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Secret World Bank report Millions go hungry to feed biofuel biz

By Leilani Dowell

At a time of increased hunger worldwide, a confidential World Bank report has revealed that the overwhelmingly largest factor in rising food prices is the production of ethanol for fuel production.

More than a third of the corn produced in the U.S. and about half of the vegetable oils in the European Union are now used to produce biofuel instead of food.

Rising food costs have affected workers around the world. Rebellions over the cost of food have taken place in no less than 15 countries. The head of the World Bank has stated that as many as 100 million people may be pushed into poverty and hunger as a result of the price increases.

The secret report, leaked to the British Guardian, asserts that a whopping 75 percent of the rise in global food prices can be attributed to biofuel production. "Without the increase in biofuels, global wheat and maize stocks would not have declined appreciably and price increases due to other factors would have been moderate," it states. The Guardian described the assessment as "the most detailed analysis of the crisis so far, carried

out by an internationally respected economist at the global financial body." (July 4)

In another Guardian article, Benjamin Senauer, a professor of applied economics at the University of Minnesota, calculates the consequences of ethanol production using more modest figures from the International Food Policy Research Institute. "We can combine IFPRI's estimate that biofuels account for 30 percent of the rise in grain prices and the World Bank president's figure of 100 million more hungry people due to higher food prices. This combination suggests that biofuels are responsible for 30 million more people going hungry in the world. ... If the leaked World Bank figures are more accurate, then that figure could be even higher." (July 4)

The report was leaked to the press as leaders of the Group of 8 industrialized countries were preparing to meet in Hokkaido, Japan, where a major focus was biofuel production.

Senior development sources told the Guardian they believed the report had not been officially released to avoid embarrassing the Bush administration—which has claimed that biofuels contribute to less than 3 percent of the price increases, and has

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Children from the MOVE family at July 4th demonstration for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

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Welcome home, Ed Lewinson!

By Sara Flounders
New York

Political activist Ed Lewinson returned home July 1 after serving a 90-day sentence at the federal prison in Elkton, Ohio. Lewinson is 78 years old and has been blind from birth. He has been active in the movement for almost 60 years.

Lewinson was one of a dozen people arrested at last November's SOA Watch protest for crossing onto the U.S. Army base at Fort Benning, Ga. More than 20,000 people participated in the annual event. It was Lewinson's fourth arrest at the protests, which have exposed the Pentagon's training of Latin American military officers in torture techniques.

When offered a more lenient sentence, he insisted that all defendants be treated and sentenced equally. He also says he wants activists to focus on other prisoners who were in far worse conditions.

Lewinson was forced to serve most of his sentence in the Special Housing Unit, known as the "hole," under punitive lockdown conditions. The prison officials kept him locked down 23 hours a day on weekdays with a one-hour walk in a small closed yard. On weekends he was locked down around the clock.

It wasn't because he was accused of being disruptive. He was locked down simply because the prison had no facilities for blind prisoners.

After activists from School of the Americas Watch, New Jersey Peace Action and International Action Center waged a three-week campaign of letters and calls to the prison for Lewinson to be released into the general population, he was finally transferred to less restrictive conditions for a few days. But then, claiming it was inconvenient for the prison, the authorities put him back in the highly restrictive lockdown.

At the International Action Center here on July 9, he was given a warm and rousing welcome by a meeting of activists. Lewinson had arrived to help put out a national mailing by the Stop War On Iran campaign. The gathering was a combined welcome back celebration for Lewinson and a mobilizing and strategy meeting for Aug. 2 demonstrations opposing any U.S. war on Iran. For many years Lewinson has helped on mailings and phone banking, walked countless picket lines and been in the forefront of countless struggles against racism and war.

Lewinson says his prison time increased his determination and reaffirmed his thinking that people need to be ready to do whatever is necessary in order to make an important political point. He said this is an example he learned from the Freedom Riders in Mississippi.

"While nobody wants to go to jail, social change will only come about by the commitment of many, many people. I hope that my acts contributed to people realizing the need for real social change," he says.

Welcome home, Ed Lewinson! □

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Don White: committed activist

By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

The anti-war and social justice movement of Los Angeles lost a great friend and committed activist when Don White, 71, passed away at his home on June 19. Anyone who went to progressive activities here over the last 20 years remembers Don shouting an orientation for security volunteers or making people laugh as he carried out a fundraising pitch.



Don White speaking in support of Haitians

White's activism began, more or less, in college with protests against the House Un-American Activities Committee. When he moved to Los Angeles in 1963 to teach history, he became involved in the struggle for equal education and participated in every teachers' strike.

