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GLOBAL STOCK MARKET CHAOS

Wall St., big banks seek gov't handout

By Deirdre Griswold

Jan. 23—Can all the king's horses and all the king's men put Humpty-Dumpty back together again?

Wall Street is looking to Washington to rescue it from disaster. But everything that the government has done so far has failed to reverse the fortunes of U.S. capitalism.

And now, the stock market crash on a global scale has finally begun.

It started on Wall Street on Thursday, Jan. 18. Stock values fell 3 percent, even though the head of the Federal Reserve Bank, Ben Bernanke, had just told a congressional hearing that he supported the idea of a government "stimulus package" after dismal earnings reports from major banks and corporations.

By Monday, Jan. 21, while U.S. markets were closed for Martin Luther King Day, stock markets in Asia and Europe started to tumble wildly, some closing down as much as 10 percent in one day. Declines are continuing as of this writing. There has been no accounting yet, but it is certain that trillions of dollars in paper (or electronic) value have "vanished."

By all accounts, the panic abroad was caused by the realization that the United States is in a recession that will sharply curtail its imports as purchasing power declines. The U.S. consumer market, which has absorbed such a large portion of the world's commodities, has been crucial to Asia's industrial and financial development. Indeed, the global restructuring of U.S. manufacturing, in which many corporations have moved their operations abroad to get cheaper labor and higher profits, has been integral to this development.

Early Tuesday morning, Jan. 22, before the U.S. markets opened, the Federal Reserve Board announced it had held an emergency

meeting and was lowering interest rates by an unprecedented three-quarters of a percent, to 3.5 percent. This allows the federal government to pour more money into the hands of the big banks. The ensuing "easy credit" is supposed to stimulate production and restore investor "confidence" in the economy.

Such a dramatic move by the Fed would ordinarily push the U.S. markets up from red ink to black. But it didn't. It only staved off for a little while longer the kind of stomach-churning dead drop that had been occurring elsewhere. U.S. market indices continue to fall, but as of Jan. 23 are not yet in a 1929-type "panic"—although that dreaded word is appearing more and more frequently in the business media.

Big capital wants free lunch

For a long time, the U.S. ruling class establishment has pushed the view that the markets would solve all the problems facing the capitalist government and the masses: entrenched poverty, unemployment, rising debt and so on. Cut the social "safety net" of anti-poverty programs and entitlements; the market will fix everything!

Now they want the government to solve the problems of the market.

Lowering interest rates is supposed to help. But government economists are worried about going much lower, because that can have other consequences, like inflation. They're between a rock and a hard place. Yet they're afraid not to. In Europe, after the central bank for the European Union said it would not lower its interest rate, stocks there took another huge tumble on Jan. 23.

For the first time, even President George W. Bush is now

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FREE JENA 6

Anti-racists tell fascist gang 'No nooses'



WW PHOTO: TYNEISHA BOWENS



Anti-racist activists from many parts of the country march in Jena, La., Jan. 21.

WW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS

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By Tyneisha Bowens
Jena, La.

One hundred and fifty anti-racist activists continued the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. on Jan. 21 as they confronted members of the white supremacist organization, the Nationalist Movement, in Jena, La. The event took place on Martin Luther King Day in this small Louisiana town that has been the stage for what is being called the new civil rights movement.

The Nationalist Movement was in Jena for what they called "Jena Justice Day," which was in opposition to the September 2007 mobilization of tens of thousands of people in support of the Jena 6 and the overall message of equality that Martin Luther King Jr. preached. The white supremacists recently won a suit with Jena giving them the right to march there without a permit, carrying nooses and white cross flags and even firearms. Various anti-racist organizations, groups, and

Continued on page 3

746 jailed in Georgia for demanding justice

Editor's note: Workers World is in its 50th year of publication. Throughout the year, we intend to share with our readers some of the paper's content over the past half century. Here are two articles originally published in Volume 3. The first appeared in the issue dated Dec. 22, 1961. The second, written right after the Kennedy administration's Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, appeared in the issue dated April 28, 1961.



WW in 1961

In the week ending Dec. 16, [1961,] no less than 746 Afro-American citizens of Georgia were arrested and jailed for peacefully demanding the rights which the United States Constitution has explicitly claimed they had for the last 94 years.

The specific charge against most of them was "unlawful assembly." (The right of assembly is also guaranteed by the Constitution.)

A series of demonstrations began in Albany, Ga., on Dec. 12 when a trial of 11 sit-in youths was being held. On that day, 400 to 500 Afro-Americans marched up and down in front of the City Hall, praying and singing in a driving rain.

Several of the leaders of this group were arrested. One was given five days in jail on a charge of "contempt of court."

Later in the same day, hundreds marched in protest against this outrage and this time 205 were arrested including children as young as 10 and 11 years old.

After this, the demonstrations snowballed. And when 565 had been arrested in three days of protests, Dr. Martin Luther King and Mrs. Ruby Hurley (Southeastern Secretary of the NAACP) arrived on the scene and tried to negotiate a truce with the white supremacists.

All that the King negotiators seem to have asked for was a pledge that the police stop enforcing segregation in the city's rail and bus terminals, and release the hundreds of Afro-Americans being held in jail.

But racist Mayor Kelly and his racist Board of Commissioners broke off negotiations after a few hours and defied the Black community to do anything about it.

After waiting several hours, hoping for a possible change of mind from the mayor's group, and still making one more attempt to see the mayor, a new demonstration was held—peaceful, as before.

This time, according to the New York Times: "The 70-man police force, sheriff's deputies and State Highway patrolmen armed with pistols and nightsticks, stood on the alert at City Hall. About 150 National Guardsmen were held in readiness at the armory. Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation cruised the streets in cars."

With all this national, state and city "protection," there were 150 more Afro-Americans arrested, including Dr. King.

Meantime, the Supreme Court refused to rule on the constitutionality of the previous arrests of sit-in youth.

Meantime, [President] John F. Kennedy was down in Venezuela making speeches about injustice and inequality in that country and how he was going to end it.

Meantime, [Attorney General] Robert F. Kennedy, who John appointed, presumably to enforce the U.S. Constitution, was busy prosecuting one of the few political groups that are honestly opposed to segregation—the Communist Party. (This Kennedy is top boss of the FBI—above J. Edgar Hoover—and it was his men who were "cruising the streets in cars" and watching innocent Black people being molested and arrested by the criminal cops of Georgia.)

Whole world calls U.S. aggressor; Kennedy gets set to do it again

The whole world, including even the capitalist allies of the United States, was appalled at the open attack on tiny Cuba which U.S. officials engineered on April 17. And yet Kennedy had the nerve to make his "blood and iron" speech after the fiasco, in which he spoke of the danger to U.S. "security" and of the "tyranny" in Cuba.

The Manchester Guardian of England summed up much of foreign Big Business sentiment when it said:

"Everyone knows that the sort of invasion by proxy with which the U.S. has now been charged is morally indistinguishable from open aggression."

Of course the reason for such "moral" indignation is to be found in the great working class demonstrations that were held throughout the world, particularly in Latin America. Over 25,000 marched in Mexico City alone.

But Kennedy, representing the arrogant and still unchastened American capitalist class, made his war-mongering speech on the very morrow of the invasion's failure, and furiously warned the oppressed Latin American countries as follows:

"If the nations of this hemisphere should fail to meet their commitments against outside penetration ... this government will not hesitate in meeting its primary obligation."

By this, Kennedy meant that if he could not get enough stooges among the Latin Americans to attack Cuba, he would see that the United States did so this time with sufficient planes and bombs—and Marines.

The truth is—that Cuba does indeed pose a threat to the United States. Not to the vast majority of the people of the United States, and not to the military security of the United States. But by its example to Latin America, it poses a threat to the Wall Street domination and exploitation of 230 million people in the hemisphere outside of the United States.

Most of the 180 million people in the United States itself do not even know that this super-exploitation exists. And many imagine that the 6 million Cubans are going to start attacking the United States with "Russian weapons."

But the Latin Americans are very well aware of the nature and identity of their oppressor. Their revolution against that oppressor will not be defeated, nor even postponed, by Kennedy's coming adventure in Cuba. □

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Movement to support Jena Six confronted racism

By Larry Hales

Jena, La., has not only become a symbol of the willingness of the state—the police, courts and prisons—to crack down on self defense from racist threats and attack. Of late, it is also the latest city to be besieged by ultraright forces.

When the Nationalist Movement announced that it would march on Jena on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, “to protest the holiday and the Jena Six,” many saw the march’s real intentions: to provoke fear in the Black inhabitants of the town, and to attempt to use the scapegoating and criminalizing of the six young Black men who fought back against racism to the racists’ advantage.

Already, the case of the young men had attracted international attention. Officials claim that Jena is a nice town and that people just want to be left alone. When Black students protested a “white students only” tree, however, school officials ignored their dissent and the district attorney threatened the youth.

The six endured taunts, racial slurs, and an attack. Two young Black men had a shotgun pulled on them. Instead of charges against the bearer of the weapon, the young men were charged with theft of a weapon for disarming the person.

Nothing was done to address the rampant racism. The hanging of three nooses under the “white students only” tree led to

light punishment and no criminal charges, though the hanging of nooses constitutes a viable threat and act of terror. When the men who came to be known as the Jena Six defended themselves against a white youth who taunted them with racial slurs, they were charged with attempted murder.

The acts of the men and the reaction by city officials sparked a rebellion, as tens of thousands converged on the tiny town of Jena and tens of thousands rallied around the country on Sept. 20, 2007.

Another rally in Washington, D.C., a few months later drew more than 30,000 people, mostly Black. Many recognized the case as a matter of self defense of the oppressed and the subsequent criminal charges a reaction by the state meant to quell inklings of self defense from the oppressed.

The town of Jena had another chance to redeem itself, to prove that it was not a racist town. The Nationalist Movement decided that not only would it march, displaying its vile, fascist tendencies, but that it would do so armed.

Jena mayor praised ultrarightist

Jena’s Mayor Murphy McMillin had met with Richard Barrett—spokesperson for the ultra-right Nationalist Movement—before the rally Sept. 20 in support of the Jena Six. McMillin has never denied that he told Barrett, “I do appreciate what you

are trying to do,” and, “Your moral support means a lot.” (Chicago Tribune, Sept. 24, 2007)

The action of McMillin and the district attorney and many of the white residents of Jena is clear enough. Reed Walters, the district attorney, threatened to make the lives of the Black youth who complained about the “white students only” tree disappear with a stroke of his pen.

Justin Barker, the young white man who got beat up, was paraded around as a victim. He also would later try to mobilize white readers of a white supremacist Web site, according to the same Chicago Tribune article.

