Naval armada moves into position

Bush gang ‘surges’ toward war on Iran

By Sara Flounders

In the face of spiraling disaster for the U.S. occupation of Iraq, the Bush administration is moving toward a another reckless adventure—war on Iran.

The positioning of a second aircraft carrier group—with its accompanying destroyers, cruisers, submarines, cruise missiles and combat aircraft—in the Gulf, along with naming Adm. William Fallon of the Navy to replace Army Gen. John Abizaid as head of Central Command, are ominous signs of Pentagon plans.

This array of deadly equipment and this command change are hardly relevant for fighting Iraqi insurgents in the streets of Baghdad or Falluja.

A package of onerous sanctions on Iran, demanded by Washington and passed by the United Nations Security Council, appears to be part of the war preparations, just as past U.N. resolutions against Iraq served to create a war climate.

President George W. Bush’s speech on Jan. 10 outlining his new strategy for Iraq directly threatened both Syria and Iran. Bush accused both countries of not doing enough to block insurgents from crossing into Iraq and accused them of funneling arms and fighters to aid the insurgency.

Almost immediately after Bush’s speech, the first act of his new escalation took place. It was the provocative storming of an Iranian consulate in the Iraqi city of Erbil. In international law any attack on diplomats or their offices is considered an act of war.

The following day, rather than pass the blame to lower officials, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice escalated the offensive, goading Iran by declaring that the decision came directly from the president.

Increasingly in Washington and in the corporate media, speculation has opened on whether the hype about a surge of U.S. troops to Iraq is actually a diversion from plans to launch a new, wider war.

War plans unfold

The Kuwait-based daily Arab Times on Jan. 14 released a report that the U.S. military plans a military strike on Iran before April 2007.

The report, written by Editor-in-chief Ahmed al-Jarallah, said that the attack on Iran would target its oil installations and nuclear facilities and be launched from U.S. ships, while Patriot missiles would supposedly guard all Arab countries in the Gulf.

The report said that the Bush administration believes that attacking Iran will create a new power balance in the region. It said that Bush recently held a meeting with Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and others in the White House where they discussed the plan to attack Iran in minute detail.

The Arab Times report was circulated by Xinhua News and China Daily.

Other media and political blogs had similar reports. Steve Clemons, a senior fellow and director of the American Strategy Program at the New America Foundation and publisher of the

KING’S REAL LEGACY

Honored across the country

Continued on page 6

Protest at Times Square Jan. 5 denounces Bush’s war plans. Left, Brenda Stokely and NY City Councilperson Charles Barron address the crowd.
Workers World newspaper recently interviewed Willie ‘JR’ Fleming, a member of the Coalition to Protect Public Housing and chair of the Hip Hop Congress Community Development Chapters. The Hip Hop Congress has 29 chapters nationwide. In Chicago, they have chapters at Columbia College, Loyola University, Morgan Park High School and University of Illinois at Chicago, and the Cabrini Green community.

Its Web site, www.hiphopcouncil.com, describes the congress as “a non-profit corporation that uses hip hop culture to inspire social and civic action, and cultural diversity amongst young people.”

JR told WW: “Predominantly before, the Congress was basically set up in institutions like universities, affluent neighborhoods and certain high schools. Our vision was to change that, and put it in more local colleges, community-based colleges, communities where there’s a lot of African-American or urban population. The element of the Congress that we represent is activism, knowledge—I guess another word for that would be advancement of the Congress itself, or Hip Hop itself. By using Hip Hop as a platform we get not only artists to be accountable and socially conscious to what’s going on, but also the community.”

He explained: “Music has always been a platform to unite the people; so we use Hip Hop as one of them tools to unite the people, educate them, and also at the same time, entertain them, or as some people would call, edutain, our people. There has always been a plight in various communities, a lot of social ills exist, a lack of social services, social injustices. So Hip Hop has become a platform to unite these people. We utilize that to the utmost.”

**Fighting police brutality**

JR led the Cabrini Green chapter of the HHC in an activist, struggle-oriented direction. That was evident in the militant protests at Cabrini Green, organized under the leadership of the Hip Hop Congress, after the Aug. 7 shooting last year of Ellis Woodland, Jr., a 13-year-old African-American boy.

Woodland was shot three times by police. The killing took place in the North Side Cabrini-Green public housing development.

JR said: “I mean, make no mistake about it, he was shot three times, shot at, four, he hit three times by large caliber firearms. So their intention wasn’t to wound him, disarm him, or anything of that nature. Their intention was to take him out.”

First, police claimed the youth had a gun. Then, it became a BB gun. His father, Ellis Woodland Sr., publicly stated that neither he nor his mother ever purchased a BB gun for his son.

The shooting outraged the Cabrini Green community. Several days after the shooting, HHC organized a demonstration against police brutality in front of the police station at 1200 N. LaRabee in the heart of Cabrini Green.

“We went around with the bullhorn of course to hype the people,” he said. “Word travels fast in this community, you know. Hip Hop Alliance played a role, Coalition to Protect Public Housing played a role.

“A lot of residents over here already know what’s going on. You know, this police shooting had more or less something to do with community development more than anything.”

There is a rising wave of gentrification of Cabrini Green. It is built on some of the most valuable land in Chicago and borders on one of its most expensive neighborhoods—the “Gold Coast.”

The police response was more racism and violence. Cops at the protest were heard taunting a 17-year-old Cabrini Green resident, Maurice Taylor. After he verbally confronted an officer, Taylor reported that cops threatened him. On Aug. 13, Taylor was stopped and viciously beaten by the cops.

“So it’s just another facet of the treatment of the people” by the cops, JR said. “They feel that the people have been displaced out this community, population is dwindling, and they don’t have too many rights, where the people don’t really care about what’s going on around them. We say we beg to differ.

“We saw the results of the marches. After the shooting occurred, a lot of people, when they got out there, they wasn’t just really angry at the police, they was angry at politicians. They was angry at the mayor. They was angry at the Housing Authority. For a lot of people already knew the reason behind that shooting stems from the gentrification of this neighborhood, or the urban cleansing of this community.

“So the people have realized that these are just tactics and ploys to make people want to leave this community, gentrification of this neighborhood, or the urban cleans up of this neighborhood.”

“We went around with the bullhorn of course to hype the people. You know, this police shooting had more or less something to do with community development more than anything.”

**50-day vigil for Sean Bell**

Valerie Bell, whose son Sean was gunned down by New York undercover cops in a hail of bullets, on Jan. 1 began a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week vigil outside the 103rd police precinct in Queens, N.Y. Joined by supporters and her own friends, the “Gold Coast.”

We went around with the bullhorn of course to hype the people. You know, this police shooting had more or less something to do with community development more than anything.”

50-day vigil for Sean Bell

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

Joan Kretzmar, coordinator

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**Contact Us**

Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, N.Y. 10011

Phone: (212) 627-2994 Fax: (212) 675-7869

E-mail: editor@workersworld.net

Web: www.workers.org

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Goal of Feb. 3-4 immigrant rights conference: BUILD MAY DAY 2007!

By John Parker
Los Angeles

The power and potential of our working class was dramatically illustrated last year on March 25 and again on May 1 with the immense marches by immigrants. Many are still inspired by those huge protests. May 1 has historically been a day to celebrate the massive outpourings in 1886 in Chicago demanding an eight-hour work day. Since then, the capitalist class has worked overtime to try and diminish the day’s importance to workers.

The marches last year reignited and re-established the relevance of May 1 in the United States to the working-class struggles of today. This time is ripe to exploit and repress of immigrants.