But it was his experiences in Guatemala during a 1976 trip that compelled him to spend the rest of his life organizing against U.S. imperialism. During the war in El Salvador, he often traveled on fact-finding missions at risk to his own safety; he became an early member of the Los Angeles Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador. For years he traveled to protests in Georgia demanding closure of the School of the Americas, known for training Latin American military figures in methods of torture and assassination.

White played a part in the early sanctuary movement and, until his death, took part in protests against Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids and the separation of immigrant families that they cause.

When the CIA was exposed for selling crack in South Central L.A. to fund the contras in Nicaragua, White worked in a coalition called "Crack the CIA" that mobi-

lized many demonstrations. He helped organize for the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle and for D2K protests during the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles.

More recently, White linked up with Global Women's Strike and the International Action Center in January 2006 to organize a mass public meeting in solidarity with Cuba and Venezuela that drew hundreds. He was part of a local steering committee when the Troops Out Now Coalition mobi-

lized a week of anti-war activity culminating in a mass march and rally in September 2007.

Don White was active in the Ad Hoc Working Group on Haiti, where he was a constant presence at weekly vigils calling for the safe return of Haitian human rights activist Lovinsky Pierre Antoine. He was also a proud founding member of the Coalition to End Israeli Apartheid—Los Angeles, which strongly advocates for the Palestinian people's right to return to their homeland.

An invitation for his 70th birthday party was sent out by actor Martin Sheen, but White agreed there would be one only if it could be a fundraiser for continuing the fight. And so it was.

White leaves behind his brother Dennis White and sister-in-law Harriet White, their children and grandchildren, and many activist friends across the U.S. and in El Salvador. Several on-air tributes have been aired on Pacifica radio's KPFFK, and a public memorial will be held Aug. 10 in a church where White made numerous speeches and fundraising pitches for justice and an end to imperialist war. □

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As Wall Street talks bankruptcy

What can autoworkers do to protect jobs & pensions?

By Jerry Goldberg
Detroit

With U.S. automobile sales plummeting nationwide, Wall Street is raising the possibility that both General Motors and Chrysler may enter bankruptcy in the near future. The questions for autoworkers, and especially the tens of thousands who were essentially forced to take early retirement in recent years, are how bankruptcy will affect them and what they can do to protect their rights.

The bankruptcy specter was raised after June sales dropped 35.9 percent at Chrysler, 27.8 percent at Ford and 18.2 percent (despite a deep-discount sales program) at General Motors.

Significantly, Toyota and Nissan, whose U.S. sales had actually risen in recent months due to their dominance in the small-car market, also reported steep sales drops—21.4 percent at Toyota and 17.7 percent at Nissan.

These statistics reflect the impact of the recession on all auto sales, on top of the collapse of the truck and SUV market due to overproduction and rising gas prices.

In the wake of these sales figures, the price of GM stock fell to its lowest level in 54 years. A Merrill Lynch analyst downgraded the stock to “underperform” from “buy,” stating that “bankruptcy is not impossible” if the auto industry continues to deteriorate. By contrast, an analyst from J.P. Morgan said GM was unlikely to go bankrupt, while Chrysler was more likely to face imminent bankruptcy.

While auto sales are plummeting in the U.S., sales in developing nations seem to be on the rise. GM set record second-quarter sales in Russia, Brazil, China and India. Chrysler announced record international sales as well.

Of course, not one article in the capi-

talist press has focused on the potentially catastrophic consequences for autoworkers if GM and/or Chrysler file for bankruptcy.

What happens to pensions?

In the past few years, tens of thousands of autoworkers took early retirement as the auto companies used buyouts to drastically trim their workforces. Under the UAW contracts a worker can retire with a full pension after 30 years of service—though this is no longer the case for new hires. Hence, workers as young as 48 years of age, faced with the deterioration of their job situations and encouraged by the UAW leadership, took advantage of the buyouts and opted for early retirement.

What will happen to these workers' pensions if either GM or Chrysler goes bankrupt? During a bankruptcy, the corporation typically stops putting money into its pension fund. The Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, a quasi-governmental agency, takes over the pensions, which are vested under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). The PBGC generally pays only about 80 percent of the pension liability.

For retirees under 65 years of age, the PBGC pays even less. For example, in 2008, the maximum guaranteed amount for a pension assumed by the PBGC was \$4,312.50 per month for a 65-year-old worker, but only \$1,366.88 for a 48-year-old retiree.

Thus, in the event of bankruptcy, the pensions of younger UAW retirees could be reduced as much as 70 percent. And that is assuming that the PBGC is solvent enough to cover these pensions!

Benefits are not vested—that is, not fully guaranteed as a legal right—under ERISA. That means no quasi-governmental agency makes up the loss of benefits for retirees whose company goes bankrupt.