It is simple to understand the climate of a town like Jena, a town that is 86-percent white and voted overwhelmingly for racist David Duke when he ran for governor and for the Senate. The Barker family even offered a place for Barrett to stay when he came to town before Sept. 20.

The march of the white supremacists turned out to be small, 15-30 people compared with over 150 counterprotesters organized by the Jan. 21st Committee and supported by many other groups including the International Action Center and Fight Imperialism—Stand Together in solidarity with the Black inhabitants of Jena [See other article this issue on Jena].

It is important in any period to drown out ultraright-wing racists and to shut down their message, no matter how small

they seem. As Sam Marcy wrote in “The Klan & Government: Foes or Allies,” “The U.S. working class should not fall prey to the deadly illusion that the reemergence of the Ku Klux Klan and the growth of fascist violence in widely separated areas of the country is a fleeting, momentary phenomenon, soon destined to sink into oblivion as conditions rapidly change.”

The above was written during the right-wing Ronald Reagan administration, after the Klan marched on a number of cities, including Washington, D.C.—where they were soundly defeated and driven off by a counterdemonstration.

The analysis is critical, because all too often there are attempts to paint outright fascist organizations and individuals as on the fringe. These violent, racist, ultrarightists operate out in the open, and even during the most prosperous of times, they are always at least one weapon on the ruling class’s arsenal aimed at smashing any movement for change emanating from workers and oppressed nationalities.

That the U.S. government, local and state governments allow and even appease organizations such as the Nationalist Movement, asserting the First Amendment as their rationale for granting permits and for providing police protection for the racists from the righteous indignation of counter-protesters, shows not only sheer hypocrisy, but is a sign of complicity of the keepers of the status quo. □



WW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS



WW PHOTO: TYNIESHA BOWENS

FREE JENA 6

Anti-racists tell fascist gang ‘No nooses’

Continued from page 1

individuals drove into the city to say “No to nooses!”

The diversity of the anti-racist group, which included Black, Latin@, Arab, Asian, Native and white folks, showed the unity that is being forged between oppressed nationalities in the United States. People came out from Los Angeles; Chicago; New York; New Orleans; Atlanta; Jersey City, N.J.; Durham, N.C.; and Jena.

At 9 a.m. the anti-racist activists met at two checkpoints outside of Jena and caravanned in for safety. “We have been harassed by the police, pulled over and ticketed almost everyday,” explained one of the organizers from the January 21 in Jena Committee. After caravanning into the town, the anti-racists held a rally in Jena’s park where the crowd listened to speakers including police brutality activist Juanita Young, Rev. Raymond Brown of Louisiana’s National Action Network, a

representative of the youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together, Carl Dix of the Revolutionary Communist Party, a member of the Common Ground Collective and activists from cities across the country.

After the rally the group of about 150 marched from the park to the courthouse where 15-30 white supremacists were holding their rally. En route to the courthouse, the march received acknowledgment, support and adversity from the residents of Jena. However, the people of Jena did not come out in support of the white supremacist rally.

As they climbed the hill toward the courthouse chanting “No Nazis, No KKK, No Fascist USA!” the anti-racists saw a wall of police. The strong police presence was an attempt to force the march into a “free speech zone” in the back of the courthouse. But the march successfully pushed back the police line and asserted

its constitutional rights of assembly and free speech.

At the front of the Jena courthouse the protestors confronted the racists, drowning out their message of white supremacy with the message of justice, unity and equality.

Though there were only 15 Nationalist Movement members present, the overwhelmingly racist presence of the state—the police, courts and prisons—was much larger. Agents from the local, state and federal law enforcement agencies protected the armed and threatening white supremacists from the unarmed crowd speaking out against racism and hate.

Peter Gilbert of FIST, who participated in the rally with a delegation of FIST and International Action Center members from Raleigh, N.C., and New York, said: “The collusion of the state was apparent at every level. It was the state that gave the white supremacists the right to march unpermitted and armed; it was the state

that gave them the front of the courthouse; and it was the state that was protecting them.”

The anti-racists effectively drowned out the Nationalist Movement’s message and showed the white supremacists and the state that this kind of racism will not go unanswered. The march, having achieved its goal, moved back to the park where a rally and caravan into the community ended the event.

The presence of the white supremacist Nationalist Movement, whose leaders are small businesspeople from outside Jena, in a small and economically underdeveloped town like Jena, shows the rising tide of racism as a reaction to the economic crisis. However, the relatively higher numbers of anti-racists shows that a multinational, unified movement is becoming more prepared to counter these attacks.

Bowens spoke at the anti-racist rally representing FIST.

Economic collapse sharpens foreclosure crisis

Group demands Michigan governor declare emergency

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Racist, predatory lending practices of banks and major lending institutions have caused the subprime mortgage crisis to hit Detroit residents especially hard. The Detroit News recently reported that 72,000 homes in metropolitan Detroit—Oakland, Macomb and Wayne Counties—have faced foreclosure in the last two years. Detroit city's foreclosure rate is 10 percent, with some neighborhoods as high as 17 percent.

The mortgage industry considers a 1 percent foreclosure rate alarming.

The prevalence of subprime variable mortgages in Detroit combined with racism and the economic devastation that has hit the city's population has led to an unprecedented crisis of home foreclosures. This crisis will only deepen in the coming months as more and more families find their mortgage rates increasing as the variable rates are set higher.

The foreclosure crisis in Detroit and Michigan affects the entire population. The many abandoned homes depress all property values. Homes are left vacant and stripped and neighborhoods decline further. Renters too are evicted when the owners are dispossessed.

The foreclosure catastrophe in Michigan must be viewed within the context of the overall economic tsunami that has engulfed this Midwestern state.

Grim statistics recently published confirm what poor and working people face in Michigan. Unemployment data released on Jan. 16 revealed that the state leads the country in job losses. A total of 90,000 jobs disappeared in 2007. Michigan's official unemployment rate for last year hit 7.2 percent, according to the State Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

Workers lost 19,000 jobs in the auto industry, 16,000 in construction and more than 10,000 jobs in retail. Economists at the University of Michigan predict that up to 51,000 more jobs will disappear in the state during 2008. This is on top of the 336,000 jobs that were lost in the previous six years.

Researchers Joan Crary, George Fulton and Saul Hymans are forecasting that 21,000 jobs will be lost in Michigan this year in auto manufacturing alone. General Motors recently announced further restructuring and buyouts, with planned cuts of thousands more workers.

More than 40,000 people left the state in 2007 to seek work elsewhere. A study by United Van Lines showed that last year Michigan led the nation in the number of workers leaving their state. Nearly 68 percent of Michigan moves took workers out of the state, surpassing the state record of 67 percent during the 1981 auto recession.

A 2007 Census Bureau study documented that 33.6 percent of Detroiters earn incomes below the federal poverty line, and 47.8 percent of Detroit's children live in poverty. The 2007 Kids Count in Michigan study revealed that African-American and Latin@ children are three times more likely to live in poverty than white children.

High health care costs

Health care costs are taking great chunks of workers' pay. A recent study revealed that in 2007 more than a half million Michigan residents spent over 25 percent of their family income on medical-related costs, including prescription drugs or co-pays, health insurance premiums and deductibles. Eighty percent of these residents had health insurance.

An additional 1.5 million Michigan residents spent between 10 and 25 percent of their income on medical care. The Lansing State Journal, reporting on the study by FamiliesUSA, said the organization "considers more than 10 percent of income going toward health care as unaffordable for most middle-class and working-class families."

While the federal and state governments claim there is no money to help poor and working people, Michigan taxpayers have already paid almost \$13 billion just to fund the war on Iraq. Two-thirds of what Michigan families pay in federal taxes goes directly to the Pentagon to wage war against other poor and working people, in



Vanessa Fluker
WW PHOTO: KRIS HAMEL

Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere.

Mass unemployment, foreclosures and homelessness, soaring medical costs, skyrocketing poverty—the statistics for Michigan are horrendous. Each number represents an individual or family suffering tremendous hardship and deprivation.

Mortgage loan horror stories

Vanessa Fluker is a Detroit attorney who represents poor and working people in many struggles for justice. She turned her attention last year to assisting those facing foreclosures and losing their homes. Fluker told Workers World some of the horror stories she has heard: "For instance, an individual has a loan under \$60,000, yet the adjustable rate allows the payment to go up to a maximum of 18.25 percent interest. This is an actual loan, and to make matters worse, it's a 40-year loan and not a 30-year loan.

"I have met with seniors," said Fluker, "who come in for loan evaluations who have lived in their homes for 20, 30, sometimes 40 years, that have been persuaded or induced to enter into adjustable refinancing loans and their rates are now adjusting beyond their meager fixed income. One such instance is a senior who refinanced the home to help pay medical

bills for her husband, who was dying of cancer. The mortgage adjusted, and after missing only one payment, a pre-foreclosure notice was sent demanding that she come up with an exorbitant amount of money.

"This woman actually borrowed that money, caught the payments up. The next month her husband died and the lender continued to hound her even though she was less than one month behind. Currently they are again seeking to place her in foreclosure on a home that she's lived in for more

than 40 years."

The federal and state governments' proposals to resolve the foreclosure crisis give little or no relief to the vast majority of those affected. These proposals amount to putting a band-aid on a gaping wound.

But there is a solution. The state constitution of Michigan declares that the health and welfare of the people is of primary concern. Under the law, the governor has not only the authority, but the duty, to declare a state of emergency during times of great public crisis.

A growing movement is demanding that Gov. Jennifer Granholm declare a state of economic emergency in Michigan and use her authority to impose a moratorium to stop all foreclosures for a five-year period.

A struggle to stop foreclosures

Organizers with the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI), who are leading this struggle, point out that such a moratorium on foreclosures was in place in Michigan during the Great Depression of the 1930s, as well as in 25 other states.

MECAWI literature states: "The Mortgage Moratorium Act, Public Acts 1933-98, was enacted by the state legislature in the 1930s. This Act, as amended, halted foreclosures for five years during the Depression and allowed individuals facing foreclosure to stay in their homes, based on the paying of fair rental terms and just and equitable terms for the payment of taxes and insurance, as set by the courts."

The Michigan Mortgage Moratorium Act was declared constitutional by the Michigan Supreme Court as well as the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that in time of public crisis the right of people to their homes takes priority over contracts with banks and lenders.

Only a united mass struggle of poor and working people will force the governor to declare a state of emergency and place a moratorium stopping foreclosures. A moratorium will give desperately needed relief to the people and allow a breathing space wherein a long-term solution to the crisis can be found.

An important step in this struggle will take place outside the Capitol building in Lansing, where Michigan activists and those facing foreclosures will gather on Jan. 29 while Gov. Granholm delivers her annual "state of the state" speech. MECAWI organizers will present the "state of the people" and demand a moratorium on all foreclosures, evictions, and utility shut-offs.