As many activists working to revive May Day have put it, the immigrant struggle is a major component of the working-class movement in general in the United States.

The challenge for the labor movement and other progressive organizations is to build solidarity with the immigrant communities by helping to broaden May Day in terms of greater and more helpful participation by the anti-war and social justice movements, unions and more.

To facilitate that participation, the March 25 Coalition, which initiated and pushed for the May 1 last year, has called for a conference to take place this year on Feb. 3-4 here in Los Angeles, where it is based, to begin a national planning strategy to build May Day 2007.

“We intend to put this effort in the context of the history of the immigrant and workers’ movements in this country, to link it to what is internationally and to address the root causes of mass migration in the policies of transnational globalization,” explained Javier Rodriguez, one of the main organizers of the conference and co-initiator of the March 25 and May 1st actions last year.

In regards to building international and multinationalsolidarity, a special emphasis is being made at the conference to include the issues affecting people in this country. In the plenary session of the conference there will be a speaker on building Black and Brown unity, with a workshop addressing such issues as Katrina, Haiti and more.

芗 si swee!"

The call for the conference starts out: “On election day, Nov. 7, 2006, the Iraq war, corruption and a lack of immigration reform took center stage. The electorate spoke and the extreme right lost control of Congress and the Democrats are the new majority.

“The correlation of forces has changed and there is a new political reality, but as history tells, the Democrats are part of the ‘Empire.’ They will not end the war. Corruption and record profits will continue for the year. An explosive pro-immigrant, non-corporate immigration reform will not be addressed unless we march and boycott as we have in 2006.”

Already the conference boasts a number of very significant endorsers—student organizations, labor unions, various progressive organizations, activists who are on the front lines of the immigration issue. Included in that latter category is Elvira Arellano, who is in sanctuary at the Adalberto Church in Chicago. Arellano, who has become a symbol for all faced with deportation, was forced to take refuge in the church Aug. 15 after being arrested and threatened with deportation and separation from her son. Her lawyer is working on a temporary restraining order against the Immigration and Customs Enforcement to provide a legal means for her to attend the conference.

Another endorser is the Border Social Forum, which has 100 organizations on both sides of the border, including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Oregon, Washington State, Colorado, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Sinaloa, Sonora and Baja California.

Union endorsements for the conference include the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas-SME (Mexican Electrical Workers Union), a powerful union in Mexico which today is playing a major role in the struggle against U.S.-supported privatization plans there.

Already, national participation in this conference spans from the West Coast to Midwest, from the South to East Coast. In addition, international participation includes representatives from Venezuela and Mexico, and possibly Cuba.

As the opening of the call for the May 1st National Conference states, it will take a united movement in the streets to stop the attacks on immigrants, like the increased ICE raids plaguing numerous cities in the United States that sometimes even leave children abandoned.

Undoubtedly this united movement in the streets to stop immigration attacks will be the foundation of the renewed struggle to stop the attacks on all workers.

If you would like to register for the conference, you can do so at the March 25 Coalition Web site located at: www.march25coalition.org.

Dawn raid drags Pakistani family from home

By Leslie Feinberg
New York

The Siraj family nightmare began on Jan. 8 when 24-year-old Matin Siraj was convicted and sentenced to 30 years behind bars on charges of “terrorism” resulting from an entrapment by an NYPD-paid informant.

The next day, at dawn, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents raided his family’s home in Queens, N.Y., and dragged off his mother, father and sister.

The Siraj family is being held captive by the U.S. government, which uses the double-speak of a war “against” terror to wage a war of terror against Pakistani and other Muslim, Arab and South Asian immigrants in this country.

Jan. 16 protest outside detention center

A bus filled with loved ones and community supporters from civil and human rights organizations traveled on Jan. 16 to the Elizabeth Detention Center in New Jersey, where Shazna Parveen and her daughter Sanya Siraj faced an immigration judge in a hearing closed to the public.

Siraj’s father, Abdul Rehman, faces an ICE administrative decision that has not been scheduled.

DRUM (Desis Rising Up & Moving), a community-based social justice organization of working-class and poor South Asian immigrants in New York City, organized the demonstration to support the Siraj family.

At the Jan. 16 hearing, the judge set the bail so high—$200,000 for Shazna Parveen and $150,000 for 10-year-old Sanya Siraj—that it was, in reality, a ransom.

Fahd Ahmed from DRUM stated, “Setting such an unreasonable bond is clearly another tactic to keep our communities fearful and silent. The Siraj family, as another victim of the U.S. government’s ‘war on terror,’ is being targeted for their outspoken cries for justice on behalf of their son.”

He added that the family remains “steadfast and courageous in speaking the truth as the government continues to try to break their spirits.”

That bravery and conviction resonated in a message that Shazna Parveen sent to her supporters from behind the coiled razor wire of detention: “This is a systemic targeting of Muslims, a political attack on a peaceable family—and we have been caught in the middle of it. We have not gotten any justice and will continue to speak the truth. We will continue to struggle with patience and courage.”

Desis Rising Up & Moving stated in a Jan. 16 media release, “DRUM, as a community-based organization that works with Muslim and South Asian immigrants and has seen the targeting of this community before and especially after 9/11, is calling on all concerned individuals and organizations to support the immediate release of the Siraj family.

“DRUM, alongside countless civil and human-rights organizations and concerned citizens, will continue to expose the only way the government can call the ‘war on Terror’ against this family and all targeted communities.”

For more information, contact Fahd Ahmed, DRUM, 940-391-2660 or Kavitha Pavria, 718-216-0756.

March 25th Coalition sponsors National Conference on Feb 3 & 4 in Los Angeles to Organize The Great American Boycott II, May 1, 2007

The Conference will be held at Loyola Law School, located at 919 Albany St. in downtown Los Angeles, CA.

Determined protestors say ‘STOP THE EXECUTIONS!’

By Sharon Danann
Cleveland

In blustery cold rain and mud, almost 100 people faced off with prison authorities at the Ohio State Penitentiary in Youngstown, Ohio. The crowd maintained their high spirits and militancy in spite of drenched clothing and the state’s snowy conditions.

Since 2004, Ohio has been second only to Texas in the number of executions. Most death row prisoners are held at OSP, as are a majority of prisoners with life sentences from the 1993 rebellion in the Lucasville, Ohio prison. Many of their family members and friends had come to make their sentiments known, including mothers carrying handmade signs with their son’s names. Most of the demonstrators are African American.

Chants echoed over the 50-acre property and the rings of fences around the monstrous prison. In keeping with the spirit of an event in honor of Martin Luther King Jr., a Cleveland community group called Black on Black Crime began singing “We Shall Overcome.” A banner demanded “Stop the Executions!” in 13-inch letters in the hopes that prisoners would be able to see it from their windows.

Many of the participants learned of the protest through a grassroots prisoner letter campaign. Rally organizers had also reached out to various organizations that oppose the death penalty and anti-war groups.

In addition to the locally based Youngstown Prison Forum, LOOP (Love Ones Of Prisoners), and Youngstown Peace Action, Cleveland organizations showed up in force. Black on Black Crime had a contingent of many car loads. Cleveland Coalition Against the Death Penalty brought many signs. The Cleveland Lucasville Five Defense Committee and Peoples Fightback Center arranged for a 12-person van and coordinated a four-car caravan from Cleveland. The Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE-Ohio) was also represented.

The International Action Center put out a press release about the rally. Images of solidarity and support came in from Vancouver, British Columbia and England.

The rally signifies the start of a new campaign to halt executions and to get the Lucasville-related convictions overturned, with Ted Strickland newly inaugurated as Ohio’s governor. Write to Governor Ted Strickland, 77 High Street, 30th Floor, Columbus, OH 43215, fax 614-728-4819 or call 614-728-4900.