No agency makes up the loss of benefits for retirees whose company goes bankrupt. Generally these retirees lose their health & benefit plans

Generally these retirees lose their health and benefit plans.

GM had promised to cover retiree benefits for workers at Delphi, a manufacturer of GM parts, as well as its own employees.

It was to avoid the potentially catastrophic consequences of bankruptcy, causing retiree benefits to disappear, that the UAW opted in the last contract to take over payment of retiree benefits through a Voluntary Employee Benefit Association. The VEBA is to be initially funded by contributions from the auto companies in the amount of \$35 billion from GM and \$8.8 billion from Chrysler and then operated by the UAW.

However, the VEBAs are not scheduled to go into effect until January 2010. If GM or Chrysler goes bankrupt before 2010, will the payments to fund the VEBAs and make them operational be made? Or will they be liquidated in the bankruptcy proceedings?

In the case of GM, \$4.4 billion of its VEBA payment is to be in the form of company stock. With that stock falling to record lows, the VEBA, which under optimum conditions was underfunded by \$20 billion relative to current health-care costs, will have even less funds available to maintain health-care benefits for retirees and their families.

Of course, bankruptcy would impact not only retired autoworkers. The UAW made

unprecedented concessions in the last contract, agreeing to a two-tiered wage scale with new hires making one-half the wages of current workers in exchange for job guarantees. Under bankruptcy, those job guarantees would be eliminated, and union membership would shrink even more.

In fact, the recession has already made mincemeat of those job guarantees. GM announced 17,000 layoffs last month, a violation of at least the spirit of the contract.

The UAW leadership has been silent in the face of this bankruptcy threat and the dire consequences it could mean for the workers and retirees. It is critical that the rank and file be on the alert and begin organizing now to meet this attack.

Bankruptcy calls into question the ownership of the means of production. The courts must appoint a “trustee” to assume control while the proceedings go on. It was the auto bosses who in part brought on the current crisis by refusing to invest their record profits from the sale of trucks and SUVs into developing fuel-efficient, low-cost cars and other means of transportation. It's time for the workers to assert control of the industry to protect their jobs and benefits and retool the plants based on production for need, not just short-run profits.

The UAW and its allies should be prepared to demand that they become the trustee that assumes control of the auto companies if bankruptcy ensues. Most important, the autoworkers should prepare now to implement this demand with plant takeovers and occupations to defend their jobs and benefits.

Jerry Goldberg was a Ford assembly-line worker and member of UAW 900 for 12 years. He also was an organizer of the Job Is a Right Campaign.

Women hit utility shutoffs, foreclosures

By Phebe Eckfeldt
Boston

The NSTAR Electric Co. was the focus of an angry picket line July 3 initiated by the Women's Fightback Network and the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

This greedy corporation, with assets of \$7.8 billion, sent 100,000 Massachusetts residents electric and gas utility shutoff notices at the beginning of May. NSTAR earned \$59.2 million in the first quarter of 2008 but was shutting off people owing as little as \$100.

Women from WFN and FIST and their supporters from the International Action Center demonstrated outside the gates of the NSTAR plant. It's on a busy thoroughfare across from a big shopping mall frequented by workers and low-income people from the mainly Black and Latin@ community of Dorchester.

Hearing chants of “Shut off the war, not our lights; affordable food, fuel, housing is a right,” people leaned out of their cars and buses to read the banner and placards. One placard read, “Honk to stop utility shutoffs” and another, “Foreclose the war, not our homes.” There was an almost continuous response of blaring horns, waves and thumbs-up in this heavily foreclosed neighborhood. People took flyers through car windows and one bus driver grabbed a bunch and handed them out to the passengers.

It's no wonder the response was so

strong. Shutoffs are predicted to increase by at least 20 percent this summer, leaving thousands without lights, refrigeration, fans or air conditioning. (Boston Herald, June 29)

Action for Boston Community Development spokesperson Susan Kooperstein said, “The numbers are pretty staggering. We're talking about thousands of households that are facing shutoffs. When you combine that with the increase of food costs, health care and all the other basic necessities, it's a downward spiral.”

WFN made clear its solidarity with NSTAR workers and their struggle for good working conditions and a decent contract next year. The group also targeted Big Oil and the Pentagon in a flyer handed out to the community: “Why should the utility and oil companies make huge profits while workers struggle to get work, keep a roof over their heads, feed their families and keep the lights on at home? ... Last week, Congress gave the Pentagon \$162 billion more for the war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan. The current cost of the war is now over \$650 billion. ... It is time for us to come together to demand money for food, fuel and community needs, not for a war which profits greedy corporations, politicians, military contractors and Big Oil.”

