the underlying tendency of capitalism to create poles of extreme wealth and extreme poverty, which will continue until another great working class struggle erupts.

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“The justification for each new social system as against its predecessor is that it raises society to a higher level. It has done so in each succeeding social order by raising the productivity of labor. The great achievement of capitalism was that it not only promoted a tempestuous development of the productive forces, of science and invention on an unheard-of scale, but it raised the productivity of labor. Over a period of centuries it laid the basis for raising the material standards of society and the wage levels of the working class as a whole.

The distinctive feature of this particular phase of capitalist development, the scientific-technological phase, is that while it enormously raises the productivity of labor, it for the first time simultaneously lowers the general wage patterns and demolishes the more high-skilled, high-paid workers. It enhances the general pauperization of the population.” *Sam Marcy, High Tech, Low Pay, 1986*

Read book online at : www.workers.org/marcy/cd/samtech/index.htm

grants.” For 11 months the well-kept secret, never disclosed to future workers nor publicized in the media, was that the burden of further cost reductions would be borne by “the chosen few.”

“Nothing in the contract applies to us,” Kathy Hungness—one of the 800 or so who were actually hired as ETes—told Workers World. Hired in June and kept in the dark about her temporary status until the last minute, she was terminated in October.

She's not alone. Some 250 workers have been terminated so far, recently 50 in just one week. They can apply for unemployment, but so far none have seen a check, and they cannot apply for emergency public assistance until their status with unemployment is clarified. They cannot go back to the jobs they gave up, and jobs are hard to find. “We have families to feed,” stated Hungness. “They're throwing us away.”

Hungness is not just fired, however. She's fired up and has organized rank-and-file ETes into the group Enhanced Fight.

Now 150 have joined Hungness in a class-action lawsuit against DCX and the UAW, and more are joining every day. The first organizing meeting of Enhanced Fight was a huge success, with many volunteering for fundraising, membership, phone tree and community-action committees. They hope to have a public protest sometime in the future.

Hungness had a message for this writer, who is a 19-year DCX employee in Twinsburg, Ohio: “If we don't stand up for our rights that were broken here, this will come to you. Enough of concessions, enough, enough!”

Messages of support for Enhanced Fight can be sent to Sister Hungness at kpsd1968@yahoo.com. □

ON THE PICKETLINE

by Sue Davis

S.F. Labor Council opposes U.S. war against Iran

The San Francisco Labor Council voted unanimously on Nov. 27 for a resolution opposing any U.S. military action against Iran. The resolution urged all organizations with which it is affiliated to demand that Congress “promote diplomatic, non-military solutions to any disputes.”

The resolution also pledged to “join with other anti-war forces to organize mass popular opposition to any military assault on Iran, and to respond rapidly should such an assault occur.”

A number of national unions and state and local labor councils have come out against the U.S. occupation of Iraq. A few even issued statements this summer denouncing U.S. support for Israel's bombing of Lebanon. However this is the first labor organization to take a strong stand against U.S. threats aimed at Iran.

Another statement of international labor solidarity occurred in Columbus, Ga., during the Nov. 17-19 protest to shut down the notorious School of the Americas (now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security and Cooperation). Representatives of the AFL-CIO, UAW, the Georgia State AFL-CIO and the Atlanta-North Georgia Labor Council participated in the annual protest.

Mass. nurses' strike averted with landmark settlement

The 2,700 nurses at Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston, represented by the Massachusetts Nurses Association, won a precedent-setting contract on Nov. 21 after voting overwhelmingly to strike.

Language in the two-year pact, the first of its kind in New England, prevents the hospital from implementing the recent controversial ruling by the National Labor Relations Board. That ruling reclassifies charge nurses or those who perform charge duties as supervisors, making them ineligible for union membership.

The new contract clearly recognizes and protects the union rights of all registered nurses.

Other positive provisions include protections for newly licensed nurses and 3 percent annual pay increases. The hospital also removed a number of proposals restricting nurses' sick time benefits.

Meanwhile, registered nurses at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Mass., took their struggle for a fair contract to the streets. They held an informational picket on Dec. 7 demanding a contract with Vanguard Health Systems, the new for-profit owner of the hospital.

The nurses, who conducted an historic strike in 2000 against Tenet Healthcare over the issues of staffing and mandatory overtime, have been negotiating for more than a year with the new owners over similar concerns. Other issues include health-care benefits, pay raises and language protecting their rights. Even though the hospital has posted significant profits, it is refusing to pay competitive wages and is cutting back on patient care resources, which endanger safe nursing practices.

N.Y. town guilty of harassing immigrant workers

A federal judge ruled Nov. 20 that town officials in Mamaroneck in Westchester County, N.Y., discriminated against Latin@ day laborers when they stepped up police patrols, closed a hiring site and aggressively fined contractors who hired the workers. The ruling found “evidence of racism” in the officials' “negative and stigmatizing” comments and actions.

“This sends a very clear message to local governments all over this country that day laborers have rights and that municipal governments that ignore those rights will be held responsible,” said Cesar A. Perales, president of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, which brought the suit on behalf of six workers. (New York Times, Nov. 21)

In a similar case, officials in Freehold, N.J., agreed in mid-November to allow day laborers to seek work in public places without being subjected to fines. This agreement ends a three-year court battle.

N.J. state workers demand negotiated contracts

The contracts for 80,000 public workers in New Jersey are due to expire on June 30, 2007. The governor and legislators recently set the stage for a fierce battle when they announced plans to pass laws aimed at balancing the budget by cutting the workers' health care benefits and pension plans.

The response from labor leaders was united and unequivocal. On Nov. 27, a coalition of dozens of labor groups held a media conference demanding that the state negotiate contracts at the bargaining table. Backed by a banner reading “Benefits are negotiated, not legislated,” Larry Cohen, president of the Communication Workers, said, “We will bargain our future, we will negotiate our future, but we will not have the legislature or this governor dictate the future to hundreds of thousands of state workers.” (New York Times, Nov. 28)

He continued, “We've had enough of the politics of Wall Street; we've had enough of the politics of the rich dictating to the rest of us that we take the crumbs while they take all they can get.”

A CWA press release pointed out that tax cuts for the rich have created the budget deficit. It also noted that CWA public workers in New Jersey have sacrificed wages and agreed to increases in out-of-pocket health-care costs to ensure health-care and retirement security.

CWA represents 40,000 New Jersey state workers in seven locals. □

Yemeni leader slapped with 5-year sentence

By Ellie Dorritie
Buffalo, N.Y.

Mohamed Albanna, a widely respected leader in the Western New York Yemeni and Arab communities, was sentenced here on Nov. 30 to five years in prison for failing to pay a licensing fee.

Albanna, former vice president of the American Muslim Council of Western New York, has been a prominent spokesperson supporting the rights of the “Lackawanna Six”—six Yemeni men arrested in December 2003. Supporters charge the arrests were part of the hype for the Bush administration’s “war on terror.”

The infraction for which Albanna was sentenced to a five-year prison term would normally result in a fine. This adds to the belief that the charges against him were



Mohamed Albanna in 2002. PHOTO: RNEWS.COM

part of the government’s ongoing campaign of racism and intimidation against U.S. residents of Muslim and Middle Eastern backgrounds.

The court was obviously expecting the extremely large turnout of supporters. Identification was required, names were recorded, bomb-sniffing dogs were arrayed around the lobby. However, the courtroom used was one of the smallest in the building and half the supporters were refused any access to the proceedings.

The prosecutors, the FBI and big-business media continue to try to justify the injustice done to Albanna by hinting or suggesting that he might somehow be connected with what they term “terrorists,” although they admit there is no evidence whatsoever of such a connection.

In fact, Albanna’s “crime” was that he ran a hawala—a way for families to transfer money to relatives in Yemen. But that did not stop these false accusations or the brutal sentencing of this prominent

Yemeni community leader to the maximum possible jail term—for an infraction that often results in a mere slap on the wrist for businesses.

A spokesperson for the Buffalo/Western New York branch of the International Action Center at Federal Court told media that the Bush administration’s lies, fear-mongering and racism can no longer convince workers and the poor to support the so-called Patriot Act, and that Western New Yorkers have begun to realize that the real terrorists are in the White House, Congress and the Pentagon.