The Cleveland Lucasville Five Defense Committee is planning a series of educational and outreach activities in the months to come, including a fundraiser to provide the public’s awareness of the false convictions. Evidence continues to emerge showing the perjury of “witnesses” who got the Five to confess.

The prisoners are in solitary confinement and are handicapped during non-contact-only visits. This has gone on for 13 years and is taking a health toll on some of the prisoners. It is time for their unjust convictions to be overturned and they be allowed to walk free. (See Workers World, Oct. 18, 2006, and Oct. 30, 2006)

The prisons in this country are concentration camps for the poor and oppressed.

Active-duty GIs speak out on Iraq war

By John Catalinotto
Norfolk, Va.

Twenty-five active duty GIs reflected the growing opposition to the U.S. occupation of Iraq at a news conference Jan. 15 in Norfolk, Va., by publicly acknowledging that they had signed the “Appeal for Redress,” a statement offering a view of the Iraq occupation that differs from that of President George W. Bush. The appeal has been circulating since last October.

Organizers had chosen the date to correspond with the fourth anniversary of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.’s struggle for civil rights, helped focus the conference on the appeal for justice and peace. Some 35 active-duty troops and reservists, including Iraq veterans and other veterans, and the day’s speakers filled the stage at the Unitarian Universalist Church. Banners around the walls of the church greeted the 100 people filling it, including one banner with the message: “Support the troops; listen to them.”

And those who came, along with Norfolk’s TV stations and some national and international media, listened. They heard, if they listened carefully, that a new movement of active-duty troops was starting to speak with its own voice. They heard that those in the civilian anti-war movement were pleading to support this new GI movement and to welcome it.

Some of the appeal’s drafters and early organizers spoke out at the meeting and clarified their position with a four-hour series of nonstop interviews with television and press media and documentary filmmakers. These active-duty troops included Navy Seaman Jonathan Hutto and Javier Capella, Petty Officer Dave Rogers and Marine Sergeant Liam Madden.

Hutto and Capella are stationed on the aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt with a complement of more than 3,000 officers and enlisted sailors stationed in Norfolk. Hutto, who grew up in Atlanta under the strong influence of that city’s movement for civil rights, helped focus the conference on Martin Luther King Jr. and his opposition to the Vietnam War.

Madden, who is stationed at the Marine base in Quantico, Va., and has only a week of active-duty left in his contract, spoke about the need to pay attention to King’s words more than a day or two. He read the Appeal for Redress, which the move- ment drafted in such a way that active-duty troops have the legal right to sign, protected by the Military Whistleblower Protection Act (DOD directive 7050.6). The simple statement makes it clear that “staying in Iraq will not work and is not worth the price. It is time for U.S. troops to come home.” Madden added, “Not one more of my brothers should die for a lie. This is not politics. It is our generation’s call to conscience.”

Hutto said that among the 1,092 signatures that the group has verified, 35 are from troops in Iraq. “That while the main supporters were at least a dozen members of the Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). This group had up to now concentrated on organizing returning veterans of the Iraq occupation and getting them involved in the anti-war movement. The IVAW now also uses the appeal to reach out to active-duty personnel.

Jabbar Magruder of IVAW, still active in the National Guard in California, said he would be joining Madden and others on Jan. 16 to meet with Dennis Kucinich and other representatives in Congress and present the signatures to them. Nancy Lessin of Military Families Speak Out and Michael McPherson of Veterans for Peace also had representatives supporting the new active-duty movement.

Phil Williams of the Virginian Anti-War Network (VAWN) spoke, along with Fabian Bouthilette of the Military Project in New York, which has been reaching out to National Guard troops at armories in the city.

“We must listen to the men and women who are in the military and who are taking the courageous move of speaking out against the war,” said David Cortwright, author of the book “Soldiers in Revolt.” A year earlier, Hutto had read this book about the GI movement during the Vietnam War, which inspired him to begin the Appeal for Redress.

Before the conference ended, Hutto pointed out that before King made his famous April 1967 anti-war speech from Riverside Church in New York, King himself had come to a realization: if he were going to advise non-violence as a tactic in the movement for civil rights, he would have to start by insisting that the U.S. government—“the greatest purveyor of violence”—desist from its warlike foreign policy.

Hutto then introduced three active-duty GIs who read their ‘Appeal’ aloud in Norfolk, Jan. 15.

Labor, anti-war, immigrant rights converge

“The bringing my nephew home,” “Yea, bring ‘em home!” were some of the cheers that greeted the Service Employees International Union Local 660 contingent at the Los Angeles Martin Luther King Day Parade. The International Action Center and the March 25 Coalition for the May 1 Great American Boycott II joined the SEIU contingent with banners and signs against the war at home on immigrant workers and the U.S. wars abroad from Iraq to Afghanistan and Somalia. The parade route was lined with tens of thousands of Angelinos, news of the largest MLK Day parades in the United States.

—Maggie Vascassennio
the country: ‘NO TO RACISM & WAR!’

By Gloria Verdieu
San Diego

The first annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day Rally and Picnic to honor the 78th birthday of Rev. King was held at beautiful Martin L. King Park in the diverse working-class community of southeast San Diego. People brought all types of homemade dishes and food to put on the grill. Some said that this event reminded them of a big family gathering.

The event was organized by the King/Chávez Coalition for Justice and Unity, which was formed after last year’s Martin Luther King Day Parade. A diverse group of community members came together to discuss what to do about the parade, which had been moved out of the community and had become disturbingly militarized and completely co-opted by corporate interests. The King Day Parade has turned into a tourist attraction that represents everything that Martin Luther King was against.

The community group then organized a contingent in the Cesar Chávez Parade that was held in March, and again witnessed the same type of militarization. The group later voted to name itself the King/Chávez Coalition for Justice and Unity.

This year’s picnic and rally began with a recording of King’s 1967 “Beyond Vietnam” speech. Then there was a drum call by young African drummers ranging in age from 4 to 18. After the drummers were a number of speakers making the connections among struggles of all working people. Enrique Morones of Border Anger spoke on immigration and border issues.

The Assembly was honored with the presence of Minister James Haggard of the Christian Fellowship Church. Rev. Haggard knew Rev. King and was a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He recounted how King spoke out on Vietnam and U.S. militarism. Haggard noted that if King were alive today, he would be speaking out against the Iraq war. He also commented on the disturbing militarization of the connection between King and Chávez and on the need to unite the struggles of all nationalities. He praised the picnic, rally and the organizers for having a vision and acting on it.

Professor Pat Washington spoke on the criminal justice system. Professor Jesse Mills spoke about racism. Poetry was read by the African American Writers & Artists, the Common Collective and the Langston Hughes Poetry Circle. Sylvia Telafaro, president of AAWA, announced that Mumia Abu-Jamal had been made an honorary member of her organization and that everyone should be involved in the struggle to free him. The Radical Cheerleaders performed several chants that they do to disrupt and agitate in front of Minutemen at day labor hiring sites, and to support immigration and border rallies.

The rally also included speakers from FIST (Fight Imperialism Stand Together), the International Socialist Organization and Copwatch. There was a speaker from the San Diego Black Contractors who brought his group to this rally after concluding their own rally that addressed the issue of unfair work practices. Workers World organizer Bob McCubbin tied the issues together with his talk, which emphasized the need to intensify our struggle to end war, racism and poverty, to free the Cuban Five, Abu-Jamal, Leonard Pelletier, and all political prisoners. The rally concluded with a reading of “An Urge to Surge,” an essay that Abu-Jamal wrote before Bush’s speech on Jan. 10.

