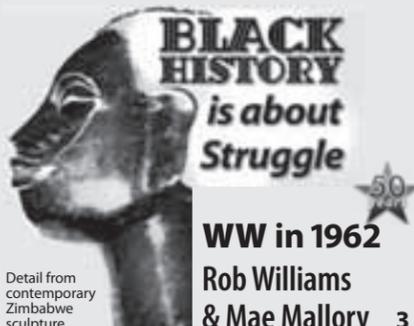


MUNDO OBRERO

Caos en las Bolsas de Valores 12

'THE GREAT DEBATERS' A challenge to racism 2



Detail from contemporary Zimbabwe sculpture

GAZANS Tear Down The Walls! 9

'STIMULUS' PACKAGE A joke for workers 5

PTSD Hidden scars of Iraq war 7

U.S. v. COLOMBIA PEACE Heavy sentence for Simón Trinidad 11

Day after Bush talk War, recession still the reality

By Deirdre Griswold

No boos, hisses or catcalls were allowed. Unthinkable! The more pro-military, the more pro-big business were the president's statements, the louder was the chorus of baritone cheers from somewhere in the vast chamber.

On cue, the select audience of politicians plus military brass, Supreme Court justices, Cabinet members and their special guests rose to applaud and cheer every few minutes—as has become obligatory during State of the Union addresses. If anyone disagreed, the most they dared do was sit on their hands.

What unity! What respect for the leader! What crap!

The totally scripted event—camera close in on adoring face A, then pan to the medals on B's chest—that took place in Washington on Jan. 28 could not have been farther from the reality. And millions of people knew it.

As expected, Bush talked about progress in Iraq (although he's going to send more troops there), having a plan to fix the economy, and the success of his "No Child Left Behind" fiasco. He hit "the terrorists" and made it clear he was going to continue to fight to keep the massive tax breaks for the rich that have helped drive

government debt above \$9 trillion.

Out in the real world, all over this country, millions of workers are losing their homes and agonizing over which bills to pay. Jobs are disappearing at an alarming rate. Young people are deserting the military "option" despite few job opportunities and no money for college.

The people more than a year ago, when they voted so many Republicans out of Congress, showed they hate these wars and want the troops brought home. But Bush offered absolutely no hope on that score—and neither did his so-called opponents, the Democrats, who rose to their feet and applauded enthusiastically at every mention of "strengthening the military."

Bourgeois 'unity' in time of crisis

It is hard to remember a time when the capitalist political establishment in the U.S. was more removed from the mood of the populace. In the political debates now going on—all to capitalize on mass discontent for electoral gain—candidates in both parties try to differentiate themselves from Bush and his record in order to gain mass acceptance. But their conduct during the State of the Union address, and the mild "critique" offered afterwards by the Democrats, shows their true unity behind the might of the capital-

ist state during a time of growing crisis.

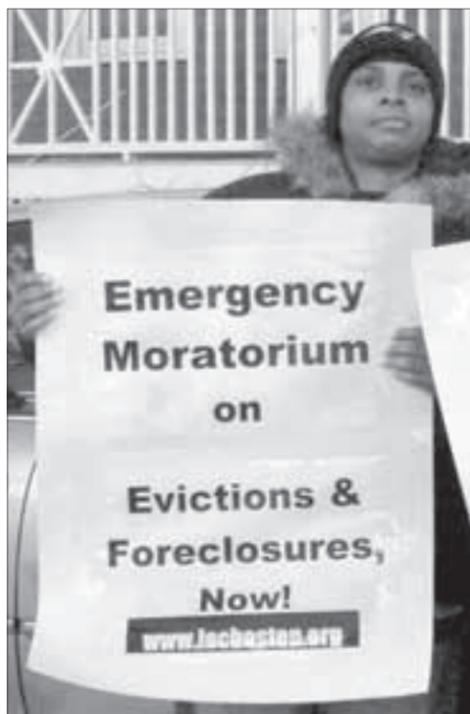
Bush, as chief executive, is the symbol of that state, and no matter how much they fear and loathe him, they all bow down when his highness demands it.

This unfolding economic crisis can inconvenience the superrich, and may even lead speculators to suicide, but its true havoc will be wreaked on the working class of this country. Millions are already burdened by debt and can't dig their way out because of low-wage jobs and rising prices. An economic downturn with massive layoffs can well be the straw that breaks many, many backs.

These are the conditions that lead to militant mass movements sooner or later. The capitalist politicians, who are so used to manipulating the electorate by passing out a few crumbs while the ruling class that sponsors them soaks up the gravy, are afraid. What's going to happen when crumbs are replaced by cutbacks and apathy gives way to anger?

So they all get behind more brutal, repressive measures to shore up the power of the state. It's not against "terrorists," it's against the mass of the people. But, as the civil rights movement of the sixties showed, police power cannot defeat a righteous mass movement seeking justice.

E-mail: dgriswold@workers.org



WW PHOTOS: MAUREEN SKEHAN

Subscribe to Workers World

4 weeks trial subscription: \$1 One year: \$25

NAME _____ PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

WORKERS WORLD
55 W. 17 St. NY, NY 10011 212-627-2994 www.workers.org

Mass. movement stops eviction



'THE GREAT DEBATERS'

Challenging racism then & now

By Larry Hales

How did it come to be that a movie like "The Great Debaters," starring Oscar winners Denzel Washington and Forest Whitaker, was made by the Weinstein Company and distributed by a major motion picture company like MGM, or the fact, even, that the movie was made at all? Of course, having Oprah Winfrey produce the film was no small factor in getting it made.

On the surface from the previews, "The Great Debaters" appears to be simply a feel-good story, on par with other U.S. movies that touched on the conditions Black people faced under U.S. apartheid commonly known as the Jim Crow era, but usually separating particular events from the overall struggle.

Movies such as "Glory Road" or "Remember the Titans," both Disney films, tell important stories about segregation in sports. They give testament of the willingness and determination of Black people to engage in the struggle against oppression and racism no matter the circumstances, as racism and oppression stretch across all facets of life in the U.S.

However, these films are snapshots of history taken from an overall context and primarily deal with the issue of socialization, of overcoming the racist attitudes of certain white workers and certain institutions.

The difference between a movie like "Glory Road" and "The Great Debaters" is the equivalent of the difference between Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" 1963 speech when he uttered, "Little Black boys and Black girls will be able to join hands with white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers," and his last speech in 1968 when he said, "Something is happening in our world. The masses of people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; Accra, Ghana; New York City; Atlanta, Georgia; Jackson, Mississippi; or Memphis, Tennessee—the cry is always the same: 'We want to be free.'"

"The Great Debaters" is based on the true story of the Wiley College debate team, and the events in the film take place in 1935 at the small historical Black college in Marshall, Texas. When the main character in the film, Melvin B. Tolson, played by Washington, first appears on screen he is dressed as a sharecropper running through what looks like a swamp, with a pulsating blues rhythm in the background to the words "Soul is a witness."

One can easily infer, by the music and the dress of the time, what a Black man could possibly be running from, but that question is never explored in the movie.

Tolson is next seen bursting into a classroom, standing atop a chair—where he recites the Langston Hughes poem which begins with: "I too sing America. I am the darker brother."

Tolson writes "Revolution" across the chalkboard, walks around the room and recites different parts of the Gwendolyn Bennett poem, "Hatred," then parts of Countee Cullen's "Saturday's Child."

The parts of the three poems taken together firmly ground the movie.

While the movie is about Tolson's debaters and the history of the Wiley College debate team, it is equally about the struggle against national oppression, for Black liberation, and it is absolutely about class solidarity—such is the great debate, of the oppressed against the oppressor, the

identity of each and the struggle of one against the other.

Tolson, a self-described socialist, was a poet as well as teacher and activist, and famous for the epic poem, "The Libretto for the Republic of Liberia" and for "Harlem Gallery." His poem "Dark Symphony" begins with: "The centuries-old pathos in our voices/ Saddens the great white world/ And the wizardry of our dusky rhythms/ Conjures up shadow-shapes of ante-bellum years."

The lines are similar to W.E.B DuBois' characterization of the songs of slaves as "Sorrow Songs," beautiful utterances arising from the conditions imposed through the barbaric beginnings of capitalism in North America and the repression and oppression following the defeat of chattel slavery.

Tolson would deal with these kinds of contradictions in his writings and through his teaching.

The movie expresses the struggle through discourse, spoken word. In the Black students' first debate against white students, Samantha Boone rebuts a white student who epitomizes liberalism and exposes the scant difference between it and outright racism when he says the time is not right for school integration.

Boone states emphatically, "No, the time for justice, the time for freedom and the time for equality is always, is always right now."

Tolson is shown organizing sharecroppers. Though he was an activist, it is difficult to find specific information relating to whether he was or was not an actual union organizer. When red-baited, Tolson refuses to answer yes or no in the movie but states that it is his business. His writings in real life, however, show a man keenly aware of the evils of capitalism, the contradictions it produces and the importance of struggling internally and outwardly against it.

An important scene where he and others are trying to organize sharecroppers reveals one of the white sharecroppers to be the racist who insulted the father of James Farmer Jr.—the founder of the Congress of Racial Equality.

The effect of this scene is that it displays then and now the backwardness of some white workers and how because of the inherent racism in capitalism, they are a privileged layer of workers that must overcome their racism to be in solidarity with the most oppressed against a common oppressor, the land owners in this case.

The most poignant scene, one that has or will resonate with the oppressed from South Central to Pine Ridge to Iraq, is one where James Farmer Jr., when debating the validity of civil disobedience with white Harvard students, talks of the right of the oppressed to resist by whatever means necessary. He says, "I have a right, a duty to resist, with violence or with civil disobedience. You should pray I choose the latter."

"The Great Debaters" is a magnificent movie. It puts everything in context and builds to a crescendo. The entire town has become so inspired by the development of the young debaters, to the point of rebelling when Tolson is imprisoned, and winning his freedom from jail.

There are those who would use the movie as a sign of how far Black people have come, but if anything, it is a sign of how far things have regressed and how far Black people have to go. Then and now, liberation is not to be won through electoral bourgeois politics, but is to be waged and won through open class struggle. □



This week ...

★ In the U.S.

State of the Union: war, recession 1
 'The Great Debaters' 2
 Support Katrina, Rita survivors 3
 Free all political prisoners 3
 50 years of Workers World 3
 GM, Ford, Chrysler job cuts 4
 Immigration forum expresses unity in struggle 4
 On the picket line 4
 Unemployed, poor snubbed in 'stimulus' plan 5
 Community mobilization blocks Boston foreclosure 5
 Rallies in 14 cities build support for war resisters 6
 35 years after Roe v. Wade 10

★ Around the world

Lavender and red, part 120 6
 Trauma's impact on U.S. troops and Iraqis 7
 Broad ruling-class conspiracy behind war on Iraq 7
 George Habash's struggle lives on 8
 Remembering the Tet Offensive 8
 International actions say 'End Gaza siege' 9
 Gazans participate in 'biggest jailbreak ever' 9
 Kosovo secession linked to NATO expansion 10
 U.S. judge sentences Trinidad to 60 years 11
 Misery & hunger growing in Haiti 11

★ Editorials

Arrest Bush and Cheney 10

★ Noticias En Español

Caos en las Bolsas de Valores 12

Workers World
 55 West 17 Street
 New York, N.Y. 10011
 Phone: (212) 627-2994
 Fax: (212) 675-7869
 E-mail: editor@workers.org
 Web: www.workers.org

Vol. 50, No. 5 • Feb. 7, 2008
 Closing date: Jan. 30, 2008

Editor: Deirdre Griswold
 Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
 Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie Feinberg, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
 West Coast Editor: John Parker
 Contributing Editors: Greg Butterfield, G. Dunkel, Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Hales, David Hoskins, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Cheryl LaBash, Milt Neidenberg, Bryan G. Pfeifer, Minnie Bruce Pratt
 Technical Staff: Shelley Ettinger, Bob McCubbin, Maggie Vascassenno
 Mundo Obrero: Carl Glenn, Teresa Gutierrez, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Donna Lazarus, Carlos Vargas
 Internet: Janet Mayes
 Supporter Program: Sue Davis, coordinator

Copyright © 2008 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved.

Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 55 W. 17 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Phone: (212) 627-2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$25; foreign and institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at www.workers.org/email.php.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

JOIN US.

Workers World Party (WWP) fights on all issues that face the working class and oppressed peoples—Black and white, Latin@, Asian, Arab and Native peoples, women and men, young and old, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, trans, disabled, working, unemployed and students.

If you would like to know more about WWP, or to join us in these struggles, contact the branch nearest you.

