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Refuting U.S. lies Cuban election shows workers' democracy

Women 43 percent of new legislature

By Teresa Gutierrez

On Feb. 24, Raúl Castro Ruz was elected president of Cuba's State Council and Council of Ministers. Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada was re-elected president of the National Assembly and José Ramón Machado Ventura was elected first vice president of the Councils of State and Ministers.

The elections came on the heels of a Feb. 18 announcement by Comrade Fidel Castro that he would not accept the nomination for president.

Fidel's announcement created quite a stir in the U.S. Once again the mainstream media and government officials distorted the news and even outright lied about Cuban reality.

U.S. President George W. Bush said that he stood ready to help Cubans realize the "blessings of liberty. Eventually this transition ought to lead to free and fair elections, and I mean free and I mean fair, not those ... staged elections that the Castro brothers try to foist off as being true democracy."

The candidates for U.S. president also weighed in. In fact, Fidel's announcement was the very first question asked by Univision's Jorge Ramos at the Democratic candidates' debates in Austin, Texas, on Feb. 21.

Although there were shades of difference in the comments made by Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton, and elsewhere by Republican John McCain, all were united in portraying Cuba as a society run by dictators where the people had no freedom to voice their opinions. They sounded just like Bush.

All of them called for Cuba to change its course and open up its society. No one was for lifting the cruel, illegal blockade of Cuba the U.S. has imposed for almost 50 years.

Their comments speak volumes about what side of the class divide they stand on. Does one stand with the Cuban people who have won their independence and dignity from U.S. imperialism and are building a society where free healthcare and education are guaranteed? Or does one stand with imperialism and simply apologize and seek band-aids for the many ills brought on by this profit-hungry, war-driven, racist system?

Even if one does not believe in socialism, the Cuban people have the right to determine their own course free of blockades and terrorist attacks from the U.S.

Presidential blah-blahs

On Fidel's announcement, John McCain said: "Fidel Castro

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Justice for Sean Bell!



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New York City protest on Feb. 25 at opening trial of police in killing of Sean Bell. See page 4.

WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD

The economy: scams of the rich and famous

This week ...



By Deirdre Griswold

As with a rotten onion when it is peeled away, new layers of the capitalist economic crisis are being revealed in all their slime and stink.

In recent weeks, government statistics have been issued showing higher unemployment, declining house values and fewer construction of new homes, lower retail sales (people can't afford to buy stuff) and a slump in the service sector—the part of the economy whose growth was supposed to have cushioned U.S. workers from the shock caused when bosses seeking cheaper labor dismantled and offshored so much manufacturing.

Big banks have started to reveal precipitous drops in their profits for the last quarter of 2007. Much of this was attributed to their involvement in the mortgage loan business—which earlier had delivered hundreds of billions to Wall Street in easy earnings but has been in crisis since last spring.

Big business always whines that “big government” is interfering in the economy with its environmental regulations, rules about the purity of food and medicines, and safety and health laws for workers—laws that are minimal in the United States and are constantly broken at little cost to the corporations.

This doesn't stop the corporate bosses from being first in line for government handouts, however. In fact, they don't even have to stand in line—it's all worked out behind the scenes.

Banks borrow cheap, lend dear—thanks to the Fed

One way the capitalist government has been flooding Wall Street with “liquidity”—easy cash—has been to lower the interest rate the Federal Reserve Bank charges to the big commercial banks. In January, the Fed lowered this rate by 1.25 points—the biggest drop since 1982.

The banks can now borrow money from the Fed at 3 percent interest, but they are charging homeowners more than 6 percent interest for mortgages—which can balloon to twice that rate later on if the mortgages are adjustable rate, the kind that “reset” at a much higher cost.

This is why so many homeowners now face foreclosure—they just can't meet the increased mortgage payments, especially in a time of rising unemployment and higher prices for everything.

The latest government data show that homeowner mortgage debt in the United States now amounts to \$11 TRILLION, and one third of that is in shaky adjustable-rate mortgages.

In February the average interest charged for a 30-year mortgage rose from 5.48 percent to more than 6 percent. This will cost the borrower an extra \$38,000 over the life of a typical loan—and is rung up by the bank as an extra \$38,000 anticipated profit. (Bloomberg Online, Feb. 26)

Why they're not cheering

You'd think the banks would be sitting pretty, making all that money. But what goes around comes around. Money capital is like blood—is has to constantly circulate or it will clot and cause big trouble for the organism. And what cuts off circulation better than a tourniquet is a market that is glutted with many more products than can be sold and too much capital—not just money capital but also the huge, high-tech, global productive apparatus

that can now produce so many more goods while paying wages to fewer and fewer workers.

The result is collapsing “bubbles” in the market, like the housing bubble, a contagion that then spreads to the many convoluted mechanisms that boosted credit and the financial markets even when there was little real—that is, little increase in real goods and services—to pump them up.

So even as the banks try to squeeze more out of homeowners, they find themselves in big trouble. And it's not just a U.S. phenomenon.

Northern Rock: nationalization for the rich

In Britain, where the repossession of houses by banks is at a 12-year high, the government stepped in on Feb. 21 and nationalized Northern Rock, the fifth-largest mortgage lender in the country. This nationalization was motivated entirely by the fear of British capitalists that they could go the way of the U.S. and have near-panic in their financial markets.

It required a special act of Parliament—the Banking (Special Provisions) Act—for the nationalization to go through. The government will take over all shares of the bank and an “independent” auditor will determine how much compensation should be paid to the bank's shareholders.

This comes hard on the heels of a move last September by the government to “rescue” the same bank with an infusion of 25 billion pounds (almost \$50 billion U.S.). The government also stepped in to guarantee all deposits. All that wasn't enough to stave off the threat of bankruptcy. However, it did deprive the working people of Britain of \$50 billion that is sure to come out of their social services, one way or another.

There are different kinds of nationalizations. On occasion, a country that has been oppressed and robbed by imperialism gets the strength to kick out the foreign exploiters and nationalize a vital resource that the outsiders had controlled—like Mexico's nationalization of its oil in 1938, or Iran's oil nationalization in 1953, after which the CIA conspired with Britain to overthrow the Iranian government and install the puppet shah.

In these cases, whatever “compensation” was made to the imperialists, they were furious because it was much less than what they had expected to make in super-profits. But often an oppressed country that does pay “compensation” for taking back its own resources calculates the amount based on what the imperialist corporations have assessed the property at—and it's always very low to avoid taxes. So they get caught at their own game.

Britain, soon after World War II, nationalized its railroads, coal and steel industry. Since the nationalization was accomplished under a Labour Party government, many equated it with socialism. But it was not. It left the capitalist class and the capitalist system intact—in fact, it strengthened British capitalism, which had been weakened by the war. None of the wealthy wanted to commit their capital to rebuilding these essential parts of the economy. They didn't know how long it would take for them to turn a profit—and profits are what capitalism is all about.

Today's nationalization of Northern Rock definitely falls into this category. Despite its name, the Labour Party government of Prime Minister Gordon Brown, just

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Memoirs of an abortion doctor

By Kris Hamel

"This Common Secret: My Journey as an Abortion Doctor," by Susan Wicklund with Alan Kesselheim. PublicAffairs Books, 2007.

Dr. Susan Wicklund is a rare breed of U.S. physician—she performs abortions. Her memoir is at once warm and poignant, terrifying and cold. It is an intensely personal and political chronicle of a career spanning two decades, set against the backdrop of anti-choice protests and violence that impacted Wicklund's job and life on a daily basis. The title "This Common Secret" refers to the fact that 40 percent of women in the U.S. have had abortions.

Wicklund decided to dedicate herself to providing reproductive health services, including abortions, after she had an abortion in 1976 that left her scared and humiliated. A single mother, she overcame many obstacles to complete college and medical school, yet her resolve to help women in a compassionate, caring manner never wavered. Although learning to perform abortions was excluded from the medical school curricula, she sought out the necessary training.

In the 1980s Wicklund began her medical career, working 100-hour weeks and traveling thousands of miles by car and plane to provide services to women in North Dakota, Wisconsin and Minnesota. She bought a clinic in Bozeman, Mont., where she spent five years providing reproductive care and abortions.

Dr. Wicklund's belief in listening

to women, hearing their stories and treating them with dignity and compassion before, during and after their abortions, runs throughout her book: "Each patient is unique. Each has her own set of fears, her own hopes and dreams and emotions. Every woman has personal reasons behind her choice that are hers alone. Nothing is routine about any of this for them. ... I couldn't describe the common reasons for abortions, couldn't sketch the typical patient."

Some of Dr. Wicklund's patients faced an unwanted pregnancy caused by rape or incest. Some were victims of domestic violence. Some were young women in high school or college. Many were rural and poor and had gone to great lengths, involving cost and travel, to obtain an abortion. Wicklund always considered the financial and other hardships of her patients, and believed the inability to pay was not a reason to deny women her services.

In her book she describes having to comply with laws such as the 24-hour waiting period between counseling and performing an abortion, parental consent and notification laws, and having to read a non-medically based script to her patients as mandated by state laws.

Dr. Wicklund's compassionate stories of caring for her patients, however, are matched in full by other stories taking place simultaneously—stories of anti-choice protests, physician murders and everyday violence against clinics and abortion providers.

Because of constant threats by

hordes of anti-choice protesters, Wicklund's job required her to travel in disguises, take convoluted routes, wear a bulletproof vest and even carry a gun. Protesters followed her everywhere and set siege to her home, placing concrete-filled barrels in her driveway to try to prevent her from going to work. They followed her daughter to school and placed "wanted" posters around town.

Wicklund was verbally and physically assaulted by anti-choice protesters and stalked, threatened and harassed on a daily basis. But they never succeeded in stopping her work. Alan Kesselheim, the book's co-author, provided her safe haven for a year at his family's home in Montana.

Wicklund describes the barriers to choice that are increasing all the time. She reminds us that 87 percent of U.S. counties have no abortion provider and that access is more restricted with each passing year: "Between 1982 and 2000, the number of abortion providers in the United States declined from 2,900 to 1,819, a drop of 37 percent, and the trend has continued since. In 2004, almost 60 percent of abortion providers were more than fifty years old."

Dr. Wicklund's memoir puts a woman's face on the reality and difficulty of providing abortions in the U.S. And she advocates throughout for full reproductive justice for women. She emerges as a pro-choice activist and outspoken advocate for reproductive rights.

Hamel is a founding member of DANFORR—the Detroit Action Network For Reproductive Rights. And yes, she has had an abortion.



By Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

On Frederick Douglass: The freedom of some, or the freedom of all?

As the presidential campaign of Senators Hillary Rodham-Clinton (D-N.Y.) and Barack Obama (D-Ill.) continue in their breakneck race to acquire the most delegates (and thus the nomination), various segments of the population have endeavored to pose the question of whether gender should trump race in this rare historical moment.

Some have suggested that Sen. Clinton, as a woman, deserves the nomination given the nation's delay in granting women's suffrage until 1920 while Black men could vote since the ratification of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, in 1870.

Of course, this is a cribbed reading of American history, for passage of a constitutional amendment was one thing, the actual implementation of such a right would be almost a century later for half the country.