She called for support for the Albanna family and the Yemeni community here, which has been targeted in an unending stream of injustices as part of the Bush administration’s “war on terror.” □

‘No bombs, no borders, no bosses’

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

A large contingent of young activists marched alongside the many unionists from Cleveland and around the country and made “Bring the Troops Home Now” the central demand of a militant march and rally here Dec. 2. The protest, which drew nearly 500 people, was sponsored by the North Coast Labor Federation and U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW).

Chant leaders from UNITE/HERE and the United Auto Workers (UAW) got the crowd to join a group of youth in shouting, “No bombs, no borders, no bosses!” Other march slogans included, “We want jobs, we want peace, U.S. out of the Middle East” and “Unions yes, war no, the occupation has got to go.” Percussion accompaniment added to the spirit of the demonstration.

Speakers at the rally included North Coast Labor Federation General Secretary John Ryan, Ohio State AFL-CIO President Bill Burga, Maryland State AFL-CIO President and USLAW Co-Convenor Fred Mason, A. Philip Randolph Institute President Clayola Brown, Samir Adil of

the Iraq Freedom Congress, and Farm Labor Organizing Committee Secretary-Treasurer Beatriz Maya.

The action was part of the national assembly and national conference of USLAW, which attracted over 100 labor leaders and activists. With 140 labor organizations as affiliates, USLAW has helped bring the issue of the Iraq war to the labor movement. Four state AFL-CIO presidents—from Ohio, Wisconsin,

South Carolina and Maryland—attended the conference. Some national unions and state labor federations have passed antiwar resolutions, although most have resisted putting the word “immediate” before “withdrawal.”

The assembly passed an important resolution opposing U.S. intervention against Iran. On the other hand, a number of solidarity resolutions, and one on maintaining the position for immediate

withdrawal, were not passed but referred to committee.

Later in the day hundreds came out for a Saturday evening rally. Chaired by USLAW Co-Convenors Mason and Nancy Wohlforth, who is the president of Pride At Work and secretary-treasurer of Office and Professional Employees International Union, the rally featured Ryan, Brown, Adil, UNITE/HERE President John Wilhelm, Congressperson Dennis Kucinich and anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan.

Sheehan touched on many issues. She contrasted the pay and benefits of her son Andy, who is a member of the Operating Engineers union in the Bay Area, to that of her son Casey, who was killed in the Iraq war. She described her trip to South Korea, where she met unionists fighting the Free Trade Agreement and farmers trying to save their land from the U.S. military, which wants to build an exclusive golf course on land families have farmed for generations. “People say ‘What does that have to do with your son getting killed in Iraq?’ Well,” she explained, “it’s the corporations and the military that are doing all these things. That has everything to do with my son being killed.” □



Labor activists protest Iraq war in Cleveland Dec. 2.

WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHUR

Anti-war activists open ‘Coffeehouse’ near Fort Drum

By John Catalinotto

When the news broke that anti-war organizers had set up the Iraq War’s first “coffeehouse” near Camp Drum in upstate Watertown, N.Y., Workers World contacted Tod Ensign of Citizen Soldier, one of the founders of the “Different Drummer Cafe.”

Ensign has organized GIs and veterans since the Vietnam War. Citizen Soldier provides legal and organizational support for resisters, veterans and anyone fighting grievances against the Pentagon.

During the Vietnam days the anti-war movement created an extensive GI coffeehouse and counseling network, starting first in Ft. Jackson, S.C., in late 1967 and spreading to 20 other major U.S. bases within a year.

In the same period resistance grew inside the barracks with the spread of groups like the American Servicemen’s Union. The troops became a formidable force that played a dynamic role in ending the war.

Ensign notes that while there is growing opposition to the Iraq occupation within the military—a Stars and Stripes poll reported that 72 percent want the U.S. out within a year and 29 percent want them out yesterday—it would be a mistake

to draw the parallels too closely to the Vietnam period.”

“We opened the Different Drummer Cafe at 1 Public Square in Watertown this fall,” said Ensign. It’s in one of the oldest shopping arcades in the country, right in the middle of town, close to a bar, a pizza shop and an espresso-type shop.

An eight-year Army veteran, Cindy Mercante, keeps the cafe open afternoons and evenings from Wednesday to Saturday. Five military veterans help out as volunteers. The Different Drummer offers free counseling, but so far “GIs aren’t asking for help to refuse or for help in changing their status,” said Ensign.

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“The troops show us no hostility, but they have a realistic fear of repression and a confusion about what to do. Pay and benefits are more than what the troops would get if they left the service. It’s not like back in 1970, when enlisted troops were paid next to nothing.

“In the 1960s the troops came to coffeehouses to find books, especially Black GIs inspired by Martin Luther King or the Panthers and George Jackson. We don’t find that now. But if we hire bands that people in the area know, the GIs come in for Saturday night dance parties.

“We show film every Saturday afternoon. We showed ‘Iraq for Sale’ last Saturday.

We showed ‘Poison Dust’ about depleted uranium, and discussed a bill providing testing for veterans who suspected DU poisoning. We showed ‘Sir, No Sir!’, the film about the Vietnam GI movement.

“Fort Drum is no longer just a training base for National Guard troops. It’s now the home base for the 12,000-plus troops of the active-duty 10th Mountain (Light Infantry) Division, a highly mobile but not airborne division intended as a rapid intervention force, the kind Donald Rumsfeld likes. It has the highest rate of deployment of any Army division.

“Our project has potential,” said Ensign. “The troops face a grinding, vicious war and a military obligation much longer than in the Vietnam period. Troops coming home in March are back from second full-year deployment, and whatever the Iraq Study Group and Bush agree to do, these troops may face redeployment by the end of 2007. The issues are real to them. They are getting killed and maimed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“We will build links with the troops and their families. The opposition to the war is very deep. And no one knows exactly how it will come out.”

For more information, see www.differentdrummercafe.org.
Email: jcat@workers.org



Turmoil in Baghdad and Washington

No relief from the Iraq Study Group

By John Catalinotto

The Iraqi resistance continues handing setbacks to U.S. occupation and Iraqi puppet forces. With 10 GIs reported killed on Dec. 3, including deaths from a helicopter crash the Pentagon claims was “mechanical,” official U.S. troop deaths are over 2,900. Car bombings leave Baghdad in turmoil. U.S. forces in Anbar Province once again are striking residential areas with bombs, rockets and artillery, killing children and other civilians although they allege their targets are fighters.

U.S. aggression in Iraq has led to disaster. Most of all, disaster for the Iraqi people. How bad it is was hinted at by outgoing United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, who broke a taboo by telling the BBC on Dec. 4 that it is worse now for ordinary Iraqis than under Saddam Hussein. Annan added that U.N. inspectors sent to Iraq could have avoided the war “if they had more time,” that is, if the Bush administration had not been hell-bent to carry out a criminal invasion.

But it is also a disaster for the Bush administration’s original scheme to

conquer an entire region, monopolize its resources and use it as a base of expansion. Instead, the invasion and occupation have exposed U.S. political and military weaknesses to the world, in what former President Jimmy Carter calls “one of the greatest blunders that [U.S.] American presidents have ever made.”

Washington has its own kind of turmoil these days as ruling circles there battle over how to cut U.S. losses. Attention is now focused on the upcoming Dec. 6 report from the Iraq Study Group, set up by Congress last March to study ways to change U.S. fortunes in Baghdad.

Led by former Secretary of State James Baker, who is now an adviser to former President George H.W. Bush, and made up of five Republicans and five Democrats, the ISG has become a point of reference for all Washington. According to leaks—which have been frequent in Washington lately—the ISG will offer some compromise programs that add up to a gradual drawback of U.S. combat forces from Iraq, replacing them with U.S. military advisers to the Iraqi puppet troops.