National Office
 55 W. 17 St.,
 New York, NY 10011
 212-627-2994;
 Fax (212) 675-7869
 www.workers.org

Atlanta
 P.O. Box 424,
 Atlanta, GA 30301
 404-627-0185
 atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
 426 E. 31 St.,
 Baltimore, MD 21218
 410-235-7040
 baltimore@workers.org

Boston
 284 Amory St.,
 Boston, MA 02130
 617-983-3835
 Fax (617) 983-3836
 boston@workers.org
 workersworld.net/boston

Buffalo, N.Y.
 367 Delaware Ave.
 Buffalo, NY 14202
 716-566-1115
 buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
 27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
 Chicago, IL 60606
 773-381-5839
 chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
 P.O. Box 5963
 Cleveland, OH 44101
 216-531-4004
 cleveland@workers.org

Denver
 denver@workers.org

Detroit
 5920 Second Ave.,
 Detroit, MI 48202
 313-831-0750
 detroit@workers.org

Houston
 P.O. Box 595
 Houston, TX 77001-0595
 713-861-5965
 houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
 5274 West Pico Blvd.,
 Suite 203
 Los Angeles, CA 90019
 323-936-1416
 la@workers.org

Milwaukee
 milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
 P.O. Box 9202,
 Philadelphia, PA 19139
 610-931-2615
 phila@workers.org

Raleigh, N.C.
 raleigh@workers.org

Richmond, Va.
 P.O. Box 14602,
 Richmond, VA 23221
 richmond@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
 585-436-6458
 rochester@workers.org

San Diego, Calif.
 P.O. Box 33447
 San Diego, CA 92104
 619-692-0355

San Francisco
 2940 16th St., #207
 San Francisco, CA 94103
 415-738-4739
 sf@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
 P.O. Box 57300,
 Washington, DC 20037,
 dc@workers.org





PHOTO: INDYMEDIA



WWPHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Support Katrina, Rita survivors

Survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and their supporters rallied nationally on Jan. 25-26 to demand the right to return to their homes in New Orleans and other areas of the U.S. Gulf Coast and to agitate for the passage of Senate Bill 1668, the Gulf Coast Recovery Act of 2007.

According to the New York Solidarity

Coalition with Katrina and Rita Survivors, SB 1668 "is essential to guaranteeing our right to return because of its provisions for replacement of housing units, long-term recovery funds [and] prohibitions of demolitions of affordable and livable housing for the poor, low-income and moderate income" people.

In New York on Jan. 25, the coalition's activists gathered outside Sen. Chuck Schumer's office in Manhattan and got a good response from the many passers-by as they collected signatures on a petition urging Schumer and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton to pass SB 1668.

The next day, in San Francisco, 200

protesters gathered in front of Sen. Dianne Feinstein's estate on the same issue. They were participating there in the World Social Forum's Global Day of Action as well as promoting nationwide solidarity actions for Gulf Coast recovery.

See www.NYKatrinaRita.org for more information.

—John Catalinotto

Free all political prisoners!

MOVE 9 youth enjoy the 12th annual dinner in Brooklyn Jan. 27 honoring the families of political prisoners and prisoners of war. Sponsored by the Malcolm X Commemoration Committee, speakers included Native leader Ward Churchill, attorney Michael Tarif Warren and Pam Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Along with cultural presentations and inspiration from Chairperson emeritus, former political prisoner Herman Ferguson, the speakers fired up the hundreds of supporters present to offer donations for prisoners' expenses, such as stamps and phone calls, to continue the struggle to fight racist oppression and to free all political prisoners.

—Report and photos by Anne Pruden



50 YEARS OF WORKERS WORLD

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. The two articles below about Rob Williams, Mae Mallory and the struggle of Black people for self-determination were originally published in 1962, in Volume 4. The first article appeared in the issue dated Jan. 29, the second on Oct. 26.

Robert F. Williams organizes for self-defense

Workers World
Jan. 29, 1962

Robert F. Williams was given a rousing, thunderous ovation at the People's Conference which opened in Havana on Jan. 22. He was introduced by Nicolás Guillén, the prominent Cuban Revolutionary poet. Guillén warmly embraced Williams. It was a demonstration of solidarity between the Cuban people and the aspirations of the 20 million black people of North America, who are struggling for freedom.

The People's Conference in Havana opened almost at the same time as the OAS meeting in Punta del Este. Washington seemed to have its ears attuned to the goings on at the Havana conference. The sight of the most prominent fighter for the liberation of the black people in this country receiving such wholehearted support at this important gathering in Cuba must have made State Department officials squirm.

Robert Williams, editor and publisher of the Monroe, N.C., weekly *The Crusader*, is in exile in Cuba.

He was forced to flee with his family for his life. The FBI—instead of coming to his rescue from the lynch mob—conducted a nationwide search to hunt him down and frame him on a phony kidnapping charge.

Rob Williams' only crime was his determination and courage to organize Afro-

Americans against racist oppression in this country. In Monroe, N.C., he built an armed defense guard of his people that had the Klan on the run.

That is the real reason he was framed and forced to seek asylum in Cuba, temporarily. His followers in Monroe—also harassed, hounded and framed by federal authorities as well as local—have maintained their organization, their militancy and their defense guards.

In the first article which Williams wrote for *The Crusader* since his exile, following the mob attack on the black people of Monroe last August, he vowed to return to the land where he was born "but which never has been home."

Williams broadcasts over Radio Havana every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 9 p.m.

After one year of hell Mae Mallory is still a champion

Workers World
Oct. 26, 1962
By A.T. Simpson

Black Freedom Fighter Mae Mallory, temporarily deserting her desolate and dingy jail cell—which has been the only home she has had for the past seven months and will be until no one can say how long—came over to the visiting screen as the matron called her up and thus began her weekly talks with her many visitors, myself included.

Her visitors that day consisted of an assortment of Black and white individuals from many walks of life—as I was told, "This has been a common occurrence on her visiting days." Among the visitors were a college student, a nurse, a steelworker, a common laborer, an unemployed college graduate; most of them members of the Monroe Defense Committee—the committee which is dramatically leading her fight against extradition.

She did not merely listen to what they had to say. She talked enthusiastically to all of them, discussing her situation in jail, the problems of the day and of the committee and the practical matters it had in fighting on her behalf.

Travesty of justice

Not one of them could recall a greater Black woman of our time in this epoch of capitalist degeneration who has endured so much hell in these United States and who still manages a gay smile and a lively conversation with all of those who came to see her. Nor could they even recall another present-day woman fighter who has been caught up in such a glaring travesty of justice as she.

Mae Mallory continued to talk with her visitors and answered their questions about the plight of the Black man in the United States and she put the point of view of self-determination for her people directly before them—a point of view that many are finding out about today.

"We are colonials in the country which colonized us," she commented to me when it came my turn at the visiting screen. "We were originally brought here as a labor force. Now we are no longer needed as laborers. ... Something's got to happen to us. Perhaps they are going to suggest extermination next."

Won't be intimidated

"Certainly America should have gained from the many lessons of the world that the Black man will no longer be intimidated by the presence of 'white skin,' and we are going to work towards the solving of our own problems without any paternalism whatsoever."

All of this is strikingly consistent with this courageous Black woman; a woman who, since her confinement in a country which has given her few privileges, has

had the opportunity of being a careful observer of many things relating to the plight of her people, a victim of the land of discrimination and segregation, where, as she very correctly puts it:

"A Black man has never been acquitted when accused of a crime against a white man, and a white man has never been convicted when accused of a crime against a Black man."

Bogus charge

It has been more than a year now since the struggle broke out in Monroe, N.C., where Mrs. Mallory is falsely charged of a bogus kidnap issue and she has been militantly holding off extradition from Ohio there to face this phony indictment. But as a fighting Black woman, Mae Mallory has been in the struggle for freedom all of her life.

This 35-year-old factory worker, once a dressmaker, hospital worker, housewife, maid and mother of two children has been gallantly commanding a mighty fortress, courageously defending the honor of Black womanhood and taking a firm stand against the racist terrorists of both the North and the South. And this is being done even in spite of the fact that when this fugitive from Southern so-called "justice" fled to Ohio last October seeking protection in the state, the governor of the state abruptly ordered her arrest and he along with the Ohio courts said that the woman has to go back to the Klan country to stand trial.

Fighting Black woman in hell

Truly, it can be said that revolt and rebellion against the racist status quo are quick in the blood of the "fighting Black woman in hell," and it is no wonder, then, that she answered the clarion call for help from the dynamic Robert Williams and rushed down to assist him in his valiant fight against the lynch-hungry terrorist

Continued on page 10



Killing us softly

GM, Ford, Chrysler buyout 'offers' signal new round of job cuts

By Martha Grevatt

Promises, promises. Last fall promises of job security were enough to convince a majority of United Auto Workers members at Ford, General Motors and Chrysler to ratify four-year contracts they might otherwise have rejected. The contracts, which a sizable minority opposed, were the most concessionary of any in the auto union's 73-year history.

By January the promises were revealed for their emptiness. Many thousands at all three companies, regardless of how they or the workers at their plant voted, were now laid off. News coverage reported mass anger.

Now the latest development is a new round of buyouts, enticing workers to quit or retire. This strategy serves the bosses in a number of ways. It lets Ford, GM and Chrysler permanently shrink the workforce and allows laid off workers to return, minimizing worker anger. At the same time, by creating an atmosphere of economic insecurity, the companies are encouraging lower-seniority workers to take one-time cash payments of \$100,000-\$140,000 and give up their good-paying union jobs forever. If enough workers leave, eventually there will be openings for new hires making half the pay of those who take the buyouts.

Ford and GM will give every single hourly employee a buyout "offer,"

while the number of Chrysler workers being encouraged to leave will also be substantial. When the contracts were ratified last fall, UAW membership at the Big Three stood at a mere 173,000; with these new cuts the figure can be expected to drop well below 150,000. If not enough workers sign up for the buyouts—for which they are given just 45 days to make such a life-altering decision—it goes without saying that forced layoffs will continue. Executives such as GM's CEO Rick Wagoner are hinting that more plant closings are on their agenda.

Whether workers are given a bribe or given the boot, the permanent elimination of that many jobs is a vicious attack on the communities who depend on them. It can only add to the economic devastation facing states like Michigan and Ohio, whose foreclosure crises have gained worldwide exposure. The end result will be the further pauperization of the working class caused by capitalism's compulsive drive for greater and greater profits—in the words of Chrysler CEO Bob Nardelli, "the insatiable appetite for cash."

For their part, the companies stand to make huge gains. GM has previously stated that in four years time, with the many contract concessions, labor costs are expected to be slashed by 50 percent. If the same holds true for Ford and Chrysler, their combined savings amount to a \$6.5 million dollar per hour rip-off

of workers' labor! At the same time, if the immediate cost of the huge number of buyouts shows up as a net loss, the companies will have no moral qualms about demanding a new round of concessions in the middle of the contract.

While insisting he will oppose any further plant closings, UAW President Ron Gettelfinger defended the buyouts, stating, "We knew what we were doing when we went into it, but we also recognized that the companies needed help."

Just what do the bosses intend to do with all the money they hope to save from all this help? "Wagoner has said that within a decade, up to 75 percent of GM sales could be in foreign markets," the Detroit News reported Jan. 18. Along with this orientation to the overseas market, the companies have transferred production away from unionized plants in the U.S., building state-of-the-art sweatshops in Latin America and Asia.

The latest corporate strategy can only bring misery to workers worldwide. Workers must not fall into the protectionist trap of blaming workers in other countries for "stealing our jobs." If we really believe that we own our jobs, we must, for ourselves and our communities, rebuild our union from the ground up around the slogan "a job is a right." It's a property right and we should insist that no overpaid executive be allowed to mess with it. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

Union membership rising

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported the largest rise in the number of U.S. workers belonging to labor unions in the last quarter-century. In 2007 the rolls increased by 311,000 for a total of 15.7 million workers, despite a decline in manufacturing jobs, particularly in auto.

The overall percentage of organized workers rose to 12.1 percent of the workforce, including 7.5 percent of private-sector workers and 35.9 percent of public-sector workers. Membership grew most in construction and health services, with a higher rate of 14.7 percent in Western states compared to 13.8 percent in Midwestern states.

Labor leaders hailed the turnaround. Stewart Acuff, AFL-CIO organizing director, cited organizing drives of 40,000 child care workers in Michigan and New York. (New York Times, Jan. 26)

Directors Guild finalizes new contract

On Jan. 17 the Directors Guild of America agreed to a contract for its 13,500 members, after months of informal talks with the production companies (Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers). After members ratify the contract, the deal will take effect on June 30.

The three-year contract achieves a breakthrough in several digital areas, which are similar to the issues in the Writers Guild of America strike. The deal roughly doubles the residuals rate paid for film and TV programs resold on cassettes and DVDs. (This rate is much higher than that last offered to the writers in early December.) For the first time the deal requires studios and production companies to pay a reuse fee when advertising-supported programs are streamed free over the Internet. Among other gains, the agreement also increases minimum compensation rates. (New York Times, Jan. 18)

Writers Guild back to the table

After negotiating a contract with the DGA that includes new or increased compensation for digital uses of directors' work, the AMPTP announced it would resume "informal" negotiations with the Writers Guild of America. They suspended talks a month into the WGA strike in early December.