It took long and tortuous struggle for the alleged constitutional right to vote to be made real. For, if the constitution were sufficient, why would a Voting Rights Act (passed in 1965) have been necessary?

One great Black leader, Frederick Douglass, was an outspoken defender of women's rights, and never stopped being so during his long public career, both before and after the Civil War.

Indeed, the love of freedom being so close to his heart, when he escaped to England to raise the money to legally purchase his freedom, he used his time there to criticize the conditions of white, poor working classes in England, Scotland and Ireland. He would write in *The Liberator*: "Though I am more closely connected and identified with one class of outraged, oppressed and enslaved people, I cannot allow myself to be insensible to the wrongs and suffering of any part of the great family of man. I am not only an American slave, but a man, and as such, am bound to use my powers for the welfare of the whole human brotherhood. ... I believe that the sooner the wrongs of the whole human family are made known, the sooner those wrongs will be reached."

When the princely sum of \$750 was raised by British friends and supporters, Douglass bought his own freedom, and indeed, had the bill of sale to his own self, placed in his hands.

When he returned to the U.S., he wrote in his own paper, *The North Star*, and announced from public women's conventions, that "Right is of no sex."

When women's rights activist Elizabeth Cady Stanton introduced the resolution for women's suffrage in 1848, Douglass was the only man, Black or white, to step forward and support her motion, and argued that political equality was necessary for the complete liberation of women.

In *The North Star* of a week after the convention, Douglass reiterated his support, writing: "Standing as we do upon the watch tower of human freedom, we can not be deterred from an expression of our approbation of any movement, however humble to improve and elevate the character of any members of the human family. ... We are free to say that in respect to political rights, we hold woman to be justly entitled to all we claim for man. ... Our doctrine is that 'right is of no sex!' We therefore bid the women engaged in this movement our humble Godspeed."

There are few Black leaders, whether they call themselves radicals, liberals or even conservatives, who do not turn for inspiration to the words and wisdom of Frederick Douglass.

As an activist, as an agitator, as a premier journalist, as a powerful spokesman, he had few true peers.

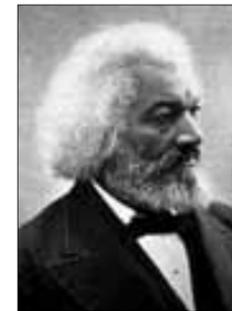
Without a doubt, he was a leader, and not a follower.

That he informs our steps now, over a century after his passing, is a testament to the clarity of his vision, and the power of his spirit.

He didn't serve the interests of power, he critiqued it, he assailed it, he used his gifts to push it closer, ever closer, to a more human expression.

We all live in a world that still bears his imprint.

[Source: Douglass, Frederick, *On Slavery and the Civil War: Selections From His Writings*. (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publ., 2003), pp. 5-6, 13.]



Filipino women call for militant struggle on IWD

Following are excerpts from a statement by GABRIELA Philippines, a national alliance of more than 200 women's organizations. Visit workers.org to read the full statement.

On March 8, 2008, Filipino women once again call for a militant commemoration of the International Women's Day to honor working women. The women's militancy to demand change and fight for their rights roots from the historical condition of oppression and inequality of women. For working-class women, this meant inhuman and slave-like conditions in the form of feudal and capitalist exploitation.

One hundred years ago, on 8 March 1908, 15,000 women marched through New York City to demand shorter work hours, just pay and the right to vote. In Europe women also set up strikes, protested against welfare cuts and campaigned for equal pay and unionization.

In the Philippines, women's participation has always been significant in the people's historical struggle for sovereignty and against oppression and exploitation. Today, Filipino working women carry on the struggle at a time of worsening economic and political crises under the seven-year Macapagal-Arroyo regime—a regime most subservient to U.S. imperialist dictates, most corrupt and tyrannical, and almost equaling the Marcos dictatorship in its fascism.

The Arroyo regime boasts of a growing Philippine economy, citing the increase in the country's Gross National Product and the strengthening of the peso against the U.S. dollar. The regime further claims that a diminishing hunger incidence as shown in the last quarter of 2007 survey was due to her good governance and the success of the hunger mitigation program that she started in 2005.

The concrete experiences of the majority of the Filipino people, especially women who bear the brunt of hunger and poverty, prove the Arroyo regime's declaration of progress a lie. For the Filipino people, there has been no meaningful development amidst the economy's continuing deterioration.

The Arroyo government's ever-ready compliance to policies of imperialist globalization leads to the bankruptcy of the country's industry and agriculture, which in turn, causes the widespread dislocation of workers and farmers. Even owners of small businesses bemoan the weight of the crisis and its adverse effects on their businesses and investments.

Reality also runs counter to the Arroyo political clique's propaganda of good governance. Arroyo and her political clique are being hounded by unending scandals of corruption and abuse of authority. Yet in all these corruption scandals and anomalies, not one of those involved was ever tried, much less punished.

Worsening the modern day slavery of women

The worsening economic crisis leads to further deterioration of Filipino women's social status. Household work remains the woman's individual responsibility while the crisis further compels women to seek livelihood to augment the family's income. And yet feudal patriarchal relations between men and women remain and society, in general, continues to view women as inferior and second-class citizens. The number of women victims of sexual abuse both in the country and abroad continues to rise.

The majority of poor women work as farmer tenants, seasonal plantation workers or contract workers in the manufacturing industry and are burdened by low wages, absence of benefits and job insecurity. As primary homemakers, women resort to ingenious ways to earn extra income (providing laundry services, vending food in the streets, etc.) or seek work overseas. In fact, a majority of present-day overseas Filipino workers are women, who are in jobs most vulnerable to abuse, such as domestic workers and entertainers.

The Arroyo regime's much-touted low hunger incidence in the country in a survey conducted during the last quarter of 2007 at 16.2 percent remains high. This can only be appreciated as lower relative to a 21.5 percent

Continued on page 6

Campaign demands

Justice for Larry Hales!

Following is a statement demanding justice for Workers World Contributing Editor Larry Hales. Visit troopsoutnow.org to sign the petition and get involved or call 212-633-6646.

On Nov. 30, African-American anti-police brutality and anti-war activist Larry Hales was arrested after 10 cops illegally busted into his home without a warrant and without permission, physically attacked him and handcuffed his partner to a chair. He is facing frame-up charges of "interfering with the police" and faces extended jail time for being the victim of a police attack.

Hales has been a primary organizer of a number of anti-imperialist and anti-racist events in Denver. He is a leader of the youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; a founder of Colorado United Communities Against Police Brutality; and an organizer with the International Action Center and the Troops Out Now Coalition.

Hales is also a principal organizer in the Recreate 68 Committee, which is planning protests to counter the Democratic National Convention to be held in Denver in August.

At the time of the police attack, Hales and his partner Melissa Kleinman were housing a survivor of police brutality who was on parole. The man had been shot in the back by police and had filed a civil case against the Aurora police department. Hales had previously agreed to house visits by the man's parole officer, but only when the man was home.

However, when Hales told the police officers at his door on Nov. 30 that the parolee wasn't home and asked to see their business cards that because of a city ordinance Denver police must carry and surrender upon request, he had badges stuck in his face and was told that they didn't have to give him their cards. Hales told them that they didn't have permission to come in, that the parolee was not home, and that he wanted their cards. One



WW PHOTO: JOHN PARKER

Shareef Aleem, Larry Hales, Melissa Kleinman at Dec. 3 news conference.

of them scoffed and pushed the door open and pushed him out of the way.

The cops charged into his apartment and ransacked his house. When Hales expressed concern that his cats would escape, he was shoved. When he asserted his rights, the police told him to shut up and violently attacked him, twisting his arm, grabbing him by the back of the neck, ripping out several of his dreadlocks, throwing him against the wall, and tearing off his shirt. He was pushed down the stairs of his apartment building, against the wall and railings and out into the cold night with a half-ripped shirt, in socks and thin sweat pants. One officer squeezed his cuffs and the two had an exchange, where the officer asserted that more could be done and that Hales could end up face down on the ground, and then he was hit in the stomach and thrown into the car.

The officers rolled the front windows down, left Hales in the car, told him he looked like he might hurt himself, and that he would be booked as a "John Doe" and have to spend 72 hours in jail before anyone could find him. He spent the night in a freezing jail cell.

Police brutality is rampant in Denver, and this attack is part of the ongoing attacks nationally on Black youth, from the Jena 6 to Sean Bell and countless cases of police brutality and repression throughout the country.

In addition, the police violence against such a well-known activist can only be seen as part of a continuing attempt to stifle political dissent. At a press conference following the attack, Denver police brutality activist and survivor Shareef Aleem noted that police were attempting to neutralize activists related to the DNC protests. He stated, "In the last couple of years many of us involved in police accountability work have been attacked by the police, and we know that when it happens we all have to stand up."

Hales now faces a pretrial hearing on Feb. 29 and trial on March 12 on police "interference" charges. During the arraignment, the state's attorney suggested that more charges from the incident may be pending. For the city attorney to continue to prosecute these charges would constitute a serious miscarriage of justice and state harassment, standing justice on its head by blaming the victim of police misconduct and brutality. It could be seen as an illegal, politically motivated abuse of process to chill political protest both against police brutality and at the upcoming DNC.

We demand that ALL charges against Larry Hales be dropped immediately, and that there be an immediate investigation into the police misconduct and violation of Larry Hales' and Melissa Kleinman's rights. □



PHTO: HOUSTON INDYMEDIA.ORG

Happy Birthday to Albert Woodfox!

FREE THE ANGOLA 3!

By Gloria Rubac

Houston activists celebrated the Feb. 19 birthday of political prisoner Albert Woodfox at a forum featuring Parnell Herbert, political activist and Woodfox's childhood friend from New Orleans.

Herbert spoke at length about who the Angola 3 are and how, because of their political activism, the Louisiana prison system targeted them and falsely accused them of murdering a guard. Herbert also spoke of the political strength that has allowed them to survive in solitary confinement for more than 30 years at Angola, one of the most oppressive prisons in the country.

One story exemplified the political understanding that Woodfox developed in his early years at Angola. Woodfox and Herman Wallace, who later became two of the Angola 3, had built a chapter of the Black Panther Party in the prison. When the New Orleans 12—Black Panthers involved in a shootout with police at the Desire housing project—wound up at Angola, the guards tried to sow division between the two groups, telling each group lies about the other.

When Woodfox was allowed to walk past the cellblock housing the New Orleans 12, a fight was expected to break out. But when he met them, he gave them a Black Power salute and a big hug.

The talk was followed by much discussion on Woodfox and the Angola 3. "I learned so much about the injustices suf-

fered by Angola 3 that I want to inform others about their plight," said Sharon Johnson, an activist with the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement.

Johnson has since contacted King Wilkerson, the one member of the Angola 3 who has gotten out of prison and is steadfastly working to win the release of his two brothers. "I invited Wilkerson to come speak in Houston and I also ordered some of his candy, Freelines, to sell in Houston." (Freelines are a praline-type candy Wilkerson learned to make in prison and now sells on the Internet to raise funds. See www.angola3.org.)

Houston Anarchist Black Cross and the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement sponsored the meeting, which also showed the documentary "3 Black Panthers and The Last Slave Plantation." The ABC spoke of their projects, including sending books and literature to prisoners.