People left with a good feeling about the event. Everyone agreed that it should become a yearly event. Organizers plan to return to this park in an effort to also have a march through the community to the park.

New coalition offers alternative to militarized parade

‘Surge’ of protest at Times Square

Activists from the immigrant rights, Katrina, and anti-war movement protested on Jan. 15 in Times Square in New York to denounce Bush’s announcement of a “surge” of troops to Iraq, and to demand an end to funding for the war and an immediate date return of all troops.

The multinational rally was spirited, with chanting and a moving picket line that ended in a powerful rally.

—LeiLani Dowell

True peoples’ commemoration denounces police brutality

On Martin Luther King Day, the temperature in Denver was forecasted to be in the teens. Early in the morning, when people were gathering to remember the great slain fighter who fought against war and racist repression, the temperature was in single digits and the ground was covered in snow, in what has been a near record of single digits and the ground was covered in snow, in what has been a near record of

On Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday, Detroit said, “End the war in Iraq, now! Fund human needs! We won’t go back—say no to racism!”

After an introductory rally at Central United Methodist Church, the blocks long demonstration marched past the Detroit International Auto Show to the Labor Arch monument and then back to the church. High school students read excellent essays and poems prepared for the annual writing contest.

A leaflet with a petition on the back announced a demonstration at Senator Levin’s office on Jan. 29 to kick off a “Not a Penny More for War” campaign. For more information contact the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice at mecawi.org.

—Cheryl LaBash

‘Money for human needs, not war!’

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After an introductory rally at Central United Methodist Church, the blocks long demonstration marched past the Detroit International Auto Show to the Labor Arch monument and then back to the church. High school students read excellent essays and poems prepared for the annual writing contest.

A leaflet with a petition on the back announced a demonstration at Senator Levin’s office on Jan. 29 to kick off a “Not a Penny More for War” campaign. For more information contact the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice at mecawi.org.

—Cheryl LaBash

‘Money for human needs, not war!’

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'Only the mass of the people can stop this war'

U.S. crisis in the current state of

The following is excerpted from a talk given by Fred Goldstein—Workers World newspaper contributing editor and Workers World Party (WWP) Secretariat member—at a Jan. 12 WWP Secretariat meeting and in an online editorial for WorkersWorld.org.

‘Only the mass of the people can stop this war’

"In our era, America is acting like a colonial power in Iraq. But the age of colonialism is over. Waging a colonial war means.

That’s why Lenin said that capitalist democracy is the best shell for hiding the capitalist class. It allows the people to have the feeling that they have a say in the matter when actually it’s the capitalists and the imperialists who pull all the strings."

I would like to read to you something about Bush’s troop escalation announce-ment by an eminent imperialist strat-egist—Zbigniew Brzezinski—who is a re-lat-or and Workers World Party (WWP) Secretariat member—at a Jan. 12 WWP Secretariat meeting and in an online editorial for WorkersWorld.org.

"Well, it’s rare when we agree, not only with the substance of..."
that started out shooting bows and arrows at U.S. aircraft in the 1950s—marched into Saigon and the U.S. Embassy. When the imperialists saw that, they said, “We better rethink this situation.”

So they sent Clark Clifford, a big corporation lawyer, to negotiate with the “wise men” of the establishment, as an emissary to Lyndon Johnson, the Democratic president, to tell him: “You can’t run for president again.” And he resigned.

The big bourgeoisie was saying, “We gotta get out of here.” There was a lot of maneuvering. Nixon came in and decided to take the U.S. troops out, keep the air war going and supply the puppet troops. But that wasn’t going anyplace either. So finally they voted to cut the funds in 1973. The Tet regime fell apart and the NLF, within two years or less, actually marched in and took over the country, drove out the final remaining imperialist forces and took over the country.

So, if the bourgeoisie decides that they want to cut their losses, you’ll see the Democrats suddenly getting a backbone. But they’re not there yet.

**Remember the Iraq Study Group?**

Practically nobody remembers the Iraq Study Group. For two months they were the headline; they were the saviors. “The Iraq Study Group is coming!”

The Iraq Study Group was a prestigious political grouping of bipartisan imperialist politicians and political operatives, headed by James Baker, who was an aide to Bush’s father. He was the architect of the stealing of the 2000 election in Florida. When they came, Cheney ate them for lunch.

It’s clear now that while the ruling class was hoping that they would come up with some magic solution, there is none. That became apparent when they made their report, and the bourgeoisie saw that. It’s not true that they can’t fold and withdraw. They certainly can. And they will have to do that, eventually. It has to get worse for them before they will begin to contemplate it seriously.

When Bush floated his plan to send 20,000 or 30,000 troops to Iraq, Brent Scowcroft had an op-ed piece in the New York Times in favor of sending additional troops to Baghdad. Scowcroft was the national security advisor of Bush’s father. He is a general in the Air Force and a consultant in a big bourgeois consulting firm for giant corporations.

Scowcroft was so much against this war that Bush Jr. wouldn’t let him in the Oval Office, wouldn’t even talk to him. But the other day, Scowcroft said it would be an unper- alleled strategic defeat if the U.S. was to be pushed out of Iraq. The faction of the military that is with Bush plays a role in this. Actually, Bush was desperately trying to find the mili- tary grouping that would support him. He had a lot of trouble with [Gen. John] Abizaid, the commander of U.S. Central Command there; he had a lot of trouble with [Gen. George W.] Casey, who was in charge of the troops; and probably a lot of others. You remember the parade of retired generals who went a few months ago saying this is a disaster? So there were many sections of the military who felt that they were pushed into a really bad situa- tion, and they wanted out of it. It’s not like the military to want to leave and take a loss. They always want to fight—that’s what they do. That’s the divi- sion of labor in capitalist society between the ruling class and the capitalist state. The military, part of the capitalist state, is not the same as the ruling class. They have their own role in capitalist society, which is to be aggressive in pursuit of imperialist interests, and not to be troubled and bur- dened so much by political constraints.

Now some of them think it’s too late in Iraq. But there’s plenty who want to go and see what they can do.

**Lessons of Vietnam**

U.S. imperialism spent 13 years in Vietnam trying to hold the communists back from taking over. But it was also at a time when they were trying to destroy the Chinese Revolution. Their presence in Vietnam was to some extent an attempt to set up a beachhead against China. It was part of a broader strategic idea of con- quering Asia, which they have, never ever forgotten.

General [Douglas] MacArthur, the commander of the Pacific during World War II, had warned them after the Korean War—when they were fought to a stand- still—never to fight another land war in Asia. But they did it anyway, because the temptation of super profits and the beach- head against China was pulling them in as a class—their great dream of conquering one-quarter of the human race.

But after the Tet Offensive, they gave up the idea—for the moment.

Here’s the difference with Iraq: [While] Vietnam never “belonged” to them, the Middle East, as far as they’re concerned, is their “property.” [Anglo-U.S.] imperial- ization has been there for 150 years.

Iraq once belonged to British imperial- ization. The Iraqis threw them out. Now the U.S. imperialists went in to take it back. They yielded to the temptation of the col- lapse of the USSR, and they spelled it out in a doctrine that said preemptive war is permissible and regime change is the order of the day.

The neo-cons sold it to the ruling class.

There wasn’t one significant dissent in the ruling class about invading Iraq. They all had misgivings about the diplomacy of it, and that alliances that were being rup- tured. But when they thought they could get it back, they were all for it.

All their strategic thinking [involves] the Middle East. You control that, you control the oil flow and a good part of the economic arteries of Japan and Europe. Certainly China needs oil. You control all of this, in addition to being in a strategic military situation, to go in both directions, east and west.