The WGA announced in mid-January that it would continue efforts to organize reality and animation writers but not as part of the current contract negotiations. (New York Times, Jan. 23) Though the WGA allowed the Screen Actors Guild Awards to proceed on Jan. 27 and will not picket the Grammy Awards on Feb. 10, what's to become of the Oscars scheduled for Feb. 27? WGA holds the fate of the Oscars as a very strong bargaining chip.

Starbucks picketed in NYC

On Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday holiday, Jan. 21, picketers in Manhattan protested Starbucks' refusal to pay workers overtime on the national holiday. The pro-union crowd, carrying an Industrial Workers of the World banner, chanted outside a Starbucks at Fifth Avenue and East 33rd Street.

The IWW, founded in 1905, has been striving to organize Starbucks workers since 2004. Last April the National Labor Relations Board—no reliable friend of labor—accused Starbucks of breaking the law 30 times while fighting pro-union activity at four shops. After braving the cold weather for about a half hour, the protesters moved to Wild Edibles, a seafood shop that the IWW is also trying to organize. (New York Times, Jan. 22)

Washington Post workers seek contract

Working without a contract for the past five years, 400 mailroom workers who assemble the newspaper at Washington Post printing plants started an unusual campaign to kick-start negotiations.

Members of the Communication Workers initiated a radio, print and billboard advertising campaign in early January focused on the paper's signature sections. One headline is "Looks like greed is in Style. Just ask Washington Post executives." Each ad directs readers to a Web site, washingtonpostunfair.com, which discusses the issues and asks supporters to write to Post CEO Donald E. Graham or the Post ombudsman. One of the company demands, which the workers refuse, is dropping their pension plan to join the company's. (New York Times, Jan. 21) □



PHOTO: WALTER SINCHE

By LeiLani Dowell

A powerful meeting on the struggle for immigrant rights was held Jan. 22 in New York, with a panel of speakers representing, as event chair Teresa Gutierrez described, "people who are actually fighting the racist attacks the U.S. government commits everyday."

Victor Toro, a founder of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) in Chile in the late 1960s, who faces deportation from the U.S., discussed taking advantage of the economic crisis to build a broad movement, calling on all those affected by the crisis to come together and march in May Day rallies in 2008.

Marc De La Cruz, one of the Sentosa 27—Filipino nurses and one physical therapist who are being tried for trumped-up charges in Long Island, N.Y., after they complained about exploitative working conditions—

described their case, where several of the nurses, if convicted, face jail time and deportation. For more information, visit www.s27plus.com.

Flor Crisóstomo, a Mexican immigrant and mother of three, described how she and her brothers ended up in the U.S. from her native Oaxaca: "Every day in Mexico showed the necessity of work and food. ... My brothers were already in college [in Mexico], but in 1995 NAFTA devaluated the Mexican currency and obliged me and my brothers to go north."

Tearfully she declared, "It's not easy being without your children for seven years; working, not even asking for welfare and paying taxes, and facing these attacks. ... I am Indigenous and I don't need to ask permission to come here. This country forced me to come here to work. ... If you really want me to leave, leave us in peace in our own countries."

On Jan. 28, Crisóstomo announced that she would be taking sanctuary at the Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago—the same church Elvira Arellano received sanctuary.

Black and Brown unity was a recurring theme during the evening. Emma Lozano, a key figure in the support of Arellano and Crisóstomo, pointed out that her brother, Rudy Lozano, was assassinated after helping to forge the unity that resulted in the election of the first Black mayor in Chicago, Harold Washington, in 1983. She said the U.S. is becoming "more people of color—which is ok to them if you're serving them, but not if you're resisting." "Flor says to me," Lozano reported, "let Blacks and Latin@s unite, and they will tremble."

The event was sponsored by the New York May 1 Coalition for Immigrant Rights (<http://may1.info/>).

Email: ldowell@workers.org

Another giveaway to the rich by Congress, White House

Unemployed, poor snubbed in economic 'stimulus' plan

By Gary Wilson

The "economic stimulus" plan agreed to by the Democrats in Congress and the Bush White House is another giveaway to the rich.

There is a mini one-time payment of \$300 to \$600 to anyone who is employed. That's not a significant amount, considering that the average rent for an apartment in the U.S. is \$1,027 a month. (*Business Week*, Jan. 17)

If you are jobless, you get no payment; a minimum yearly income of \$6,000 is required to get the one-time rebate. The jobless don't even get an extension of unemployment benefits, which usually adds 16 weeks of payments, or food stamps. Adding those to the plan would have put thousands of dollars in the pockets of the people who need it most.

Unlike the one-time rebate, which won't happen for months, an extension of jobless benefits and food stamp increases would put money into the economy immediately.

The original plan proposed in the House of Representatives included an extension of benefits for the jobless and an increase in food stamp money for the 35 million low-income households eligible for payments. In a logic-defying statement, top Democrat Nancy Pelosi claimed the Democrats agreed with Bush to drop those benefits in order to help "the middle class." (*New York Times*, Jan. 24)

The "stimulus" plan also includes more than \$50 billion in tax breaks for businesses.

The mini payment and the tax break for businesses have gotten most of the publicity. But neither of them is the really big item in the package. Most significant is a bailout of the banks and mortgage companies and a giveaway of a housing loan guarantee to the rich.

The details of this part of the plan can't be found in either the White House statement or the Democrats' summary of the plan; the inside story is hidden in the financial pages of the media.

"The plan tries to make it easier to secure or refinance mortgages for more expensive homes. First it would allow

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, for a year, to buy loans of up to \$729,750. The current limit is \$417,000. The package would similarly increase the \$362,790 limit on loans insured by the Federal Housing Administration, while making it easier for borrowers to qualify," *USA Today* reported in its business section on Jan. 24.

The report adds that the plan also shifts the "risk" for financing the more expensive loans to working people, whose taxes will now be used to insure the loans for expensive houses.

The plan was falsely labeled a stimulant in order to pass it through Congress quickly, without any further review.

But could any plan really be a stimulant and stop the spiraling economic downturn?

Dangers of the military stimulant

The current capitalist cycle started its upward climb following the stock market crash in 2002, often referred to as the bursting of the Internet bubble. The U.S. was in a recession; the economy was stagnant with no recovery in sight. The massive military buildup that started then, estimated at over \$2 trillion over the last five years, was a huge stimulus.

But a military stimulus is not the same as normal capitalist production. Military expansion by no means guarantees an economic recovery with full employment. In fact, its expansion may well spell a deepening of the economic crisis and may be depressing the economy instead.

The cyclical capitalist upturn that began after the crash in 2002 has been one of the weakest recoveries on record. It has frequently been described as a jobless recovery, meaning that while profits for the rich recovered, there was not the usual rise in employment that goes with a rising economy. Unemployment didn't increase, but jobs didn't grow in the way usually seen during a recovery.

Now the unemployment rate is starting to increase. The official figure, which by design underreports the levels of joblessness, for December showed a significant increase to 5 percent.

"An uptick of this magnitude (up 0.3

percent in December)," says the Economic Policy Institute, "has historically been either a symptom or a harbinger of recession. Moreover, the increase in unemployment was not isolated among any one group—joblessness increased significantly among all demographic groups." (www.epi.org)

In a recession, the first thing that happens is that people lose their jobs; the reserve army of unemployed workers grows. The length and depth of the recession determines the severity of the unemployment, the spread of homelessness and loss of food.

For the working class—the ones that bear the brunt of a recession—the most important issue is jobs. For the capitalist, the only issue is profits. Government "stimulus" plans are aimed at restoring profits.

For anyone but the rich, what is needed is a rescue plan—a guarantee of a job, no evictions/foreclosures and adequate food. Any plan that isn't about jobs, housing and food isn't responding to the real crisis.

Crisis of overproduction

A recession is most often the result of what Karl Marx called a capitalist crisis of overproduction. Capitalist overproduction is poorly understood, partly because the capitalists want to obscure the reasons for recessions and the misery they cause.

A crisis of overproduction comes because the capitalists, in chasing after profits, try to get a market advantage by lowering the production cost of each individual item. This is most often done by introducing labor-saving technology that can turn out more products at the same or a lower overall cost. Capitalists are driven to constantly accumulate new machinery, new technology in order to compete.

Each capitalist tries to outdo the others in revolutionizing the means of production and lowering the unit price of the products—be they computers or clothing or corn. But eventually the new technology becomes the norm and many more products are being produced by fewer

workers. This crisis of overproduction then reveals itself as an inability to sell at an acceptable rate of profit all that's been produced. Bankruptcies, layoffs and shutdowns follow.

Marx showed that all new value comes from the direct application of labor power in the production process. Unlike raw materials and plant and equipment, labor power is the only commodity that, in the course of being used up in the production process, creates new value.

This dual character of labor power—that workers get paid only what it takes to keep them alive as a class, while at the same time they produce much more than that in new value—is the basis for exploitation and the immense profits taken by the capitalists.

Marx also explained why the rate of profit drops as the proportion of investment in machinery and technology—Marx calls this constant capital—keeps rising in relation to wages, or variable capital. Variable capital is the source of profit, but it becomes a smaller part of the total investment.

Overproduction of capital, for Marx, is the over-accumulation of constant capital.

When over-accumulation sets in and profit rates fall, capitalists begin to shift the investment funds at their disposal out of machinery, technology and labor and into financial assets. Eventually there is a shortage of profitable financial investment outlets.

When that happens, capitalist investors often bid up the prices of various social goods without increasing the real wealth in society or expanding productivity. The sub-prime loan crisis is exactly such a scheme, aggravated by easy credit.

The economic downturn that is now unfolding can't be prevented by acts of Congress. Short of getting rid of capitalism, there is no means to prevent such economic disasters. But Marx did show that the workers, through struggle, can lessen the devastating impact of such crises on their lives and also gain the consciousness and organization to begin to challenge the system itself. □

Community mobilization blocks Boston foreclosure

By Gerry Scoppettuolo

They began arriving at the two-family home at 26 Semont Street in working-class Dorchester shortly after sunrise on a freezing Jan. 23. Anticipating a constable's early morning knock to evict Melanie Griffiths-Evans, tenants and homeowners—many themselves facing eviction and foreclosure—converged from the surrounding neighborhoods, determined that she would not face it alone.

Tenant's rights activists from City Life/Vida Urbana, who had put out the call, organized a blockade and produced experienced legal back-up. Activists quickly turned the front porch into a staging area, hanging banners, stapling a house-size "Stop Foreclosures and Evictions" sign to the eaves and railings, setting up information and refreshment tables, and calling up a speak-out.

Team Unity City Councilors Chuck Turner and Sam Yoon; unionists from SEIU, Boston school bus drivers Local 8751 and UNITE/HERE Local 26; anti-war activists from Dorchester People for

Peace and the Troops Out Now Coalition; allies from the Community Church of Boston, the Women's Fightback Network, and the International Action Center—all announced to a multitude of cameras and reporters that they would physically block the foreclosure and eviction plans of the bank that morning, and would take arrests to enforce their resolve.

Griffiths-Evans stood on the porch of her home with her three children at her side and thrilled her supporters, whose numbers now were spilling out into the street, telling them: "We are going to take back our home and take back this city. It's not just about me. We are going to continue this fight."

Turner spoke forcefully to the eviction blockaders and urged that people's action also be directed at the offices of foreclosing banks. "An injury to one is an injury to all," he shouted from the front steps of the home emblazoned with City Life/Vida Urbana's "Eviction-free zone" and "People before profits" placards. "We are here today to fight economic exploitation," explained Turner, "and to stand up for the

tenants today and tomorrow. We need to take it to the banks, and tell people not to deal with those banks."

Claudette Desmond and her partner Shameeka Bolware, themselves tenants facing eviction from a home in foreclosure, carried signs demanding, "Emergency moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, now!" After spending two years in a shelter, they moved into an apartment in Roxbury last year, only to have to have the "owner" and Deutsche Bank announce their decision to foreclose. The couple had to pay for heat, at hundreds of dollars per month, even though they were initially told that heat was included.

Holding a Troops Out Now Coalition sign demanding, "Foreclose the war and predator banks, not workers' homes! Housing is a right!" Steelworkers Local 8751 Vice President Steve Gillis brought union solidarity to the stage, declaring this struggle a "union fight": "This is a war that our members and workers across the city are fighting every day. This picket line will not be moved!"

City Life/Vida Urbana organizer Cheryl

Lawrence informed the crowd that hundreds of families in Boston had been foreclosed and evicted in recent months, as banks and their agents forcibly empty houses of owners and renters for resale to speculators and at auctions. She cited the fact that over 1,500 families face foreclosure and eviction in coming weeks. She fired up the crowd with chants of "When we fight, we win!" and she and several other women led the pickets in several impromptu verses of the civil rights anthem, "We will not be moved!"

U.S. Bank and its mortgage-lending partner OCWEN had refused to accept rent payments from the Griffiths-Evans family and had given 48 hours notice for all owners and tenants to be evacuated. But when their constable showed up at 9:00 p.m. to read the legal orders, he was surrounded by the spirited crowd of African-American, Latin@, white, young and elder blockaders, who listened in bold silence to his proclamations, as TV cameras rolled.