Njeri Shakur of TDPAM spoke about political prisoners on Texas death row, including Howard Guidry. "Howard is an innocent man who never should have been on death row in the first place because the cops tortured a confession from him. But once on the row he developed a revolutionary political understanding of prisons and the capitalist system that sent him there. He is now a leader of PURE, Panthers United for Revolutionary Education."

The evening ended with a celebration complete with a chocolate birthday cake and a birthday card signing. □

Outside cops' trial

'We remember Sean Bell'

By Greg Butterfield
Queens, N.Y.

On Feb. 25, community members and activists rallied on snowy sidewalks outside the Queens, N.Y., courthouse to demand justice for Sean Bell. Inside, family, friends and supporters packed the courtroom as three New York police detectives went on trial for killing the young Black man and wounding two others, Joseph Guzman and Trent Benefield, on Nov. 25, 2006.

Bell and his friends were leaving his bachelor party when the cops unleashed a hail of 50 bullets. The three men were unarmed.

Bell's fiancée, Nicole Paultre-Bell, gave tearful testimony inside the courtroom, noting that she last saw him "in the morgue" on what should have been their wedding day. Bell was also a father of two.

Detectives Gescard Isnora and Michael Oliver pleaded not guilty to manslaughter, and Mark Cooper pleaded guilty to reckless endangerment. The cops had tried to get a change of venue outside New York City, hoping that a mostly-white upstate jury would vindicate them—a tactic used



WW PHOTO: GREG BUTTERFIELD

Feb. 25 protest.

successfully in previous police brutality cases.

The change of venue was denied. But the cops then demanded a bench trial—which means that Judge Arthur Cooperman, not a jury, will decide the case.

In his opening statement, Queens prosecutor Charles Testagrossa pointed out that the detectives didn't properly iden-

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On 140th anniversary of W.E.B. DuBois' birth

Anti-war organization says 'U.S. imperialism— HANDS OFF AFRICA!'

By Cheryl LaBash
Detroit

Less than a month before the fifth anniversary of the U.S. military occupation of Iraq, a one-day Black History Month conference sponsored by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice on Feb. 23 challenged the anti-war movement to address the increased U.S. military and political intervention in Africa. The conference commemorated the 140th anniversary of the birth of the great scholar and activist W.E.B. DuBois.

African countries are resisting the U.S. government plan to build permanent military bases on the African continent and a unified U.S. military headquarters focusing exclusively on Africa, known as the Africa Command, or AFRICOM. The historical and political context of this resistance was set through three overview presentations by Debbie Johnson, Detroit Area Network for Reproductive Rights; Abayomi Azikiwe, founding member of MECAWI and Pan African Newswire editor; and Mark Fancher, National Conference of Black Lawyers. Fancher is a primary contributor to the NCBL's position paper, "AFRICOM Threatens the Sovereignty, Independence and Stability of the African Continent."

"DuBois and other activists saw the Black struggle in the United States as being part and parcel of a broader movement against racism, colonialism, imperialism and for national liberation and socialism," said Azikiwe, who quoted extensive eloquent passages from W.E.B. DuBois' seminal work, "Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880," published in 1935 during the Great Depression.

Azikiwe highlighted and paid tribute to the contribution of African-American

tify themselves as police before brandishing weapons and opening fire. Testagrossa said the detectives' conduct "was carelessness verging on incompetence."

It's clear, however, that the district attorney's office has no plans to raise more serious and relevant issues, like the racist New York Police Department's occupation of oppressed communities and its shoot-first, ask-questions-later stance toward people of color.

At the protest outside, community members were much clearer about the stakes. "In my neighborhood the cops will arrest you even if you're not doing anything," said Renee Harris-Pinkney. "I'm out here today because this could have happened to any one of my three sons."

A prayer vigil led by the Rev. Al Sharpton preceded the opening of the trial. Later, community members and activist groups organized a picket line, held signs, drummed and chanted, "Remember Sean Bell," "No justice, no peace," and "Death to police terrorism." The New York Times falsely reported the latter's demand as "fringe groups' call for violence against the police."

Groups participating in the protest included People's Justice Coalition, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, the New Black Panther Party, the National Action Network and the International Action Center.

The trial is expected to continue for several weeks. □



Debbie Johnson, DANFORR (left), Kevin Carey, second from left; Mark Fancher, NCBL (below) with photo of W.E.B. DuBois, behind him.



women "who took charge of their political and social agendas to promote self-organization and self-help programs for the African-American people. ... Ida B. Wells-Barnett played an instrumental role in this movement by intersecting with women's groups throughout the country while carrying out her anti-lynching mobilizations."

Azikiwe concluded: "The solution to the national question in the United States will be a collective one, rooted in a struggle against capitalism and imperialism on a world scale. Irrespective of the machinations of the Bush administration's Africa policy, the fact that the problem of race, class and gender oppression in the United States has not been resolved speaks volumes to the peoples of the continent and other oppressed and struggling peoples around the globe.

"The deepening crisis of capitalism and imperialism requires the heightening of the struggle of working people and the nationally oppressed against exploitation,



WW PHOTOS: CHERYL LA BASH

Abayomi Azikiwe (left), MECAWI, Pan African Newswire editor; Andrea Egypt, MECAWI; Kim Greene, MECAWI.

racism and gender oppression. In the tradition of DuBois and other luminaries of the 20th century, the present generation must continue the fight to achieve genuine political freedom and social emancipation."

Reports by MECAWI activists on Zimbabwe, Somalia and Sudan exposed specific examples of U.S. imperialist intervention in African nations.

Andrea Egypt noted: "National press associations and other propaganda machines are the modes of operation to make it appear that Robert Mugabe is some deranged ruler who is sabotaging the economy [in Zimbabwe]. Yet sanctions imposed by the U.S., Britain and the European Union and its allies are the real cause for the failing economy. ... Just recently the Washington Post put out a call for the overthrow of Mugabe. They also insisted that President Thabo Mbeki [of South Africa] cut off 15 percent of the electricity that South Africa provides for Zimbabwe, similar to what has occurred recently in Palestine."

Kim Greene reported that the U.S. encouraged hostilities between Somalia

and Ethiopia during the 1980s, intervened directly under the guise of providing humanitarian aid in 1992, but was expelled after Black Hawk helicopters were shot down in Mogadishu. In 2006 the U.S. backed an Ethiopian invasion of Somalia.

Kevin Carey also paid tribute to W.E.B. DuBois and Paul Robeson. On Sudan, Carey pointed to the oil and uranium resources as a motive for U.S. political and military intervention. In 1998, 19 cruise missiles were used by the Clinton administration to destroy a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan.

Fancher exposed the real intent of AFRICOM, using the U.S. Navy's own website. "The U.S. military is stepping up operations in the Gulf of Guinea to enhance security in this strategic and resource-rich region. ... Maritime security is critical for the region to benefit from its natural resources and prosper economically, [Capt. Tom Rowden] said. Africa provides almost 15 percent of the United States' oil supply, much of which comes from the Gulf of Guinea. In addition, the region is rich in timber, iron ore, copper and other resources. 'Our goal is to ensure a more stable maritime environment to ensure their ability to get those resources to market.'"

The full NCBL position paper on AFRICOM is at www.ncbl.org. □

A look back at

U.S. and world imperialism in Africa

The following are excerpted remarks given by Debbie Johnson, a leader and founding member of the Detroit Action Network for Reproductive Rights (DANFORR), at a Feb. 23rd Detroit Conference on the Growing Threat of United States Intervention in Africa. Go to www.workers.org to read the entire talk.

When Karl Marx wrote, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guildmaster and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight"—class struggle, he spoke a truth that has remained constant more than a century and a half later. We are 24/7 engaged in class struggle, and we need only look at the history of this country, and more particularly at the history of the great continent of Africa, to see that truth borne out.

How is it that Africa, so abundant in so many resources, including oil, diamonds, magnesium, uranium and other bounty, is so poor economically that millions of

its children, women and men die every year of hunger, illness and disease?

Modern transnational monopolies may differ fundamentally in their economic content from the colonialists' interests of earlier centuries, but they still show the same greed and avarice, the utterly unprecedented cruelty and barbarous treatment which characterized the slave trade. In fact the rape and plunder of Africa was what lay behind the flourishing of world commerce then and today, and is the foundation for what Karl Marx called the primitive accumulation of capital.

In truth, there would have been no primitive capitalist development and later industrialization had it not been for the brutal colonization, enslavement and exploitation of African people.

In this the epoch of neocolonialism and imperialism, the rest of us, the workers—the producers of all things necessary to life and living—can ill afford to sit back and fail to challenge the imperialist beast at home—where no matter who may occupy the White House after this year's election, can continue to allow the brutality that is being carried out unchallenged in Africa, whether in the Sudan, Mozambique, South Africa or Zimbabwe.

It is our responsibility to educate our class on what is really going on in Africa, and to take on the U.S. ruling class, in any disguise it may bear—AFRICOM comes to mind—and stand in solidarity with the brothers and sisters of Zimbabwe, South Africa, Nigeria, the Sudan, or wherever, to stamp out and turn back the hands of U.S. imperialism that has targeted Africa as its next necessary conquest in world domination.

By any means necessary, we owe to our heroic brothers and sisters in Africa—no less a duty than we owe to ourselves—to challenge and hold back the brutal and bloody hands of U.S. capitalism and imperialism, in Africa and at home, or anywhere on the globe that it sets its sights, to struggle against racism, war and injustice, and not allow the wars of exploitation and domination abroad to be done in our name, or on behalf of our class, the U.S. working class, for the sole purpose of continuing to fill the coffers, bank vaults and pockets of the haves—the ruling class.

NO to the invasion and occupation of any African country! Liberation and freedom is a right our class must continue to struggle for! Workers and peoples of the world unite!! □

IVAW holds New York City Winter Soldier event

By Michael Kramer
New York

More than 200 Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) supporters attended a preliminary Winter Soldier hearing Feb. 21 at the New York Society for Ethical Culture in Manhattan.

The local event was successful in building momentum for the national Winter Soldier 2008 hearings, scheduled for March 13-16 at the AFL-CIO affiliated National Labor College in the Washington, D.C., suburb of Silver Spring, Md.

Winter Soldier will feature testimony from U.S. vet-

erans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan and will expose the criminal nature of both wars.

The political unity of military veterans from different generations was in evidence as IVAW, Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Veterans For Peace shared the stage and program.

Bill Perry, who testified at the original Winter Soldier hearings in 1971, described the war crimes he witnessed while serving with 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. Fernando Braga told about the anti-Arab racism that was part of his pre-Iraq deployment training at Fort Dix, N.J., while a member of the New York Army National Guard.

IVAW member and war resister Ryan Johnson was able to take part in the program from Canada via a live video feed. He is a member of the Winter Soldier Organizing Committee and described the situation of more than 50 absent without leave war resisters in Canada as they courageously struggle for human rights and against deportation. There is now an IVAW chapter in Toronto.

More ominously for the Bush administration and Pentagon generals, an IVAW chapter has recently been formed on the Fort Hood, Texas, army megabase. This base has more than 33,000 residents and is home to the 1st Cavalry Division and 4th Infantry Division. □

From Philippines to Guantánamo

Torture: U.S. policy then and now

By Greg Butterfield

By now most people have heard the term “waterboarding.” Newspapers and television talking-heads shows are filled with debate over whether the CIA should have the right to use this and other “enhanced interrogation techniques” to question suspected terrorists. President George W. Bush has vowed to veto a congressional bill to ban “coercive interrogations.”