So, Iraq is a strategic defeat for them. Both sides are right—the ones who say you can’t walk out and the ones who say you can’t stay there. That’s their problem.

That’s their agony.

We’ve no confidence in any imperialist politician to stop this war. The ruling class doesn’t even want to stop it. Only the mass of the people can stop this war, and that’s the only ones we have any faith in.
Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five

U.S. lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans activists launch initiative

By Leslie Feinberg

A call for Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five is issuing out of the planet. On Feb. 6, lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) activists working with the New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five issued the statement calling for a new trial and freedom for the five Cubans held in U.S. prisons.

The only “crime” of the Cuban Five is that they had infiltrated CIA-backed mercenary commands of groups operating out of the U.S. in order to monitor and halt terrorist plots against Cuba.

The Rainbow Solidarity call concludes, “The Cuban people have the right to self-determination and sovereignty. The U.S. must stop getting their hands dirty with the same old medical blockade and CIA-trained, funded and armed attacks by mercenary ‘contra’ armies operating on U.S. soil. These are all illegal acts of war. We call for a new trial and freedom for the Cuban 5.”

Within hours after the call for Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five went out, close to 200 individuals and organizations that fight oppression based on sexuality, gender expression and race had signed on, many adding enthusiastic comments. Most exciting to organizers was how many of the signers immediately volunteered to help spread the call.

Endorsers came from across the U.S. and around the world: Mexico, Brazil, Hong Kong, India, Costa Rica, New Zealand, Ireland, Wales, Italy, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Germany, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Portugal and Spain.

Signers span political spectrum

Early U.S. signers span a broad political spectrum. They include Ted Underwood, a long-time leader in the struggle to free the Cuban Five; former political prisoner and leading prison abolitionist Angela Y. Davis; Leslie Cagan, who is national coordinator of United for Peace and Justice; LeLani Dowell, national coordinator of FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together); Stephen Funk, the U.S. Marine who was the first imprisoned Iraq War conscientious objector; Bev Tang, organizer for Anakbayan, the youth group of Bayan; Gerry Scoppettuolo, co-founder GALLAN (Pride At Work, Boston); Lani Ka‘ahumanu, BINET USA; Atlanta community activist Pat Hussein; Camille Hopkins, director of NYTRO (New York Transgender Rights Organization) of Western New York; transgender activist Moonbow River Stone; and Jesse Lakahi Heiwa, Queer People Of Color Action.

Activists Barbara Smith and Margo Okazawa-Rey signed on. The two were among the founders of the Combahee River Collective, a group of Black feminists of all sexualities who issued a historic statement against the “interlocking” system of “racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression.”

Former political prisonersLaura Whitehorn and Linda Evans added their names. Playwright and performer Imani Henry and performance artist Holly Hughes endorsed. So did renowned lesbian cartoonist and graphic novelist Alison Bechdel and many other political figures, including Minnie Bruce Pratt, Matt/ida a.k.a. Matt Bernstein Sycamore, Eileen Myles, Sarah Schulman and Catherine Ryan Hyde.

Organizations signed on, including the Audre Lorde Project—a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Spiritual and Transgender People of Color center for community organizing, focusing on the New York City area; PRCANGE—a community organization for Transgender, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Queer, and Questioning (TLGBTSQQ) youth of color in New York City; GUTI! (Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism); Trans Action Canada; LAGAILA: Queer Insurrection; Stonewall Warriors, Boston; and Queers Without Borders, Hartford, Conn.

In addition, people of conscience across the United States and around the world of all nationalities, ages, sexes, genders and sexualities are adding their names, as well, to this call.

Organizations that are not exclusively LGBT signed on in the spirit of unity, including Anakbayan-Los Angeles; Bayan-Southern California; ALL India Anti-Imperialist Forum; Latin American Solidarity Committee, task force of the Western New York Peace Center; VIRTUAL u.s. Peace Academy at Seattle, Wash.; and The United Peoples, Denmark.

“Your help is needed!”

Less than a week after the initial call circulated the globe, the Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five published its web page on the New York Committee to Free the Cuban Five web site. Visit: www.freethєfєvєny.org/rainboweng.htm

The introduction to the initiative and the call itself are up there in English, Spanish, simplified and traditional Chinese.

The introduction and call have now also been translated into Farsi, Portuguese, German and French and will be posted soon. More translations are planned for the web site, including into Tagalog, Japanese, Korean, Italian and a video version in ASL (American Sign Language).

For more information, visit Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five site at www.freethєfєvєny.org in order to add their names and to help spread the news to others to do likewise. For more information on this struggle also visit: www.freethєfєvєny.org.

Those with ideas for widening and deepening the initiative are urged to e-mail organization, race and gender-variant people faced police raids disguised as a “Lavender Scare.”

But by the 1970s—while cops were still raiding bars and Stonewall and same-sex love was still illegal—the imperialists suddenly became champions of gay rights, as well as the struggle against racism and sexism.

But first, it is impossible to skip over the staggering hypocrisy of U.S. imperialism and its media propaganda machinery. They don’t care a whit about lesbian and gay, bisexual and trans lives. They want to crush the revolution and re-enslave the entire population.

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Latin America continues to move left

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

From Jan. 11 through 15 three leftist Latin American presidents were sworn in. This surely made the White House more nervous about this region of the world.

VENUEZUELA initiates new stage of revolution

Early on Jan. 11, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez was sworn in at the National Assembly after having won a landslide election on Dec. 3. Ironically, this was the same day of the inauguration of the American continent, U.S. President George W. Bush would announce his new policy for more death and destruction in his war on “terrorism” and Iraq.

Several of Chávez’s speeches point to a new stage of the Bolivarian Revolution that will intensify the development of his proposed “Socialism of the 21st Century” in Venezuela. These included a call for the formation of a United Socialist Party of Venezuela, a new party that would coalesce all the pro-revolution groups existing in the country; the nationalization of important sectors of the economy, including telecommunications, electricity and the Central Bank—which up to now has been an autonomous entity—and several other measures intended to move toward the construction of a socialist society.

Sandinistas back in office in NICARAGUA

After being sworn in, Chávez flew to Nicaragua to attend the inauguration of President Daniel Ortega. After a lapse of many years, in a completely new situation in the country, the Sandinista Front for National Liberation was back in office on Jan. 11, represented by Ortega. The Sandinistas, who had tried earlier to bring revolutionary change to Nicaragua, had been forced out in 1990 after a con-

tra war sponsored by the U.S. that cost billions of dollars of damage, followed by Washington’s direct intervention in Nicaragua’s elections in support of an opposition it had created. In fact, the World Court in 1988 actually ruled that the U.S. should pay Nicaragua some $12 billion to $17 billion in reparations for the damage of the contra war—a ruling Washington ignored.

The Nicaraguan masses have suffered terribly—first during the U.S.-contra war and then, after the U.S. regime was installed, by neoliberal economic policies dictated from Wall Street.

Indicative of Nicaragua would be the way Ortega announced his inauguration day signed on to ALBA, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas. ALBA is the anti-FTAA program for Latin American integration and trade that emphasizes solidarity over profits and has already set up wide areas of coopera-
tion among its members especially in health and education. There are now four countries in ALBA—Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

ECUADOR: Indigenous leaders show confidence in Correa

In Ecuador on Jan. 14, a simple and moving ceremony in the heart of the Indigenous Zambala province of Cotopaxi, the leaders of the communities represented invested President Rafael Correa with their authority and their confidence for the direction of a new and progressive Ecuador. Correa, an economist from the progressive Alianza País (Country’s Alliance), won the highest office in run-off elections against pro-U.S. magnate Álvaro Noboa.