He then looked around, apparently

Continued on page 10

'Dear Canada, let them stay'

Rallies in 14 cities support war resisters

By Dee Knight

Anti-war activists delivered tens of thousands of letters and petitions on Jan. 25 to Canadian consulates in eight cities across the United States. The "Dear Canada: Let U.S. war resisters stay" letters ask that the Canadian government allow the resisters now seeking sanctuary in Canada to remain there.

In New York, Washington, Minneapolis, Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles, supporters gathered outside Canadian consulates to show support for the war resisters. Meanwhile, on Jan. 26 in Canada, war resisters and their supporters in Ottawa, Toronto, Sudbury, London, Thunder Bay, Saskatoon, Nelson, Vancouver, and Victoria also rallied to demand that the Parliament take urgent action to stop possible deportations of four of the war resisters, several with families.

The rallies urged the Canadian House of Commons to adopt a recommendation of its Committee on Citizenship and Immigration that would make it possible for U.S. Iraq War resisters to obtain permanent resident status in Canada.

In San Francisco, the delegation to the Canadian Consulate was led by Pablo Paredes and Mike Wong. Paredes is a former U.S. sailor who refused orders to return to Iraq, and is now a GI Rights Hotline counselor. In December 2004 at Camp Pendleton, Calif., he publicly refused to get

on a ship returning to Iraq. "I don't want to be part of a ship that's taking 3,000 Marines over there, knowing a hundred or more of them won't come back," he told reporters at the time. Mike Wong is a Vietnam War-era veteran who chose exile in Canada for five years in the 1970s.

Courage to Resist in collaboration with the War Resisters Support Campaign (Canada) initiated the actions at Canadian consulates across the U.S. They had the support of Iraq Veterans Against the War, Veterans for Peace and many other groups.

This event was the first nationally coordinated action in the U.S. in support of war resisters in Canada. Since the illegal U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, many soldiers have been going AWOL (Absent Without Leave). GIs who have publicly refused to deploy—or re-deploy—to Iraq have been court-martialed and imprisoned. Thousands of service people are AWOL and are believed to be in hiding in the U.S. and abroad. Hundreds have fled to Canada.

In a poll last August, 65 percent of respondents in Ontario, Canada's largest province, said U.S. soldiers should be allowed to settle in Canada. The poll results were broken down by party affiliation: 71 percent of Liberal voters, 74 percent of NDP (social democratic) voters, and 53 percent of Conservative voters said, "Let them settle in Canada." Parliamentary



JEFF PATERSON/COURAGE TO RESIST

San Francisco action in front of the Canadian Consulate

representatives of the Liberals united with the NDP and the Bloc Quebecois last November to approve a resolution that soldiers who refuse to fight in a war not approved by the U.N. should be allowed to stay in Canada. The resolution is now due for debate and a possible vote in the full Parliament in February.

The Canadian rallies featured war resisters speaking on their own behalf, along with members of the War Resisters Support Campaign, which includes the Canadian Labour Congress, the United Church of Canada and many local groups. In Toronto, Olivia Chow, the member of Parliament who introduced the resolution demanding resisters be allowed to stay, was a featured speaker.

One of the war resister speakers was Joshua Key, whose recently published memoir, "The Deserter's Tale: The Story

of an Ordinary Soldier Who Walked Away from the War in Iraq," has won international acclaim. The documentary film "Breaking Ranks," featuring the stories of numerous U.S. war resisters in Canada, was shown at several of the rallies in Canada. It was also recently aired nationally on CBC, the national Canadian TV broadcasting network.

Gerry Condon, a Vietnam War-era resister who dedicates his time to supporting Iraq War resisters, said, "We have achieved a valuable goal—this is the first nationally coordinated action in the U.S. in support of our war resisters in Canada. Various elements of the peace movement participated in this together. This is also another important step in the reorientation of much of the antiwar movement to the importance of defending our war resisters." □

British colonialism outlawed 'sodomy' in Iraq

By Leslie Feinberg

British colonialism outlawed "sodomy" in Iraq after World War I. The edict was part of an entire body of colonial law created by British overlords more than half a century earlier, which the English called "The Indian Penal Code." The code was not indigenous to India. It was the legal system that the British colonial rulers forced on India in 1860.

Article 377 of that colonial code made "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" a crime punishable by up to 20 years of deportation or up to 10 years imprisonment.

The term "sodomy" originates in the Bible: "Sodom and Gomorrah." British Common Law derived from ecclesiastical—church—law.

In 1533, as England's church split with Rome, King Henry VIII had made "buggery"—synonymous with "sodomy"—a capital offense punishable by hanging. A British colonial law in Ireland in 1634 also called for the death sentence. Later, the 1885 British Labouchère Amendment reduced the sentence to imprisonment with hard labor.

As the British colonial empire expanded, its overlords imposed and enforced Article 377 and similarly worded edicts against "sodomy" in Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang and Malacca, Hong Kong, Fiji, the Malay Peninsula and Burma, Sri Lanka, the Seychelles and Papua New Guinea, "British" Honduras (today Belize), Jamaica, Anguilla, the "British" Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Bahamas, Tobago,

Turks and Caicos, and St. Lucia, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia.

In the Middle East, British colonialism made "The Indian Penal Code" the law of the land in Aden, Bahrain, Kuwait, Muscat and Oman, Qatar, Somaliland, the Sudan and what is today the United Arab Emirates.

Any system of law, as Karl Marx explained, cannot break free of its economic foundation. Colonial Britain imposed its patriarchal capitalist "order of nature"—theft of labor and natural wealth, brutal state repression, attempts at cultural genocide, and guarantee of commercial distribution, private ownership and property rights—on the pre-capitalist, essentially feudal economic system in Iraq in 1918.

The outlawing of "sodomy" in 1919 was part and parcel of British structuring of Arab family and kinship, sexuality and society, in order to exploit the greatest profits from the oil-rich region.

Colonial 'law'

During the first interimperialist world war, from 1914-1918, the British promised the Arab people that if they fought to defeat the Ottoman Empire, with its administrative center in Turkey, that England would grant them independence.

World War I was the first international military bloodbath between imperialist rivals over the division of global capitalist markets and resources. The massive human toll, military and civilian: 20 million dead and 21 million wounded.

Yet even as they sent their armies into battle they were cutting backroom deals with each other. England, France and Czarist Russia signed the secret Sykes-

Picot Treaty, which divided up the Middle East into colonial "possessions," during the middle of the war, in 1916.

After World War I, the Supreme Commander of the British Forces of Occupation in Iraq drew up the penal code—including the outlaw of "sodomy"—in 1918 and imposed it on the population of the capital city on Jan. 1, 1919. Later the British applied it to the whole country.

The colonial penal code was written and published in English. No Arabic translation was made for the first two years after it was established as the rule of law in Iraq.

The British legal code wasn't translated into Arabic until 1921. Discrepancies between the English version and the Arabic translation created legal chaos.

As far as the British were concerned, the English version was definitive and binding.

Jehoeda Sofer wrote in the essay in "Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies," a book co-edited with Arno Schmitt, "In 1956, this Code was replaced in the British territories of the Persian Gulf by a new Penal Code. Article 171 made sodomy punishable by imprisonment not exceeding 10 years, with or without corporal punishment."

First step toward independent law

After decades of vicious imperial rule, an Iraqi military rebellion on July 14, 1958, lit the fuse of an anti-colonial revolution for independence.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower deployed an estimated 20,000 Marines to Lebanon to block the Iraqi national independence movement from widening

in the region and was prepared to send a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier to the Gulf.

But the determination of the Iraqi population to oust imperialism and nationalize the country's vast oil wealth helped stay imperialism's hand. Anti-imperialist solidarity with the Iraqi national democratic revolution of 1958 from the socialist governments of the USSR and China—and support from India under Nehru and Indonesia under Sukarno—also sent a strong message to U.S. finance capital not to intervene militarily.

However, the U.S. and Britain never gave the newly independent Iraq a moment's peace to rebuild its society, free from the legacy of colonialism and imperialism.

In 1969, the independent Iraqi Ministry of Justice issued, in Arabic, the first Iraqi revised penal code. It was a first step towards creating an independent national legal system.

Did the 1969 code legalize "homosexuality"? Those who ask reveal their historically based, economically bound cultural concepts of sexualities.

'Sodomy': a colonial concept

The British imported the concept of "sodomy" in order to outlaw it.

Khaled El-Rouayheb is the author of "Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800," which was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2005. He explained, "Homosexuality is usually seen in the modern West as an innate and abnormal condition of a minority of humans which reveals itself in a regular desire to have homosexual intercourse, but also in various other ways. For example, a 'homosexual' is widely assumed to

Continued on page 8

lavender
&
red
#120

Trauma's impact on U.S. troops & Iraqis

By Imani Henry

Since Jan. 13, the Sunday New York Times has run as its main front page story a weekly investigative series focused on "the 121 cases in which veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan committed a killing in this country, or were charged with one, after their return from war" as a result of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Since the Times is the leading bourgeois media mouthpiece in the U.S., this multimedia series, entitled "War Torn," has generated both outrage and praise from both readers and other publications around the country.

Outside the U.S., this equation of U.S. soldiers with murderers is no shocking realization, but an unfortunate reality. Sent by the U.S. government onto every continent of the world, U.S. military personnel are ordered and encouraged to commit countless acts of murder and torture on daily basis.

At least 1.6 million U.S. troops have been deployed around the world since 2001. As a direct result of the U.S. invasion and occupation of their country, more than 1 million Iraqi civilians have died violently since 2003, according to estimates based on a Johns Hopkins study.

In truth there are absolutely no statistics to measure the severity of the emotional trauma as a result of centuries of colonization and imperialist war on the majority of the world's peoples.

What is PTSD?

According to the National Institute of Mental Health website, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, (PTSD), is an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened."

Traumatic events like violent personal assaults, natural disasters or military combat are traditionally classified as causes of PTSD. More progressive mental health workers have also included systematic racism, lesbian/gay/bi/trans oppression, homelessness and capitalism itself as PTSD factors.

The NIMH goes on to report that PTSD affects about 7.7 million adults in the United States. PTSD is often accompanied by depression, substance abuse or one or more of the other anxiety disorders. Symptoms of PTSD include sleep-related disorders such as nightmares, anxiety, impaired memory, as well as anger, loss of control, irritability and hyper-vigilance.

Much has been documented about the high percentage of Vietnam War veterans who face chronic homelessness, substance abuse and/or who become psychiatrically institutionalized or jailed.

Part I of the "War Torn" series reported that in the mid-1980s, veterans made up a fifth of the country's inmate population. There were so many Vietnam veterans behind bars that Vietnam Veterans of America created chapters in prisons. In a report last May, the Veterans Administration Inspector General George Opfer estimated 1,000-5,000 suicides per year among all veterans.

Currently, the Disability Rights Advocates, a non-profit law firm, has a lawsuit against the VA, the governmental agency that is supposed to oversee benefits for veterans. DRA argues that there is now a backlog of more than 600,000 PTSD claim applications, with some dating back to the Vietnam era. "Of the 750,000 veterans of the Iraqi and Afghanistan wars, at least 15 percent are thought to suffer from PTSD," according to DRA. (injuryboard.com)

The Part I article also pointed out, "Clearly, committing homicide is an extreme manifestation of dysfunction for returning veterans, many of whom struggle in quieter ways, with crumbling marriages, mounting debt, deepening alcohol dependence or more-minor tangles with the law."

The cause and effects of PTSD in soldiers

The vast majority of the U.S. military personnel is from the working class. According to the Washington Post's Faces of the Fallen Web site, the largest proportion of soldiers killed have been between the ages of 19-23, with 21 year olds having the highest death rate. Twenty-one is also

the legal age to consume alcohol in the U.S., while 18 year olds are recruited into the military right out of high school.

Much has been written on the economic draft that has forced young workers of many nationalities into the U.S. military since 2001, including immigrants. They are told it is an opportunity for job training and access to higher education. Many young workers from the poorest communities are lured in by the free housing, health care benefits and the guarantee of three meals a day. The first thing they are trained to do, though, is to kill or be killed.

The group Veterans for Common Sense sued under the Freedom of Information Act to find out that U.S. government documents report that 4,400 U.S. soldiers have been killed and 67,600 injured or wounded on the battlefield since 2001. (veteransforcommonsense.org)

Instead of providing young workers with jobs, health care, housing, education and mental health services here at home, the U.S. government spends more than \$270 million a day to use them as cannon fodder in Iraq.

With each passing year of the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, fewer new recruits have joined the military. According to Iraq Veterans against the War (IVAW), over the last five years, only 25 percent of the troops in Iraq are there for their first tour, while 50 percent are on their second tour, and the remaining 25 percent have been there three times or more. On Jan. 17, several newspapers reported that based on a military study, up to 20 percent of U.S. troops in Iraq have experienced a concussion, and thousands are suffering from some form of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) because of bomb blast explosions.

All of these factors have also taken a serious toll on the mental health of soldiers. The Army reported in December that 85 active duty soldiers are confirmed or suspected of committing suicide in 2007, the highest amount since 1990. There has also been a growth of anti-war resistance and AWOLS [absences without leave] among U.S. troops

PTSD fuels Iraqi resistance

After 12 years of economic sanctions, the Iraqi people have endured the emotional trauma and economic devastation of five years of a racist colonial occupation by the U.S.