But how many people really know what these euphemisms mean?

Waterboarding is torture. It is not a new practice. It has gone under other names—the water detail, the water cure. Its first recorded use was by the Spanish Inquisition. And exactly 100 years ago, it was a preferred method of torture used by the U.S. military.

A timely article by Paul Kramer appears in the Feb. 25 edition of the New Yorker magazine, entitled “The Water Cure: Debating Torture and Counterinsurgency—A Century Ago.” Kramer’s piece powerfully illustrates how today’s debate over whether it is “OK” to torture people of color accused of fighting U.S. domination—and to what degree—eerily mirrors the debate a century ago over the torture of Filipino rebels fighting the U.S. takeover of their country.

Kramer quotes firsthand accounts from returned soldiers, like this from A.F. Miller of the 32nd Volunteer Infantry Regiment, published in the Omaha World-Herald in May 1900: “Now this is the way we give them the water cure. Lay them on their backs, a man standing on each hand and each foot, then put a round stick in the mouth and pour a pail of water in the mouth and nose, and if they don’t give up pour in another pail. They swell up like

toads. I’ll tell you it is a terrible torture.”

According to a fact sheet issued by the Center for Constitutional Rights’ Guantánamo Global Justice Initiative, waterboarding is “a form of mock execution where a detainee is strapped to a board and water is poured over the detainee, causing him to believe and physically experience the sensation of drowning.”

This is the reality behind today’s debate on “harsh interrogations.”

‘Evidence obtained through torture’

At the Guantánamo Bay naval base, illegally occupied by the U.S. in violation of Cuban sovereignty, and at so-called “black sites” spread across the globe, the CIA has used waterboarding and other forms of “cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment” to obtain evidence and confessions from detainees.

On Feb. 11, a Bush administration-created military commission announced it was seeking the death penalty for murder and war crimes against CCR client Mohammed al Qahtani and five other men alleged to have participated in planning the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. They, like hundreds of other men captured in Afghanistan and other parts of the Middle East and Central Asia, have been held captive for six years without access to courts or the protections guaranteed to prisoners of war under international law.

Al Qahtani’s attorneys are challenging the validity of the military commissions and what they call “evidence obtained through torture” in these death penalty cases. According to CCR, al Qahtani was subject to the “First Special Interrogation Plan” personally approved by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

The “aggressive interrogation methods” used included beatings; sleep deprivation combined with 20-hour interrogations; explicit threats against family members; strip searches and forced nudity; sexual humiliation; attacks by dogs; forcible administration of drugs during interrogation; stress positions; tight restraints for long periods; extremes of temperature; at least 160 days of severe isolation; and more.

With anger escalating over the Bush administration’s use of torture, the Justice Department announced Feb. 22 that its ethics office was investigating the department’s legal approval of waterboarding and would make public an unclassified version of its report.

An Aug. 1, 2002, Justice Department memo had declared that interrogation methods were not torture unless they “produced pain equivalent to that associated with organ failure or death.” The use of waterboarding and other torture was reaffirmed by Steven G. Bradbury, the acting head of the Office of Legal Counsel, in 2005.

‘The water cure’

Outside of school textbooks, the colonial war to dominate the Philippines is little discussed today in this country. But it is well remembered in the Philippines, where the people have lived under the boot heel of U.S. imperialism and its lackeys ever since—as an outright colony for more than 40 years, and later as a neocolony.

Posing as liberators, U.S. naval forces attacked the Spanish fleet at Manila Bay in May 1898 and returned exiled Filipinos to help mop up the crumbling Spanish colonial regime. But when the new Philippine government asserted its right to indepen-

dence, U.S. President William McKinley refused to recognize it.

Instead, while the Senate “purchased” the islands from defeated Spain for \$20 million, U.S. forces launched a three-year war to overthrow the government it had helped to install. The bloody conflict killed hundreds of thousands of Filipinos.

Atrocities by U.S. troops were widespread, including torching of villages and murder of prisoners. But what grabbed public attention and outrage were the reports by returning U.S. soldiers of barbaric water torture—the same methods being used by the CIA today.

President Theodore Roosevelt, who succeeded McKinley after he was assassinated, cut off the debate by declaring a U.S. victory and continuing the war quietly under the auspices of a puppet government.

But U.S. war crimes against the people of the Philippines are not distant history. They continue to this very day, under the rubric of “the war on terror.”

Chito Quijano, chair of BAYAN-USA, a mass organization of progressive and revolutionary Filipinos in the U.S., reported Feb. 21 on “the involvement of U.S. troops in a fatal raid of a Sulu village, south of Mindanao, killing eight innocent bystanders, including two children and a pregnant woman.”

Villager Sandrawina Wahid reported that at least four U.S. soldiers participated in the raid on her village. Soldiers burned down houses and harassed residents. Wahid’s husband, a vacationing army private, was one of those killed in the raid.

Noting that U.S. troops are “prohibited under Philippine law to engage in direct combat,” Quijano called for the removal of all U.S. troops from the Philippines. □

Filipino women call for militant struggle on IWD

Continued from page 3

cent (nominally equivalent to 3.8 million Filipino families) all-time high posed during the third quarter of 2007.

No amount of propaganda or manipulated statistics can conceal the intensifying poverty of the Filipino people. And women bear the brunt of the severity of this crisis.

Effects of a plummeting economy and livelihood push urban poor families towards further misery. While they suffer from the uncertainty of irregular sources of livelihood, their homes and communities are being demolished to give way to so-called urban development projects for the benefit of merely a few. Rather than a social service, the government’s housing project is, in fact, a profit-making endeavor. The government has also turned its back on providing needed social services, like health services, to the people.

Intensifying political repression

Meanwhile, repression of civil liberties and violation of human rights persist. The state claims even pregnant women, elders and children as victims. By 2008, reported human rights violations in the country have involved 889 victims of political killings, which include 98 women victims and 58 children. Among 179 cases of enforced disappearances are 29 women. Recently the military massacred eight civilians including two children and three women, one of whom was pregnant.

Currently, there are 23 women who languish in jail for political reasons; the most recent illegally arrested and detained was Elizabeth Principe, a peace advocate and staunch supporter of the welfare of farmers and indigenous peoples in the countryside. There are also eight women victims of rape by the military. The list

of human rights violations continues, as these figures and cases have yet to include thousands of women and children victims of forcible evacuation due to massive militarization in the countryside. They experienced hunger, trauma and various forms of sexual abuse.

The military’s policy of rape and sexual abuse against women in captivity is indeed enraging. The spine-chilling torture and rape the military committed against missing students Karen Empeño and Sherlyn Cadapan, and the sexual abuse experienced by 64-year-old Angie Ipong in the hands of her military captors cannot and shall not go unpunished.

As the economic and political crisis escalates, coupled with the further intensification of the people’s protest, we can only expect—caution and condemnation notwithstanding—heightened attacks by

the Arroyo government against progressive organizations like GABRIELA.

Intensifying women’s resistance

Our 8 March 2008 campaign is the persistence of the historic struggle and victory of the women’s movement as our own contribution to the intensifying struggle of the Filipino people. We will unleash a strong mass struggle of women against dire poverty, corruption and the tyranny of the Arroyo regime.

This March 8, we will conduct actions with the widest participation of masses of women to fight for their right to livelihood, housing and social services, for the future of their children and their families, and for their right against violence, especially state violence. We will unleash widespread and militant actions by women and the people against the Arroyo regime’s

Peoples court condemns Israel for war crimes in Lebanon

By John Catalinotto
Brussels, Belgium

A four-member jury of distinguished legal officials, after hearing and considering two days of intense, moving and precise testimony at the International Associations Center in Brussels, Belgium, on Feb. 24 found the Israeli state guilty of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in its 2006 war on Lebanon.

Some 250 people filling the center stood as one to applaud as Judge Adolfo Abascal from Cuba finished reading the decision. Those in the courtroom, many from Lebanon or from the Lebanese diaspora, already knew or had heard enough to make up their minds. But a formal decision based on a body of evidence can more effectively counter reactionary imperialist propaganda in the corporate media.

The other three judges were Judge Lilia Solano from Colombia, a professor at the National University of Bogotá; Rajindar Sachar, retired chief justice of the High Court of Delhi, India; and Professor Claudio Moffa of the University of Teramo, Italy. A fifth member of the panel, judge of the Court of Appeal Hisham Bastawisi of Egypt, was prevented from participating by the Egyptian government.

The organizers counted on the media coverage of the hearing—which was broadcast throughout the Arab world and in Latin America in whole or in part—to bring a convincing statement of Israeli guilt of serious war crimes to their audiences throughout the world. In the imperialist countries it will be up to progressive media and organizations in solidarity with the liberation struggles to spread the news of the tribunal.

There was representative support from organizations in Europe and the U.S., including present and former European Union parliamentary members Louisa Morgantini from Italy and Miguel Urbano Rodrigues from Portugal, and former MP Ángeles Maestro from Spain. Human rights, anti-war and anti-imperialist organizations sent representatives to watch, participate and report on the hearings.

In the introductory session, leading co-coordinator Leila Ghanem (Raoul Jennar was the other) introduced Judge Solana, who presided over the judges' panel. Solana explained the procedure for the tribunal.

John Catalinotto of the International Action Center (IAC) in the United States, Dr. Paola Manduca of the Permanent



WW PHOTOS: JOHN CATALINOTTO
Above: Witness holds part of U.S.-made rocket that killed some of his family. Right: Mayor Mostafa Bader Eddine of Nabatieh.

People's Tribunal and Prof. Jean Bricmont of the BRussels Tribunal gave political statements on the issues before the court. Catalinotto focused on U.S. complicity in the war crimes through providing the Israeli offensive with coordinated military aid and diplomatic support throughout the invasion.

Israelis expose their own crimes

What made the 2006 war on Lebanon different from the other U.S.-Israeli aggressions in the region was that the Israeli offensive collapsed. The Lebanese resistance—2,000 fighters led by Hezbollah but joined by other patriotic forces like the Communist Party—inflicted heavy casualties on the most powerful army in the region. Instead of wiping out the popular armed struggle, the Israelis were driven out.

This defeat forced the Tel Aviv regime to re-examine and investigate its own war strategy. Prosecuting Attorney Dr. Issam Naaman pointed this out as he introduced the tribunal case. After the witnesses, he said, the Winograd Report by an Israeli government-appointed committee will “fill in any remaining gaps” in the case.

That the report admits that Israel had planned the aggression months before it took place absolves the Lebanese resistance—which had been charged with provoking the war by capturing two Israeli soldiers.

The others on the prosecution team were Dr. Hassan Jouni and Maitre Albert Farhat, also from Lebanon, and Dr. Hugo Ruiz Díaz Balbuena from Paraguay.

Although the Lebanese successfully fought back, this did not prevent the Israeli military from inflicting horrible casualties on the Lebanese civilian population. The prosecutors introduced witnesses who

struggle and triumphs next year.