Several Indigenous leaders interviewed on Ecuador TV that day stated the need for the social development of Ecuadorian society. At Correa’s request, the inauguration in the Indigenous community—a day earlier than Correa’s “official” inauguration in parliament—was attended by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and Bolivian President Evo Morales.

Protesters demand: close Guantánamo

By David Hoskins

On Jan. 11 prominent anti-war mom turned activist Cindy Sheehan and others marched in Cuba to demand that the U.S. torturers at their Guantanamo Bay be per-
menantly closed. The mothers of a prison-
er held at Guantánamo and of a New York City firefighter killed on 9/11 were among the protesters.

At a conference on the eve of the pro-
test Sheehan identified “George Bush and his administration” as “enemies of humanity.” She also referred to the U.S. as “horrific” and “unspeakable.”

The event was given front-page cover-
age in the Cuban Communist Party’s daily newspaper, Granma. The Guantánamo facility is unlawfully located on a part of Cuban territory occupied by a U.S. naval base. Cuban authorities have previously referred to the U.S. center as a “concen-
tration camp.”

The protests coincided with similar events held in Washington and London. The new U.N. Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon, has also called upon U.S. President Bush to shut down the infamous detention center.

The Center for Constitutional Rights and Amnesty International co-sponsored the demonstrations in Washington. The aptly named Witness Against Torture Processed Through U.S. Legislation was held on Jan 11 and marched to the Supreme Court and then to the U.S. Federal Court. Approximately 100 supporters were arrested inside the federal courthouse in protest conditions at Guantánamo.

On the steps of the Supreme Court, organizers demanded that those held at Guantánamo not be sent to other detention facilities, secret “black sites” or to third-party countries for torture by proxy. CCR President Michael Ratner pointed out, “Five years ago, the Bush admin-
istration brought the first detainees to Guantánamo hooded and shackled in an attempt to create an offshore penal colony free from the rule of law and hidden from the eyes of the world.”

More than 700 have been impris-
oned at Guantánamo. All detainees have been denied access to a court of law and an AI report issued in summer 2005 detailed a pattern of systematic torture at the Guantánamo facilities.

Extra-judicial intimidation

Senior Pentagon official Charles D. Stimson said in a recent radio interview that he was unhappy with the fact that lawyers at several of the nation’s top firms were representing the Guantánamo pris-

oners, and called on the firms’ corporate clients to end their business ties with the firms.

New York University law professor Stephen Gillers has called Stimson’s com-
ments “prejudicial to the administration of justice.” Reports in the New York Times identified an immediate backlash from lawyers, legal experts and bar association officials.

The U.S. government’s use of intimi-
dation tactics to pervert the legal process for justice was echoed by Bush adminis-
tration allies at the Wall Street Journal in an editorial by Robert L. Pollock. In a move eerily reminiscent of the McCarthy era-anti-communist witch hunts, Pollock’s editorial provided a list of law firms, along-
side a quote from an anonymous govern-
ment official demanding that “corporate C.E.O.’s seeing this should ask their firms to choose between lucrative retainers and representing terrorists.”

Excerpts from Correa’s speech at his Inauguration on Jan. 15, 2007 show the direc-
tion of his government. Besides calling for a Constitutional Assembly—something that the more progressive Latin American governments have already achieved in order to turn back imperialism’s neoliberalist grip on their economies—he also refers to the need for a new stage of the Bolivarian Revolution.

“This way we start this crusade called Country’s Alliance, that is more than a campaign slogan but it is the homeland returns, and with her, the jobs return, justice returns, the millions of sis-
ters and brothers expelled from their own homeland in that national tragedy called migration, return …

“This is the hope of a few, spread like a breath and turned into an odyssey, and will of all Ecuadorians who on Nov. 26, 2006, wrote the heroic quest in our coun-
try and initiated a new history. Today, the homeland is already fully mobilized.”

“However, the struggle is just begin-
ing. The 26th of November was not a final point; it was a starting point. The Citizen’s Revolution has just been initi-
at ed and nobody can stop it, as long as we have a united people ready to make the change.”

President of Iran visits at a time when the Bush administra-
tion is pursuing an aggressive omnibus strategy that targets the sovereign country of Iran, preceded by the illegal capture by U.S. troops of five Iranian diplomats in the Kurdish region of Iraq, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is visiting Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela to fur-
ther bilateral relations.

Bilateral trade agreements between Nicaragua and Iran were signed for the first time. Ahmadinejad also attended Correa’s inauguration on Jan. 15, in an unprecedented event in international relations and diplomacy. An agreement signed with Venezuela is aimed to help African nations as well.

COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA

Right-wing destabilization plans thwarted

By Craig Conway

A massive popular uprising in Cochabamba, Bolivia, appears to have thwarted right-wing destabilization plans by provincial governor Manfred Reyes Villa, a member of a right-wing opposi-
tion party, Reyes Villa tried to submit a second referendum on autonomy for the province of Cochabamba, the first having been defeated by popular vote.

The right-wing opposition to Bolivian President Evo Morales is pushing region-
al autonomy as a way to weaken Morales’ government and disrupt efforts to nation-
alize vital natural resources and institute progressive social policies.

Cochabamba had a referendum on autonomy in July 2006 that was defeated. When Reyes Villa announced another referendum on this issue last week, the peasantry and social movements opposed to autonomy were outraged at the gover-

de’s inability to act as the “centrist” govern-
dum. They protested, demanding Reyes Villa’s resignation.

The local government responded with tear gas and police violence. Fascist gangs came out on the street and there were vio-

lent confrontations that resulted in two deaths and hundreds of injuries.

The social movements then mobilized peasants, trade unionists, cocaleros (coca leaf growers), students, teachers and other social forces which smashed in Cochabamba demanding Reyes Villa’s resignation. Roads were blocked by people demanding an end to the autono-
my issue, effectively cutting off the city of Cochabamba from the rest of the country. An angry crowd lit the Governor’s Palace on fire.

The Morales government intervened to mediate between the social move-
ments and Reyes Villa, who was conven-
tionally staying in a La Paz hotel. Reyes Villa, under pressure from the masses in the streets, agreed to cancel the autono-
my referendum and submit to a recall referendum.

The social movements responded posi-
tively to the cancellation and removed the bloque; but the progressive sectors of Cochabamba want Reyes Villa to resign. As this goes to press, the social move-
ments still are protesting in Cochabamba, demanding the governor leave office immediately.
Common sense and science both tell us that, at some point, quantity turns into quality. Add heat to water and for a while nothing much happens. But eventually it starts to disappear—the splashy, splashy liquid is evaporating, becoming a gas. So the obvious thing to do is cool it down and, sure enough, at a very definite point the free-running liquid turns into hard, brittle ice.

When it comes to the social phenomenology, the point of dramatic change may be harder to predict, but it happens, sooner or later. Take something like the amount of money that the Bush administration’s war in Iraq is costing.

It’s a staggering amount—no one can pinpoint it for sure. Estimates range from $1 trillion to $2 trillion. The higher figure comes from a Nobel laureate in economics, Joseph Stiglitz.

You have trouble imagining a trillion dollars? Join the club. Even a billionaire would have difficulty visualizing how much goods and services could be bought with a trillion dollars, and something tells us that if you’re reading this editorial, you’re likely a billionaire. If you are, you’re probably trying to figure out how to use it—or worse.

This is a very fluid sum, because the war on terrorism is still going on and, incredibly, the government seems to be preparing to widen the war to other countries in the region. So $1 trillion or $2 trillion may soon have to be revised upwards.