About.com estimates 2,255,000 Iraqis have been displaced inside Iraq while upwards of 2.1 million to 2.25 million Iraqis are now refugees in Syria and Jordan because of the occupation. (Jan. 16)

The Iraqi unemployment rate is 27 to 60 percent, even where the curfew is not in effect. Access to electricity in an Iraqi home may be as minimum as 1-5 hours a day. As of June 2007, 28 percent of Iraqi children suffer from chronic malnutrition. (CNN, July 30, 2007)

At the same time, with each year of the occupation the Iraqi resistance forces continue to grow. In November 2003, it was estimated there were 15,000 Iraqi fighters. By October 2006, it was estimated to be 20,000-30,000. As of June 2007, the armed resistance fighters numbered over 70,000.

Because it is a U.S. election year, the plight of active duty troops and veterans is being paid lip service by politicians from both bourgeois parties. They are tripping over themselves proposing or signing on to new legislation to prevent suicide among veterans by providing mandatory mental health counseling for returning soldiers and monies for research for PTSD in the military.

The bottom line is that if Congress or any of the presidential candidates really gave a damn about the mental health of U.S. soldiers they would bring them all home right now.

Ultimately, the end of the war and the fight for health care for the veterans will not be decided in the voting booth. In 2008, the best "therapy" for the trauma that capitalism inflicts is for working-class people to continue to protest out in the streets.

Imani Henry has been a worker in the social service field for the last 15 years.

Lorraine Ramirez assisted with research for this article.

935 lies—count them!

Broad ruling-class conspiracy behind war on Iraq

By John Catalinotto

Two organizations that analyze the media have counted 935 false statements made by the Bush gang between Sept. 11, 2001, and March 19, 2003, that greased the way for the invasion of Iraq. This useful information exposes almost by itself the responsibility of the entire U.S. ruling class for the conspiracy to wage war.

The Bush administration knew from the start that it had no real basis for its statements. War opponents pointed this out all along. Then, in interviews published in 2004, former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill admitted that the Bush administration began plotting the invasion right after Sept. 11, 2001.

Now the Center for Public Integrity, working with the Fund for Independence in Journalism, has counted 259 lies told by Bush himself, including 231 statements claiming that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and 28 that Saddam Hussein had ties to al-Qaida. Then-Secretary of State Colin Powell, the only administration figure to be publicly embarrassed for lying, was a close second with 254.

While Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the lesser neo-cons of the Bush administration took the lead in both plotting the war and lying about it, the conspiracy extended to the entire ruling class and its institutions. The Pentagon went along willingly. The State Department and its head, Powell, presented the false statements to the United Nations.

Corporate media spread the lies

No one in the major corporate media seriously questioned or challenged these lies, although the anti-war movement could see through them easily. The influential New York Times and the Washington Post helped build toward the war and supported the U.S. invasion. Nor did the media allow war opponents to expose, for example, the patently false and illogical charge that Saddam Hussein collaborated with Osama bin Laden, who was Hussein's ideological enemy.

In January and February 2003, mass mobilizations tried to stop the war. No major ruling-class politicians or business figures participated in them.

In a word, the vast majority of the super-rich ruling class, through their Democratic and Republican parties and all their institutions, were either enthusiastically pro-war or were willing to swallow their misgivings rather than mobilize to stop it.

The truth is that the corporate owners were watering at the mouth over the profits and plunder they thought would come from a quick and clean U.S. victory in Iraq. By the fall of 2002, ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, ConocoPhillips, Halliburton and Bechtel were meeting with Cheney and lining up for the contracts to "reconstruct" Iraq.

The war conspiracy was not the work of a tiny group representing a small sector of the imperialists. It was a conspiracy that included the entire U.S. imperialist ruling class and its hired hands and hired brains, from neo-con to liberal. The military-industrial complex was key, of course, but also every sector from banking to oil to agribusiness had a long-term interest in U.S. military, political and economic domination of Southwest Asia and its oil reserves.

Five years later, the "quick victory" in Iraq has become a long-term debacle for U.S. imperialism. The determined resistance of the Iraqi people has exposed the Pentagon's weakness—which includes having its ground troops stretched to their limit and demoralized.

The ruling class here made the same error that imperialists so often make. It's the error German dictator Adolf Hitler made invading the Soviet Union in 1940. It's the error Washington made sending a half-million troops to Vietnam in 1967, and that Washington and Tel Aviv made invading Lebanon in 2006. They underestimated the invaded and occupied population's willingness to sacrifice and fight rather than submit.

Faced with this giant military flop, now sectors of the U.S. ruling class are beginning to see the war as a disaster for U.S. imperialist interests. Yahoo featured the report on Bush's lies at the top of its news page. The same media that had promoted those lies to help build for the war is now exposing them to the world.

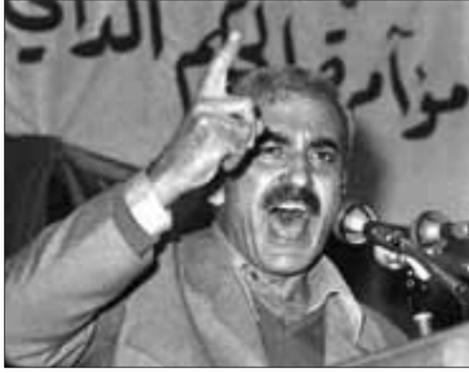
Continued on page 8

George Habash's struggle lives on

Workers World Party joins the people of Palestine, the Arab nation and freedom-loving people everywhere in mourning the loss of Comrade Dr. George Habash, Al Hakim. We send deep and heartfelt condolences to imprisoned Comrade Ahmad Sa'adat and all militants of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Your loss is our loss.

Dr. Habash will be remembered not only as a heroic and steadfast fighter for the liberation of Palestine, all Palestine, but as an international working-class leader and an important contributor to the science of Marxism-Leninism and its application to the conditions of the late 20th century.

His revolutionary creativity in the aftermath of the defeat of 1967; his steadfast leadership in the face of onslaught after onslaught by genocidal Zionism, the forces of Arab reaction and their puppet masters in Washington and on Wall Street; his application of revolutionary science to the concrete situation of the Palestinian and Arab people; his unwavering commitment to the total lib-



eration of Palestine and the right of all Palestinians to return to their homes and land; his solidarity with all oppressed people everywhere earned him the hatred of the oppressor and the love of all revolutionaries.

His legacy can never be erased; it lives on in the PFLP and in the unbreakable determination of the people of Palestine, generation after generation, to win their land and freedom,

as they just showed once again by tearing down the wall separating Gaza from Egypt. It will inspire us as we continue our fight to get the boot of U.S. imperialism and its Zionist agents off of Palestine and all Arab land.

George Habash is with us—now and forever!

Palestine will be free, from the river to the sea!

The oppressed of the world shall be victorious!

Workers and oppressed people of all countries, unite! □

40 years later

Remembering the Tet Offensive

By Caleb T. Maupin

On Jan. 30, 1968, Vietnam was divided and in the midst of a war for liberation. The northern part of Vietnam was under the control of a socialist government of workers and peasants. The southern part of Vietnam remained under the control of a regime bought and sold to U.S. bankers and capitalists. Peasants in southern Vietnam remained landless and hungry, and slums and poverty filled Vietnam's large urban centers. But all throughout South Vietnam, the spirit of resistance was flowing.

In North Vietnam, the soldiers wore armbands showing their solidarity with their southern country folk. The armbands read "Born in the North, Died in the South."

The Buddhist holiday of Tet marks the Lunar New Year, and was traditionally celebrated in Vietnam in late January and early February. In years previous to 1968, the National Liberation Front of Vietnam had signed peace treaties with the United States to mark the holiday.

The NLF planned an attack on U.S. forces for the Tet holiday, so their people could celebrate the holiday before the vicious bombings that would come from the U.S. in retaliation. They knew the U.S. would respond with brutality.

Already the U.S. was viciously bombing Vietnam. By the war's end, more bombs would fall on the Vietnamese people than had been dropped in all of the Second World War. When directly bombing North Vietnamese cities and villages failed to weaken the Vietnamese resistance, the U.S. began bombing dams, causing massive flooding and a famine in Vietnam's agriculture-based countryside.

Some estimate that as many as 4 million Vietnamese people died as a result of the bombing campaigns, which Gen. Curtis

Lemay proclaimed were done to "bomb them back into the stone age." Later, in 1972, the U.S. would drop 800,000 tons of explosives on Southeast Asia in one year alone.

The Tet Offensive struck 36 of the 43 provincial capitals of Vietnam. In each city, the attacks were similar. The guerrilla soldiers of the NLF were able to sneak into villages under the cover of the Tet celebrations. In some cities they were even able to test explosive weapons under the cover of the holiday fireworks.

Once inside the cities, with supporters residing within them acting as guides, they would wage mortar attacks on key sites and do their best to get control.

The attack on Saigon

Saigon, now called Ho Chi Minh City, was the capital city of the puppet government of Vietnam. It was also a city in which many Vietnamese people lived in poverty and longed to resist. The city, which had not been rocked in nearly 20 years, was suddenly the site of a massive insurrection.

NLF guerrillas infiltrated and assaulted the U.S. occupiers right within their own embassy, which had been built up with massive security following a bombing. The diplomats were forced to barricade themselves inside inner rooms as the fighting went on, in the equivalent of modern day Iraq's "green zone."

After the fighting had subsided, U.S. troops ordered the slaughter of all people within the embassy who were "not American." This included many Vietnamese people who had been hired to work at the embassy and had had no part in the rebellion.

The National Radio Station, which the U.S. used to broadcast pro-imperialist propaganda throughout Vietnam, was also invaded. Guerrillas were able to liber-

ate much of the station's \$1 million worth of equipment, and destroy what they couldn't take with them.

During the Tet Offensive, a Saigon prison was busted into by the National Liberation Front. In South Vietnam 65,000 people were in prison, most of them political prisoners. These prisons were known for beatings and torture at the hand of the puppet forces of the South Vietnamese government. Five thousand prisoners were set free from the clutches of the U.S. backed regime and joined the insurrection.

A horrific scene unfolded in the streets of Saigon during the rebellion. A leader of the police forces of South Vietnam carried out an on-the-spot execution of an NLF supporter. Police officers walked the man over to Police Chief Ngoc Loan, who promptly put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger in front of the lenses of Western television reporters. Soon the picture of this killing was on the front pages of newspapers and headlined on the evening news in the Western world. This helped turn many against the war in Vietnam and strengthened the anti-war movement.

Paper tigers

"Imperialism and all reactionaries are paper tigers," Mao Zedong wrote, and he

was proved correct by the Tet Offensive and the eventual outcome of the Vietnam War. All of the countless thousands of U.S. CIA agents and spies in Vietnam could not predict the Tet Offensive. The Vietnamese were able to score massive blows against the U.S. occupiers. U.S. forces clearly had underestimated the strength of the Vietnamese people, who desperately wanted to be free from the clutches of U.S. imperialism and capitalism.

Eventually, the U.S. was forced to withdraw from Vietnam, as resistance flowed throughout the U.S. military itself and the streets of the U.S. were filled with militant youth. Fifty-eight thousand U.S. troops were sent to their death in Vietnam by the rulers of the U.S. Many more came home to spend the rest of their lives disabled or homeless.

It's been 40 years since the Tet Offensive and since Vietnam has liberated itself from U.S. imperialism and established a socialist government that has redistributed land to the peasants, raised the life expectancy by 14.7 years and cut infant mortality in half.

All of this would not have been possible without the heroism of countless millions of Vietnamese people who fought and died for the liberation of their country—especially those who surged forth, 40 years ago, in the Tet Offensive. □

Broad ruling class conspiracy

Continued from page 7

U.S. imperialism has full responsibility

Because the war has obviously harmed U.S. ruling-class interests, some analysts, including some progressive intellectuals, have made the mistake of looking for a mysterious element to explain Washington's decision to invade Iraq. These analysts' most serious error and the one that seems to have confused the most people is their argument that, without the efforts of what they call the pro-Israel lobby, the U.S. would not have carried out the invasion and occupation.

Now, there is a pro-Israel lobby. It includes fundamentalist Christians as well as pro-Israeli Jews and includes individuals with money and influence who are part of the imperialist establishment. It promoted U.S. intervention against Iraq. It also has played an utterly reactionary role within the U.S., defeating some progressive politicians like former Rep. Cynthia McKinney and suppressing anti-Zionist professors and the books they write.

But there is no evidence that this lobby

has the power to impose a policy on the entire U.S. imperialist ruling class against its will and interests. Washington supports Israel, including the most virulent and aggressive forces there, not because it is duped by a lobby but because the interests of the class it represents have been served by the Israeli state for more than half a century. Indeed, Washington has paid handsomely for this service, especially in military aid.

As is shown above, the vast majority of the U.S. ruling class, including those who are part of the pro-Israel lobby, believed the Iraq war would lead to a quick victory. They believed the war would promote U.S. imperialist interests. But they underestimated the Iraqis.