These programs include the possibility

of negotiating with Iran and Syria, but also allow U.S. military commanders flexibility to keep U.S. troops in Iraq, as determined by conditions there. It is also unclear how the ISG will impose its program on the administration. But already the news from Iraq is that more U.S. advisers—even though they are not specially trained for the job—are now attached to Iraqi units. (New York Times, Dec. 5)

Iraq out of U.S. control

Revealing U.S. weaknesses are recent statements by U.S. diplomats and officials regarding the bleak prospects that ISG “solutions” will lead anywhere. One of the harshest critiques came from Richard C. Holbrooke, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Holbrooke is a hard-nosed imperialist diplomat. In 1995 he brokered the Dayton Accords by using threats of continued NATO bombing to force the Yugoslav government to make serious concessions to Washington’s ongoing attempt to break up that country.

Of Iraq, Holbrooke said: “For all the excitement in Washington, this will be

decided on the ground in Baghdad. The United States has lost its capacity to shape the events on the ground, regardless of what’s recommended by the commission, regardless of what’s done by the U.S. military and the president.” (Washington Post, Dec. 1)

Strangely enough, one of the warlords who finally realized his Iraq policy had ended in shambles is recently fired Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. In a classified memo written to the White House on Nov. 6, two days before he was dismissed—this one leaked to the New York Times—Rumsfeld noted: “In my view it is time for a major adjustment. Clearly, what U.S. forces are currently doing in Iraq is not working well enough or fast enough.”

Rumsfeld’s memo is a list of often contradictory proposals that create an illusion that he was being flexible, but also indicate how desperate the U.S. position is. Some of the media report that Rumsfeld’s memo was growing closer to the Democratic Party position.

Even Bush had to pay lip service to his problems in Iraq in his Dec. 2 Saturday

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2 million unite in Beirut

Continued from page 1

someone from the United States: An end to economic policies dictated by Wall Street. An end to the growing divide between wealth and poverty. An end to U.S.-financed Israeli terror. A Lebanon and an Arab world free of U.S. political and economic domination.

Many identified with the global struggle against U.S. imperial power. An older woman wearing the hejab head covering waved a giant Venezuelan flag. A young man carried a giant flag of Palestine.

As in Palestine, Iraq and the North of Ireland, the Western corporate media try to cast what is happening here as a fight over religion. But it is at heart a class struggle.

On one side is the ruling March 14 coalition, which represents the power of a privileged Westernized elite. Its control is based on a system of sectarian divisions left behind by French colonial rule. It is propped up by the U.S., France, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

On the other is the March 8 alliance, which has the support of Lebanon’s poor and exploited, those who suffer the most from Siniora’s U.S.-dictated economic policies and from Israel’s U.S.-made Israeli missiles. It includes the Shiite-based parties Hezbollah and Amal, the mostly Christian-based Free Patriotic Movement and Marada parties, the Druze-led Democratic Party, the Lebanese Communist Party and the Syrian People’s Party of Lebanon.

“Look and see! This is the real new Middle East,” said Hussein Husseini, a motorcycle mechanic from the Dahiye, Beirut’s southern suburbs. “Not the Middle East of George Bush and Condoleezza Rice. This is the people’s Middle East. We are all here together—Shiite, Sunni, Catholic, Orthodox, Druze, Armenian. Bush thinks he can rule over us. But this will be the end of his dream!”

“I am Sunni,” said Khidr, 24, a student. “My father is a Sunni Muslim, my mother is Druze. They are both here with me today. We all love Hezbollah. Not just because it defeated Israel. But because it helps the poor, it builds schools and hospitals.”

“I want this government to go down,” said Tariq, 16, from South Lebanon. He



fled his home last summer to escape Israel’s bombs. “It is controlled by the U.S. and Israel. We want a government that represents the people of Lebanon—all the people, not just a few.”

Ahmed N. grew up in Michigan, where he worked as a driver. He returned to Lebanon this year to help his family. “You can’t believe how poor people are here,” he said. “Whole families live on 200 lire a day [13 cents U.S.] and, like the U.S., there are a few capitalists who have everything.”

People laughed at the Bush regime’s assertions that Hezbollah is “terrorist” and that it is being controlled by Syria and Iran. “Look at all these people,” said Yusuf, who works nights as a security guard. He earns \$50 a week in a city with prices almost as high as New York’s. “They are all terrorists? They are Syrians and Iranians? No, these are the real people of Lebanon. We are here because we cannot find decent work; we can no longer afford to live in our own country.

“But we have nothing against Syria and Iran. They are our neighbors; we want to be friends with them. They are not attacking us. It is the U.S. and Israel that attack us.”

Again and again, people emphasized that they distinguished the people of the United States from the government.

“I have a message for the U.S. people,” said Fatima Al Kubaisi, a mother from the Dahye whose home was destroyed in the bombing. She lived for a year in Michigan. “Listen to what we say ourselves, not what CNN says about us. And be aware of what your government is doing here in Lebanon and in Iraq and in Palestine, where they are killing the kids. And also inside the United States, what they are doing to the Black people and to white people, too. And we want you to make a change in your country.”

While the people of Lebanon are reaching out to the world, the Bush regime is trying to strengthen its ties with the apartheid state of Israel, the Saudi royal family, King Abdullah of Jordan and Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak. Not to mention British Prime Minister Tony Blair and French President Jacques Chirac. All have expressed alarm at the people’s movement that is sweeping this small Arab country.

In an interview Dec. 4, Adnan Kasseir of Hezbollah’s international relations committee charged that the U.S.-backed regime is trying to divert the people’s movement by provoking sectarian war. “They have tried this in Iraq and throughout the region. But we are aware of what is going on. We will not fall into



PHOTOS: SAMIA HALABY

Dec. 1 in Beirut, Lebanon’s Martyrs Square, thousands of people—Shiite and Sunni Muslims, Maronite and Orthodox Christians, Druze and Armenians, religious and secular rally to say, “This is a fight for independence, against U.S. domination of the region.

this trap,” he said. “You can see we are here together, people of all communities. We will stay united and we will achieve our goal.”

After Mahmoud’s funeral, sound trucks drove through Beirut’s working-class neighborhoods urging people to stay united and not be provoked into a sectarian struggle.

At the demonstration in Beirut’s Martyrs Square, thousands of people—Shiite and Sunni Muslims, Maronite and Orthodox Christians, Druze and Armenians, religious and secular—waved lighted candles in Mahmoud’s honor. It was an eloquent answer to the Western corporate media, which cast the struggle in Lebanon as one about religion. It was an answer to those who want to divert the Lebanese people’s struggle into a religious civil war.

“This is not a Lebanese dispute,” said Kasseir. “The Siniora government is striking the people’s movement on behalf of the U.S. and Western powers. They are trying to achieve through the back door what the U.S. and Israel could not achieve by war in July. The Lebanese people know this is a fight for independence, against U.S. domination of the region. We are one with struggling people all over the world.” □

Protests at U.S.-Korea trade talks

The beef with U.S. beef imports

By Imani Henry

The fifth round of negotiations on the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KorUS FTA) took place in Montana on Dec. 4 to 8. It is projected to be the largest trade agreement since NAFTA. But critics say the KorUS FTA will economically and socially devastate the lives of millions of workers and farmers in both countries.

South Korea now ranks as the seventh-largest trading partner of the U.S. If the KorUS FTA passes, U.S. agricultural exports to South Korea will increase more than 200 percent, with other exports increasing by 54 percent. South Korean imports to the U.S., on the other hand, will increase by only 21 percent.

Conditions imposed on this agreement by the U.S. have set off mass protests in South Korea. These U.S. conditions include lifting price controls on pharmaceuticals, which will disproportionately impact the poor and elders; reduction of the film-screen quota, which would impose more U.S. films on Korea and has already spurred some of the first anti-FTA protests by Korean actors; and loosening Korean regulations on auto emissions from imported U.S. cars.

One of the most hotly contested U.S. conditions is the lifting of the 2003 South Korean ban on the importation of U.S. beef, imposed after the outbreak of “mad cow” disease in the U.S.

Since a public announcement about this agreement in February, a bloc between the Korean Alliance Against Korea-U.S. FTA (KoA)—a South Korean coalition of more than 280 organizations—and Korean Americans against War And Neo-liberalism (KAWAN) was formed to mobilize internationally to stop the KorUS FTA. Part of the strategy has been to hound the negotiators by calling week-



Koreans protest KorUS FTA at Big Sky resort in Montana, Dec. 4; Imani Henry, above, speaks on his trip to S. Korea at Dec. 1 forum in NYC.