To get involved in this critical struggle, call (313) 319-0870 or visit www.mecawi.org. □

'No' to Con Ed's 17-percent rate hike

By Mary Owen
Queens, N.Y.

People who live and work in Queens, New York City's most international borough and its largest in area, gave a resounding "No" to Con Edison's request for a 17-percent rate hike—its largest ever—at a Jan. 17 public hearing. Many who spoke out were mobilized by the Western Queens Power for the People Campaign (PFP).

PFP has been fighting for justice and restitution from a nine-day Con Ed power outage in July 2006 that plunged over 200,000 people into darkness in mainly working class, immigrant communities. Since then, people have been killed or seriously injured in a July 2007 Con Ed steam pipe explosion in Manhattan and a November 2007 Con Ed gas explosion in Sunnyside, Queens.

"Con Ed should be held accountable for what they've done, and a rate increase is not the way to do it," said Madelene



Transport worker & unionist
Charles Jenkins, speaks against
the Con Ed rate hike.
WW PHOTO: MARY OWEN

DeLeon, a PFP organizer who works on the block where the steam explosion occurred. DeLeon also lives a block from where a gas explosion killed Sunnyside resident Kunta Oza, 69, in her home on Nov. 21.

Others who spoke said that Con Ed takes in \$12 billion a year and has \$25 billion in assets, and stockholders and top

managers should use that for the \$1.2 billion in increases they're trying to squeeze out of customers.

"Workers are limited to raises of 3 percent or 4 percent, but my Con Ed bill has become outrageous. We the people are looking for justice. Any rate hike is a tax on working people," transport worker Charles Jenkins, a vice-president of the New York City Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, told the state Public Service Commission (PSC).

PFP organizers handed in 100 letters from community residents and small business owners opposing the Con Ed rate hike. Local elected officials also spoke and condemned the requested increase. But a week earlier on his radio show, billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg appeared to endorse the hike saying the utility giant, which bills customers the highest rates in the U.S., "does not make that much money."

The state PSC is expected to make its final decision on the citywide rate hike by March 30. Readers who would like to sign a letter to say "No" to the increase can go to www.powerforthepeople.info. □



James Kelly



Larry Hamm



Margaret Stevens

Conference says: Fund human needs, not war

The People's Peace Conference held its second annual gathering on Jan. 19 at the Rutgers School of Law in Newark, N.J. The Peace and Justice Coalition, a broad coalition of more than 100 organizations sharing the goal of uniting and fighting against U.S. wars abroad and wars against poor and working people at home, sponsored the conference, which the People's Organization for Progress (POP) initiated.

The conference's main theme was, "The

U.S. War in Iraq and our communities—Breaking the silence: The grassroots speak."

Conference organizer Vickie White told Workers World that more than 250 people from the region attended the event, which included opening and closing plenary sessions, and cultural performances as well as workshops.

Lawrence Hamm, POP chairperson, opened the conference with remarks on how the money going to the wars in Iraq

and Afghanistan should be going to fund human needs at home, especially in the Black and Latin@ communities. Hamm cited hospital closings, based on lack of profitability, in Black-majority Newark, the most populous New Jersey city and one of the poorest. The workshops raised important issues of police brutality, the prison-industrial complex, violence against women, global warming, environmental racism and military recruitment.

Other speakers included Margaret

Stevens, who helped to found a New Jersey chapter of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW); anti-war activist James Kelly, whose son died in combat in Iraq in December 2005; Amiri Baraka, a well-known poet and activist; Ray Stever, president, Industrial Union Council; and Paula Rogovin, Military Families Speak Out. For more information, see www.peaceandjusticecoalition.org.

—Report & photos by
Monica Moorehead

Roe v. Wade commemorated

The Detroit and Downriver chapters of the National Organization for Women (NOW) on Jan. 20 commemorated the 35th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the landmark Supreme Court decision that legalized women's right to choose abortion. A multinational gathering of women and men heard from keynote speaker Debbie Johnson of the Detroit Action Network For Reproductive Rights (DANFORR) and Dessa Cosma, an organizer with Planned Parenthood of Michigan. Johnson's remarks tied the ongoing struggle for reproductive justice to the fight against racism and updated the audience on the many obstacles placed in women's paths as they exercise their right to choose. Shannon Clary of Downriver NOW and Karisha Fenton of Detroit NOW introduced the speakers and urged people to get involved with DANFORR and Planned Parenthood.

—Report & photos Kris Hamel



Karisha Fenton



Debbie Johnson



Dessa Cosma

Global stock market chaos

Wall St., big banks seek gov't handout

Continued from page 1

working with congressional Democrats and Republicans on what is supposed to be an "economic stimulus" package of emergency bills. Bush's turnabout is a sure sign that the super-rich want the government to bail out their system.

They will be looking for populist language to sell what, in essence, will be more handouts to their class, dressed up with a few crumbs for the workers like an extension of unemployment insurance. This extension should have happened a long time ago, but was not considered necessary by the ruling class while their profits were high, no matter what level of suffering was inflicted on the workers.

Banks in crisis, too

An important feature of the current crisis, one that indicates that it is severe and will be long lasting, is the perilous condition of the big banks.

The drop in global stock markets was accompanied by reports from banks and major corporations in the U.S. on their fourth-quarter 2007 earnings. Many were disastrous. Three giant banks reported either losses or virtually no earnings.

Citigroup's "earnings" report was actually a loss of \$10 billion in the final quarter—the largest decline in the bank's 196 years of existence. It blamed the mortgage crisis, since the bank held many of the financial instruments created to

gamble on the huge amount of debt owed by homeowners.

When the mortgage crisis hit last year, it became clear that millions of people could not pay the higher interest rates kicking in. This resulted in unprecedented numbers of foreclosures, and banks and mortgage companies found their golden eggs had become worthless paper.

Immediately after reporting its loss, Citigroup strong-armed several overseas banks, mostly in Asia, to give it money to cover the shortfall.

Next, Bank of America reported its fourth-quarter profits had fallen 95 percent to \$268 million, compared to \$5.26 billion last year. The bank's profit for all of 2007 fell 29 percent to \$14.98 billion.

Wachovia's fourth-quarter net income fell about 98 percent to \$51 million, compared to \$2.3 billion in the same period last year. For the year, its profits were down 19 percent.

What made them vulnerable

The stock market decline has further exacerbated this crisis for the banks.

Walk into any bank branch today and you will see a "financial adviser" urging depositors to put their savings into mutual funds or other instruments connected to the stock market. Of course, the bank gets a juicy commission from every transaction.

Before 1999, that was illegal. Commercial banks were prohibited by law

from involvement with the stock market. The law was the Glass-Steagall Act, passed in 1933 after the disastrous crash of the stock market had triggered a collapse of the banking system. The government had actually suspended operations of the banks for a while when panic withdrawals drained their vaults and led them to barricade their doors.

For more than 60 years, Glass-Steagall insulated commercial banks from the shocks of a stock market crash. But in 1999, under the deregulation pressure of big bankers who felt this law prevented them from getting onto the lucrative gravy train underway in Wall Street, Bill Clinton signed into law the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. It repealed those elements of Glass-Steagall that had separated commercial banks from investment banks. They are now vulnerable again to severe shocks in the stock market.

The banks also hold trillions of dollars in credit card debt. Whether you're retired, a student, unemployed or have a low-paying job, how many times in the last year have you received letters from banks offering you a new credit card? The interest and fees are enormous and have kept the banks' profits up.

But with the economy turning down, millions will not be able to keep up with their payments and at the same time buy food, energy and other needed goods—let alone pay for health care or education. Even if they're working, much of their

income will go to pay interest in one form or another—on student loans, on mortgages, on credit cards. It all adds up to deepening poverty and crisis.

Workers can't accept bosses' scenario

This is the ugly scenario concocted by the super-rich for the working class in this country. It is one that has already been played out in so many oppressed countries that have lived under the heel of imperialist corporations and banks for more than a century.

But there can be another scenario. The working class is not helpless—far from it. In fact, it can decide whether buses and trucks run, food is picked, data entries are made, cargo is loaded, and water and electricity are turned on in the Stock Exchange. Its potential power is immense.

There are 140-plus million workers and their families. Many are already living on the edge or have completely fallen into the abyss of unemployment, homelessness and living hand to mouth. Millions are in unions, but seven times as many are not.

Like the crisis of the 1930s, this one can be the catalyst for organizing on a greater scale than ever before—one in which the leading role of militants schooled in the struggles against racism, sexism, homophobia and immigrant-bashing can provide the framework for true class-wide solidarity.

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Martin Luther King Day means s

HOUSTON:

End the death penalty

Thousands of Houston residents braved cold weather Jan. 21 to watch the Black Heritage Society's 30th Annual Martin Luther King Day Parade. The theme this year was "Saluting the Great Debaters" and one of the grand marshals was Dr. Thomas F. Freeman, who is in his 58th year as head coach of the internationally acclaimed Texas Southern University Debate team.

The Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement's contingent in the parade condemned Texas' use of the racist and anti-poor death penalty. Thousands of flyers were distributed asking the public to get involved in this life and death struggle and to support Howard Guidry, Mumia Abu-Jamal and other innocent people on death row.

DETROIT

Fighting war, racism and poverty

Despite a bitter cold day of 20 degrees, those participating in the fifth annual Martin Luther King march and rally in Detroit came out in the hundreds to honor Dr. King and carry on his legacy of fighting war and injustice. This year's theme: "Fighting the Shackles of War, Racism and Poverty."

At the beginning rally participants were welcomed to the Central United Methodist Church by its pastor Rev. Ed Rowe. Then



WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER

participants heard main speaker Rev. Lucius Walker of the Inter-Religious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) and founder of Pastors for Peace describe Dr. King's contributions, particularly his connecting the United States economic war against the poor and people of color within this country and the war in Vietnam. Walker called on participants to carry on Dr. King's legacy by fighting back against political, social and economic injustice.

Detroit City Councilor JoAnn Watson introduced Walker and also brought on stage a delegation from Vietnam who

expressed their solidarity with the day's events. She and Walker also recognized two students from Detroit, Chinere Knight and Ese Agari, studying at the Latin American Medical School in Cuba. Throughout the opening rally many youth recited poems and sang, a 1967 Mike Wallace interview with Dr. King was screened, and much more. The rally site was imbued with Dr. King's spirit as community members' artwork adorned the vestibule along with a large banner declaring "Michigan says no to war!"