To argue otherwise is to diminish the responsibility of the U.S. imperialist establishment for its war crimes against the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, for the threats against Iran, and for whatever criminal wars Washington and/or its heavily armed Israeli client unleash in the region.

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

British colonialism

Continued from page 6

be effeminate, promiscuous and sexually uninterested in members of the other sex. McIntosh argued that such a homosexual 'role' or stereotype only emerged in England in the late 17th century."

El-Rouayheb stressed, "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."

He concluded, "[T]he encounter with European Victorian morality was to have profound effects on local attitudes toward what came to be called 'sexual inversion' or 'sexual perversion' (shudhūdh jinsī)."

Next: *Independence brought greater social freedoms; imperialism rolled them back.*

For more on Iraq, read Part 119 at www.workers.org, where the full *Lavender & Red* web-book-in-progress is posted.

E-mail: lfeinberg@workers.org





Buffalo, N.Y.

WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITTE



New York

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO



San Diego

WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

International actions say 'End Gaza siege'

By John Catalinotto

By tearing down the wall between Gaza and Egypt, the Palestinian people and their organizations gave an impulse to the anti-imperialist movement all over the Middle East and throughout the world. Demonstrations set for Jan. 25-26, which were first called as a plea to stop Israel's criminal siege of 1.5 million Palestinians trapped in Gaza, turned into militant displays of solidarity with a people in struggle.

Demonstrations were held internationally in Belgium, Canada, Germany, Austria, England, Scotland, France, Switzerland, Ireland and in the Middle East. The Al-Awda organization, which called or coordinated many of the protests in the United States, listed actions in 29 U.S. cities and

at least a dozen in other countries.

Worldwide, the largest actions reported were from the Middle East, with mass protests in the thousands in Amman, Jordan; Cairo, Egypt; and Beirut, Lebanon; as well as in Teheran, Iran. As of Jan. 29, Workers World received reports from the cities listed below.

One of the largest U.S. actions was in New York, where nearly 1,000 people, many of them Palestinian-Americans of high-school age, protested on Jan. 25 outside the Israeli Consulate at 42nd Street and 2nd Avenue in Manhattan. Demonstrators held signs reading "End the siege" and carried Palestinian flags. Another protest was held Jan. 26 in the same place.

Called on short notice by San Diego Al-Awda, the Free Palestine Alliance and

the National Council of Arab Americans, a sizable crowd, including large numbers from the Palestinian and other Arab communities, gathered with banners and Palestinian flags across the street from the downtown Federal Building to demand, "Break the silence on Gaza now!" The call also demanded an end to U.S. complicity with the ongoing repression and an end to all U.S. aid to the Zionist state.

A determined crowd in Buffalo, NY, shouted and chanted their support for Palestinian resistance, and denounced the U.S.-backed siege of Gaza, while passers-by raised fists and cars honked in a busy shopping district. The demonstration, initiated by the Lackawanna Discussion Group Commission on Rights, raised the demand, "Defend rights in Palestine and New Orleans!"

About 75 people called out by the local al-Nakba Committee formed a spirited demonstration in Philadelphia on Jan. 26. They rallied across from the Liberty Bell and marched to the Israeli Consulate. The rally began with a strong statement in solidarity, not just with the coalition of Jewish people and Palestinians who were challenging the siege with humanitarian convoys, but foremost with the Palestinians who tore down the walls.

The International Action Center; the Free Palestine Alliance; the National Council of Arab Americans; Jewish Voices for Peace; FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; the Arab Muslim American Federation and many local organizations were among those that supported the protests in the U.S.

continued on page 11

Gazans participate in 'biggest jailbreak ever'

By Joyce Chediak

The following is based on a talk given at New York City Workers World Forum on Jan. 25.

The whole world watched in wonder on Jan. 23 when the blockaded Palestinian people of Gaza blew up the walls imprisoning them and walked en masse into Egypt.

It was the biggest jailbreak ever.

In a bold challenge to Zionism, imperialism and reaction, hundreds of thousands of men, women and children, many flashing victory signs, poured over, around and through the demolished wall into Egypt to get the food, medicine and other survival supplies they had been denied. There was no stopping them. [According to BBC, by Jan. 26, 700,000 Palestinians had crossed into Egypt, approximately half of Gaza's 1.5 million people, and they were still coming—ed.]

After getting what they needed to survive, the people turned around and went back to Gaza, to defend Palestinian land and continue the struggle

Imperialism's weaknesses exposed

The people of Gaza have exposed the fundamental weakness of imperialism, Zionism and their local agents. The huge military colossus of the U.S. and Israel can hurt but cannot defeat a people's movement. The whip of repression—the daily Israeli bombardments and supply, food and medicine shortages—did not quell the people or consume their struggle.

On the contrary, the Palestinian population turned the terrible six-month siege of Gaza into a fire forging the rebirth of the Palestinian struggle on a new level. This remarkable development is testimony to the strength of a mass movement and a bold leadership responsive to its needs.

Gaza's mass defiance gives heart to all under the iron heel of imperialism and capitalism. Surely those Palestinians on the West Bank will never look at the apartheid wall that imprisons them in the same way.

U.S., Israel and the European imperialists hoped to pummel, starve, freeze and sicken the Gaza population into turning

against Hamas, which it elected. This has badly backfired. Today, the prestige of Hamas is higher than ever. The Jan. 23 New York Times interviewed all classes of Palestinians breaching the wall and independent Fatah supporters. All said, "This was the best thing that Hamas did."

Further isolated are the forces of Mahmoud Abbas, which are seen as aligned with the U.S. and Israel, and which attended imperialism's so-called peace conference at Annapolis where the siege of Gaza was not even on the agenda. On Jan. 24 Hamas leaders called for unity and invited Abbas and the Ramallah government to run the Rafah border crossing jointly with it. So far, Abbas has refused this offer.

Israeli war crimes make Gaza a Warsaw ghetto

Israel's blockade and siege of the 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza began in June [2007], when Hamas took over the government there. This punishment of the civilian population because Israel, the U.S. and the European imperialists did not like Gaza's government was a blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions governing the treatment of an occupied people, and a war crime.

Gaza became a Warsaw ghetto. Unable to get supplies or export goods, the civilian economy collapsed, leaving the majority jobless and dependent on U.N. food handouts for survival. Gazans died because their medicines were no longer available. There was hunger, then starvation. And all this time, the small strip of land was bombarded by Israel using high tech U.S. weapons.

Then, on Jan 17, Israel shut off fuel shipments, plunging Gaza in darkness and rendering hospitals ineffective.

Hamas responded by organizing daily demonstrations at the closed Rafah crossing into Egypt, demanding that the border be opened. On Jan. 22, a demonstration of Palestinian women in traditional dress was beaten bloody by Egyptian security as they sought to cross the border and buy food and medicine for their families. (BBC, Jan 22). The people had had all that they would take.

In the wee dark hours of Jan. 23, 17

explosions ripped through the concrete and corrugated metal wall with Egypt. Most of the seven-mile wall blockading Gaza came tumbling down. While Hamas did not take credit, the Jan. 24 London Times, after interviewing Gaza residents, determined that this was not only a Hamas action, but the moment had long been planned. For months, the Times said, Hamas had been secretly slicing through the heavy metal portions of the wall with oxyacetylene torches.

Residents were told to stay away from the wall the night the explosions went off, the Times said.

The next day, a Hamas spokesperson would not take credit for exploding the wall. "We are creating facts," he said, adding, "We warned the Egyptians yesterday that people are hungry and dying." Hours later the wall was demolished. (New York Times, Jan. 24)

People and leadership united

Blowing up the wall was not just an audacious action. It was a bold move that spoke to the needs of the people. Gaza's residents did not have to coax people to cross. In fact, they couldn't be held back. Some 350,000 crossed the first day, with Hamas forces acting as guides.

They crossed over on foot, by donkey cart, in beat-up pickup trucks. While most came to purchase needed food and supplies, some came to see relatives on the other side of Rafah they hadn't seen in months. Some young people had never been out of Gaza, and they came just to breathe the air and feel free.

They returned carrying sacks of flour, jerry cans filled with olive oil and gasoline, medicine, cigarettes and carts filled with cement. They walked farm animals and camels into Gaza, giving the "V" for victory sign when news cameras were spotted. When Egypt used water cannons and riot police to close the two main border crossings on Jan 27, Palestinians bulldozed another hole in the fence and used a crane to hoist needed goods over the barrier.

Egyptian security stood by, with many guards showing clear sympathy with the Palestinians and others overwhelmed by the sheer numbers crossing over.

Just a few weeks ago, with much fanfare, the Bush administration held a conference at Annapolis and claimed it wanted a resolution to the Palestinian question. Washington's response to events in Gaza makes it clear that Washington is no friend of the Palestinians. On Jan. 23, the U.S. was the only U.N. Security Council member opposing a statement condemning Israel for the blockade of Gaza.

Why? Turning events on their head, Washington insisted that the criminal and genocidal blockade of Gaza was an act of Israeli self-defense, because Palestinians in Gaza continue to fire homemade rockets into Israel. Surely the rocket firers would gladly trade these rockets for the cruise missiles the Pentagon gives to Israel.

Speaking from Syria in Jan. 24, Khaled Meshaal, the head of Hamas' political bureau, explained, "The siege was before and after the firing of rockets. We stopped firing rockets many times, but the siege had not come to an end; we ceased the resistance tactically for several months, but the aggression and occupation continued." (Palestine Information Center, Jan. 24).

The breaking of the blockade of Gaza is a continuation of other mass actions in the Middle East.

For example, in 2000 Hezbollah and allied fighters liberated southern Lebanon from a decade of Israeli occupation. Their success was due to their deep roots in and support from the population.

In the summer of 2006, less than 3,000 Hezbollah people's fighters stopped the heavily armed Israeli army in its tracks, preventing it from invading Lebanon.

Today in Iraq and Afghanistan all the might of the Pentagon cannot stop the resistance, because these movements have the support of the people, and, in fact, are the people.

The Bush administration, aided by the establishment media, has tried to hide the mass character of these struggles. Nothing, however, could hide the fact that the breaching of the wall between Gaza and Egypt was done by the Palestinian people themselves.

These struggles need and deserve the support of all who value freedom and justice. □



Arrest Bush & Cheney

Brattleboro, Vt., or at least some of its residents, raised the spirits of tens of millions of people in the United States and hundreds of millions around the world by putting the following proposition on the ballot, to be decided by vote on March 4:

"Shall the Selectboard instruct the Town Attorney to draft indictments against President Bush and Vice President Cheney for crimes against our Constitution, and publish said indictments for consideration by other authorities and shall it be the law of the Town of Brattleboro that the Brattleboro Police, pursuant to the above-mentioned indictments, arrest and detain George Bush and Richard Cheney in Brattleboro if they are not duly impeached, and prosecute or extradite them to other authorities that may reasonably contend to prosecute them?"

There is no existing legal mechanism for Brattleboro's putting these two war criminals behind bars where they belong. Still, any opponent of the criminal Bush administration can only be cheered by contemplating the vision of these two top gangsters handcuffed by the Brattleboro authorities and a crowd of righteous Vermonters.

Beyond the mood lift to anti-war and other progressive forces that this initiative supplies, there is a deeper lesson. Brattleboro officials complained of

hate calls. Yet one—admittedly unscientific—Internet polling link showed that of 1,836 voters, 60 percent polled said they would vote YES to arrest the two top U.S. executives. This is a popular initiative.

The Bush government lied its way into two criminal wars. It imposed repressive rulings on the entire population, with special police-state actions against Muslims, Middle Eastern and South Asian people, immigrants in general, and people of color of the United States. It imposed a culture of torture on the world. And it presided over a decline in the standard of living of the entire working class at home. Among other things.

Tens of millions voted for the Democratic Party to redress these crimes. But the Democrats have done nothing to take down the Bush regime. They have completely avoided moving to impeach. They have continued to fund the Iraq war. The Democrats have even made a deal on an "stimulus" package for the economic crisis that left out aid for unemployed and very poor people.

The Brattleboro initiative is a sign that many people are fed up with the normal functioning of the capitalist elections and are taking their own steps to get rid of the Bush regime. This is a sign of coming struggle.

For the sake of this struggle, may the Brattleboro proposition win on March 4. □

35 years after Roe V. Wade

Women recount & plan new struggles

A standing-room-only crowd of 75 women and allies turned out for "The Past and Future of the Right to Abortion in New York State," a meeting in honor of the 35th anniversary of the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion. The event was co-sponsored by the Women's Liberation Birth Control Project of Redstockings Allies and Veterans and the Center for Constitutional Rights.

Andrea Costello, a Redstockings activist and CCR staff attorney, opened with an appeal to learn from past battles of the women's liberation movement to preserve and extend reproductive rights today. Nancy Stearns and Rhonda Copelon, former CCR attorneys who litigated major abortion-rights cases in the 1970s,

recounted the key role of activists in the progressive women's movement to put pressure on the courts, and also the strategy pursued by the religious right to undo the gains of that era. Annie Tummino, co-chair of the Women's Liberation Birth Control Project, spoke on the recent women's mobilizations that forced the Food and Drug Administration to make the morning-after pill available over the counter. A lively discussion followed with remarks from young women and feminist veterans, including several original Redstockings activists.