PHOTO: KAWAN
WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

long protests in cities where the talks are being held.

When the first round of talks was held in June in Washington, D.C., farmers, workers and anti-war activists from South Korea joined with labor unionists and anti-globalization activists from the U.S. to hold protest marches and other actions against the KorUS FTA.

Protests against the second round of talks in July in Seoul, South Korea, brought out over 100,000 people into the streets.

In Seattle, a week of third-round talks was interrupted by a direct action on Sept. 9 in which 15 demonstrators were arrested at the Washington Trade and Convention Center, the site of the talks.

As a result of these protests, the U.S. and South Korean governments were forced to hold the fourth round of talks on Jae Ju Island at the southern tip of Korea.

Just as the 1999 World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting took place high up in the Alps in Davos, Switzerland, the fifth round of talks—which was originally



rumored to be planned for Washington, D.C.—was later rescheduled to convene at the exclusive and secluded ski resort of Big Sky, Mont.

This move outraged activists and even inconvenienced the Korean FTA negotiators themselves, who had to take three airplane flights and a two-hour bus ride, traveling over 24 hours to get to the ski resort.

In the heart of U.S. beef country

The choice of Montana by the U.S. government was a strategic one. According to the National Cattlemen’s Association, Montana’s beef industry represents a major economic activity in the state’s economy.

Big Sky Ski Resort was the site of the July 2005 FTA talks between the U.S. and Thailand.

Montana Sen. Max Baccus, a Democrat with a long record of support for FTA agreements, sent an invitation to the

Korean government to host the talks back in 1999. Baccus, whose family has been cattle ranchers for six generations, will take over as chair of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee in January.

According to the Dec. 4 issue of the Korean newspaper The Hankyoreh, the U.S. is applying “pressure for South Korea to further open its beef market for U.S. imports; beef is Montana’s flagship industry.”

Baccus—while digging into a Montana-raised T-bone steak—said to reporters, “I have a beef with Korea. Our beef is the safest, highest quality in the world and Korea should open its market fully as soon as possible.” (AP, Dec. 3)

Since 2003, U.S. beef imports have been banned from the South Korean market. But through the KorUS FTA talks, there was an easing off of restrictions this September. Korea now accepts beef from cattle less than 30 months old, but continues to

Continued on next page

Venezuela vote

Victory for Bolivarian Revolution

By Bob Dobrow

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez easily won re-election on Dec. 3 with 61 percent of the vote, 23 percentage points ahead of his main opponent.

“Today begins a new era,” Chávez told supporters at a victory rally in Caracas. “The central idea of that new era will be the deepening and the expansion of the Bolivarian Revolution towards socialism.”

This landslide electoral victory comes to a government that speaks openly of “socialist revolution” and in the name of workers and peasants, the poor and Indigenous peoples. It is a stunning blow to the Bush administration and U.S. corporate interests in the region.

The victory comes amidst a sharp turn to the left in Latin America. In just the past five weeks leaders with progressive histories have won elections in Ecuador (Rafael Correa), Brazil (Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva), and Nicaragua (Daniel Ortega).

“Venezuela has independence. Venezuela is free. Venezuela will never be a North American colony,” said Chávez.

In the weeks before the election, Washington funneled millions of dollars to opposition right-wing candidates through groups like the U.S. Agency for International Development and National Endowment for Democracy. U.S. consultants, political strategists and communications experts went to Venezuela to assist reactionary



Pro-Chávez, anti-Bush banner in Caracas, Venezuela reads: “Vote against the devil! Vote against the empire!”

WW PHOTO: REBECA TOLEDO

candidates.

Pre-election reports suggested that the rightwing was gearing up to contest the election, charging “election fraud.” This tactic fell flat as numerous observers from entities ranging from the European Union and the Carter Center to the Organization of American States were unable to report any significant difficulties. The election, using new high-tech voting machines, was virtually without incident.

U.S. threatens socialist process

Despite Washington’s political isolation throughout Latin America, there are still tens of thousands of U.S. troops there.

According to Venezuelan-American lawyer Eva Golinger, author of “Bush vs. Chávez: Washington’s War on Venezuela,” the U.S. has been building a secret base in Colombia near the Venezuelan border as a future launching point for espionage

operations. She noted in an October interview with Australia’s Green Left Weekly that recent U.S. military exercises in the Caribbean were an aggressive show of strength near Venezuela.

The exercises included eight major warships, all armed with “Tomahawk” cruise missiles. One of the ships was the aircraft carrier USS George Washington, with 85 combat planes and 6,500 troops on board. The warships prowled off Venezuela’s coast for two-and-a-half months.

A key reason why Washington is targeting Venezuela is the example the Bolivarian country sets not only for the southern continent, but for the United States as well. In the U.S., racism is rampant, tens of millions have no health care, pensions are being slashed and dismantled, and quality education is fast becoming a privilege only for the haves.

Yet in Venezuela, a country whose \$130 billion gross domestic product is about one hundredth that of the U.S., people’s needs have become the first priority.

The Chávez government has initiated a vast array of “Bolivarian Missions,” including anti-poverty initiatives, the construction of thousands of free medical clinics, the launching of educational campaigns that have achieved nationwide literacy, and the enactment of food and housing subsidies.

The Missions bring workers and peasants into the country’s top governing structures. These initiatives have granted thousands of free land titles to formerly landless poor and Indigenous communities.

“I think the president has done what he said he would do,” José Medina, 54, a schoolteacher in the working-class neighborhood of Cano Amarillo outside Caracas, told the Washington Post on Dec. 23. “He’s put the social policies above everything else.” □

prohibit beef fed bone material that could carry mad cow disease.

The U.S. has not lived up to its end of the deal. The Korea Times reported on Dec. 4 that “[O]fficials said they found three bone fragments in the 3.2 tons of beef from a slaughterhouse in Nebraska, following a similar discovery in beef from Kansas in October. The government plans to return or discard the latest imports, as Seoul had agreed to buy only ‘boneless’ meat.”

The Korean Times continued, “Recent reports say a dozen cases of mad cow disease have been found in cattle younger than 30 months as well as in red meat, meaning import limits by age or parts have their own limits.”

Currently, the U.S. livestock industry tests only about 1 percent of every 100,000 cattle slaughtered daily, and reportedly plans to reduce this percentage to 0.11 percent. The U.S. government is even discouraging voluntary testing by slaughterhouses.

Part of every anti-FTA protest in South Korea has included protesters dressed as cows, or carrying placards with images of cows, to send a clear message that tainted beef from the U.S. is a huge concern.

More than 170,000 workers, farmers and anti-war activists took to the streets in 13 cities in South Korea on Nov. 22. These demonstrations coincided with a general strike called by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.

The protests were met with severe police repression and brutality in the cities of Gwangju and Daejeon. The following day, the South Korean government banned all further anti-FTA demonstrations and issued 85 arrest warrants for leaders of worker, farmer and anti-war groups, raiding nine offices of organizations.

However, what was supposed to be a deterrent to the anti-FTA movement in South Korea has ignited a firestorm of protest. Once again on Nov. 29, tens of thousands of people came out for another anti-FTA demonstration.

South Korean organizers project outrage against the government repression will turn out even larger numbers for the Dec. 6 anti-FTA demonstration during the fifth round of talks in Montana.

Protesting at Big Sky

Likewise, neither arrest warrants, several inches of snow or the cold Montana weather have hampered the militant resolve of the activists who traveled to Big Sky, Mont. Activists have come from South Korea and from cities in the U.S., including New York, Seattle, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., to join with Montana activists to say “No!” to the KorUS FTA.

Defying local officials, activists held a media conference on the morning of Dec. 4 outside the front doors of the Yellowstone Convention Center, the site of the talks.

Later that afternoon more than 50 activists participated in a rally at City Hall in Bozeman, Mont.