Following the opening rally hundreds marched through downtown Detroit with

BOSTON

The first MLK hip-hop rally

A militant youth-led Martin Luther King Day rally, march and speakout against racism filled the streets of downtown Boston on Jan. 21 with chants, hip-hop and spoken word calling for funding Dr. King's dream, cutting the military budget and using the money for jobs, housing, education and health care.

Youth from FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) and Voices of Liberation led the demonstration, which included strong participation by activists from the Boston Workers Alliance, a community organization that organizes against discrimination based on "CORI" past criminal records. The crowd of about 70 included strong representation of youth as well as older representatives from the

Ohio death row

Visitors fight for the right to touch

By Sharon Danann
Youngstown, Ohio

More than 60 people came together from various parts of the state to Ohio State Penitentiary (OSP) on Jan. 19 to hold a news conference and rally where they argued for contact visits on death row and called for an end to executions. Many there were relatives of prisoners on death row. Some participants brought letters with them addressed to the warden of OSP, where 145 death row prisoners are held.

Saadiqah Amatullah Hasan, spouse of Siddique Abdullah Hasan, one of the wrongly convicted Lucasville 5, read a letter expressing the hardship for her

daughter seeing her father unnecessarily shackled and chained. She described what it would mean to her daughter to have the consolation of Hasan's loving touch.

The family of a death-sentenced prisoner, James Conway, brought his excellent letter, which was tearfully read by his sister, Jennifer. His young son and daughter had also written letters. Conway has filed litigation on the issue of contact visits, which he believes help with genuine rehabilitation.

Jean White, mother of a man on death row, when contacted by him about this campaign, had collected 30 letters. At the press conference she read a letter that came from a supporter in the U.K.



WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

Relatives protest at the prison.

There was also a letter from a supporter in Australia.

Marquita Dennis experienced the tragedy of having her son executed in 2004.

She told what it was like to not be able to hold him until just before his execution. She vowed to get active in the movement against the death penalty.

Attorney Staughton Lynd explained that several of the states that allow death row prisoners to have contact visits are in the South, including Louisiana,

Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia,

Missouri and Tennessee.

Everyone then proceeded to the entrance to OSP. A prison official was already ready to receive the packets of letters to the warden which were presented ceremoniously by Theresa Lyons of Loved Ones Of Prisoners (LOOP). She made it clear that this was the beginning of a campaign and would be followed up until there was a policy change.

Surrounding a huge banner proclaiming, "Stop the Executions!" demonstrators rallied in the subfreezing weather with signs saying, "A Hug is a Human Right," "Let a Mother Hold Her Son," and "Overturn All the Lucasville Convictions." The chants were on the same themes and others such as, "Rich men walk, poor men die! Equal justice, that's a lie!" and "All the prisoners should be free! Tear down the walls of OSP!"

The coalition that put together the action was made up of the Cleveland Lucasville 5 Defense Committee, LOOP, Youngstown Prisoners Forum and CURE—Ohio. Other organizations represented at the event were the Campaign to End the Death Penalty-Toledo, Free Siddique Abdullah Hasan Coalition, New Black Panther Party-Cleveland, and Black on Black Crime, Inc. □

Excerpts: Letters from prisoners

Risking retaliation from prison officials, many prisoners became active in the campaign for contact visits for death row prisoners. Both death-sentenced prisoners and other prisoners wrote to the warden of Ohio State Penitentiary (Warden Houk) or of Mansfield Correctional Institution to press the case for this change. Here are some quotes from those letters:

I write this letter on behalf of the men who need to have an opportunity to have contact visits with their wives, families and children. It is said that a newborn baby will die without human contact. So too will the spirit of an adult if not given the same opportunity.

As you know I am a level 5 death-sentenced prisoner housed at OSP for

going on 10 years now. While confined at OSP I have been denied any human contact, inmate, family, friend and even now attorney contact? All such contact is with a solid glass window between us.

Sir, I ask of you to find it within yourself to see beyond the death sentence and even the prisoner if you must, but look to their family and friends who suffer with us, and allow contact visits to all death-sentenced prisoners at OSP, unless such visit is abused on an individual basis, deal with that individual's abuse and not punish other similar situated prisoners.

Notably, in a number of other states in America, death row prisoners are treated less inhumane, and are allowed contact visits. Since you (Warden Houk) may unconstitutionally resort to murdering innocent men, the Lucasville 5, on your death row, at least

allow them the right to contact visits with their families and other loved ones before you murder them.

Especially in considering that despite the fact that "Death Row" inmates are sentenced to death, the law requires that all individuals be "treated equally." This is not about "Guilt or Innocence" because the Penalty Phase of their lives has already been decided and thus far all everyone perceives is to deceive themselves that Deathrow Inmates deserve more punishment than the law has dictated!! ...

We're not campaigning for anything other than to be recognized as human beings who required more than just to hear our family's voice. ... All I ask is that all death-row inmates (not just a few) be allowed to have contact visits even if it's on a trial basis. □

struggle & unity



BOSTON

WW PHOTOS: LIZ GREEN



NEW YORK

United action hits media racists Don Imus and Lou Dobbs

More than 1,000 people joined a dynamic March Against Racism on Jan. 21 despite its being one of the coldest days in New York this winter, and despite being on a weekday many workers don't have as a holiday.

Black, Latin@, Arab, Asian, Native and white, women and men, lesbian, gay, bi, trans and straight, young and old—all marched almost 30 blocks from Madison Square Garden, at the new studio of racist and sexist radio shock jock Don Imus, to CNN headquarters in Columbus Circle, studio of immigrant-basher Lou Dobbs. The chants included everything from "Free the Jena 6" to "End the Siege of Gaza."

As the march was filling up the block outside CNN headquarters, Lou Dobbs, accompanied by bodyguards, crossed the street as if he were going to try to take over the stage and receive yet another platform.

He quickly learned that the crowd wasn't going to let him turn its cause into a media stunt. While they chanted him down, Million Worker March leader Brenda Stokely, on the microphone, denounced Dobbs, his Time Warner bosses and the corporate sponsors who keep him on the air.

Flor Crisóstomo, a Mexican mother and immigrant facing deportation on Jan. 28, confronted Dobbs and asked him why he doesn't talk about the effects of policies like NAFTA on immigrants' home countries, which force workers to migrate when their livelihoods are taken away.

Speakers at the day's events included Victor Toro, a Chilean activist facing deportation; Bernadette Ellorin, secretary general of BAYAN-USA; Charles Jenkins,

oppressed communities and a good representation of supporters of all ages.

The opening rally at Park Street on the Boston Common featured hip-hop performances addressing issues affecting oppressed youth in Boston, including police sweeps in the community and a surge in violence affecting Black youth.

City Councilor Chuck Turner told the crowd he was honored to be addressing "the first hip-hop rally commemorating Dr. King," and raised the need to continue the fight to fund Dr. King's dream and abolish the three evils identified by Dr. King: militarism, economic exploitation and racism.

Minister Rodney X from the Nation of Islam also gave a rousing talk to the crowd, highlighting Dr. King's legacy of struggle. The youth, including Jonathan Regis, D. J. Nomadik, Jesse and Augustin, coordinated and led the program and played hip-hop with a message that can no longer be heard over public media, where it has been co-opted and taken over by big business interests.

The demonstration marched through downtown Boston led by a sound truck playing excerpts from Dr. King's final speeches condemning the Vietnam War, and raps and chants led by Miya Campbell of FIST and the Women's Fightback Network. Rev. Franklin Hobbs, director of Healing Our Land, highlighted the disproportionate incidence of HIV/AIDS among communities of color resulting from discrimination and failure to provide resources available to other communities, and led militant chants against racism.

The demonstration was closed out by messages from members of Boston Workers Alliance including Mr. Tim and Phil Reason, Sara Mokuria of VOL, and Bob Traynham of the International Action Center and the Boston School Bus Drivers Union. It was endorsed by City Councilors Charles Yancey and Sam Yoon, New England Human Rights for Haiti, and Bishop Filipe Teixeira, OFSJC.



Brenda Stokely and Teresa Gutierrez tell Lou Dobbs "like it is."



Flor Crisóstomo, right, confronts Lou Dobbs, who is left speechless.

WW PHOTOS: GARY WILSON



NEW YORK

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL



DENVER

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Shahid Comrade, Pakistan USA Freedom Forum; Larry Holmes, Troops Out Now Coalition; Raja, Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition; a recorded message from political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal; Teresa Gutierrez, May 1 Coalition for Immigrant Rights; Katrina survivors Ada Hann and Herbert Hubbard; LeiLani Dowell of the youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; representatives of FIERCE, a New York community organization for transgender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, two spirit, queer, and questioning youth of color; and CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities.

DENVER:

A day of world solidarity

It was a bitter cold morning but that didn't stop hundreds of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. supporters to come out for the "Marade." Activists organizing for the March Against Racism called for a Day of World Solidarity.

For years State Farm Insurance has been the official "sponsor" of the "Marade," which has gotten smaller as people have grown tired of the corporate co-opting of Martin Luther King Jr. Activists from the Black, Latin@ and Asian communities and white supporters had an alternative rally, calling for unity of the oppressed against

racism and war and drawing attention to State Farm's failure to pay back hundreds of claims filed by the victims of Hurricane Katrina, yet their slogan for the Marade was "We share the same dream."

The activists drew many people to the alternative rally and community speak-out, where people spoke against the \$600 million new jail being built, the closing of schools, police brutality, U.S. imperialism and the attacks against immigrant workers.

When the "Marade" started, a State Farm truck was supposed to be at the head of the march, but was successfully blocked by those opposed to its co-opting of the commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr. to sell insurance.

Later, there was a people's video night where "The Murder of Fred Hampton," "Welcome to New Orleans" and "Legacy of Torture" were shown.

SAN DIEGO:

King/Chávez Coalition organizes rally for justice and unity

Undeterred by unusually inclement weather, King/Chávez Coalition organizers offered a powerful, people-oriented alternative to the "official" San Diego Martin Luther King Jr. parade, a downtown event that each year becomes more cop-heavy and more militarized. Community activists have pointed out that police forces and military units have no place in any event truly honoring Dr. King. In addition, they want the parade returned to the community where it originated years ago, with full participation by community residents.

The second annual King/Chávez rally was held in the heart of a working-class community of color in Martin Luther King Park. Gloria Verdieu, an International Action Center organizer and the initiator of the King/Chávez Coalition, chaired the rally. She opened making reference to the Al-Awda (Palestine Right to Return Coalition) T-shirt she was wearing, explaining that the key symbol on the T-shirt referred to the keys many Palestinians have to the homes seized from them by the Israeli apartheid state. Many Katrina survivors also have keys, she added, and they

Continued on page 8

How colonialism & imperialism spread malaria

By G. Dunkel

A Review of "The Making of a Tropical Disease: A Short History of Malaria" by Randall M. Packard (Johns Hopkins Biographies of Disease).