The war is now almost four years old, so it has been draining the Treasury at the rate of around $1 BILLION A DAY—more or less, depending on which estimate you choose. By comparison, the National Cancer Institute’s budget is just $6 billion a year.

New Orleans and its levees could be completely rebuilt better and safer for about what the war costs in a month.

You get the point. We could have universal health care, good schools, subsidized housing, and everything else that is needed to lift the entire population out of poverty if this money, which comes from the taxes of working people, were spent on humankind instead of on a doomed attempt to deliver world empire to the super-rich of this country.

How much bigger does this massive theft of the wealth created by the working class have to become to bring about the political climate that passes the threshold of rebellion, before quantity turns into quality?

Actually, that’s what the more realistic of the billionaires are asking themselves. How much time have they got left before they’ll have one hell of a fight on their hands—not just in Baghdad but right here, in their soft underbelly?

When does disgust, disillusionment and anguish among the people turn into a commitment to organize for profound and irreversible social change? The money and blood keep piling up, piling up.

It’s a staggering sum, because the war on terrorism is still going on and, incredibly, the government seems to be preparing to widen the war to other countries in the region. So $1 trillion or $2 trillion may soon have to be revised upwards.

EU, Morocco repress African immigrants

Starting on Dec. 23 the Moroccan government, acting on behalf of the European Union, rounded up between 330 and 400 people from Sub-Saharan Africa who were recognized as immigrants or asylum-seekers by the United Nations, had no place in a country called Morocco and then took them by force to the Algerian border by bus.

The authorities frequently confiscated or destroyed these people’s identification documents. Police often beat, invaded, or humiliated the people, including injuring pregnant women and women with young children. The imperialist governments of the European Union, while not directly participating in the abuse of the immigrants, have urged Morocco to crack down on those trying to arrive in Europe.

On Dec. 26 people from the Elin Association, which assists immigrants, contacted some of the people in Rabat and then went to the desert region near Oujda, in the south of Morocco.

On the university campus of Oujda, the Elin group met a number ofg groups of deportees who showed marks of the physical and psychological suffering inflicted on them. The majority of deportees, some of whom had already undergone deportations to the desert, were from Congo, the Ivory Coast, Nigeria and Mali.

They asked the Elin activists to bring before the government authorities the truth about the rights of the immigrants being violated. They demanded their rights and to be treated with dignity.

—John Catalinotto

Cold War gay-bashers condemn Cuba

Continued from page 8 anywhere except on their own soil.

The big-business spin made it seem as though the Cuban Revolution was a well-spring of anti-gay prejudice.

“Absurd the persistent and pervasive climate of anti-communism,” McCubbin stresses, “such attacks would have been laughable, emanating as they did from a country where gay-baiting was an indis- pensable political tool and where scarecely a week went by without the murder, somewhere within the country, of a transgender person.

“But since the anti-Cuba propaganda campaign was relentless and did have a negative effect on many people, including many lesbian and gay youth, we felt a serious responsibility to answer and challenge these attacks. And we did, just as we conscientiously defended the other socialist countries, and in particular the Soviet Union, from the steady stream of anti-communist attacks.

“So we were often challenged by pro-gressve youth, gay and straight, and I support Cuba.” The more serious listened carefully to what we had to say in Cuba’s defense, but we were also badmouthed frequently by anti-communist elements in Latin America and elsewhere.

An understanding of the Cuban Revolution, and the hand it was dealt by imperialism, is as important today as it continues to be. The mobilizing power of the revolution can achieve, even when surrounded and under siege by imperialism.

The truth to begin with is this: Communism did not just fall down on the feet of the bourgeoisie.

A global mobilization was able to overturn a war of imperialist aggression.

The year 2006 marked a critical victory for reproductive rights. It was 30 years since the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that snatched the right to reproductive rights away from women, to set up a movement that radicalized abortion.
Africans denounce U.S. attacks on Somalia

By Deirdre Griswold

What possible excuse can the U.S. imperialist government and the corporate media give for sending the most modern and destructive war fleet to the coast of Somalia, an impoverished country in Africa about the size of Texas, where hundreds of thousands are thought to have been viciously bombing its villages with planes that fire thousands of rounds a minute? From the Pentagon Generals and the Bush administration, all the way to the tips to the print and electronic media, the rationale given is that the Islamic Courts Union, which has come to power with popular support in opposition to the Al-Qaeda harboring “terrorists” from Al-Qaeda—where have we heard that before?—and so the Pentagon was justified in taking a sledge hammer to a nut.

The subtext to this story is also becoming familiar. The U.S. is supposedly coming to the aid of “Black Africans” who are Christians—in this case the present government of Ethiopia—against “Arabs” who are Muslims. This blatant attempt to pit “Arabs” against “Africans” against each other along ethnic and religious lines is also the strategy of those who covet Sudan’s oil and have pressed for Western intervention in that country.

But many Africans are not buying it. Articles have appeared in papers and online sites across the continent not only about the support of the imperialist government and the corporate media, but also criticizing governments that do Washington’s bidding.

Here are a couple of examples culled from African newspapers:

Issa Shijivi from Tanzania writes in the publication Fahamu that “an American Air Force AC-130 jet ... bombed a site in Somalia near the Kenyan border. The excuse was the usual one—to destroy alleged Al-Qaeda agents who, the Americans have constantly propagandized, are part of the Union of Islamic Courts. The planes flew from an American air base in another African country, Djibouti.”

This is a very, very ominous turn of events. Africans have constantly warned that the American military design on the East African nation of Somalia that embarked upon a bombing campaign in the east African nation of Somalia that has been partially supported by Ethiopia, Egypt, and the United States.

By Abayomi Azikiwe

African Anti-War Movement protests U.S. bombings of Iraq and Somalia

Two demonstrations were held in Detroit on Jan. 11 against the rising tide of U.S. militarism in Iraq and Somalia. Jan. 11 had been designated a day of action around the country to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the opening of the American military base at Guantánamo and the start of the imperialist government and the corporate media’s project is bound to collapse.”

When members of MECAWI pointed out that most people viewed Ethiopia’s action as part and parcel of U.S. policy, they were denied the right to speak.

The presence of the Ethiopian ambassador to the U.S., Dawit Bayati, as well as to Mr. Yohannes.

Members of the audience including MECAWI representatives began to shout out questions and statements in opposition to the Bush administration’s policies in the Horn of Africa and the rest of the African continent. The Ethiopian and Kenyan ambassadors then attempted to justify their pro-U.S. actions in east Africa. According to Yohannes: “We are in Somalia based on our own interest. The U.S. has taken a firm anti-terrorism position and we support this.”

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Cuba enseña a leer al mundo

Por Cheryl La Bash

Tradicado para Rebeldión y Triaxlora por Chevo Ramos

En sólo 43 años, una revolución socialista transformó Cuba de una empobrecida colonia de Unamérica en un poder educativo internacional. En 1961, el analalfabetismo en las áreas rurales de Cuba era del 42 por ciento. En 2006, la UNESCO premió a Cuba por su programa internacional de alfabetización.

El 22 de diciembre de 1961, la Revolución cubana culminó con éxito la fase inicial de la campaña nacional de alfabetización que ensayó a leer y escribir a casi un millón de cubanos, muchos de ellos en aisladas áreas rurales. Durante el mismo año, un ejército de 268.420 voluntarios, maestros, jóvenes recién graduados y estudiantes de escuelas básicas y preuniversitario, sentó los bases que darían origen a los médicos, hospitales y escuelas de medicina que hoy Cuba comparte con el mundo. Más de la mitad de los brigadistas eran mujeres; 100.000 eran jóvenes de entre 10 y 19 años.