Young Choe, an organizer with KAWAN and the Queens, N.Y.-based group Nodutdol for Korean Development, said, “The myth is KorUS Free Trade Agreement would benefit Montana farmers, but the reality is that it will only benefit U.S. corporations like Tyson and Cargill. Today on the first day of the protest, small farmers from both Montana and Korea stood in solidarity against FTA.”

More activists are scheduled to travel to Big Sky throughout the week to participate in rallies, marches, candlelight vigils and other actions.

To support the protests and for updates on the struggle at Big Sky, check out kawanlist.blogspot.com. □



PHOTO: SONIA OLIVERA

Above, Ramona Africa and Pam Africa at a rally for Mumia in Paris. Leaflet above calls for a demonstration on the anniversary of Mumia’s imprisonment to gather at the Bastille, site of an infamous prison torn down during the French Revolution, from there to “march for justice” to the U.S. Embassy demanding Mumia’s release.



Support in France stays strong for Mumia Abu-Jamal

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

The Paris suburb of St. Denis reaffirmed its decision to name a street in honor of U.S. political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, refusing to bow down to threats and intimidation from U.S. politicians.

A press release issued Nov. 30 from St. Denis city hall describes unmasking the lies of an ultra-conservative group based in Philadelphia claiming that the city of Philadelphia was suing St. Denis for the April 2006 street naming and suing Paris for making Abu-Jamal an honorary citizen in December 2001.

On Nov. 12, Peter J. Wirs, a minor Republican ward leader in Philadelphia’s Germantown section, issued a press release claiming to speak on behalf of a delegation including Philadelphia’s city council president and police commissioner, who were to “meet with elected members of the Paris City Council” on Nov. 30 to ask them to revoke Abu-Jamal’s honorary citizenship.

In response to Wirs’ threats, a protest was organized in St. Denis on Nov. 30 against what turned out to be a nonexistent delegation. The mayor of Philadelphia, as well as other city officials, informed the city of St. Denis that they never intended to file any kind of lawsuit and had nothing to do with Wirs’ campaign. Wirs, it turns out, was actually working with the

Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police, the main group pushing for Abu-Jamal’s execution.

The statement from St. Denis officials went on to reiterate that they were “proud to have named a street of this city in honor of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who has become one of the symbols of the struggle for justice and the abolition of the death penalty in the U.S. and throughout the world.”

The statement also noted that “It is not the first time an international mobilization has taken place in favor of American citizens who are unfairly sentenced in their own country. Such was the case for Nicola Sacco, and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in the 1920’s, for Julius and Ethel Rosenberg who died on the electric chair in 1953, and subsequently in 1972 for Angela Davis, initially sentenced for murder, before being acquitted of all charges.”

Wirs’ malicious misrepresentations are nothing new when it comes to opponents of a fair trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal in his twenty-five years of incarceration following his arrest for the fatal shooting of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner.

It took months for Philadelphia police officers to “remember” they’d “heard Abu-Jamal say he’d killed Faulkner,” even though doctors treating Abu-Jamal for a serious gunshot wound and brutal beating by Philadelphia police on Dec. 9, 1981, stated “the Negro suspect never

spoke.” Police failed to give Abu-Jamal the standard hand test after his arrest to determine if he’d actually fired a gun. From the beginning, material witnesses were coerced into changing their testimony, mainly by the FOP’s pressure.

Prior to Wirs’ erroneous letter, other Philadelphia-area legislative leaders mounted their own campaigns of lies and distortions in response to the St. Denis’ street naming. The Philadelphia City Council approved a resolution in May stating “Mumia Abu-Jamal has exhausted all legal appeals,” even though the federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia in late 2005 had approved Abu-Jamal’s request for appeals concerning racial bias in jury selection in his 1982 trial and judicial bias in his 1995 appeals hearing in front of Judge Sabo. Abu-Jamal’s lawyers are awaiting word from this court on whether a new trial will be granted.

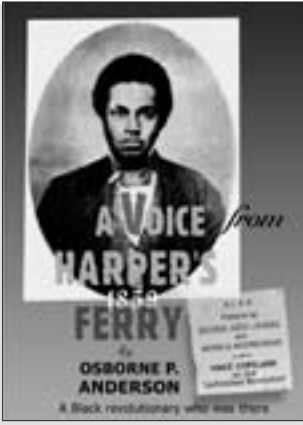
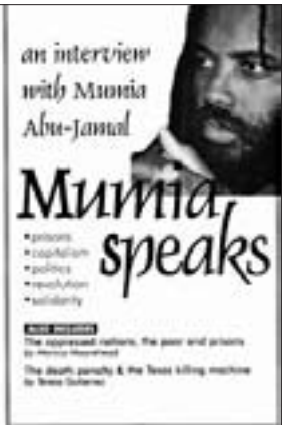
Philadelphia-area congresspersons also got into the act with Republican Michael Fitzpatrick and Democrat Allyson Schwartz introducing an anti-St. Denis resolution claiming “Mumia Abu-Jamal struck Officer Faulkner four times in the back with his gun.” Pennsylvania Republican U.S. Sen. Rich Santorum introduced a similar resolution in the U.S. Senate, even though there is not one bit of evidence in court testimony to support this claim. Both Fitzpatrick and Santorum were voted out of office on Nov. 7. □



WE WANT FREEDOM A life in the Black Panther Party

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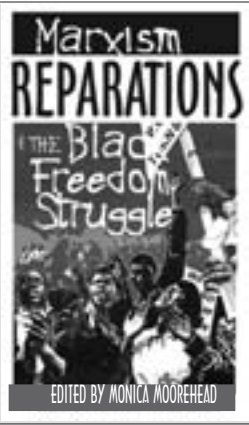
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It’s over and we won

*C*ontinued from page 1

2006) was “false and defamatory” and that we should immediately retract the article and apologize to Renco or face legal action.

In the following week’s issue, we ran a second article (“You Be the Judge: Is Renco Robbing Steelworker Pensions?”) that stood by the points made in the first.

So the battle was on. Renco filed charges against Workers World newspaper, Workers World Party and reporter Brenda Ryan in New York State Supreme Court, charging us with “malicious, false and defamatory statement”—libel.

This struggle was not just about Renco and the workers at WCI Steel. The articles addressed the larger context.

In Judge Edward H. Lehner’s decision on Sept. 26 dismissing the libel charge, he wrote:

“The Feb. 14 article states that there is a ‘widespread campaign of corporations like United Airlines, Delphi Automotive Systems and Bethlehem Steel to use bankruptcy to steal workers’ pensions.’ It also mentions Delta Airlines, IBM and Alcoa taking steps to deprive workers of pensions and asserts that ‘[p]ensions are deferred wages’ and ‘now the brutal hand of capitalism wants to snatch away this hard-earned pay.’ The February 23 article states that the shortfall in pension plans is approximately \$450 billion in the private sector and \$300 billion in the public sector, and concludes that: ‘Only under workers’ control can (pensions) be guaranteed.’ Next to the ‘Workers World’ heading on the Party’s web site is the phrase ‘workers & oppressed people of the world unite.’”

The judge pointed out the political context of the articles because that went directly to the legal issue at hand: our use of the word “robbing.” Renco argued that we were charging them with a criminal act. Our attorneys argued that the statements were “protected opinion.”

The judge agreed, concluding that “[I]t is clear that the implication to the reasonable reader of the subject articles is not one of criminality by the stealing of pension funds. Rather, the articles discuss in an impassioned manner an area of public concern—that of alleged corporate underfunding of retirement obligations owed to workers, and how parts of corporate America are purportedly depriving workers of pension rights through bankruptcy proceedings.”

So does that mean that Renco and other corporations are not criminal?

Sadly, it is not a crime under U.S. law at this time for huge corporations like the ones mentioned above to use bankruptcy in order to shed contractual obligations to workers that include pensions, health coverage and other benefits won over decades of struggle and paid for out of the value these workers created through their labor.

It is not a crime punishable by law for the owners and investors in these

companies to become obscenely wealthy while workers are being told after a lifetime of toil that there’s no money left for them.

Hundreds of billions of dollars that had been promised to workers so they could survive in their old age seem to have evaporated—yet it’s no mystery where it all has gone. As recent statistics show, the richest of the rich have never had it so good. The question is, how did the rich and their heirs get it “legally” when many of them never did an honest day’s work in their life?