For more info, visit the Redstockings Women's Liberation Archives for Action Web site at www.redstockings.org.

—Greg Butterfield

WW in 1962

Mae Mallory

Continued from page 4

cut-throats of Monroe, N.C.

In New York City, which is Mrs. Mallory's home, she fought militantly for desegregated schools and opposed the welfare authorities when they mistreated relief recipients. She took an active part in the historic U.N. protest demonstration which was organized into a dramatic world-shaking event by Afro-Americans after the brutal murder of Patrice Lumumba.

And even while in jail, Mae Mallory is leading a significant battle against the treatment of herself and her fellow inmates.

Mae still champ

As one of her visitors puts it: "Yes, Mae is still our champion and a bold and militant fighter even while she is catching hell in a dingy jailhouse cell." And hell it is.

For it is significant to point out that at this very moment when hundreds of federal troops have been placed in Mississippi to protect one single Black student (tokenism at its best), this Black mother awaits her fate alone—unprotected by Governor DiSalle, or his boss Jack [Kennedy], or Jack's middle brother Bobby, who could alone give her all the protection she needs. □

Kosovo secession linked to NATO expansion

By Heather Cottin

The U.S. calls it "Operation Status." The United Nations calls it "The Ahtisaari Plan." It is the U.S./NATO "independence" project for Kosovo, which has been a province of Serbia since the 14th century. With NATO's 17,000 troops backing it, Kosovo's government is set to secede on Feb. 6, declaring itself a separate country.

Kosovo's president is Hashim Thaci, who was the leader of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK for its Albanian initials), which U.S. diplomat Robert Gelbard called "terrorist" in 1998, just before the U.S. started funding the UCK to use it against Yugoslavia. Thaci, whose UCK code name was "Snake," and his UCK cronies are well funded by drug running and the European sex trade.

In a series of wars and coercive diplomacy in the 1990s, the U.S. government and the European NATO powers backed the secession of four republics of Yugoslavia, a sovereign socialist state. It took another 78 days of NATO bombing in 1999, aggression that President Bill Clinton described as "humanitarian," and a coup financed by the National Endowment for Democracy and other imperialist agencies in 2000, to install a pro-western regime in Serbia that was open to Western intervention and privatization.

State resources were privatized. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was almost totally dismantled politically and economically.

But the U.S. then moved to break up the rest of Yugoslavia. Through lies and raw military power, the U.S. supported a pro-imperialist group of gangsters—the UCK—in the war against Yugoslavia, and this gang then took over Kosovo.

Then the U.S. supported UCK moves to detach Kosovo, where the U.S. had built the massive military base "Bondsteel." Washington and its NATO allies allowed this criminal element to drive over 200,000 Serbs, Roma people and other minorities out of Kosovo, and terrorize the impoverished Albanian population.

Wealth and poverty in Kosovo

Kosovo is sitting on fifteen billion tons of brown coal. Its mines contain 20 billion tons of lead and zinc and fifteen billion tons of nickel. EU and U.S. corporations are going to buy Kosovo as soon as its status is settled as "independent." (Inter Press Service Italy, Jan. 15)

But in Stari Trg, the most profitable state-owned mine in former Yugoslavia, inactive since 1999, rich with lead, zinc, cadmium, gold and silver, unemployment is above 95 percent. With unemployment high, wages will be low, and profits fabulous.

In Kosovo half of the population doesn't get enough to eat. Unemployment hovers near 60 percent (IHT Jan. 28). Kosovo Albanians in the U.S. or Europe send home 450 million euros in remittances each year, half of Kosovo's entire budget. "I don't know how we would survive without this," said economist Ibrahim Rexhepi. (Deutsche Welle, Jan 27)

An Albanian living in New York told Workers World recently that he knows many families in Kosovo and Albania that have had to sell their daughters to get the remittances from their work in the sex trade. "Unemployment is so high that most people are poor, and many bought into the Ponzi scheme in 1997 that robbed most Albanians at home and in Kosovo of their entire life savings."

The U.N. Charter forbids the forced

breakup of nations, and U.N. Security Council resolution 1244 guarantees the territorial integrity of Serbia. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said that Kosovo independence "is fraught with serious damage for the whole system of international law, negative consequences for the Balkans and the whole world and for the stability in other regions." (Interfax, Jan. 25)

The U.S. and its NATO partners are ignoring legalities. But they have to pay attention to the possibility of Serbia making energy deals with Russia. The two countries agreed to build a large gas storage facility in Serbia, while Russia's state-controlled oil concern Gazprom signed an agreement granting Gazprom control of 51 percent of Serbia's state-owned oil-refining monopoly NIS. The Russians have commenced work on the South Stream gas pipeline through Serbia to supply southern Europe.

The U.S. and the EU have been working feverishly on the rival Nabucco pipeline to cut European dependence on Russian energy (Reuters, Jan 25).

Kosovo and NATO growth

The Kosovo crisis has prompted leading Serbian presidential candidate Tomislav Nikolic, of the Radical Party, to suggest the creation of a Russian military base in his country. (Itar-Tass, Jan. 25).

Why is Kosovo so crucial to NATO expansion?

The creation of Kosovo as an "independent" state would be a precedent for other schemes U.S. imperialism could take advantage of to break away areas of other sovereign nations, including China and Russia, applying the old "divide and conquer" strategy perfected by British imperialism.

The Russian and Chinese governments both have spoken out against the Ahtisaari plan.

Russia's foreign minister Sergy Lavrov said NATO's buildup in Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet republics are "a process of territorial encroachment similar to what Napoleon and Hitler failed to achieve by cruder means." (Voice of Russia, June 28, 2007)

The planned NATO/U.S. plot to make Kosovo independent is a continuation of NATO military expansionism to ensure U.S. economic control in Eastern Europe. NATO is the military arm of international capital on five continents. Popular opposition is rising in Serbia, Russia, Georgia, Armenia, the Czech Republic, Poland, the Ukraine, Afghanistan and Africa.

But anywhere NATO tries to go, resistance grows. The secession of Kosovo may still blowback to haunt the imperialists. □

Boston housing

Continued from page 5

thought better of it, got in his car, and left. When City Life/Vida Urbana organizer Steve Meacham announced that City Councilor Sam Yoon had just negotiated by phone with bank reps to call off the evictions that day, the crowd erupted in cheers and chants of "El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!" ("The people united will never be defeated!")

"They blinked in the face of our action," Lawrence said of the banks. She called on the crowd to stay vigilant and be prepared to come back at a moment's notice. Meacham announced another blockade action on Jan. 28, and vowed that resistance will continue and grow. □

In slap at FARC's peace efforts

U.S. judge sentences Trinidad to 60 years

By Berta Joubert-Ceci
Washington, D.C.

A federal judge here on Jan. 28 sentenced Ricardo Palmera, a peace negotiator for the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces-People's Army (FARC-EP), to 60 years in prison without parole.

This harsh sentence came three years after Palmera, whose nom de guerre is Simón Trinidad, was illegally extradited from his homeland and charged in the U.S. with complicity in the FARC's detention of three U.S. Pentagon contractors whose plane had crashed in the jungle.

Trinidad denied having any role in the detention of the three but proudly defended his role as a peace negotiator for the FARC who had tried to facilitate a prisoner exchange with the Colombian government.

The U.S. had also charged Trinidad with "terrorism" but failed to get a conviction on that charge, despite trying him twice. Nevertheless, Federal U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth, in an obviously political speech, called the detention of the contractors "an act of terrorism" and gave Trinidad the maximum sentence allowed, as requested by the prosecutor, Ken Kohl. During his long speech, Kohl had compared Trinidad to Osama bin Laden.

Bob Tucker, Trinidad's court-appointed lawyer, spoke of his client's negotiating work on behalf of a prisoner exchange, arguing that the U.S. government should allow "negotiations for the release of hostages," which it vehemently refuses to do. Tucker also mentioned a letter Trinidad wrote to FARC Secretariat member Raúl Reyes, asking the guerrilla group to provide "proof of life" of the people it retained for purposes of a humanitarian exchange. Trinidad asked that he not be included in the exchange, hoping that would facilitate the process.

"How many people would do that?" asked Tucker, adding, "It was a complete pleasure to work with him."

The packed courtroom included Colombian Sen. Piedad Córdoba, a key figure in the prisoner exchange. Trinidad spoke in his own behalf with dignity and revolutionary fervor for an hour.

In a strong voice, he started by thanking the court for allowing an earlier meet-

ing with Córdoba and for its help with his medical problems. He also thanked the U.S. Marshals for their respect, and the translators for their work.

He explained the political *raison d'être* of the FARC, its fight on behalf of the most oppressed in Colombia and his reasons for joining the insurgency. He said he was satisfied that his trial had turned into a political trial where the social and economic situation in Colombia was discussed and the political nature of the FARC proven.

Below are excerpts from his speech, translated by Washington-based lawyer Paul Wolf.

"Nelson Mandela, who founded a guerrilla movement in South Africa and later rose to become president of that country, said it is the oppressor who always dictates the terms of the struggle, not the oppressed. In Colombia, the oppressor is the oligarchy and the use of force against the people is what led to the formation of the FARC.

"Latin America is a region of great economic disparity. The FARC supports the

basic human rights that everyone needs to lead a dignified life, including access to nutrition, education, potable water, electricity, dignified living conditions, recreation and rest. Some 54 percent of Colombians, or 24 million people, live below the poverty line on just one to two dollars a day.

"A variety of fertile lands and climates would permit the harvesting of crops in Colombia 12 months of the year, providing enough for all Colombians as well as a surplus for export. Colombia is also rich in mineral resources, including gold, nickel, coal, salt and oil. Colombia's biodiversity, in flora and fauna, the fish in its rivers, and a wealth in human resources make Colombia a very rich country able to provide for all of its inhabitants.

"Nevertheless, a small group of people, the petty governing class, has monopolized these resources, taken the best lands, controlled the economy, and kept the rest of Colombia in poverty. Leaders of both Liberal and Conservative parties have legalized these monopolies for the benefit of the rich, and by the same token, handed

over Colombia's resources to foreign capitalists for their own enrichment.

"The oligarchy's policy of violence utilizes murder, torture and disappearances as tools against their opponents to keep themselves in power. Examples range from the genocide of the Gaitanista movement in the 1940s to the extermination of the Union Patriótica in the late 1980s. The three branches of power in the government have granted themselves impunity for all of their crimes, as well as those of the military and paramilitaries."

At the end, he thanked international solidarity and the Committee to Free Ricardo Palmera in the U.S. He finished by shouting:

"Long live Manuel Marulanda! Long live the FARC! Long live Simón Bolívar, whose sword of freedom continues to advance throughout America!"

Note: The International Action Center read a statement of support during a press conference before the hearing. This message and more excerpts from Simón Trinidad's speech will be available online at www.workers.org.

Misery & hunger growing in Haiti—along with signs of resistance

By G. Dunkel

Life in Haiti is growing worse—rapidly. According to online Haitian news service AlterPress (www.alterpresse.org), the prices of basic food items like oil, rice, cornmeal and beans in Port-au-Prince have gone up by 20 to 50 percent since the start of this year. In Jean-Rabel in northwest Haiti, the poorest region of the country, prices have gone up by 70 percent. While food is most affected, prices of shoes, clothes and household items like soap are also rising.

Christmas sales were dismal. Some shopkeepers reported that their sales were only 5 percent of last year's. Normally filled open-air markets, where a lot of Haitians shop for holiday cheer and presents, were deserted. Haiti's economy is so weak that worldwide inflation—which has caused mild discomfort with higher prices for fuel and food in the developed economies of North America and Europe—is devastating it.

When the legal minimum wage for a day's work is \$2.02—down from \$3.00 in 1970—workers have no savings, no reserves to carry themselves through tough times. The only country in the world with a lower minimum wage is Bangladesh. And this wage only applies to Haitians with a steady job, not to day laborers, farmhands, or street merchants selling charcoal by the handful or other small, necessary items.

Haitians struggle in Dominican Republic

One of the major supports of the Haitian economy is remittances from abroad—not only from the United States and Canada, with their significant Haitian communities, but especially from the Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti.

More than a million Haitians, many of them undocumented immigrants, live in the Dominican Republic. Haitians have worked in the Dominican sugar industry, which used to be state-owned but now has been privatized, for more than a cen-

tury. Wages there are five times higher—the per capita income in Haiti is \$485 a year, while in the Dominican Republic it is \$2,800.

Their treatment in the Dominican Republic is sometimes harsh. Between 15,000, according to official Dominican sources, and 20,000, according to the Support Group of Refugees and Repatriates (GARR), were expelled from the Dominican Republic last year.