What Randall M. Packard does masterfully in his book on malaria is to integrate the biological complexity of the disease into its historical, social and economic context, even if he stops short of drawing all the obvious conclusions from the data he so ably presents.

The two questions Packard poses, which bear directly on how malaria can be controlled, are: how did the temperate countries of the world get rid of malaria? and why is malaria a serious health issue only in the economically underdeveloped, tropical and subtropical countries of the world?

Malaria strikes 300-500 million people a year according to World Health Organization estimates. It kills 1-3 million people a year, mainly children under 5 years of age living in sub-Saharan Africa.

Like all statistics from the poorest countries of the world, these estimates are incomplete. The countries most affected don't have the resources to set up a minimum level of health care, much less count people who get sick but don't die.

How malaria develops

There are four different kinds of malaria parasites. The most common and virulent is named *Plasmodium falciparum*. Malaria is transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, which has become infected by biting a human host at a certain stage of the disease. It takes about 10 days for the parasite to mature inside of the mosquito, which has a maximum lifespan of 21 to 25 days.

Biologists believe malaria coevolved with humans in Africa. The earliest fossils of the anopheles mosquito, a genus that uses blood to nurture its eggs, is about 30 million years old. The 60 or so species of anopheles which transmit malaria are called vectors and each of them has a different behavior and a different ecological niche.

Malaria varies in how it appears in different areas. In some areas malaria is seasonal, in other areas it occurs year round. In some areas malaria might break out only under exceptional circumstances. In the North-Western Province of Zambia, for example, a health survey in 2005 concluded that for every thousand children

under age five there were 1,353 cases of malaria, which means that many children are infected with malaria more than once a year.

Disease followed colonialism and war

The point Packard makes in his introduction and over and over again in the text is that malaria can spread and infect people even in temperate climates, but is only a serious health problem in some economically underdeveloped countries, that is, in the part of the world that was oppressed and colonized by the imperialists.

Packard starts with the malaria outbreak in the Russian city of Archangel, shortly after the Russian civil war in 1922-23. There were 1,000 deaths and 30,000 cases in a city just 125 miles south

of the Arctic Circle. He then discusses West Bengal, a tropical area that did not know much malaria until under British rule irrigation practices changed, causing malaria to explode. But even in Palm Beach in 2003, in the state of Florida, which spends hundreds of millions of dollars on mosquito control, there was a small outbreak of mosquito-spread malaria.

The most virulent form of the malaria parasite can't survive in its human hosts more than a few weeks so it probably didn't migrate with the earliest humans out of Africa. As Packard puts it, "The expansion of malaria into ... more temperate regions ... probably did not occur to any great extent until the first millennium BCE," that is, less than 3,000 years ago.

Sardinia is an early but clear example of how social and economic conditions—war and conquest, leading to changes in agricultural practices and the movement of people—spread malaria. Most probably, Sardinia was the source of the malaria that took hold in the Campagna marshes south of Rome, where it remained a threat until after World War II.

The Carthaginians conquered Sardinia, an island in the Mediterranean, south of France and west of Italy, in 502 BCE, cut down the forests in the lowlands and planted wheat and flax for export. The absence of trees produced floods, which left standing water, conditions the local mosquitoes used to multiply. Since the native inhabitants of Sardinia refused to let the Carthaginians enslave them and fled to the mountains, the Carthaginians imported workers from North Africa, who were infected with malaria.

When the Romans took Sardinia in 283 BCE, using it to supply most of Rome's wheat, they also had to continuously import labor. So many agricultural workers died from malaria that being sent to Sardinia was the equivalent to a death sentence.

After Roman rule in the western part of the Empire collapsed, malaria began spreading through western and central Europe, becoming well established in England and France by the 15th century.

The history of malaria in England is very instructive, and shows how it was linked to the capitalist transformation of agriculture in the Fernlands of southeast England. During the 13th and early 14th century, the Fernlands had a large population that was decimated by the plague and other epidemics.

When the population of England began growing again in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Fernlands were drained for pasturage and grain. The drainage was done poorly, leaving standing water for mosquitoes to breed abundantly. Malaria started to ravage the local population. So many people died that labor became short and wages high, which led people from outside the area without any acquired resistance to keep migrating in.

But "the continued capitalization of agriculture in England," according to Packard, led to the gradual disappearance of malaria in the Fernlands. Drainage improved, housing became better and more mosquito resistant, nutrition improved, agriculture became more efficient and the need for labor dropped.

Colonialism and slavery

Many of the poorer people emigrated to the colonies. This emigration probably spread malaria to North America but made it harder for an infected mosquito in

the Fernlands to successfully find a host, because there were fewer people around.

French and Spanish colonialists very likely brought malaria to the Caribbean and Latin America, since many of them came from parts of France and Spain where malaria was rife.

But the major source of the most virulent form of malaria came to the Americas through the slave trade. Even if the enslaved Africans were from areas which didn't have malaria, when they were forced onto plantations with ramshackle, crowded housing, inadequate sanitation, and poor food and in close contact with people who were infected and abundant anopheles mosquitoes, they quickly developed malaria and suffered more than people who had managed to build up some resistance through repeated exposure.

Many of the agricultural practices that were adopted in growing rice, sugar cane and cotton both in North and South America created new opportunities for mosquitoes, which spread malaria. The rising capitalist countries in Europe and North America—mainly Britain, France and the planters in the British colonies that would become the United States—made tremendous profits off these cultivations, which formed the base of their future wealth and power.

Malaria was widespread in North America, from Canada to the Deep South. After the Civil War, agricultural developments, similar to what happened in England, removed malaria as a major threat, without specific attention being devoted to its eradication. The exception was in the South, where the local bourgeoisie tried to maintain its hold on the descendants of enslaved people through sharecropping.

Next: How imperialism removed malaria from the developed world.

New York Times admits:

'Life better for gay

By Leslie Feinberg

The New York Times—an imperialist mouthpiece—admitted in a mid-December article that social life was better for those who it described as "gay and lesbian Iraqis" under the secular government of Saddam Hussein. The Times also confirmed that sanctions, war and occupation crushed that social progress and ushered in death-squad terror.

The Dec. 18 article was a political feature, not based on breaking news. The original headline summed up: "Gays Living in Shadows of New Iraq: Violence Replaces Tacit Acceptance."

Times journalist Cara Buckley interviewed Iraqis who she described as gay. She reported, "And, until the [U.S.] American invasion, they said, Iraqi society had quietly accepted them."

Buckley said those Iraqis she interviewed offered this view of life before sanctions and war: "For a brief, exhilarating time, from the mid-1980s until the early 1990s, they say, gay night life flourished in Iraq. Whereas neighboring Iran turned inward after its Islamic revolution in 1979, Baghdad allowed a measure of liberation after the end of the Iran-Iraq war."

The New York Times newspaper—"all the news that's fit to print"—doesn't see fit to mention that U.S. imperialism instigated the Iran-Iraq war. The Reagan admin-

istration armed both sides. Instead, the article continues to attempt to pit the two oil-rich countries against each other.

At the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, Buckley continued, "Abu Nuwas Boulevard, which hugs the Tigris River opposite what is now the Green Zone, became a promenade known for cruising. Discos opened in the city's best hotels, the Ishtar Sheraton, the Palestine and Saddam Hussein's prized Al-Rasheed Hotel becoming magnets for gay men. Young men with rouged cheeks and glossed lips paraded the streets of Mansour, an affluent neighborhood in Baghdad."

The Times quotes Ali Hili, who left Iraq in 2000 and is now living in London, where he heads the organization Iraqi LGBT-UK. Hili stressed that before the U.S. war and sanctions, "There were so many guys, from Kuwait, from Saudi Arabia, guys in the street with makeup," Hili recalled. "Up until 1991, there was sexual freedom. It was a revolutionary time."

Buckley noted, "Then came the Persian Gulf War, and afterward Saddam Hussein put an end to nightclubs. Iraq staggered under the yoke of economic sanctions."

The late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, a bourgeois nationalist, reportedly added a religious law that made anal intercourse, prostitution, rape and incest a capital offense in 2001. The edict came after almost a decade of economic stran-

SAN DIEGO:

King/Chávez Coalition organizes rally for justice & unity

Continuation from page 7
want their homes back too.

Then Jim Moreno, San Diego activist poet adopted by the local Chumash people, presided over a ritual invoking the spirit of fallen revolutionaries.

Other highlights of the rally included presentations by representatives of African American Artists and Writers, Border Angels, International Peoples Democratic Uhuru Movement, African Peoples Socialist Party, Colectivo Zapatista, All of Us or None, Nation of Islam, an organizer from SEIU Local 1877 and audio recordings of Mumia Abu-Jamal and of Dr. King's less known but supremely important April 4, 1967, speech.

Following the scheduled speakers, Verdieu asked that all present join the

coalition, that the coalition commit itself to organizing a community march next year, and that pressure be applied to the city government to rename Skyline Drive, a main thoroughfare in the community, to Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Raymond Burruel, SEIU organizer, responded that his union local had the same goal of organizing a community march for next year and there was general agreement to cooperate on reaching this goal.

To close the rally, students from UCSD MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán) led the assembled in an enthusiastic round of unity clapping.

Gloria Rubac, the Detroit WW bureau, Frank Neisser, Greg Butterfield, LeiLani Dowell, Maiysha Smith, Larry Hales & Bob McCubbin contributed these reports.

Power cuts to Gaza create humanitarian crisis

By David Hoskins

More than 800,000 Palestinians have been living in darkness since Israel forcibly closed the border and blocked fuel shipments into Gaza on Jan. 18, forcing Gaza's only electrical plant to shut down. The general director of Gaza's single electricity plant, Derar Abu Sissi, explained that "the catastrophe will affect hospitals, clinics, water wells, houses, factories, all aspects of life."

Hospital generators are rapidly running out of fuel. Health Ministry official Moaiya Hassannain exclaimed, "We have the choice to either cut electricity on babies in the maternity ward or heart surgery patients or stop operating rooms." (Washington Post, Jan. 22)

Israel sealed off all entrances to Gaza last week, shortly after President Bush's recent trip to the Middle East, and just a week after Bush met with Mahmud Abbas and Ehud Olmert. The blockade was no doubt approved by the Bush administration.

Egypt also shares a border with Gaza. Egypt's reluctance to reopen its border, however, has led many to speculate that the U.S. knew of Israel's plans in advance and Bush used his recent trip to bully other countries into cooperation.

The civilian population of Gaza is being punished because they elected Hamas, a group which is militantly anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist, to run Gaza. This type of collective punishment is a flagrant violation of international law and is in specific breach of Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 50 of the Hague regulations, and should be protested by progressive people everywhere.