Throughout the world, the struggle of working women against exploitation is the key to our successful struggle against all forms of oppression. Only where women are members of the working force and have collective power will they learn to fight exploitation and oppression as women. We need to fight the oppression of women towards our full participation in the economic, political and socio-cultural life of our community. The struggle of organized working-class women will end not only women's oppression but women's exploitation as well.

Women unite! Struggle against oppression and exploitation!

Fight corruption and tyranny! Oust President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo!

Long live International Working Women's Day!

Long live international solidarity!
GABRIELA Philippines



gave evidence of massacres against civilian targets and the systematic destruction of towns and villages and popular housing projects south of Beirut.

Through expert witnesses, the prosecutors also showed that Israel used prohibited weapons, such as uranium-cased bunker busters and thermobaric weapons, and those prohibited against civilians, such as cluster bombs. The Israeli military was apparently testing new weapons on the Lebanese they killed and maimed. More than 1,200 people in Lebanon were killed, the great majority of them civilians, including many children.

First-hand testimony of war crimes

Eyewitnesses were more than observers of the war. They had lost multiple family members, been involved in ambulance driving, been responsible for their town or village. The Lebanese organizations fought heroically, but the Israeli war machine, armed by Washington, rained death on civilians who had the misfortune of being in the south of Lebanon that summer.

Civil defense worker Maher Saloum from Baalbek city provided a moving PowerPoint demonstration of the casualties inflicted on Lebanese children and other noncombatants. His co-workers, while clearly driving ambulances, were equally targeted by Israeli rockets. While not physically wounded, this hero had suffered what in the U.S. would be called post-traumatic stress disorder as he risked his life every day to try to save his compatriots.

One witness held up a piece of the U.S.-made rocket that crashed into the home his family was trying to take cover in as they fled north.

The judges asked each witness if there were any military targets, any Hezbollah fighters, in the vicinity of the bomb or rocket strikes. The answer was always, “No.”

Dr. Ali Mustafa, mayor of one of the towns in Baalbek in the south, 15 miles from the border with Israel, told of the “250 martyrs” from his district. “I’m asking the people of the world,” he said, “What do they [the Israelis] want from us and our children? We had 423 homes destroyed, but I don’t think they will beat us.

“They tried to drive a wedge between the people and the resistance, but we remained together. The enemy attack failed. We will fight them all our lives if attacked.”

Weapons, environment, economy

After the reports of the deaths, it may not have seemed necessary to show the use of illegal weapons, to decry the long-lasting assault on the environment or to demonstrate the damage in tens of billions of dollars to the Lebanese economy. The “legal” weapons are also murderous



WW PHOTO, (ABOVE)
Above right: Judges Solano, Sachar and Moffa. Below right: John Catalinotto of the International Action Center.

in the hands of an arrogant imperialist army. But in a trial, the prosecutors need to demonstrate all the crimes under discussion.

It was hard to look at the photos of the Lebanese people wounded or killed by either old or new weapons. But phenomena like internal bleeding without entry or exit wounds and no evidence of shrapnel, deep burning on one side of the body and none on the other, and high levels of radiation showed that Israel was testing new weapons, most of them manufactured in the United States.

Dr. Rania Masri, who had been an anti-war activist in Raleigh, N.C., for many years before moving to Beirut, gave an excellent and concise presentation of the lasting damage to the environment from the Israeli attack. The most devastating single blow was to an oil storage tank serving an electric power plant, causing an enormous spill that has destroyed the beaches and the aquatic environment all the way from the south of Lebanon to Syria.

Dr. Kamal Hamdan, a macroeconomist, apologized if his “cold view” of the economic impact detracted from the suffering of the Lebanese. He explained that besides the \$2.8 billion in direct losses, 60 percent of it in housing, much of it in the popular suburbs south of Beirut, there are other even greater losses. Higher unemployment and inflation rates have impoverished a greater proportion of the Lebanese population.

Almost as an aside, Dr. Hamdan pointed out that U.S. imperialist aggression in the entire West Asian region was aimed not only at guaranteeing access to energy sources but also to give Washington the ability to intimidate both China and the U.S.'s rival imperialists in Europe and Japan by controlling the oil.

Dr. Díaz Balbuena, representing the American Association of Jurists before the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, presented the legal rules of the case, of which only a small part of the testimony has been summarized above.

Introducing the verdict, Justice Lilia Solana made sure to also inculpate the United States for its complicity in the war. The final decision was that the judges “declare the Israeli authorities in charge of the 2006 war against Lebanon guilty of the following international crimes:

1. war crimes
2. crimes against humanity
3. genocide.”

Email: jcat@workers.org

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desperate grip on power.

Women are aware that only through their militant struggle, together with the rest of the people and under the aegis of a national democratic struggle, can the recurring and worsening crisis of the semicolonial and semifeudal Philippine society meet its decisive end.

On this International Women's Day, let us vow to bring tens of thousands of working women in a militant action to contribute to the struggle of the working women of the world. Let us organize and mobilize women in the unions and factories, in farms, in urban poor communities, schools and offices around their local issues and concerns. Let us involve women from numerous localities through solid and extensive education, agitation, propaganda and local mass struggle campaigns. This March 8 will also kick off GABRIELA's celebration of 25 years of

In Serbia

Mass resistance to U.S. NATO rule

By Sara Flounders

In the final analysis, history is never decided by resolutions, laws or proclamations.

It is decided by explosive mass movements that churn up from below in response to intolerable conditions and outrageous events.

An angry and enormous demonstration—estimates range from a half million to well over a million people—in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, on Feb. 21 has changed the terms of the debate about Kosovo.

Following this colossal outpouring in opposition to Washington's theft of the Serbian province of Kosovo, thousands of people in Belgrade stormed the U.S. Embassy and set fires in it. The British, German, Croatian, Belgian and Turkish embassies were also attacked. Western franchises, including 10 McDonalds plus Nike stores and 50 other outlets, along with bank windows, were targeted by angry youths. There were nights of running street battles with riot police.

Thousands demonstrated at border crossings between Serbia proper and Kosovo. Two border crossings were destroyed, one by fire, the other in an explosion. All these actions sent a sharp message—that the U.S. decision to establish a direct colony in Kosovo by recognizing its "independence" would be challenged by an explosive movement that has gone much further than just the official Serbian government statement of opposition.

An article in the New York Times of Feb. 25 worried that Washington may have underestimated the Serbian response. It said that policy makers in Washington and Brussels fear that the angry opposition may be "destabilizing for the entire region." Entitled "Serbian Rage in Kosovo: Last Gasp or First Breath?" the article reflected many other news commentaries: "The world is waiting to see whether the riots on Thursday were the final spasm of anger in Serbia or the first tremor in a new Balkan earthquake."

Of course, it is the danger of a new Balkan earthquake that U.S. corporate power fears.

It certainly appears that the U.S. government has once again underestimated opposition to its criminal policies. Washington had considered that its long-announced decision to recognize a new mini-state in the Balkans could not be opposed. It was considered a fait accompli.

Although Kosovo might for a time lack official U.N. endorsement, it was thought that quick recognition by the U.S. and European Union, along with funding and continued stationing of international forces, would overwhelm Serbian opposition.

Washington is so used to having its arrogant way and violating international



WWW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS

On Feb. 24 hundreds gathered in front of the White House to oppose the latest U.S. attack on Serbia, organized by the STOP (Stop Terrorizing Orthodox Peoples) Coalition. Major protest demonstrations were held in Geneva and Zurich, Switzerland; Vienna, Austria;

Athens, Greece; Vicenza, Italy; Montreal and Toronto; Cleveland and Chicago. This week demonstrations will continue, including a major demonstration in front of the U.N. on March 2 from 2 to 4 p.m.

agreements—even the terms that the U.S. itself dictated on NATO expansion, borders and national sovereignty—that it is shocked to find serious opposition.

Certainly many politicians in Serbia, anxious for Serbia to join the EU, were not disposed to make more than a symbolic opposition. But the angry response of the entire Serbian population has changed the very ground under this latest imperialist land grab.

Struggle heating up

EU staff and other forces are now withdrawing from the northern part of Kosovo, around the town of Mitrovica, which has been divided between areas that are either majority ethnic Serbs or majority ethnic Albanians. Other national groupings also live in Kosovo. All have been historically oppressed, recently by Western European and U.S. imperialists, earlier by feudal empires.

At the bridge over the Ibar River in Mitrovica, there has been a weeklong standoff between the Kosovo Police Service, a multi-ethnic force, and U.N. police. The KPS police have refused to serve under the new Kosovo-declared state. Dozens of busloads of protesters have come to the border of the province to support rallies against Kosovo's separation.

Meanwhile U.S./NATO forces, called KFOR, have moved to seal the border with armored vehicles and tanks to halt an influx of potential protesters.

Once again the challenge in Europe to the crushing backward drag of U.S. imperialism, whose threats and pressures have undone numerous socialist states, including Yugoslavia, has come from the Serbian mass movement.

Solidarity demonstrations all across Europe, Canada and the U.S. were held on Feb. 24, and were to continue through the week.

For many the very hypocrisy of the U.S. position alerted them to its having a more sinister motive than wanting to grant independence to Kosovo. After all, the U.S. has refused to allow the independence of Puerto Rico despite more than 100 years of struggle, yet it was the first country to recognize Kosovo's independence from Serbia—on the very day that the unilateral declaration was made.

International opposition

Both Russia and China, which hold veto power on the U.N. Security Council, made it clear that they would not allow the U.N. to endorse the forcible theft of Kosovo from Serbia. They expressed grave concern about the dangerous precedent it set in further fracturing nation states around the world that are targeted by imperialist intervention.

The unilateral declaration was a direct violation of the U.N. Charter, other international law and even the terms of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244, drafted by the U.S. after 78 days of bombing Serbia in 1999. Despite the lack of U.N. approval, the U.S., Germany, France and Britain recklessly went ahead with the recognition of Kosovo.

Opposed to the recognition are Serbia, Russia, China, Spain, Greece, Venezuela, Bolivia, Portugal, Slovakia, Malta, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Sri Lanka and Armenia. A number of other countries have not yet made a decision, despite intense U.S. pressure.

President Hugo Chávez said Venezuela would join other countries in condemning the declaration. "This cannot be accepted. It's a very dangerous precedent for the entire world," he said.

Bolivia also refused to recognize Kosovo's independence. President Evo Morales compared Kosovo separatists to the leaders of four eastern resource-rich Bolivian states who have U.S. encouragement in demanding greater autonomy, in an effort to fracture and halt progressive changes coming from the federal government.

On Feb. 22, Russian envoy to NATO Dmitry Rogozin said on state-run Vesti-24 television that Kosovo's split from Serbia was the result of an "imperialistic American effort to divide and rule."

Rogozin made an ominous warning that could hardly be ignored. He said that the Russian military might get involved if all the EU nations recognize Kosovo as independent with U.N. agreement. If that happens, Russia "will proceed from the assumption that to be respected, we have to use brute military force."

On Feb. 24 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was in Belgrade with current Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev, who is Vladimir Putin's likely successor as president. They came to make Russia's position clear.

Medvedev said, "It is unacceptable that for the first time in the post-war history, a country which is a member of the United Nations has been divided in violation of all principles used in resolving territorial conflicts.