AlterPress carried a story in October 2007 of Dominicans protesting the actions of Cuerpo Especializado de Seguridad Fronteriza (Cesfront), the newly created border guard. Cesfront went into a construction site in Dajabón, across the border from the Haitian city of Ouanaminthe, and brutalized Haitians working there. They also prevented Haitian domestic workers and agricultural workers, who used to cross the border daily, from going to work.

Just outside of Ouanaminthe is a Free Trade Zone (FTZ), where CODEVI (Industrial Development Company) owned by the large Dominican company Grupo M produces jeans for Levi's with Haitian labor. This FTZ has a long history of labor strife, with the most recent struggles taking place this past summer when Grupo M laid off one third of the 800 workers it had hired. SOKOWA (Union of CODEVI Ouanaminthe Workers) said its members and other workers were fired because of their organizing efforts. This massive layoff came after a one-day strike that was almost universally respected by workers. (Inter Press Service, July 27, 2007)

According to Haïti-Progrès (Jan. 23-29), the Dominican authorities have decided to round up and expel undocumented Haitian immigrants. One truck carrying them capsized, killing one passenger and injuring a number of others. GARR charges that the army is detaining documented immigrants and dark-skinned Dominicans as well, and that they are not allowed to take their property. Certainly they will lose whatever wages they are due.

Protests against U.S. price increases

The U.N. occupation force feels that they have disrupted the armed groups in Cité Soleil, who oppose their rule and support Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the U.S.-deposed president of Haiti. They have finally managed to set up checkpoints and patrol stations throughout the area, though all resistance hasn't ended. On Jan. 11, protesters in Haiti burned tires in front of Cité Soleil's mayor's office to denounce a U.S.-funded \$20-million program called a "stabilization initiative."

The U.N. recently announced that it intends to move a significant force to control the border and cooperate with Cesfront.

Between Christmas and New Year's Day, Fanmi Lavalas—Aristide's party—organized a major march to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, calling on the minister to impose price controls and set up programs to combat hunger. In Cité Soleil and Belair, two major centers of Fanmi Lavalas support, the government distributed free food in an attempt to undercut the march, which still took place according to Haiti Liberté. (Jan. 9-15)

The government of President René Préval and Prime Minister Jacques-Édouard Alexis would have to go against the free-market dictates of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to impose price controls, which is highly unlikely.

On Jan 16, agricultural students took to the streets to demand a future for themselves and their country. They pointed out that Haiti can't develop its "national productivity"—something that Préval and Alexis have claimed they want—when it relies on the Dominican Republic for almost all the plantains, eggs and chickens sold in Port-au-Prince.

Several women's groups have also criticized the government for the increase in prices and hunger.

If something doesn't happen, these protests show signs of growing. □

'End Gaza siege'

Continued from page 9

In Brussels, Belgium, there were several demonstrations starting Jan. 23 when more than 100 people called out by International Action for Liberation gathered in front of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, chanting "In Gaza, whosoever sows misery will reap fury" and "Boycott Israel." On Jan. 25, some 300 people gathered in front of the stock market building in the center of Brussels, where they reinforced the weekly demonstration in solidarity with the Palestinian people. There was also a protest action at the international day of action of the World Social Forum in Brussels on Jan. 26.

In Vienna, Austria, some 700 people demonstrated on Jan. 26 against the siege and embargo of Gaza, but also against the recent anti-Muslim agitation from the rightist Austrian Freedom Party.

Includes reports from Ellie Dorritie, Bob McCubbin, Betsey Piette, Bert de Belder and the Anti-Imperialist Coordination of Vienna.

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Caos en las Bolsas de Valores

Wall Street y los bancos buscan regalos del gobierno

Por Deirdre Griswold

Como dice la vieja rima inglesa infantil, ¿podrán los caballos y los hombres del rey rearmar a Humpty-Dumpty?

Wall Street está buscando la ayuda de Washington para que le rescate del desastre. Pero todo lo que el gobierno ha hecho hasta ahora ha fracasado en revertir la suerte del capitalismo estadounidense.

Y ahora, el declive del mercado a escala global ha comenzado.

Todo comenzó en Wall Street el 18 de enero. El valor de las acciones cayó un 3%, aunque el presidente de la Reserva Federal Ben Bernanke, acababa de decir en una audiencia congressional que él apoyaba la idea de un "paquete estimulante" por parte del gobierno después de que unas miserables ganancias fueran reportadas por los grandes bancos y corporaciones.

Para el lunes 21 de enero, mientras los mercados estadounidenses estaban cerrados por el Día de Martin Luther King Jr., los mercados de acciones en Asia y Europa comenzaron a caer, algunos decayendo hasta un 10% en un solo día. Las bajas siguen aún mientras se escribe este artículo. Todavía no hay un recuento, pero sí es cierto que el valor de trillones de dólares, en papel o electrónicamente, han "desaparecido".

Según todos los reportes, el pánico en el exterior fue causado por el reconocimiento de que Estados Unidos está en una recesión que recortaría grandemente sus importaciones conforme al declive de su poder adquisitivo. El mercado de consumo estadounidense, el cual ha absorbido una gran porción de la manufactura mundial, ha sido crucial para la industria y el desarrollo financiero asiático. De hecho, la reestructuración global de la manufactura estadounidense, en la cual muchas corporaciones han movido sus operaciones al exterior en busca de mano de obra barata y ganancias más elevadas, ha sido esencial para este desarrollo.

Temprano en la mañana del 22 de enero, antes de que el mercado estadounidense abriera, la Junta de la Reserva Federal anunció que había tenido una reunión de emergencia y planeaba bajar las tasas de interés a un porcentaje sin precedente de tres cuartos de porcentaje, a 3,5%. Esto permite que el gobierno federal inyecte más dinero a las arcas de los grandes bancos. El consecuente "crédito fácil" está supuesto a estimular la producción y res-

taurar la "confianza" del inversionista en la economía.

Tal dramática movida por los federales ordinariamente impulsaría al mercado estadounidense de la marca roja hacia la negra. Pero no fue así. Solo dilató por un momento lo que ha estado ocurriendo en otras partes. Los índices estadounidenses continúan cayendo, pero aún así, para el 23 de enero todavía no habían incitado el "pánico" del tipo de 1929—aunque esa odiosa palabra está apareciendo más y más frecuente en la prensa capitalista.

El gran capital quiere comida gratis

Por mucho tiempo, la clase dominante de Estados Unidos ha impuesto su opinión de que los mercados resolverán todos los problemas que enfrenta el gobierno capitalista y las masas: la pobreza arraigada, el desempleo, el aumento de la deuda y otras. Que se corte la "red de seguridad" social de los programas contra la pobreza; ¡el mercado lo resolverá todo!

Ahora estos quieren que el gobierno resuelva los problemas del mercado.

Supuestamente, bajando las tasas de interés debería ayudar. Pero los economistas del gobierno están preocupados porque bajando esas tasas mucho más podría producir otras consecuencias, como la inflación. Están entre la espada y la pared. Sin embargo temen no hacerlo. En Europa, después de que el banco central para la Unión Europea dijera que no iba a bajar la tasa de interés, las acciones cayeron precipitadamente otra vez el 23 de enero.

Por primera vez, hasta el presidente George W. Bush está ahora trabajando con los congresistas demócratas y republicanos en lo que supuestamente son unas propuestas de ley de emergencia conteniendo "paquetes de incentivos económicos". El reverso en la posición de Bush es una señal clara de que los súper ricos quieren que el gobierno rescate a su sistema.

Ellos estarán buscando un lenguaje populista para vender lo que será en esencia, más regalos para su clase social disfrazados de algunas pequeñas concesiones para l@s trabajadores como una extensión del seguro por desempleo. Esta extensión debía haber ocurrido hace mucho tiempo, pero no fue considerada necesaria por la clase dominante

mientras sus ganancias se mantenían altas, no importara el nivel de sufrimiento infligido en l@s trabajadores.

Bancos también en crisis

Una característica importante de la crisis actual, que indica que es grave y que va a durar por mucho tiempo, es la delicada condición de los grandes bancos.

La caída en los mercados globales estuvo acompañada por los reportes de bancos y corporaciones importantes en los EEUU sobre sus ingresos en el último trimestre del 2007. Muchos fueron desastrosos. Tres bancos gigantes reportaron pérdidas o virtualmente ningún ingreso.

El reporte de los "ingresos" de Citigroup fue una pérdida de 10 mil millones en el cuatrimestre final —el mayor declive en los 196 años de su existencia. El banco culpó a la crisis hipotecaria por la pérdida dado que el banco poseía muchos de los instrumentos financieros creados para especular con la vasta deuda de l@s propietarios@s de viviendas.

Cuando comenzó la crisis hipotecaria el año pasado, se vio muy claro que millones de personas no podrían pagar las tasas de interés más altas que habían comenzado a tomar efecto. Esto resultó en cifras sin precedente de ejecuciones hipotecarias, y los bancos y compañías de hipotecas descubrieron que sus huevos de oro se habían convertido en papeles sin valor.

Inmediatamente luego de reportar sus pérdidas, Citigroup obligó a varios bancos en el exterior, mayormente en Asia, a que proporcionaran dinero para cubrir el déficit.

Después, Bank of America reportó que sus ganancias durante el último cuatrimestre habían bajado un 95 por ciento, a \$268 millones, en comparación con los \$5,26 miles de millones el año pasado. Las ganancias para todo el 2007 disminuyeron un 29 por ciento, a \$14,98 miles de millones.

El ingreso neto del banco Wachovia en el último cuatrimestre cayó aproximadamente un 98 por ciento, a \$51 millones en comparación con los \$2,3 mil millones en el mismo período el año pasado. Durante el año, las ganancias del banco habían bajado un 19 por ciento.

Lo que los hizo vulnerables

El declive en el mercado de acciones ha exacerbado aún más esta crisis para los bancos.

Si usted entra en cualquier sucursal de un banco hoy, va a ver a un "asesor financiero" exhortando a l@s clientes a que depositen sus ahorros en fondos mutualistas u otros instrumentos relacionados con el mercado de acciones. Por supuesto, el banco recibe una gran comisión por cada transacción.

Antes del año 1999 eso era ilegal. Los bancos comerciales estaban prohibidos por ley de involucrarse con la Bolsa. La ley era el Acta Glass-Steagall, la cual fue pasada en 1933 después de que el colapso desastroso de la Bolsa iniciara el colapso del sistema bancario. El gobierno de hecho, había suspendido las operaciones

de los bancos por una temporada, cuando tantos retiros debidos al pánico habían vaciado sus bóvedas y les llevaron a cerrar sus puertas con barricadas.

Por más de 60 años el acta Glass-Steagall protegió a los bancos comerciales de un colapso de la Bolsa. Pero en 1999, bajo la presión para la desregulación de los grandes banqueros que creían que esta ley les impedía enriquecerse en Wall Street, Bill Clinton firmó como ley el Acta Gramm-Leach-Bliley. Esta ley anuló los elementos del acta Glass-Steagall que separaban los bancos comerciales de los bancos de inversión. Ahora están de nuevo vulnerables a los severos choques de la Bolsa.

Los bancos también están en posesión de miles de millones de dólares de deuda en tarjetas de crédito. Ya sea usted jubilad@, estudiante, desemplead@ o que tiene un trabajo de poca paga, ¿cuántas veces en el pasado año ha recibido cartas de bancos que le ofrecen una tarjeta nueva de crédito? Las cuotas de interés son enormes y eso ha mantenido las ganancias de los bancos.

Pero con un descenso en la economía, millones de personas no podrán pagar sus cuentas y a la vez comprar comida, pagar la luz y las otras necesidades — y mucho menos pagar por el cuidado de salud o la educación. Aún si trabajan, mucho de sus ingresos estará destinado a pagar una forma u otra de interés — ya sea de préstamos estudiantiles, de hipotecas o de tarjetas de crédito. Todo conlleva a una profundización de la pobreza y de la crisis.

L@s trabajador@s no pueden aceptar el guión de los patrones

Este es el escenario desastroso que ha sido arreglado por los súper-ricos para la clase trabajadora en este país. Es uno que ya ha sido realizado en muchos países oprimidos que han vivido debajo el talón de las corporaciones y de los bancos imperialistas por más de un siglo.

Pero puede haber otro escenario. La clase trabajadora no es indefensa — y más allá, está lejos de esa condición. De hecho, puede decidir si andan los autobuses y camionetas, si se cosechan los productos agrícolas, si se efectúa el proceso de datos, si los cargamentos son llevados, y si el agua y la electricidad funcionan en la Bolsa de Valores. El poder potencial de la clase trabajadora es enorme.

Hay más de 140 millones de trabajador@s y sus familias. Muchos ya están viviendo en condiciones precarias o han caído en el abismo del desempleo, de la falta de vivienda. Millones son miembr@s de sindicatos, pero siete veces ese número no pertenece a ningún sindicato.

Como en la crisis de los años 30, esta puede ser la catalizadora para organizar a más personas — una crisis en la cual l@s militantes entrenad@s en las luchas contra el racismo, sexismo, homofobia y agresión contra l@s inmigrantes, puedan proveer el marco para la verdadera solidaridad de toda la clase trabajadora. □