What is considered legal under capitalism is the product of a legislative process dominated by big money. At one time racial segregation was “legal,” as the vile system of slavery had been earlier, until millions fought it and forced social change.

Most of the bills before Congress are generated first by corporate lobbyists or others who got their legal training working for big business. Often they are passed into law without the elected representatives even getting a chance to really read them. This is just one example of how the government winds up being of the rich and for the rich, even though elections are held every few years when the public gets to vote—usually for the candidates who have raised the most money to advertise their candidacy, since usually the sky’s the limit when it comes to how much can be spent on election campaigns in the United States.

It is possible to find much information about economic trends in the commercial media. Much of what we report in Workers World we first saw in major newspapers. But what you won’t find through the capitalist print or electronic media is a view of what workers and oppressed peoples can do to fight the horrible, but often legal, injustices inflicted on them every day.

That’s what our “impassioned” articles are about. That’s what we are going to continue to do.

Perhaps the owner of Renco, multibillionaire Ira Rennert, thought this case would bankrupt us, no matter the outcome. Defamation cases can be very, very expensive. Fortunately, we got expert legal representation pro bono from the media law firm Davis Wright Tremaine. Pro bono means the lawyers’ time is free, saving us potentially tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, depending on the length of the case. But the legal research to find an abundance of precedent rulings supporting free speech, which undoubtedly helped us win the case at such an early stage, was contracted to an outside firm.

So we have to pay for that, and the bill will be well over \$10,000.

We’re asking you, our readers, to come through for us and contribute what you can to help clear this debt.

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WWP’s support for early gay liberation

Party-wide education campaign in 1972

By Leslie Feinberg

In the months after Workers World Party’s August 1972 conference at which founder Sam Marcy motivated the historic importance of supporting the gay liberation struggle, “Comrades hammered out some important goals for our work,” writes Bob McCubbin.

McCubbin—who had founded the Gay Caucus of WWP’s youth group Youth Against War & Fascism (YAWF) a year earlier—stresses that, “First and foremost, we wanted to show our support for the gay liberation movement in every way we could.”

He recalls, “If we step back for a minute and consider all the struggles in which Workers World Party and its youth group were involved at this time—building anti-imperialist opposition to the U.S. war against Vietnam in the streets; supporting and defending the Black Panther Party and other revolutionary organizations of oppressed peoples in the U.S.; exposing the prison-industrial complex, publicizing the cases of the many political prisoners, and defending the

political organizing going on in the prisons through the Prisoners’ Solidarity Committee; actively aiding anti-war and anti-racist organizing within the U.S. military, most importantly, by providing strong organizational and political support for the American Servicemen’s Union; supporting workers’ struggles and union organizing and establishing the Center for United Labor Action; providing active leadership, encouragement and ideological support to the growing women’s movement; and educating those we could reach on the many other struggles erupting throughout the world, including our principled defense of Cuba, the Soviet Union and People’s China—the ability of the party to take up the issue of lesbian and gay liberation in the sustained, serious and fully committed way it was done is truly remarkable.”

YAWF organized its own contingent in the 1972 Pride march in New York City, and party members of all sexualities, genders and sexes have marched together under the YAWF/WWP banners every year since.

Nowadays, McCubbin states, many glad-handing capitalist politicians, religious groups and businesses—large and small—want to be seen at the huge yearly Pride marches. “But back then it was largely the politically conscious members of the LGBT communities, mostly the youth, who made up the ranks of these grassroots marches.”

Being principled wasn’t easy

In the decades since, the LGBT struggle has gained strength and wrested many victories, attracting broader support. But at that time WWP’s stand in the movement was unique among the left parties and was not based on any short-term organizational or political advantages. It took principles to be a communist in the gay liberation movement and simultaneously to be for gay liberation in the radical and communist movement—including the self-described “New Left.”

When McCubbin left San Francisco to work in the WWP national office in



New York City: Way back in 1972, Workers World’s youth group, Youth Against War & Fascism (YAWF), had already been part of the struggle in the streets for gay liberation.



Lavender & Red focuses on the relationship over more than a century between the liberation of oppressed sexualities, genders and sexes, and the communist movement. You can read the entire, ongoing Workers World newspaper series by Leslie Feinberg online at www.workers.org. Stop and get a subscription while you’re there!

Manhattan in 1971, he explains, “The gay movement in New York had a very different character from the movement that I left in San Francisco. It was easy for me as an openly communist activist to participate fully in the San Francisco movement. The whole climate, at least among the youth, was very open, very radical, and there was no single dominant organization.”

He explains that as the movement developed, party activists in some cities were caught between the anti-communism of more politically moderate and conservative lesbian and gay groups and the anti-gay prejudices that many other left organizations had not yet examined.

As a result, McCubbin states, as the gay liberation movement grew, “All left organizations were viewed, to one extent or another, with suspicion or open hostility. We were very much at pains to always act in a principled and supportive way, and with our very limited human and material resources, we couldn’t always do much more than simply show support for the lesbian and gay struggles with our physical presence at protests.”

However, he emphasizes, “There was a group that was much easier for us to relate to when I first arrived in New York: the Third World Gay Liberation Front, composed of revolutionary Cuban, Argentinean, Puerto Rican and Mexican trans people, lesbians and gay men. Unfortunately, they were only in active existence for a short period.”

McCubbin stressed that WWP’s 1972 national conference “marked the beginning of a party-wide effort to educate ourselves and our class on this issue. As Marxists we know that it is the struggle that is the great educator, and the new movement of lesbians and gays and transgender people was providing lessons in abundance about the situation of people historically oppressed because of their sexual orientation and their gender variance. But it is important to note that at this time the main focus of the gay liberation movement was on sexual, not gender, expression. Although trans people were involved in the movement, and often stood out as the most dedicated and militant, the issue of gender variation was often, unfortunately, sidelined and/or misunderstood.”

As the struggle was educating and raising consciousness, Workers World Party was on the eve of making a historic contribution to gay liberation.

Next: 1972: Marxism is as Marxism does—WWP begins analysis of lesbian/gay oppression.

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INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

BY LEILANI DOWELL

SUDAN

African leaders denounce U.N. ‘colonization’

Leaders of African countries continue to voice their opposition to the imposition of U.N. troops in Sudan.

At a Nov. 19 meeting of Sudanese government officials and members of the Sudan Liberation Army, Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi told participants: “Western countries and America are not busying themselves out of sympathy for the Sudanese people or for Africa but for oil and for the return of colonialism to the African continent. ... The biggest disaster is if the Atlantic army came and positioned itself in Sudan.”

Qaddafi continued: “The West exploits tribalism, sectarianism and [skin] color to feed war, which leads to backwardness and Western intervention in a number of countries. All the conflicts in Africa are caused by colonialism, which does not want the rise of the United States of Africa and works for division and interference and for military coups.” (Al Jazeera, Nov. 19)

The Associated Press reported on a meeting of the heads of state of the African countries of Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Libya and Sudan on Nov. 21, saying that “the African leaders support Sudan’s cautious attitude toward deploying U.N. troops in Darfur.” (Nov. 21)

While agreeing to a combination of African Union and U.N. troops on Nov. 27, Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir reiterated Qaddafi’s words, saying that Sudan “should not be the first recolonized country under the banner of humanitarian action in Darfur.” (allAfrica.com, Nov. 27)

BOLIVIA

Massive land reform passed

Bolivian President Evo Morales signed into law several progressive measures on Nov. 28, including a bill to reclaim tens of thousands of square kilometers of unproductive land from wealthy farmers.

The law will allow the redistribution of land in the eastern lowlands region to poor landless farmers, and states that land whose use is against the collective interest will be taken without compensation. The Inter Press Service reports that between 60 and 70 percent of the country’s farmland is owned by a handful of families. (Nov. 29)

More than 4,000 Indigenous people had marched on the capital city of La Paz to demand its passage; three died during the march, two of a suspicious car accident, one by lightning.

The measure was passed despite political maneuvering by the opposition parties to block it by boycotting the 27-member Senate, making it impossible to reach the 14-seat quorum needed to meet. However, after Morales threatened to pass the law by presidential decree, three opposition senators returned to the table with the 12 senators from Morales’ Movement Towards Socialism party.