"We proceed from the understanding that Serbia is a single state with its jurisdiction spanning its entire territory and we will stick to this principled stance in the future.

"It is absolutely obvious that the crisis that has happened and is the responsibility of those who have made the illegal decision will unfortunately have long-term consequences for peace on the European continent."

Medvedev signed an agreement to build a section of South Stream gas pipeline through Serbia. The line will carry Russian gas through the Balkans to the Mediterranean Sea. A business agreement between Serbia's national oil company, NIS, and OAO Gazprom, the Russian energy giant, was also consolidated.

Kosovo is not independent

It is essential to explain again and again when discussing this issue of U.S. recognition of Kosovo's "independence" that Kosovo has not gained a shred of self-determination or even minimal self-rule, even on paper.

Unless this is continually explained and repeated, many political activists who defend self-determination for oppressed nations might naively support "independence" for Kosovo.

The plan under which Kosovo becomes "independent" establishes an old-style colonial structure in its rawest form. Kosovo will actually be run by an appointed High Representative and by administrative bodies appointed by the U.S., the EU and NATO—the U.S.-commanded military alliance.

Imperialist administrators will have direct control over all aspects of foreign and domestic policy. They have control over the departments of Customs, Taxation, Treasury and Banking. They control foreign policy, security, police, judiciary, all courts and prisons. These appointed Western officials can overrule any measure, annul any law, and remove anyone from office in Kosovo.

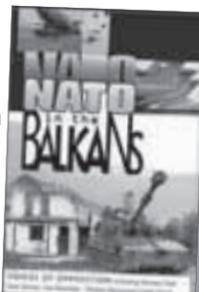
Several possible schemes are at the



Confused about the real reasons the U.S. bombed Yugoslavia? This book, released in 1998, will give you the secret background and hidden role of the U.S. and Germany in the dismemberment of Yugoslavia.

NATO in the Balkans: Voices of Opposition

by Ramsey Clark and others



Washington and NATO strategists invoked humanitarian principles to justify their war. But they practiced the divide-and-conquer tactics used by empires since the days of Imperial Rome.

Hidden Agenda: U.S./NATO takeover of Yugoslavia

By Ramsey Clark & various authors

Available online: www.Leftbooks.com

5,000 in Vicenza protest Kosovo secession

Some 5,000 people, about 90 percent of them originally from Serbia but now part of the working class in the factories in and around Vicenza, marched Feb. 24 through that northern Italian town to protest the secession of Kosovo from Serbia.

The Italian state police known as the carabinieri were out in force as a riot squad to keep the demonstration away from both the center of nearby Padua and from the gates of the large U.S. military base, Camp Ederle.

In the demonstration many carried candles through the cold February drizzle and banners reading "Kosovo is Serbia," "Stop USA terror" and "Kosovo is the Jerusalem of Serbia"—referring to the concentration of historic churches for the many of the Eastern Orthodox faith in northern Kosovo.

—Report and photos from Vicenza
by Fausto Schiavetto



root of this latest flagrant U.S. violation of international law. Separating Kosovo from Serbia further fractures the entire region. This has been U.S. policy toward the Balkans, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. As weak, divided, warring mini-states, their opposition to U.S. corporate domination becomes more difficult.

The recognition of Kosovo also divides and frays relations in the EU. Washington is certainly not opposed to sowing dissension among forces that are both allies and imperialist competitors. The U.S. has fractured the EU over this, because one-third of its 27 members are against this move.

Setting up a government in Kosovo where the U.S. has full authority to write the laws and treaties also consolidates the Pentagon's continued hold on a major new military base in Kosovo—Camp Bondsteel. It also provides unlimited access and, most important, a transfer of ownership of the rich resources of the region, including oil and gas which has just been discovered.

Camp Bondsteel

A massive new U.S. military base—Halliburton-built Camp Bondsteel—is the Pentagon anchor in the region. Near the Macedonian border, it covers more than 1,000 acres and comprises more than 300 buildings. It overwhelms tiny Kosovo, a province smaller than the state of Connecticut.

The location was chosen for its capacity to expand. There are suggestions that it could replace the U.S. Air Force base at Aviano in Italy.

Thousands of U.S./NATO troops can be comfortably stationed there. The base can easily house its 7,000 U.S. military forces, along with thousands of private

contractors. U.S. military personnel leave Bondsteel in helicopters or large heavily armed convoys.

The camp is located close to vital oil pipelines and energy corridors that are now under construction, such as the U.S.-sponsored Trans-Balkan oil pipeline and what is known as energy Corridor 8.

The U.S. began planning the building of Camp Bondsteel long before its bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, according to Col. Robert L. McClure, writing in *Engineer: The Professional Bulletin for Army Engineers*. Another document, "U.S. Army Engineers in the Balkans 1995–2002," is available online and contains photos and descriptions of the base plans. (web.mst.edu)

At Camp Bondsteel there is the most advanced hospital in Europe, theaters, restaurants, a water purification plant, laundries and shops along with a mass of communication satellites, antennae and menacing attack helicopters.

The people who live in the area surrounding the camp suffer from 80 percent unemployment. Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown and Root pays Kosovo workers, when it hires them, a meager \$1 to \$3 per hour. More than 25 percent of the Albanian Kosovo population has been forced to emigrate abroad in order to send home remittances to their families.

Under the U.S. occupation, more than 250,000 Serbs, Roma, Turks, Goranians and other peoples of this rich, multi-ethnic province have been forced out of Kosovo and are not permitted to return.

Rich resources in Kosovo

U.S. corporations are well aware of the rich resources of Kosovo. There are extensive mines for lead, zinc, cadmium, lignite, gold and silver at Stari Trg, along with 17 billion tons of coal reserves. The

once state-owned Trepca mining complex was described by the New York Times of July 8, 1998, as "the most valuable piece of real estate in the Balkans." It included warehouses, smelting plants, refineries, metal treatment sites, freight yards, railroad lines and power plants. Before the 1999 U.S./NATO bombing, followed by the occupation of Kosovo, it was the largest uncontested piece of wealth in Eastern Europe not yet in the hands of U.S. or European capitalists.

And they are still fighting over who will get to exploit it. Since NATO forces occupied Kosovo, almost this entire mining and refining center has been closed down. It sits idle while the many nationalities who once worked there have been dispersed.

Now an even greater source of newly discovered wealth is making Western corporations anxious to have an uncontested grip on the province.

On Jan. 10 Reuters reported that Swiss-based Manas Petroleum Corp. had announced that Gustavson Associates LLC's Resource Evaluation had identified large prospects of oil and gas reserves in Albania, close to Kosovo. The assigned estimates of the find are up to 2.987 billion barrels of oil and 3.014 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

Clearly U.S. corporations feel they have a big stake in the region. They have made many backroom deals and secret promises to Germany, France and Britain to gain their acquiescence.

But this is a good time to remember how ripe for the picking Iraq looked to

Halliburton and Exxon in 2003. It seemed easy to get the compliance of many countries, even if Washington couldn't secure a U.N. Security Council vote despite its lies to that body.

The U.S. is hardly the first empire to underestimate the power of an aroused mass movement to overturn its plans. Imperialist arrogance and overreach can lead to serious miscalculations.

People in every struggle for full rights and national sovereignty have an interest in defending and standing in solidarity with the heroic resistance that the people of Serbia have shown in the past week. This struggle could open a new day of resistance to U.S. corporate rule across Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

Sara Flounders was in Yugoslavia during the 1999 U.S./NATO bombing to expose these devastating attacks on the civilian population. She is a co-author and editor of "NATO in the Balkans" and "Hidden Agenda: U.S./NATO Takeover of Yugoslavia," available at leftbooks.com.

NO to the U.S. COLONY

Support the Mass Resistance in Serbia
Do Not Violate International Law

Kosovo is Serbia

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Workers World in 1966

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. Below are excerpts from an article that first appeared in the issue dated Nov. 17, 1966, one year after a pro-U.S. military coup in Indonesia.

Modern-day lynching

Yet another "casual" reference to lynching has been made in the media, directed this time at Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's spouse, Michelle Obama.

In response to remarks made by Michelle Obama, in which she said she was really proud of the United States for the first time, right-wing bigot Bill O'Reilly of Fox News said: "I don't want to go on a lynching party against Michelle Obama unless there's evidence, hard facts, that say this is how the woman really feels. If that's how she really feels ... We'll track it down."

Later, O'Reilly made a paltry apology: "I'm sorry if my statement offended anybody. That, of course, was not the intention. Context is everything."

Context. Let's look at the context of yet another media pundit evoking the historic lynching of a Black person—and

this time, not even receiving a slap on the wrist for it. Let's look at the current context of nooses appearing throughout the country, at the state-sponsored lynchings of Black people in the streets by cops and on death row by the courts. It's a wonder Michelle Obama is proud at all.

In that context, it was easy to predict that if Barack Obama's presidential bid gained momentum, the racist attacks would follow. About a week later, a photo of Obama in the traditional garb of his native Kenya—a "silly" photo, according to the Washington Post (Feb. 26)—was distributed. A photo that should have suggested pride was now meant to suggest "terrorism."

Anti-racist forces—whether they support Obama's run for president or not—will have to remain vigilant against these types of attacks, and be prepared to come to his defense against racism. □

The economy: scams of the rich and famous

Continued from page 2

like that of his predecessor, Tony Blair, follows the dictates of the capitalist ruling class, not the workers. It already plans to return Northern Rock to private ownership in a few months, as soon as the bank has been stabilized.

Guess who's cutting the budget?

Whether done through a Labour Party, the Democrats or the Republicans, state intervention in a capitalist economic crisis is designed primarily to bail out the banks and corporations and not those who suffer the most: the working class.

This can already be seen in the struggles emerging over state budgets, which are going into the red because of dropping tax revenues. In New Jersey, Gov. Jon Corzine, a liberal multi-millionaire Democrat, is already proposing a new budget that cuts deeply into services needed by the workers and poor, including hospital assistance, Medicaid and public education.

In order to give the appearance of balancing the cuts, Corzine is also proposing an end to property tax rebates for people who earn more than \$150,000. But there's no equality of sacrifice here. Someone with that level of income is not going to suffer in the same way that poor people on Medicaid will.

The biggest problem facing the Federal Reserve Board now is how to stimulate

economic growth—and avoid a rip-roaring recession or depression—without adding to inflation. It's sort of like a patient who is in danger of both bleeding to death and getting a blood clot in the brain. Should the doctor prescribe a blood thinner and risk more bleeding? Or something to stop the bleeding and risk a stroke? Either way, the patient can die.

Wholesale prices took a big jump in January, up a whole percentage point in just one month. Retail prices are sure to follow. If the Fed lowers interest rates again, it may push inflation even higher. But if it does nothing, the economy is sure to worsen. It is running out of options as "stagflation" grows worse.

For the workers, the options have to be different. They can't be based on the notion that profits have to come first. There is no excuse for hunger, homelessness or poverty in a country with a gross output worth more than \$11 trillion (yes, the same as the mortgage debt)—which averages out to \$37,000 per person per year.

Nothing is more important than the right of the people to food, shelter, education and health. A workers' movement that defies the bosses, the banks and their private property laws to win these rights is every bit as valid as the civil rights movement that defied racist segregation laws to win equal treatment for Black people.