Gaza Palestinians, led by women, defy criminal Israeli siege on Jan. 23, tear down wall and stream across border with Egypt. (See editorial, page 10)

Israel routinely stages assaults on the Palestinian population to try to break its spirit. Despite the blockade and these assaults, the Palestinian people's popular resistance against Israel's occupation of their homeland continues. Palestinians in Gaza continue to fire Qassam rockets into Israel.

Israel has supplemented the blockade with air strikes and other daily assaults on the Gaza strip. Doctor Fawzy Nabulseyah, director of the intensive care unit at Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital, discussed how the casualties from the air strikes, combined with the severity of fuel shortages, have put the lives of innocent Palestinians in double jeopardy.

"We have 15 patients on breathing machines. If the electricity is cut off they stop working and the patients will die of blood poisoning after about five minutes," he said. "Most of them were wounded in Israeli operations and air strikes." (French

Press Agency, Jan. 21)

In a separate incident, forty military tanks entered the Jabalya refugee camp to demolish Palestinian homes. Eighty percent of the people living in Gaza are refugees, and the Israeli government appears determined to destroy those homes too.

The blockade of Gaza has sparked international outrage. Christopher Guinness, spokesman for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, warned that international food aid to Gaza may be suspended due to a shortage of fuel and of plastic bags needed to pack food. Guinness pointed out that "The logic of this defies basic humanitarian standards." The UNRWA provides food necessities to 860,000 Palestinians living in Gaza.

British human rights groups have decried the fuel cutoff as unlawful. On Jan. 26 a humanitarian convoy is scheduled to travel from Israel to the Gaza strip to deliver supplies. The convoy will be headed by

human rights groups and was decked out in signs demanding that Israel "Lift the Blockade!" (The American Muslim, Jan. 21)

Demonstrations against the blockade have occurred inside Israel. Many merchants in mostly Palestinian east Jerusalem participated in a one-day solidarity strike to protest the blockade.

Amnesty International has called for an immediate lifting of the blockade. AI Middle East and North Africa program director, Malcolm Smart, in an AI news release, pointed out that "More than 40 seriously ill patients have died since the Israeli authorities closed Gaza's borders ... now the entire Gaza population is being put at risk as electricity and fuel supplies run out. This action appears calculated to make an already dire humanitarian situation worse, one in which the most vulnerable—the sick, the elderly, women and children—will bear the brunt." □

& lesbian Iraqis under Hussein'

gulation, as the U.S. pressed for shock-and-awe military invasion.

Buckley asked two of the Iraqis she interviewed what life was like in Iraq for them and acquaintances after the 2001 law was written. She reported, "While anti-gay laws were increasingly enforced, Mohammed and Mr. Hili said they still felt safe. Homosexuality seemed accepted, as long as it was practiced in private. And even when it was not tolerated, prison time could be evaded with a well-placed bribe."

The admission by the New York Times that social attitudes towards male-male or female-female sexuality were freer under the secular Ba'athist government of Saddam Hussein is particularly shocking after U.S. finance capital has enforced 12 years of economic warfare, unleashed two blitzkrieg wars and continues to be the military occupation force against the entire population of Iraq based in part on the Big Lie.

Prewar media agitation about a virtual fascist dictatorship for "gays" in Iraq targeted newspapers aimed at lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans audiences in the U.S. and Britain, and helped sell the war as "liberation."

But imperialism, and colonialism before it, has never brought liberation to the Middle East. Just the opposite is true. For example, the Times neglected to mention that British finance capital outlawed

"sodomy" in Iraq—almost a century ago.

For the purposes of the Dec. 18 New York Times feature, however, Iraqi history begins with the mid-1980s, and "gay" and "lesbian" are fixed categories, identical to Western concepts, and transcend economic and social relations, cultures and eras.

Translating sex & love

More than a century ago, as the historical sun rose on capitalist economic and accompanying military expansion, Europeans also judged and condemned, speculated and sensationalized, categorized and theorized regarding Arab sexualities, particularly about expressions of love between adult men and adolescent males.

Scholar and author Khaled El-Rouayheb pointed out, "The tendency is very much in evidence already in Sir Richard Burton's remarks on 'Pederasty' in the 'Terminal Essay' to his translation of *The Arabian Nights* in 1886. Writing before the term 'homosexuality' was introduced into the English language, Burton still assumed that he was faced with one phenomenon, 'pederasty,' which he claimed was widespread in the Islamic world and regarded as at worse a peccadillo."

El-Rouayheb is the author of a meticulously researched book, entitled "Before

Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800," that was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2005.

Khaled El-Rouayheb cautioned, "The assumption that it is unproblematic to speak of either tolerance or intolerance of homosexuality in the pre-modern Middle East, would seem to derive from the assumption that homosexuality is a self-evident fact about the human world to which a particular culture reacts with a certain degree of tolerance or repression.

"From this perspective," he continued, "writing the history of homosexuality is seen as analogous to writing, say, the history of women. One assumes that the concept

'homosexual,' like the concept 'woman,' is shared across historical periods, and that what varies and may be investigated historically is merely the changing cultural (popular, scientific, legal, etc.) attitude toward such people."

El-Rouayheb concluded, "The concept of male homosexuality did not exist in the Arab-Islamic Middle East in the early Ottoman period. There was simply no native concept that was applicable to all and only those men who were sexually attracted to members of their own sex, rather than to women."

Next: *British outlawed 'sodomy' in Iraq.*

E-mail: lfeinberg@workers.org

lavender
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red #119

Rainbow Solidarity In Defense of CUBA

This soon-to-be published work, a compilation of 25 articles from the Lavender & Red series in Workers World newspaper, shows how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love inherited from the colonial and imperial eras.

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Racism on steroids?

The witch hunt against people using steroids—most vehemently targeted against people of color—has extended itself to the entertainment industry. News reports announced on Jan. 14 that several entertainers, including hip-hop stars 50 Cent, Wyclef Jean and Timbaland; R&B artist Mary J. Blige; and movie producer Tyler Perry, were cited in an investigation of steroid use.

Notice that every single one of the entertainers mentioned is Black. They are not suspects in the investigation, the papers report, as the investigation is focused on the distribution of steroids and not the use. However, these reports have subjected them to the court of public scrutiny.

Everyone knows that drugs flourish in the entertainment industry, yet there is a double standard in the corporate media when it comes to talking about white performers and Black performers, just as there is a double standard when it comes to white music and Black music.

When white performers spew sexist

language, record misogynistic music videos and glamorize the “fast life” of drugs and music, they receive pats on the back. If Black artists do it—under record labels owned by corporations that decide exactly what will reach the airwaves—they and an entire genre of music and its performers are demonized as bad role models.

When white performers use a long list of illegal drugs, it's supposedly part of the glamour of the job. But now these Black performers are listed in a criminal investigation. Where's the investigation of cocaine and heroin distribution? The names that would come up would come not only from the entertainment industry, but Wall Street boardrooms as well.

Drug use is rampant and completely understandable in a capitalist society that exhaustively exploits workers—including athletes and artists—and forces them to compete against one another day in and day out. The enforcement by the capitalist state of drug laws, with little to no emphasis on rehabilitation, always serves to criminalize and denigrate people of color. □

Solidarity with Gaza

The Israeli state, with the complete backing of the imperialists of the U.S. and the European Union, as well as their clients among the corrupt feudal monarchs in the region, has deprived the entire Palestinian population in Gaza of electricity, sanitation, potable water, heat, cooking gas, medicines and adequate food. And it is winter in Palestine. (See article on Gaza, page 9.) Nothing has been done to end this crime against humanity, this collective punishment of the Palestinian people, despite many appeals to international agencies and organizations.

With no other choice available, the Palestinian masses and their organizations on Jan. 23 took their destiny into their own hands by blowing up, tearing down and eliminating the fence between Gaza and Egypt. The Israelis built the fence to enforce their illegal occupation. But the Palestinian people have once again given an example of how, by mass, courageous action, a mobilized population can turn the tables on the most heavily armed state in the region, backed by the world's biggest armed power.

More than 350,000 Palestinians—about 20 percent of the entire population of Gaza—surged over the fence past the Egyptian Army to buy desperately needed supplies. Faced with this mass uprising, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt ordered his border guards to stand down, even though Washington has demanded that Egypt block the border and enforce the strangulation blockade or lose its military aid.

The Palestinians then returned to Gaza and their struggle for liberation. The heroic Palestinian popular movement has once again proved stronger and more determined than its oppressors.

This dramatic and audacious act by the Palestinian people deserves the support of progressive people and especially of anti-imperialists all over the world. Workers World calls upon its readers wherever they are to join the solidarity demonstrations called in their cities and countries and stand with the Palestinian people of Gaza against the Israeli war criminals and their imperialist backers in Washington and Brussels. □

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

FRANCE

Auto manufacturer apologizes to China

Citroen-Peugeot, the French auto-maker whose cars have been banned in the United States for violating highway safety regulations, apologized for offending the 1.3 billion inhabitants of the People's Republic of China in an advertisement which mocked the Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong. The ad showed Mao's most famous portrait, distorted to show him smirking, along with a snide slogan trying to equate the automaker with Mao's belief in continuous revolution.

One Chinese resident said, “It is not only insulting Chairman Mao, but the whole Chinese nation.” (Shanghai Daily, Jan. 15)

“Chairman Mao is the symbol of China, and what Citroen did lacks basic respect to China,” said another.

This comes just after massive celebrations of Mao's 114th birthday spread across China. A Taiwanese newspaper commented that “Mao Zedong fever was sweeping the mainland” of China.

The Atlantic Monthly reported that 10 million copies of Chairman Mao's collected works were sold last year in China and an epic-style film, “The Story of Chairman Mao,” was recently released on Chinese television.

People's Daily reports that 5,000 people view Chairman Mao's body in its mausoleum daily.

It is in this atmosphere that Citroen gave a serious and long awaited apology.

—Caleb Maupin

PAKISTAN

Rejects CIA claims

The Bush administration must have thought it could prop up the regime of Pakistani dictator Pervez Musharraf by getting the CIA to support his contention that Muslim militants were behind the assassination of opposition politician Benazir Bhutto. But that has proven to be another wild miscalculation on the part of U.S. imperialism and its secret police agency.

Bhutto was killed after a mass rally in Rawalpindi on Dec. 27 when her motorcade was attacked by both gunfire and bombs. Immediately, the government's story of what had happened was dis-

puted by eyewitness accounts, videotape and the opinion of doctors who had not been allowed to conduct an autopsy.

Bhutto's political group, the Pakistan People's Party, rejected the official account of how she died. The party says she was shot, while the government says she hit her head on part of her car after a bomb blast.