Fidel Castro expulsó la importancia del largo alcance de la campaña de alfabetización que redujo el analalfabetismo del 42 por ciento al cuatro por ciento: “La Revolución Cubana está realizando esta campaña de alfabetización, porque es justo brindarles esa oportunidad a los que, por razones sociales y económicas, no tuvieron oportunidad de aprender a leer y a escribir hay que ayudarlos, hay que persuadirlos de que sí pueden estudiar. Había numerosos casos de personas que tenían dificultades en la vista, y desde el principio se acordaron facilitarles gratuitamente el examen de la vista y los espejuelos. No puedo existir ningún obstáculo, ni existe. Es una campaña que lleva sus beneficios directamente a las clases más humildes. Esa es una gran injusticia que la Revolución viene a rectificar. Al mismo tiempo es de vital importancia para el futuro de la patria. No puede concebirse progreso sin educación. La educación es indispensable, si es que queremos realizar los grandes proyectos en el campo de la ciencia y en el campo de la economía que la Revolución tiene delante para elevar tanto cuanto queramos nuestro estándar de vida.”

En 2006 la UNESCO otorgó a Cuba el Premio de Alfabetización Rey Sejong por “la labor dirigida al progreso de las posibilidades individuales de las personas del poder de la sociedad a través de la utilización del método cubano de alfabetización en más de 15 países.” Aunque otros países fueron galardonados por su trabajo interno de alfabetización, el Instituto Pedagógico Latinoamericano y del Caribe (IPLAC) de la República de Cuba recibió el único premio por ayudar a otros países. Recientemente, el método cubano “Yo sí puedo”, combinado con la voluntad política de la Revolución bolivariana de Venezuela, erradicó el analalfabetismo en ese país, al enseñar a leer y escribir a 1,5 millones de personas en dos años. En Ecuador varios indígenas han adoptado el método.

Según la UNESCO, Cuba ha puesto en marcha los programas de alfabetización en distintos contextos sociales y culturales que cubren todos los estratos sociales, lo que incluye a los pueblos originarios, a los habitantes de áreas urbanas y rurales, a los reclusos, a las personas con necesidades educativas especiales, a los emigrantes y a las minorías étnicas, al mismo tiempo que presta especial atención a la educación de la mujer.

Bolivia, con el apoyo de Cuba y Venezuela, pretende de erradicar el analalfabetismo para el año 2008. Tanto en las áreas urbanas como en las rurales, los pueblos Aymara y Quechua están aprendiendo a leer y a escribir en sus propios idiomas. Un informe presentado a la XIV Cumbre del Movimiento de Países No Alineados reveló que actualmente 2,3 millones de personas de 15 países, entre ellos México y Nueva Zelanda, están estudiando con este programa. Gambia, Nigeria, Granada, San Cristóbal y Nevis, y la ciudad española de Sevilla, han pedido a Cuba el envío de asesores para comenzar a aplicar el método.

Si bien la movilización de masas para la campaña nacional de alfabetización comenzó el 15 de abril de 1961, la preparación comenzó antes. El 5 de enero de 1961, el joven negro Conrado Benítez García, uno de los primeros maestros voluntarios, y el campesino Heliodoro Rodríguez Linares, fueron asesinados y mutilados cerca de Trinidad, en la costa sur de la provincia cubana de Sancti Spíritus. Las brigadas de jóvenes alfabetizadores que en homenaje a Conrado Benítez llevarían su nombre, comenzaron a movilizarse apenas unos días antes de la invasión de Playa Girón dirigida por la CIA, invasión planificada originalmente para el área de Trinidad.

En 1961, el año escolar cubano terminó antes y no se reinició en el otoño sino en diciembre, cuando finalizó la campaña nacional de alfabetización. A través de la Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC) 30.000 trabajadores se movilizaron para ayudar en la campaña sin perjudicar la producción. En 1961, Fidel Castro dijo a los miembros de la CTC en la provincia de la Habana “el imperialismo hace planes de educación para cumplirse, según dicen, en 10 años que, desde luego, con seguridad que no lo van a cumplir. La Revolución Cubana va a demostrar que esa tarea se puede realizar en un año.”

Cuentra y cinco años después, en un país que gasta miles de millones de dólares para ocupar Iraq y Afganistán, las palabras de Fidel siguen vigentes. Mientras los distritos escolares de Unamérica tratan de cumplir los mandatos de la Ley No Child Left Behind sin disponer de presupuesto para ello, en Dakota la tasa de alfabetización está en 47 por ciento. En un informe fechado 15 de diciembre, el Departamento de Educación señaló que “la Evaluación Nacional de Alfabetización de Adultos (NAAL) dada a conocer hoy por el Centro Nacional de Estadísticas de Educación (NCES), ha encontrado pocos cambios en la capacidad de los adultos para leer y entender oraciones y párrafos o para entender documentos como solicitudes de empleo.” La Encuesta Nacional sobre la Alfabetización de Adultos encontró que entre el 21 por ciento y el 23 por ciento, o entre 40 y 44 millones de adultos usamericanos mayores de 16 años se encuentran en el estado más bajo de alfabetización; de ellos, 21 millones no saben leer.

De izquierda a derecha, veterano Michael McPherson y marineros Jonathan Hutto y David Rogers, servir en Iraq, llaman dole su responsabili dad el rehusar participar en un crimen de guerra por participar en una guerra ilegal de agresión.

EEUU vs. Primer Teniente Watada

La vista antes del juicio en el caso de los EEUU en contra del Primer Teniente Watada comenzó el 4 de enero en el Fuerte Lewis, en Washington. La resistencia mostrada de más de 100 de los partidarios de Watada se reunió para un mitín y una vigilia en un puente sobre la carretera cerca de la entrada del fuerte. Watada es el primer oficial en rehusar de haber hecho declaraciones que fueron consideradas como “conducta inapropiada de un oficial”. En la vista, según el comité de defensa de Watada, el Juez Teniente Coronel John Head dictaminó que el acusar Watada con violaciones por lo que dijo, “los fiscales estaban permitiendo que un jurado militar considerara sus motivos de rehusar el mandato para desplegar”.

Los partidarios de Watada planean manifestaciones coordinadas para el 5 de febrero, día en que el corte marcial está pautada para comenzar. Para más información vea a www.thankyoulgt.org

Disensión de soldados de EEUU lista para ser pública

Por John Catalinotto

El llamado, que se encuentra en www.appealforredress.org dice: “Como americano patriota, orgulloso de servir en las fuerzas armadas EEUU está prevista para el 15 de enero, día festivo que reconoce el cumpleaños de Martin Luther King, Jr., en una base naval en Norfolk, del estado de Virginia.

El marinero Jonathan Hutto, quien creció en Atlanta bajo la fuerte influencia del movimiento para los derechos civiles de la población africana americana de esa ciudad, es vocero de las tropas que desde finales del año pasado formaban firmas de cientos de efectivos para una petición contra la guerra “Un llamado a la Resistencia”.

Hutto dijo a Mundo Obrero (Workers World) el 8 de enero de “miembros del grupo Veteranos de Iraq en Contra de la Guerra (IWAY), Familias Militares Denunciación y otros grupos opuestos al servicio de los soldados, ha documentado la inhumanidad y opresión de los soldados. Se nos hace oficialmente impunidad; tenemos que un jurado considera que al acusar Watada con delitos por lo que dijo, “los fiscales estaban permitiendo que un jurado militar considerara sus motivos de rehusar el mandato para desplegar”.

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