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Save Subandrio!

Free the 52,000 Indonesian political prisoners!
Stop CIA-made massacres!

Dr. Subandrio, the former Foreign Minister of Indonesia, has been sentenced to death by the CIA-inspired military junta that illegally rules in Jakarta. The main charge against Subandrio is that he conspired to block the takeover of Indonesia by the "Council of Generals." But it is this butchers' "Council" that should be on trial. Their hands are dripping with the blood of a million people whom they slaughtered in the four months following the Oct. 30, 1965, right-wing putsch.

The world working class, all the oppressed and friends of the oppressed must protest this criminal death sentence handed down at the instigation of Wall Street and demand its immediate reversal!

Prior to Oct. 30, 1965, Indonesia appeared to have wrenched itself free from the orbit of imperialism and had moved toward a strong diplomatic and political alliance with People's China and its revolutionary allies in Asia. Foreign corporate property was confiscated or threatened daily by the militant Indonesian working class and peasantry as well as by the government. Sukarno had begun to arm the masses against the pro-U.S. army.

Now, just one year after the coup d'état by the pro-U.S. clique of Indonesian generals, Sukarno, the legal President, is a captive in his own country; former Foreign Minister Subandrio has been sentenced to death by a kangaroo court of military usurpers; 52,000 political prisoners are rotting in Suharto's concentration camps; and one million Indonesian workers, peasants and intellectuals have been slaughtered in a bloody massacre unprecedented in modern history for its swiftness and ferocity.

Communist leaders have been butchered or imprisoned and the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party), which had a membership of 5 million and whose allied organizations represented 20 million more, has been dismembered and crushed. The trade unions and peasants' organizations were also among the victims.

The dollar is back!

Imperialist property is once more guaranteed in Indonesia. Jakarta has turned its back on the world liberation struggle, moved savagely against People's China and her allies and has begun a diplomatic rapprochement with the capitals of world imperialism under the tutelage of Washington.

Thus, it is little wonder that on March

13 of this year, after the generals and their Washington masterminds had temporarily satiated their blood-lust, Max Frankel of the New York Times wrote from Washington that:

"The Johnson Administration found it difficult ... to hide its delight with the news from Indonesia, pointing to the political demise of President Sukarno and the Communists. After a long period of patient diplomacy, designed to help the army triumph over the Communists, officials were elated to find their expectations being realized."

The New York Times, whose corporate owners are in the inner circles of the U.S. ruling class, wrote a threatening prophecy eight months before the coup which provided a perfect outline for coming events.

"When President Sukarno threatened the Federation of Malaysia" wrote the Times on Feb. 12, 1965, "he placed himself firmly in the path of U.S. and British efforts to contain Communist China. Washington has left active defense of Malaysia to the British ... and seeks to retain some influence in Indonesia, primarily in the hope (!) of some day helping her army against the expected Communist bid for power."

Thus the Times outlined long in advance that Washington was plotting an offensive with the Indonesian Army and that it would be carried out under the cover of preventing a coup by the PKI—this, eight months ahead of time!

The CIA has brought to power General Suharto, who is the ringleader of the U.S.-trained Indonesian high command (200 Indonesian generals and hundreds of lower officers were trained in the U.S.).

The Minister of Economics is the Sultan of Jogjakarta, one of the richest feudal lords in Indonesia and the second highest figure in the 1958 CIA plot to overthrow Sukarno. (The CIA involvement in the plot was documented in "The Invisible Government" by David Wise and Thomas Ross).

Within less than one year, the CIA-backed clique has accomplished the following:

They have launched a savage attack on China; quietly re-entered the U.S.-controlled U.N.; called off Sukarno's war against Malaysia; offered their services as a broker for the U.S. in its attempt to get a Vietnamese surrender; gone begging for debt aid to the Tokyo Club, a banking consortium dominated by the U.S.; opened the flood gates for a torrent of the Johnson administration's foreign "aid" and agents; issued new guarantees to foreign corporations in Indonesia and received U.S. billionaire ambassador Averill Harriman and Eugene Black, the chairman of the U.S.-controlled World Bank (former director of Chase Manhattan), both of whom recently traveled to Jakarta to advise (i.e., supervise) in the "reconstruction" of Indonesia's economy for the benefit of the U.S. monopolies. □

'Indonesia: Second Greatest Crime of the Century'
by Deirdre Griswold

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Feb. 29: Day of solidarity with Haitian people

By Deirdre Griswold

This year, on the fourth anniversary of the U.S. coup against Haiti, solidarity demonstrations with the Haitian people's struggle will take place in scores of cities around the world.

On Feb. 29, 2004, U.S. Special Forces kidnapped President Jean-Bertrand Aristide at gunpoint and flew him out of Haiti into exile. U.S. Marines then seized control of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, and established a coup regime. Aristide had been extremely popular with Haiti's vast majority, who are the poorest people in the

Western Hemisphere.

Activities will take place this Feb. 29 in many countries, including the ones that sent troops to Haiti to replace the Marines: the U.S., Canada, France and Brazil. Their mission, which was OK'd by the U.N. Security Council, was ostensibly to "restore order"—that is, to make sure Haiti remained under the brutal rule of the elite and their imperialist patrons.

At a time when even prosperous countries are reeling from high energy prices, the people of Haiti are in greater agony than before. Hunger, unemployment and an almost total lack of public services have worsened

with the imposition of IMF/World Bank economic policies. The jails are full of political prisoners, most from Aristide's Lavalas movement.

The call for demonstrations this year, initiated by the Haiti Action Committee, lists several demands, including an end to the U.S./U.N. occupation, freedom for political prisoners, allowing President Aristide to return to Haiti and the bringing to justice of those behind the coup and subsequent massacres of the people.

For more information, go to haitisolidarity.net or haitiaction.net or call the Feb. 29th Organizing Committee at 510-847-8657. □

Cuban election shows workers' democracy

Continued from page 1

announced that he would not remain as president—whatever that means” and that as president, McCain would not give any aid to Cuba until there was greater political freedom.

McCain even went so far as to nastily add, “I hope Fidel has the opportunity to meet Karl Marx very soon.”

Senator Clinton stated: “The new leadership in Cuba will face a stark choice—continue with the failed policies of the past that have stifled democratic freedoms and stunted economic growth, or take a step to bring Cuba into the community of democratic nations. The people of Cuba yearn for the opportunity to get out from under the weight of this authoritarian regime, which has held back 11 million talented and hardworking citizens. The new government should release ... political prisoners and take serious steps towards democracy.”

Senator Obama commented: “Today should mark the end of a dark era in Cuba's history. Cuba's future should be determined by the Cuban people and not by an anti-democratic successor regime. The release of all prisoners of conscience wrongly jailed for standing up for the basic freedoms too long denied to the Cuban people would mark an important break with the past. It's time for those heroes to be released.”

How refreshing, even revolutionary it would have been if Dolores Huerta, who was sitting next to Chelsea Clinton during the debates in Austin, had raised her hand and said: “Wait a minute. What about the innocent Cuban Five heroes who are languishing in U.S. prisons? Their only crime has been to defend their country from U.S. terrorist attacks.” Huerta has in the past spoken out on behalf of the Cuban Five.

Cuba's election process: workers' democracy in action

The fact is that Cuban society is thoroughly more democratic than the U.S. The Cuban people are some of the most opinionated people in the world and they are free to state their opinion. But they are not free to carry out counterrevolutionary activity in collaboration with the U.S. government—which is what the so-called “dissidents” have done. Cuba, after all, has been defending itself from U.S. sabotage, intervention and invasion for almost 50 years.

When Senator Clinton says that the Revolution has held back its citizens, it is proof she knows nothing about Cuba. The educational and cultural levels of Cubans are among the highest in the world. The Cuban government teaches English widely in the country. A government afraid of its people would not teach them the language of its main nemesis.

Cuba's election process is thoroughly a bottom-up process. No candidate needs to come up with millions of dollars to get elected. They do not have to come up with any money at all. No billionaire, as

in the case of New York's Mayor Michael Bloomberg, can get elected solely on the ability to pay for the position. Of course, Cuba has no billionaires.

In January, Cuba held general elections for the National and Provincial Assemblies. More than 8 million people voted in that election, which represents 95 percent of those eligible to vote—one of the highest rates in the world. That is a stark contrast to the U.S., where about 30 percent of those eligible to vote actually do so.

According to Arnold August, a Canadian who has been studying Cuba's elections, “1.2 million citizens were consulted to work out an initial basin of over 55,000 pre-candidates.”

The vote concluded a process that had begun in September 2007. Campaigning is low-key but candidates spend many hours visiting workplaces and communities, talking to people. Voting is secret and not mandatory and the counting of votes is public.

There is no such thing as having to “register” to vote. You just identify yourself and vote. No one is denied the right to vote—as in the U.S., for example, where 5.3 million people either in prison or with a prison record could not vote in 2006. (The Sentencing Project) The minimum voting age in Cuba is 16, lower than in the U.S.

Cuba's president of the National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcón, said about the election process, “The main requirement for candidates is that they be proposed by others and approved by the collective.”

This year's election was a landmark. Women will make up 43 percent of the National Assembly and almost 42 percent of the municipal assemblies. That places Cuba third in the world in percentage of women representatives. The U.S. ranks 71st in the world, with only 16 percent of Congress being women.

Black Cubans make up 36 percent of the assembly. More walks of life are represented there, such as workers and artists. For example, Jorge Gómez Barranco, the coordinator of the well-known music group Moncada, is a member of parliament.

Raúl Castro speaks

As newly elected president of the State Council and the Council of Ministers, Raúl Castro gave a key address at the closing of the first session of the seventh legislature of the National Assembly of People's Power. All who love Cuba should read his talk.

Cuba's enemies cannot appreciate this talk, much less the difficulties of building and maintaining a revolutionary socialist society. Comrade Raúl spoke honestly and soberly about the Revolution, including the need to raise wages.

Here are some excerpts:

“As comrade Fidel alerted us ... last January 14th, the people's mandate to this legislature is very clear: to continue strengthening the Revolution at a historical juncture which demands from us to be dialectic and creative.”

“The composition of the State Council ... raised much expectation both in Cuba and abroad. The most significant was clarified by comrade Fidel in his Message of February 18th. There is very little that I can add to what he said except to express to our people, on behalf of the Revolution's Leadership, our appreciation for the innumerable expressions of serenity, maturity, self-assurance, and the combination of genuine sadness and revolutionary determination.”

“I take on the responsibility entrusted to me deeply convinced that, as I have often said, there is only one Commander in Chief of the Cuban Revolution.”

“The Communist Party, a sure guarantee of the unity of the Cuban nation, is the sole worthy heir to our people's confidence in its leader. It is the top leading force of our State and society as provided in ... our Constitution. ...”

“This conviction shall become especially significant when as a fact of life the generation that founded and forged the Revolution is no longer present. Fortunately, it is not that moment we are living today. Fidel is here, as always, with a very clear mind and his capacity to analyze and foresee perfectly intact and strengthened now that he can dedicate to studying and analyzing the countless hours he previously used to tackle the daily problems.”