Now the PPP says the government's claim that a teenager confessed to being part of an al Qaida-linked plot behind the assassination is just a “cock and bull story” meant to alleviate pressure on Musharraf, who began an eight-day European tour on Jan. 20. In addition, “Human rights groups warned that the confession may have been obtained under torture and repeated calls for an independent international investigation.” (The Guardian [Britain], Jan. 21)

Washington has supported General Musharraf against the democratic movement in Pakistan ever since he seized power in a 1999 coup. It has given his regime billions of dollars in weapons to be an ally in its fictitious but brutal “war on terror” aimed against Afghanistan, whose resistance fighters are trying to expel the imperialist armies from their country.

Washington's intervention once again on behalf of the dictatorship is only stirring up more anger among the Pakistani people.

—Deirdre Griswold

AFGHANISTAN

Occupation sees U.S. troop minisurge

The United States has ordered 3,200 additional Marines to Afghanistan this coming spring amid concerns over NATO's willingness to sustain necessary troop levels to continue the occupation of that country. The bulk of the troops will be sent in to serve under NATO-led forces. Many others will train forces under Afghanistan's U.S. sponsored puppet government led by President Hamid Karzai.

According to Rand Corp.'s Afghanistan analyst, Seth Jones, “NATO's need is in the South at the moment. But what the U.S. has found is that most NATO countries are not willing to deploy forces to conduct combat operations where they're needed most.”

The Pentagon has sought to keep the pressure on NATO to commit more

Somalis battle U.S.-backed occupation troops

By G. Dunkel

Heavy fighting broke out Jan. 20 when resistance fighters attacked puppet government troops in southern Mogadishu, Somalia's capital. Two soldiers from Ethiopia's occupation army were killed and the Ethiopian army responded with tanks and heavy artillery.

The battle was on when the guerrilla fighters who oppose the Ethiopian occupation responded with machine guns and mortars, especially when the fighting spread to the Bakara market, which is the most important trading area in Somalia.

Late reports from the BBC monitoring service and Garowe Online, a Somali online news service, said that 20 had died, including four Ethiopians and two government soldiers, and that at least 150 wounded civilians had been treated in the hospital for shrapnel and gunshot wounds.

forces by explicitly stating that this is a one-time mission to last less than seven months, after which NATO would need to send more troops.

But after a recent meeting of U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates with NATO members in Scotland, the Pentagon suggested that NATO would not be required to make specific commitments and could assist the U.S.-led occupation in other ways.

NATO's reluctance to commit more troops could be a signal that many members are responding to popular pressure to bring their troops home. This would deal a blow to U.S. imperialism as it struggles to maintain dual occupations in Afghanistan and Iraq and might mean the 3,200 Marines will stay in Afghanistan beyond the promised seven months.

—David Hoskins

CANADA

Do U.S. and Israel practice torture?

It was shocking, just shocking that an internal manual for Canadian diplomats told the truth—the United States and Israel are states which practice torture. The manual even singled out Guantánamo for special mention and pointed to a U.S. interrogation manual that allows blindfolding or hooding, forced nudity, isolation and sleep deprivation.

This revelation created a huge stir in U.S.-Canada relations and was widely reported in the Canadian press. According to a Lexis-Nexis search of the U.S. press, only the three national papers of record—The New York Times, The Los Angeles Times and Washington Post—plus USA Today carried the story.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, a Conservative who sent troops to back up the U.S. in Afghanistan and who has spent the first two years of his government "mending" relations with the U.S., was so embarrassed by the revelations that he sent his foreign minister Maxime Bernier out immediately to disavow the leak.

"The training manual is not a policy document and does not reflect the views of policies of this government," said a statement from Bernier's spokesman.

The document surfaced on the same day a Canadian judge struck down a refugee agreement with the U.S. The judge said Canada has failed to ensure that the U.S. respects rules governing torture and refugee rights.

—G. Dunkel

The U.S. backed the December 2006 Ethiopian invasion of Somalia politically, and U.S. special forces supplied the Ethiopians with intelligence and provided some commando operations in the effort to oust the Islamic Courts government. The United Nations estimates that the Ethiopian occupation has forced at least 600,000 people to leave Mogadishu. The surviving refugees face extremely harsh conditions, which the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees describes as worse than those refugees from Darfur, Sudan, face.

Another sign of U.S. intervention in Somali's affairs came when U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Dr. Jendayi Frazer had lunch with Dahir Riyale Kahin, who calls himself the "president" of Somaliland, a breakaway region of Somalia, Jan. 14 at the State Department.

Earlier, in December, an unnamed Pentagon official told the Washington Post in Djibouti, a small country bordering Somaliland to the northwest, "Somaliland should be independent." Another defense official said, "We should build up the parts that are functional and box in" Somalia's unstable regions, particularly around Mogadishu. U.S. support for a breakaway of Somaliland would be another example of the imperialists using "divide and con-

quer" tactics in an attempt to subdue a rebellious colony.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates in his December visit to Djibouti gave a public speech, claiming that worries about al-Qaida drove U.S. efforts in Somalia. Since the Ethiopian offensive installed the Transitional Federal Government in January 2007, the Pentagon has conducted at least two AC-130 gunship air strikes and a naval strike targeting opponents of that government, which Washington describes as "suspected al-Qaida operatives," along with a number of "targeted" commando raids.

The U.S. has a history of military intervention in Somalia, and despite the overwhelming U.S. military advantage, has already been humiliated there in battle.

In 1993 two U.S. helicopters hunting down opponents of their intervention were shot down after they fired on and killed many Somalis in Mogadishu. Armed Somali fighters then killed 18 Marines who survived the crashes. This incident was used as the basis of a book and film called "Black Hawk Down" and forced the Clinton administration to withdraw the U.S. occupation troops from Somalia.

During 1990-1993, Washington's justification for its intervention was that Somalia was a failed state and there was a humani-

tarian crisis. The Somali people saw it as a foreign invasion and resisted strenuously. Currently, the African Union has a so-called peacekeeping force in Mogadishu and this force—mainly Ugandan—is announcing high and clear that it has no connection with the Ethiopians, trying to dissociate itself from the hated invasion and occupation.

It is unlikely that the U.S. is going to be able to install a stable puppet government in this strategically important region.

A number of Somali groups have expressed the strong desire that the U.S. should uphold and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia instead of trying to split off Somaliland.

They have urged "the Defense Department to adhere to the letter and spirit of the official policy of the United States on Somaliland, the official and stated policy of the Security Council on Somalia and follow the example of the African Union in rejecting any efforts to further destabilize Somalia."

They point out that by recognizing Somaliland's secession, the U.S. would challenge the Somali people's achievement in achieving unity and solidarity when the northern British-ruled territory joined with the southern Italian-ruled region to form an independent Somalia in 1960. □

PHILIP AGEE: *He made a clean break*

By Deirdre Griswold

The struggle of the masses of people for social justice can win over even individuals highly trained, flattered and paid well to think and act in the interests of the super-rich ruling class. It happens rarely, but Philip Agee was proof that it can happen.

Agee, who died in Havana on Jan. 7 at the age of 72, took the conscious decision in 1969 to not only leave his job as a CIA officer but to do everything he could to expose the crimes of that agency, especially in relation to Latin America.

The Cold War was in full force. Latin America was seething after decades of Yankee invasions, dictatorships and exploitation.

The Cuban Revolution was 10 years old but had already survived a bloody campaign of sabotage and an economic blockade. It had routed an invasion by thousands of mercenaries at the Bay of Pigs. These efforts to bring down its popular revolution were all planned and coordinated by the CIA and other U.S. agencies.

In Asia, the CIA had facilitated the 1963 murder of the Diem brothers in South Vietnam; they were hated dictators, but the intent was to replace them with another U.S. puppet who Washington hoped would more effectively carry out the war against the Vietnamese revolutionary patriots. The CIA had also been behind the military coup in Indonesia in 1965 that led to the horrendous massacre of up to 1 million communists and nationalists.

Perhaps some in the agency flippantly looked at all this as a giant chess game. But Agee, aided by deep friendships with Latin Americans, overcame this egotistical view so inculcated by imperialist culture and came to recognize that his work was responsible for terrible suffering and injustice.

In his best-known book, "Inside the Company: CIA Diary," published in 1975, Agee recalled how his belief in what he was doing plunged like a stone. In 1965, during a meeting with top police officials in Uruguay, he had heard the moans and screams of someone being tortured. He

realized that his work for the CIA—which involved sending agents into labor unions, student groups and other mass organizations and compiling lists of suspected leftists—had provided the police with the names of who to arrest, torture and perhaps even kill.

Agee formally left the agency in 1969 after 12 years as an officer. He took with him information that would eventually lead to his "naming of names" of CIA agents all over the world. It was because of Agee that Congress in 1982 passed an act making it a crime to intentionally reveal the identity of a covert intelligence officer.

This writer, together with Key Martin, chair of Youth Against War and Fascism, first had a meeting with Agee in Canada in the mid 1970s. He was prevented from coming to the United States, but was speaking to large audiences in its northern neighbor.

We found him to be a warm individual, very focused, precise and creative. While not coming from any kind of left background—he was from a well-to-do Florida family and had gone to a Jesuit high school and then Notre Dame before being recruited by the CIA—he realized that the system of capitalism was responsible for the immense suffering of what was called the Third World, and had told Newsweek magazine that he wanted to join a revolutionary socialist party.

In "CIA Diary," he very meticulously documented how the much-touted Alliance for Progress, devised by the Kennedy administration to counter the effect of the Cuban Revolution on Latin America, had

funneled \$5 billion in investment to Latin America. The money went mainly to the rich there and also made it possible for U.S. corporations to take out some \$20 billion in profits over the next 10 years.

After Agee went public with his attack on the CIA, other agency employees also defected. However, Agee went further than any of them in not only damaging the murderous workings of the agency but also in explaining what class it served.

In one diary entry, written before he resigned, he wrote: "I wonder what the reaction would be if I wrote out a resignation telling them what I really think," and proceeded to outline a whimsical letter to CIA Director Richard Helms, in which he would say, "The ruling class will never willingly give up its special privileges and comforts. This is class warfare and is the reason why communism appeals to the masses in the first place. We call this the 'free world'; but the only freedom under these circumstances is the rich people's freedom to exploit the poor."

Agee made a clean break with the forces of imperialist oppression and sided with the revolutionary movements in Grenada, Cuba, Nicaragua and elsewhere. He was loved by the people and hated by the bosses for what he had done.

Does the CIA today fear that its horrible crimes against the peoples of the world, especially in countries now occupied by U.S. troops, will jolt others in its employ to understand the true face of imperialism, find their humanity and become new Philip Agees?