In addition to the land reform bill, contracts were passed with 10 foreign oil companies, in relation to the nationalization of Bolivia’s natural gas reserves; and an economic cooperation agreement with Venezuela was approved. Morales also announced plans for other measures, such as nationalizing Bolivia’s tin and mineral mines.



Pro-Obrador demonstration in Mexico City, Dec. 1.

PHOTO: ALAN ROTH

MEXICO

President inaugurated under backdrop of repression, resistance

Resistance to the Dec. 1 swearing in of Mexican President Felipe Calderón turned the traditional ceremony into a farce, symbolic of the fraudulent elections that granted Calderón the victory in July.

Legislators from the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) of Andrés Manuel López Obrador—who was sworn in as Mexico’s legitimate president at a people’s inauguration on Nov. 20—used chairs to barricade most of the doors to the Legislative Palace where Calderón’s inauguration was to take place. He was forced to use a back entrance to take the oath of office.

The Los Angeles Times reports: “With European princes, Latin American leaders, former President Bush and other dignitaries looking on, Calderón was inaugurated amid a chorus of derisive whistles in a ceremony that lasted less than two minutes. ‘Felipe will fall! Felipe will fall!’ leftist legislators shouted.”

Meanwhile, resistance continues as 159 people were swept up off the streets of Oaxaca and arrested over the weekend of Nov. 24-26, for charges related to recent

protests. The Narco News Bulletin reports that 141 of those have been moved by helicopter to the penitentiary in San José del Rincón, Nayarit—a twenty-hour drive away from Oaxaca. None of the arrested has had access to legal support, reporters or family members. (Nov. 29)

It is feared that the rape and torture of prisoners—of the kind witnessed during the struggle of flower vendors at Atenco this May—will occur with impunity and without exposure. A tour of Mexico recently completed by The Other Campaign of the Zapatista National Liberation Army found hundreds of political prisoners, thousands of people facing arrest warrants or charges for political organizing, and family members of political activists that had been “disappeared” throughout the country. (narconews.com, Nov. 29)

Federal police in Oaxaca are now conducting house-to-house raids through-out the state, searching for leaders of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca.

SOUTH AFRICA

Same-sex marriage legalized

South Africa became the first African country and the fifth country worldwide to legalize same-sex marriage on Nov. 30.

The government was forced to enact legislation on same-sex marriage after the country’s highest court gave it a year,

expiring Dec. 1, to change laws that denied lesbian, gay, bi and trans couples the same constitutional rights as heterosexual couples.

Home Affairs Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula said, “In breaking with our past ... [we] need to fight and resist all forms of discrimination and prejudice, including homophobia.” (iafrica.com, Nov. 14)

The first legal gay marriage took place the next day, when Vernon Gibbs and Tony Halls were married on World AIDS Day, Dec. 1. Vernon Halls-Gibbs told the BBC, “This marriage ... is for all HIV/AIDS sufferers and gay people who have experienced discrimination.” (BBC, Dec. 1)

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Iraq Study Group

Continued from page 7

radio address. “I recognize that the recent violence in Iraq has been unsettling,” he said. “Many people in our country are wondering about the way forward.”

But while Bush talks of more flexibility, his stance is to keep stalling. His public position is that as long as the U.S. has the will to stay, it can “win” in Iraq.

Rep. John P. Murtha (D-Pa.), an ex-Marine officer with close ties to the Pentagon who first raised objections to the Iraq occupation a year ago, called the Iraq Study Group’s plan “unacceptable to me” because it would not begin to withdraw troops immediately. “If it depends on circumstances on the ground, it’s not a lot different than what President Bush is saying,” he told CNN on Nov. 30.

Murtha, who earlier asked the U.S. to pull its forces out of Iraq and into neighboring countries from where it can use air power, is one of the few Democrats in Congress to criticize the ISG. Now in control of Congress, most Democratic Party leaders have avoided taking a strong stand. They deny even thinking about withholding funds from the military—their only lever of power—or of demanding anything more than a lengthy timetable for pulling out troops.

No one can expect quick relief for Iraqis or even for U.S. troops to come from a decision by the Bush administration. The debates playing out in Washington are among forces that are all representatives of U.S. imperialist interests. They can’t find any tactical measures that can be guaranteed to protect those interests, which points to a continuation of the occupation. Only the exhaustion of U.S. forces or a popular upheaval at home against the war can hasten its end.

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60,000 protest in Belgrade at U.S. Embassy

Some 60,000 people protested in front of the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade, Serbia, on Dec. 2. They were demanding the right of political prisoner Vojislav Seselj to defend himself before the anti-Yugoslav tribunal at The Hague, which the U.S. and other NATO forces set up through the United Nations in 1992. The tribunal is known as the ICTY.

Seselj is president of the Serbian Radical Party (SRP). He surrendered to the ICTY in 2003 to combat charges of alleged war crimes, including plotting crimes together with former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. Milosevic died in custody at Scheveningen Prison in The Hague last March after being on trial for three years.

Seselj, isolated by the ICTY and prevented from effectively representing himself, has been on a hunger strike since Nov. 10 and has lost 42 pounds, according to reports in the Serbian media. (Reuters,

Dec. 2) “Vojislav Seselj 22 days ago began his last and hardest fight against injustice and humiliation, and he is ready to pay with his life,” said Tomislav Nikolic, the SRP’s deputy leader, speaking in front of the U.S. Embassy.

The Serbian Radical Party, which in the early 1990s was a right-wing Serbian nationalist party, later joined Milosevic’s government as a junior partner to the Socialist Party of Serbia. The SRP is now the largest electoral party that defends Serbia against an imperialist takeover. The Radicals are expected to get the most votes of any single party in Serbia’s upcoming election in January.

The U.S., which led 78 days of bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, leading to a NATO takeover of Serbia’s Kosovo province, is seen as the main imperialist player in the dismantling of Yugoslavia and the subjugation of the people of the Balkans.

—John Catalinotto

Victoria moral para Simón Trinidad

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

El 21 de noviembre se declaró nulo el caso del gobierno de los Estados Unidos contra Simón Trinidad después de que por tercera vez el jurado le diera una nota al juez declarando que no podía llegar a una decisión unánime. Trinidad ha servido como negociador de paz para las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC).

Durante las más de cuatro semanas que Trinidad ha estado sometido a juicio en la corte federal en Washington, la fiscalía presentó 21 testigos y mucha evidencia audio visual. El Juez Thomas Hogan sin embargo no le permitió a la defensa a presentar testigos expertos que pudieron haber explicado la historia y el origen de las FARC y el papel jugado por los Estados Unidos en Colombia, ambos puntos cruciales para el caso, diciendo que esto “confundiría al jurado y extendería la audiencia.”

El principal testigo para la defensa fue el mismo Trinidad, quién testificó por varios días.

Inicialmente Trinidad fue acusado de secuestro, terrorismo y tráfico de drogas; este último cargo será juzgado separadamente. Los cinco cargos en el juicio actual estaban relacionados a la acusación de secuestro, que proviene del incidente en febrero del 2003 cuando una avioneta guiada por contratistas militares estadounidense se estrelló en territorio controlado por los insurgentes en Caquetá, en el sur de Colombia. Los agentes, Thomas Howes, Keith Stansell y Marc Gonsalvez, han estado cautivos por las FARC desde entonces.

Aunque Trinidad no estuvo envuelto en el acto—de hecho, no estaba ni siquiera en el área—la fiscalía trató ofuscadamente de mostrar su asociación al incidente y de esa manera su “conspiración” en el asunto.

Desde la apertura del caso, el Juez Hogan

mostró claramente su favoritismo hacia la fiscalía, dando la impresión de que estaba presidiendo un juicio que solo podría tener como final la condena de Trinidad.

Sin embargo, el 17 de noviembre, después de horas de deliberaciones, el jurado le dio una nota al Juez Hogan que en parte decía, “Creemos que nuestras diferencias están basadas sinceramente en serias reflexiones y (son) irreconciliables.” Hogan rehusó aceptar tal resultado e instruyó al jurado a que continuara discutiendo hasta que llegara a un veredicto unánime.