“Therefore, with the certainty that I am expressing the will of our people, I appeal to this Assembly, as the supreme body of the State power, to allow me to continue consulting with the maximum leader of the Revolution, comrade Fidel Castro Ruz, the decisions of special transcendence for the future of our nation, basically those associated to defense, foreign policy and the socioeconomic development of the country.”

The talk is available on www.workers.org in its entirety.

When President Bush, the media or any U.S. candidates talk about Cuba, it is from another class position. Cuba's reality is practically on another planet from their worldview.

Those who know and love Cuba know that Fidel's announcement that he would not run again for president marked a sad day. Yet we are confident that the Revolution will prevail at every phase of its long journey.

Fidel is a revolutionary leader the world now sees only occasionally, a deep Marxist thinker who has embraced the liberation of workers and oppressed. That is why he is so loved and respected.

As comrade Raúl reminded us, “Fidel hears the grass growing and sees what is happening around the corner.” This is why, for now, his visible presence will be sorely missed. □

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MUMIA ABU-JAMAL DESDE LA CÁRCEL ESPERANDO SU EJECUCIÓN

FREDERICK DOUGLASS: ¿Libertad para unos o libertad para todos?

Como las campañas presidenciales de la Senadora Hillary Rodham-Clinton (Demócrata de Nueva York), y del Senador Barack Obama (Demócrata de Illinois) continúan como almas que las lleva el diablo por ganar más delegados (y de ese modo la nominación), varios segmentos de la población norteamericana insisten en hacerse esta pregunta: ¿debe sexo, ser considerado en este raro momento histórico?

Algunos han sugerido que la Senadora Clinton, como mujer, debe ser nominada por el retraso de la nación que dió el voto a la mujer sólo en 1920. Dicen éso porque los hombres Negros pudieron votar desde la ratificación de la Enmienda 15 de la Constitución, en 1870.

Naturalmente, ésa es una lectura simplista de la historia de los Estados Unidos, porque pasar una enmienda constitucional fué una cosa, pero, en realidad, la implementación de ese derecho tuvo que esperar casi un siglo en la mitad del país.

Tomó una larga y tortuosa lucha para que el supuesto derecho constitucional a votar se haga realidad. Porque si la Constitución hubiera sido suficiente, ¿porqué tuvo que ser necesario pasar en 1965 el Acta de los Derechos a Votar?



Por LeiLani Dowell

La lucha para liberar al mundialmente reconocido periodista y prisionero político Mumia Abu-Jamal, continúa luego de que la corte racista del estado de Pennsylvania el 19 de febrero de nuevo rechazara su apelación.

Sin embargo, sus partidari@s todavía esperan otra decisión más importante por parte de la Corte de Apelaciones del Tercer Circuito que determinará si se le permite un nuevo juicio, se revoca su condena, o se le re instituye la pena de muerte.

Abu-Jamal fue condenado por la muerte del oficial de la policía, Daniel Faulkner en 1982 a través de una acción política de incriminación falsa y de un juicio totalmente corrupto.

La apelación que fue rechazada el 19 de febrero por la Corte Suprema de Pennsylvania desafiaba una decisión pronunciada en el año 2005 en contra del Acta de Ayuda Post Convicción (PCRA por las siglas en inglés) presentada en su caso.

La petición del PCRA estuvo basada en declaraciones juradas de Yvette Williams y Kenneth Pate, quienes declararon que dos de los testigos claves que testificaron en contra de Abu-Jamal durante su primer juicio luego les confesaron que habían mentido en el juicio. En su testimonio, Williams dijo que había compartido una celda con Cynthia White, quien dijo que la policía de Filadelfia la había coaccionado con amenazas de muerte y ofertas de compensación monetaria para que acusara falsamente a Abu-Jamal como el autor del asesinato. Pate testificó que su hermanastra, Priscilla Durham, una guardia de seguridad en el hospital, le dijo que la policía la presionó para que mintiera diciendo que Mumia se había jactado en el hospital de ser el responsable de la muerte de Faulkner.

A pesar de que estas nuevas revelaciones de soborno de testigos solo se habían conocido poco antes de que fuera presentada la petición del PCRA en el 2003,

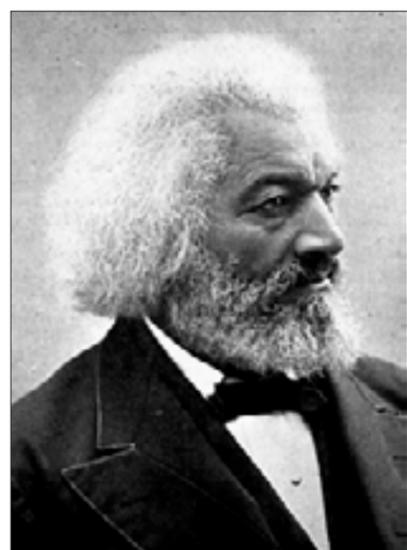
la jueza Pamela Dembe de la Corte de Quejas Comunes [Court of Common Pleas] desestimó la petición por haber estado a destiempo.

La Corte Suprema de Justicia de Pennsylvania está encabezada por el ex fiscal de distrito de Filadelfia Ron Castille, quien ha rehusado abstenerse del caso a pesar del hecho que durante su período como fiscal, luchó en contra de las apelaciones de Abu-Jamal.

Después de la decisión, Hans Bennett, co-fundador de Periodistas para Mumia, entrevistó a varias personas destacadas en la lucha para liberar a Abu-Jamal. Robert R. Bryan, el abogado principal de Abu-Jamal, dijo: "No nos sorprendió porque la corte tiene una historia de no tratar el racismo y el fraude que han predominado en el proceso de enjuiciamiento desde sus comienzos ya hace más de un cuarto de siglo. Al desechar la petición por razones de procedimiento, la corte evitó tratar los hechos apremiantes que establecen que el procesamiento de mi cliente estuvo basado en mentiras, verdades incompletas, e intolerancia."

Otros acontecimientos recientes en el caso de Abu-Jamal incluyen la publicación de fotografías tomadas en el lugar de los disparos que revelan una manipulación policíaca de la escena y desacreditan el testimonio de testigos de la fiscalía. El fotógrafo le había ofrecido las fotos a la fiscalía durante el primer proceso, pero nunca lo llamaron.

L@s organizador@s de la lucha para liberar a Abu-Jamal están pidiendo que la gente se comunique con sus contactos para ponerl@s al día sobre el caso. Pam África del grupo Familia y Amig@s Internacionales Preocupad@s por Mumia Abu-Jamal dijo, "Yo exhorto a tod@s l@s lector@s a que por favor ayuden a luchar contra los prejuicios de los medios de difusión y miren la página Abu-Jamal-News.com para que vean la nueva evidencia fotográfica, bajen la información y la divulguen en este período urgente del caso de Mumia." □



Un gran líder Negro, Frederick Douglass, fué defensor vocal de los derechos de la mujer, y a lo largo de su distinguida carrera pública, tanto antes como después de la Guerra Civil, jamás dejó de serlo.

En efecto, estando tñ cerca de su corazón el amor a la libertad, cuando huyó a Inglaterra para juntar el dinero para comprar legalmente su libertad, usó su tiempo para criticar la condición de los Blancos pobres y de las clases trabajadoras de Inglaterra, Escocia e Irlanda. Douglass escribiría en, The Liberator:

.... Aún cuando estoy más conectado e identificado con una forma del ultrage, de la opresión y de la esclavitud del pueblo, no me puedo permitir ser insensible a los males y sufrimientos de ningún sector de la gran familia humana. ... Yo no solo soy un esclavo norteamericano, soy un hombre, y como tal, estoy obligado a usar mis

facultades en beneficio de toda la humanidad. ... Yo creo que lo más pronto que hagamos conocer los males de todo el género humano, lo más pronto será alcanzada la solución de esos males...

Cuando sus amigos y patrocinadores británicos colectaron la bonita suma de \$750, Douglass compró su libertad, y, como prueba, el recibo de su propia compra fué puesto en sus manos.

Cuando volvió a los Estados Unidos, escribió en su periódico, The North Star, (La Estrella del Norte) y anunció en una de las convenciones públicas femeninas, que, "Los derechos no tienen sexo."

Cuando Elizabeth Cady Stanton, activista por los derechos de la mujer, presentó en 1848 la resolución por el sufragio femenino, Douglass fué el único hombre, Negro o Blanco, que se puso de pié, apoyó la moción, y dijo que la igualdad política es necesaria para la completa liberación de la mujer.

En The North Star, una semana después de la convención, Douglass reiteró su apoyo, escribiendo:

Estando como estamos en esta atalaya de la libertad humana, estamos obligados a expresar nuestra aprobación de un movimiento, no importa lo humilde que sea, para mejorar y elevar el carácter de cualquier miembro de la familia humana. ... Somos libres para decir que en lo que respecta a derechos políticos, estamos convencidos que la mujer tiene derecho a reclamar todo lo que garantizamos al hombre. ... Nuestra doctrina dice que, "el derecho no tiene sexo!" Nosotros entonces deseamos humildemente muy buena suerte a las mujeres que son parte de este movimiento.

Hay muy pocos líderes Negros, sea que se llamen radicales, liberales o aún conservadores, que no buscan inspiración en las palabras y en la sabiduría de Frederick Douglass. Como activista, como agitador, como periodista incomparable, como poderoso portavoz, él tuvo muy pocos verdaderamente iguales.

Frederick Douglass fué, sin lugar a dudas, un líder, no un seguidor.

Que él guía nuestros pasos hoy, después de más de un siglo de su muerte, es un testimonio a la claridad de su visión y al poder de su espíritu.

Douglass no sirvió los intereses del poder. El lo criticó. Los acosó. El usó sus talentos para hacer que el poder se acerque, que vaya mucho más cerca, a una expresión más humana.

Hoy vivimos en un mundo que todavía lleva sus huellas.

Fuente: Frederick Douglass, *Esclavitud y La Guerra Civil: Selecciones de sus Escritos (On Slavery and the Civil War: Selections From His Writings. Mineola, N.Y., Dover Publications, 2003, pp. 5-6, 13.)*

Corte de Pennsylvania rechaza apelación de Mumia

Carta de René González a Fidel

19 de febrero del 2008
Año 50 de la Revolución

Querido Fidel:

Por entre la maraña mediática de deseos malsanos, ignorancia autoinfligida, y sueño de reconquista, nos llega la noticia de su decisión de no continuar al frente del Gobierno y de nuestras Fuerzas Armadas.

Una sociedad imperial, moralmente decrepita, no puede entender una decisión dictada por su sentido del deber al revolucionario de toda una vida. Mucho pedir sería que comprendan cuán profundo ha calado en los cubanos la semilla de su ejemplo, que inspirará a incontables generaciones de combatientes en todo el mundo cuando ya ni usted, ni nosotros, ni nuestros patéticos enemigos de hoy, estemos físicamente en él.

Hace ya 55 años que un humilde soldado del honor, convencido de que las ideas no se matan, preservó su vida para la posteridad. A quienes hoy cuentan con los dedos, atónitos y apesadumbrados, los sucesivos emperadores humillados por la resistencia de nuestro pueblo, con usted al frente, no les alcanzarán los pelos para contar a los conquistadores, tiranos y servidores imperiales que habrán de ser sepultados por sus ideas.

Un abrazo,
René González Schwerert