E-mail: dgriswold@workers.org

DVD: One Man's Story: Philip Agee, Cuba, & the CIA

Bernie Dwyer and Roberto Ruiz Rebo, the directors of "Mission Against Terror" the story of the Cuban Five, unjustly imprisoned in the U.S. for nearly a decade, interviewed Philip Agee about the CIA and its role in Cuba.

"When I was writing my first book, I concluded in the book that the CIA is nothing more and nothing less than the secret political police of international foreign policy: that is the foreign policy of the United States.

"It was nothing unusual for a young man like me, patriotic, conformist from a very comfortable family to go into government service so I went into the CIA for adventure. I was only 22 and had romantic views towards things ...

"I left the CIA with the idea of forgetting it all and starting a new life but you don't forget these things."

—Philip Agee



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LA IDEA DE UN PRESIDENTE NEGRO

Por Mumia Abu-Jamal, desde el corredor de la muerte en la prisión

Para una gran parte de la población estadounidense, la sola idea de tener un presidente negro es algo tan nuevo, tan original, que fuerza a mucha gente a pensarlo como si apenas fuera posible; como si fuera cosa de ficción en vez de ser una verdadera posibilidad.

La ficción desde luego ha sido el reino de esta idea, como en las películas y series de televisión, donde actores han desempeñado el papel, pero eso, por supuesto, ha pasado sólo en la televisión.

Desde luego que el tiempo dirá si eso es más que la imaginación, pero para millones de personas que comparten este territorio enorme que llamamos América del Norte, la idea no es ni nueva ni innovadora.

Eso es porque hay unas 100 millones de personas que viven en México, y ese país ya tuvo un presidente negro (aunque fuera brevemente) — hace 173 años.

Fue durante su guerra de independencia de España cuando surgió un guerrillero, un indígena negro que se llamaba Vicente Guerrero.

En su primera batalla, él fue nombrado capitán. Mientras continuaba la guerra, muchos de los líderes revolucionarios fueron matados o capturados. Guerrero continuó luchando, encabezando a unos 2,000 hombres que se fueron a las montañas de la Sierra Madre para seguir la lucha.

Para el año 1821, los mexicanos estaban triunfando sobre los españoles y Guerrero fue aclamado como luchador independentista incorruptible. En el 1829 se hizo presidente de México, y como el erudito William Loren Katz escribe en su libro "Indígenas negros" ("Black Indians") de 1986:

"Él empezó un programa de reformas de mucho alcance, aboliendo la pena de muerte y empezando la construcción de escuelas y bibliotecas para los pobres. Él terminó con la esclavitud en México. Sin embargo, debido al color de su piel, la falta de educación y sus maneras rústicas, fue despreciado por las clases élites de la Ciudad de México. Este presidente que tenía, según el historiador estadounidense M. H. Bancroft, "una gentileza y un magnetismo que inspiraban amor entre sus adherentes," era todavía "un forastero de tres sangres".

El historiador negro J. A. Rogers resumió los sobresalientes logros de Guerrero al llamarlo "el George Washington y Abraham Lincoln de México." Guerrero, que en su juventud era un arriero analfabeto, una vez picado por el insecto de la independencia mexicana llegó al cargo más alto de su tierra.

Él aprendió a leer cuando tenía como 40 años de edad, y ayudó a crear la Constitución Mexicana, para la cual él escribió la siguiente disposición: "Todos los habitantes, ya sean blancos, africanos, o indígenas, están capacitados para tener puestos en el gobierno." Él escribió esto en 1824, más de 30 años antes de la infame decisión de la Corte Suprema estadounidense de Dred Scott, la cual anunció enfáticamente que "un hombre negro no tiene ningún derecho que un hombre blanco esté comprometido a respetar" y que "la gente negra no eran ni podrían ser ciudadanos de los Estados Unidos."

En esa época de revolución y transformación social, un hombre negro se hizo presidente del segundo país más grande de América del Norte. Hoy, 178 años más tarde, nos preguntamos todavía si tal cosa es posible. ¿Qué dice eso sobre los Estados Unidos?

Se pueden leer más comentarios de Mumia en: www.prisonradio.org.



Un debate macabro

¿Cuántas muertes de civiles en Irak desde la invasión?

Por John Catalinotto

Hay evidencia de que un nuevo y extenso estudio de muertes violentas en Irak bajo la ocupación de los EEUU subestima seriamente el número de muertes iraquíes.

El propósito aparente del estudio era minar la confianza en un estudio anterior que reportaba muchas más muertes iraquíes durante el mismo período. Una mirada al impacto político del estudio y a la técnica utilizada así lo revela.

Los investigadores de la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) divulgaron el 9 de enero que la mejor estimación del número de muertes violentas de civiles iraquíes entre marzo de 2003 y junio de 2006 es de 151.000. Su informe se basa en un cuestionario extenso de hogares iraquíes en 2006 realizado por el ministerio de salud del régimen títere iraquí. El informe fue publicado en el New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM).

El reporte de la OMS revela su carácter político específicamente mencionando para una comparación, otros dos estimados de muertes violentas en Irak durante el mismo período. El Cálculo de Cuerpos de Irak (CCI), recolectado por un grupo en Bretaña que utiliza principalmente los informes de muertes violentas de los medios de comunicación, puso este número en 48.000. Un estudio de Johns Hopkins, publicado en el Lancet, un periódico médico británico, estimó en 600.000 las muertes violentas en ese período.

Para más simplicidad hemos redondeado los números publicados, que son cálculos aproximados.

Tanto política como numéricamente, el reporte de la OMS es un acomodamiento entre los otros dos. Mientras que es tres veces el número del CCI, es solamente una cuarta parte del número de Johns Hopkins.

Bush minimiza las muertes

El imperialismo estadounidense en general y la administración de Bush en particular quisieran reducir al mínimo la percepción del daño que la ocupación y la guerra estadounidense y británica han hecho. Bush incluso intenta argumentar que la invasión "ayudó de alguna manera" al pueblo iraquí.

Cuando el CCI comenzó a publicar las figuras de muertes iraquíes, Bush y el primer ministro británico Tony Blair atacaron al CCI por estar exagerando. Después, luego que los estimados de Hopkins fueran publicados, en declaraciones públicas sobre Irak Bush comenzó a usar los números del CCI que eran mucho más bajos. Bush también ha intentado culpar a la

resistencia o a lo que él describe como "Al Qaeda", de las muertes civiles.

Pocas personas creen ahora que las muertes violentas calculadas por los reportajes de los medios, que informan de las muertes causadas casi exclusivamente por bombardeos y solamente en las ciudades grandes, pueden ser estimadas correctamente.

Los simpatizantes de la resistencia iraquí y mucha gente que está en contra de la guerra mundialmente han aceptado el estimado de Hopkins como uno razonable. Estos números, basados en una técnica de muestreo estándar, son más creíbles que los del CCI.

Los estimados de Hopkins tienen un impacto político. Agreguemos las muertes desde junio de 2006 a la figura de 600.000 dada en aquel momento y el número estimado es de más de un millón. Este número convierte a la ocupación estadounidense de Irak de una guerra ilegal "normal" en un acto del genocidio. Y ése es el porqué Washington desea desacreditar el estudio de Hopkins.

Si sumamos al millón de muertes las 1,5 millones de muertes del período entre 1990 y 2003 causadas por las sanciones de los EEUU contra Irak, las políticas de Washington han ocasionado la muerte de 2 a 3 millones de iraquíes: niños, civiles y combatientes. Además, la ocupación por parte de los EEUU ha fracasado aún después de 58 meses, de restablecer cualquier semblanza de estabilidad en Irak. El pueblo aún sufre de la falta de cuidado médico, poco acceso a agua potable, alcantarillado inadecuado y escasa electricidad. Las muertes "no violentas" resultantes de estas fuentes ni siquiera han sido incluidas en el total en el reporte de la Organización Mundial de la Salud.

Muchos de los medios de comunicación en los EEUU aceptaron el reporte de la OMS, principalmente para atacar el reporte de Hopkins. Si no existiera el estudio de Hopkins, los mismos medios sin duda alguna hubieran rechazado y atacado un reporte de 151.000 muertes cuando Bush afirmaba que habían sólo 50.000.

Problemas con el estudio de la OMS

El estudio de la OMS entrevistó gente en 1.080 "grupos" y en 10.800 domicilios. Aunque esto era cinco veces más grande que la muestra de Johns Hopkins, ambas muestras, al azar, son lo suficientemente grandes para obtener un resultado preciso bajo condiciones normales. Pero las condiciones estaban lejos de ser normales.

Las condiciones inestables y precarias son en sí una prueba del fracaso de la ocupación. Es imposible establecer un estimado universalmente aceptable de la cifra de muertes. El régimen de Irak ni siquiera puede hacer un censo preciso de la población.

Aquí hay tres factores contribuyentes a la inexactitud del estudio y una subestimación de las muertes.

Aproximadamente 115 de los 1080 grupos entrevistados (un 10,6 por ciento) estaban en zonas tan peligrosas que los investigadores del Ministerio de Salud no se arriesgaron a entrar. Estos estaban en las provincias de Anbar y Nineveh y en partes de Bagdad. El estudio de la OMS tuvo que utilizar cifras del CCI en esas zonas como base para estimar las muertes allí. Como la cobertura de los medios noticieros era tan inconsistente en esas provincias, la forma de contar del CCI resultaría en una subestimación de la cifra de muertes.

Quienes hacían las preguntas estaban conectados al gobierno títere, y mucha gente pudo sentir miedo de hablar honestamente por si diera la apariencia de que fueran parientes de la resistencia. Les Roberts, uno de los autores principales del estudio de Johns Hopkins, dice del reporte de la OMS: "Nosotros confirmamos las muertes con certificados de defunción, ellos no lo hicieron. Como los investigadores del estudio de la NEJM [el estudio de la OMS] trabajaban para los de un lado del conflicto, es probable que la gente no iba a admitir muertes violentas a los trabajadores del estudio".

Un tercer factor es que el estudio del CCI y de Johns Hopkins, más el conocimiento general sobre el nivel del combate en Irak, indican un incremento en las muertes de año a año. Pero el estudio del OMS asegura que el nivel de muertes se mantuvo constante año por año. Roberts escribe: "Ellos encontraron una tasa de violencia más o menos estable entre 2003 y 2006. Los datos del depósito de cadáveres de Bagdad, los datos de los entierros de Najaf, los datos de ataques del Pentágono, y nuestros datos todos indican un aumento dramático en 2005 y 2006".

Este y otros factores indican que el reporte subestima las muertes violentas y así minimiza la amplitud de los crímenes de los EEUU en Irak.

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¡Libertad para Mumia Abu-Jamal!