Una segunda nota le fue entregada al juez el 20 de noviembre declarando otra vez la imposibilidad de un veredicto unánime. Pero el juez en vez de declarar nulo el juicio, presionó al jurado para que llegara a un consenso y así pudieran estar “libres” de regresar a sus hogares para el feriado de “Acción de Gracias.” El ya le había dicho a los abogados que en caso de que el jurado llegara a la misma conclusión por segunda vez, él les daría lo que en el lenguaje legal se conoce como “la carga de dinamita” y pidió a aquellos en la minoría a que reconsideraran su posición. Ocho miembr@s del jurado son african@s-american@s.

Pero como la decisión del jurado tiene que ser unánime, el juez tuvo que declarar nulo el juicio luego de que el jurado no alcanzara unanimidad por tercera vez. Ahora hay dos opciones posibles: declarar al caso cerrado o comenzar de nuevo.

Esta ha sido una victoria moral para Simón Trinidad y las FARC. A pesar de todos los terribles intentos de convencer al jurado de la naturaleza “terrorista” de Trinidad y su organización—denominado como tal por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos— no se consiguió una condena unánime.

Este juicio marca la primera vez que un insurgente colombiano, extraditado de su país, ha sido enjuiciado en los EEUU. Así se constituyó una vía nueva en la guerra “antiterrorista” de Washington.

Un estibador en manifestación de Tokio: ‘La afrenta a uno es afrenta a todos’



Clarence Thomas con la gorra.

Clarence Thomas, en la Asamblea Nacional de Trabajador@s el 5 de noviembre en Tokio, Japón

Les traigo saludos y solidaridad de parte de la Unión Internacional de Estibadores y Trabajador@s de Almacén (ILWU-IBU), Sucursal 10, en San Francisco, y del Movimiento del Millón Trabajador@s en Marcha.

Una de nuestras luchas sindicales recientes es por la destrucción de la costa del Golfo estadounidense. El Huracán Katrina fue como una fotografía del siglo 21 de la dirección genocida del gobierno estadounidense. Reveló la realidad de las condiciones enfrentadas por la clase trabajadora afroamericana y de color bajo la democracia al estilo estadounidense.

También crea un nuevo sentido de urgencia para movilizar internacionalmente el poder para retar a la legislación racista y represora.

El siguiente es un extracto de los comentarios dados por el líder sindicalista estadounidense,

Hoy en día, el surgimiento de l@s trabajador@s latin@s por todo los Estados Unidos contra la penalización y la represión debe ser visto como algo muy importante para construir un movimiento de resistencia de las masas trabajadoras.

La Movilización y el Boicot para los Derechos de l@s Inmigrantes el Primero de Mayo de 2006, representó una de las huelgas generales más exitosas en la historia reciente de los Estados Unidos. Éste evento fue logrado por trabajador@s que no pertenecen a sindicatos, que no tienen beneficios, y sin el apoyo de los sindicatos.

Noventa por ciento de los embarques de cargamento en los puertos de Los Ángeles y Long Beach fue detenido como resultado del rechazo de los camioneros inmigrantes a ir a trabajar ese día. Varias empresas grandes tuvieron que cerrar sus operaciones por el día.

El 25 de septiembre en el puerto de San Francisco, la compañía Cruceros de Alcatraz se apoderó del contrato para manejar el servicio de barcos de trasbordo de Alcatraz sin usar ninguna tripulación del sindicato por primera vez desde que empezó el servicio en los años 70.

Ocurrió al mismo tiempo en que “algunos tipos” de tortura han sido denominados legales por el mismo Congreso de los EEUU y cuando prisiones “secretas” encarcelan una suma no conocida de personas alrededor del mundo, fuera del escrutinio público. Al traer a Trinidad a los EEUU para enjuiciarlo, se intenta además eludir a los movimientos populares que reclaman justicia no solamente en Colombia, sino también en Latinoamérica y en el Medio Oriente.

Uribe visita a los EEUU

Este es un momento crucial en Colombia, donde el gobierno está enfrentando un escándalo que si progresa, puede llegar a implicar al mismo presidente.

Durante la semana del 13 de noviembre, el presidente colombiano Álvaro Uribe viajó apresuradamente a los Estados Unidos luego de que las elecciones de mediotérmino aquí le dieran la mayoría en el Congreso al Partido Demócrata. Uribe quería asegurarse que los Demócratas siguieran la política actual del Plan Colombia y el Acuerdo de Libre Comercio entre Colombia y los EEUU. Pero ya que fue un presidente Demócrata, Bill Clinton quien inició el Plan Colombia que ha otorgado más de \$3 mil millones en ayuda a Uribe para la “guerra contra el narcotráfico” es probable que la política continúe igual.

Durante el último de sus numerosos viajes a Washington, Uribe rápidamente comentó sobre el caso de Trinidad, diciendo que su condena en última instancia “traería la paz”. Las FARC, por otro lado, han publicado una carta abierta a intelectuales, artistas y al pueblo de los EEUU solicitando que le pidan a la administración de Bush que ayude para que se logre un canje de prisioneros que incluiría a los tres agentes de los EEUU y a Trinidad.

Sin embargo en Colombia, Uribe tuvo que ser presionado, incluso hasta por representantes de la oligarquía, para que

se declarara sobre el actual escándalo de su gobierno.

Paramilitares en el Congreso

En un dramático y sorprendente giro, la Corte Suprema de Justicia ha emitido una orden judicial pidiendo la detención de tres legisladores: los senadores Álvaro García y Jairo Enrique Merlano y el diputado Eric Julio Morris. Tanto García como Morris ya se han entregado a las autoridades. Están acusados de tener conexiones con los derechistas escuadrones de la muerte, o paramilitares —algo que es públicamente conocido desde hace tiempo.

Los paramilitares son responsables de narcotráfico y sangrientas masacres a través del país. Pertenecen al mismo partido político que nominó y eligió a Uribe, quien, por necesidad se verá implicado en el caso. La investigación, la cual el movimiento progresista colombiano considera que se está llevando a cabo muy lentamente, sigue, y se esperan más acusaciones.

Uribe no es ajeno a tales acusaciones; de hecho él era el número 82 —Pablo Escobar era el número 79— en la lista de los miembros y socios del Cartel de Medellín que tenía el ex presidente George H.W. Bush.

Su inclusión en esa lista dice: “82. Álvaro Uribe Vélez —un político colombiano y senador dedicado a la colaboración con el cartel de Medellín en altos niveles gubernamentales. Uribe estuvo asociado con una empresa involucrada en actividades relacionadas con el narcotráfico en los EEUU. Su padre fue asesinado en Colombia por su conexión con narcotraficantes. Uribe ha trabajado para el cartel de Medellín y es un socio cercano de Pablo Escobar Gaviria. Él ha participado en la campaña política de Escobar para ganar la posición de Parlamentario Suplente a Jorge (Ortega). Uribe ha sido uno de los políticos del senado que ha atacado todas formas del tratado de extradición”. (anncol.org, 15 de nov.)□

el mundo. L@s trabajador@s debían poder llevar sus convenios colectivos y sus sindicatos y mudarse a cualquier país al cual su trabajo ha sido trasladado.

Como la lucha de l@s inmigrantes, l@s trabajador@s internacionales tienen que salir a las calles y exigir protección completa para tod@s l@s trabajador@s elegibles. Debemos tener un programa progresista internacional ligado a una agenda de l@s trabajador@s.

Los estibadores de ILWU, sindicalistas, trabajador@s, y activistas contra la guerra y para la justicia social de todas partes del mundo, incluyendo a l@s trabajador@s de Dora Chiba, se unieron en los peldaños del Monumento de Lincoln el 17 de octubre de 2004 en la Marcha del Millón de Trabajador@s.

Miles se movilizaron para demandar el fin a la guerra en los Estados Unidos y en el extranjero, derechos internacionales para l@s trabajador@s, y el fin de las privatizaciones.

Son eventos como éste los que hacen posible a l@s trabajador@s el construir la verdadera unidad internacional de las bases.□