In a press release, WFN charged, “We do not have to stand by while the oil companies drive up rates by deliberately withholding oil production and closing refineries. They get billions in windfall



WWW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Passing cars honked their approval of protest message.

profits. We get price hikes that are especially hard for women and communities of color.” The group demanded the governor “declare a state of emergency and implement a moratorium on shutoffs immediately” and that utility prices be rolled back substantially.

After picketing for an hour and a half, the demonstrators marched across the street to the Stop and Shop where WFN kicked off a petition campaign to the governor, collecting signatures from many shoppers who were eager to sign and to talk.

The petition reads: “In light of over 100,000 utility shutoff notices in Massachusetts in May, skyrocketing food and fuel prices, record foreclosures and layoffs, we the undersigned demand that Gov. Deval Patrick use his executive powers under the Massachusetts Constitution to declare an economic state of emergency in Massachusetts and that he implement an emergency executive order to stop utility shutoffs, roll back food and fuel prices by 50 percent and freeze them, and stop foreclosures.” □

Health care in crisis, part 4:

The health-care revolution workers deserve

By David Hoskins

Workers inside the United States are suffering at the hands of a capitalist health-care system.

A six-country study performed by the Commonwealth Fund found that the United States scored “particularly poorly on its ability to promote healthy lives, and on the provision of care that is safe and coordinated.”

A 2008 study published in Health Affairs journal analyzed the health systems of 19 countries. The study found that the United States had the highest rate of preventable deaths before the age of 75. The study concluded that as many as 101,000 deaths a year could be prevented by ensuring that all patients receive quality care in a timely manner.

The human face of under-investment in public health care came to light with the recent circulation of a video by ACLU lawyers showing 49-year-old Esmine Green writhing on the floor and then dying in a Brooklyn psychiatric emergency waiting room, where she had been waiting for 24 hours to be seen by a doctor.

Socialized medicine offers hope to workers

Right-wing politicians regularly call every government attempt at expanding access to health care “socialized medicine,” as though that’s a bad thing. This is generally a mischaracterization meant to derail even modest attempts at reform. Despite the right-wing’s pejorative use of the word, however, real socialized medicine remains workers’ greatest hope of health-care justice.

Socialized medicine is a medical care system that is publicly financed and government administered. Hospitals and clinics are government operated with doctors and nurses working as public employees.

The Soviet Union established the

early benchmarks for socialized medicine’s achievements following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. After World War II, a number of European capitalist countries adopted some of the features of socialized medicine because of the intense competition between the two social systems that became the Cold War.

Soviet health care was a comprehensive system that provided factory clinics, industrial hygiene programs, neighborhood polyclinics, and local hospitals at no cost to the patient. The Soviet health-care system was recognized for the great strides it made in battling infectious diseases—such as tuberculosis and typhus fever, which had periodically ravaged workers and peasants in czarist Russia.

A 2006 OECD report found that post-Soviet Russia’s move to a more market-based, insurance-driven system has proven disastrous, with declining life expectancy and dramatic increases in deaths from preventable diseases.

The Cuban Revolution in 1959 made possible a complete overhaul and rebuilding of the medical system in that country along socialist lines.

In 1960 revolutionary physician Che Guevara outlined the aims of Cuban health care in his essay “On Revolutionary Medicine.” Since that time Cuba’s system has developed into a pinnacle of achievement in socialized medicine.

Article 50 of Cuba’s Constitution establishes free health care as a right of all citizens. World Health Organization statistics demonstrate the superiority of socialized medicine. Cuba’s infant mortality rate of five deaths per thousand live births is lower than the United States, where there are seven deaths per thousand. Cuba has twice as many physicians per capita as the United States and its life expectancy is 16 years higher than the average in its region.

Socialized medicine in Cuba has accomplished all this while spending just \$251 per

capita on health care, compared to \$7,129 per capita in the United States. Cuba has protected the integrity of its health-care system even while enduring a punitive economic blockade by the United States.

A 1997 American Association of World Health report titled “Denial of Food and Medicine” outlines the difficulties deliberately imposed by the United States on Cuba’s health system.

In 1992 the U.S. Congress passed the so-called Cuban Democracy Act. It is little more than an attack on Cuba’s socialized health-care system, which the World Health Organization had praised in 1989 as a “model for the world.”

The act imposed a ban on subsidiary trade with Cuba that severely constrains Cuba’s ability to import medicine and equipment from third-country sources. Shippers are discouraged from delivering medical equipment to Cuba by a provision in the act prohibiting ships from loading or unloading cargo in U.S. ports for 180 days after delivering cargo of any type to Cuba. Licensing and other restrictions severely restrain even charitable contributions to Cuba.

Despite these inhumane attacks, Cuba has managed to exceed the United States on key health indicators while sending thousands of its own doctors to provide medical care to the world’s poor and oppressed.

“¡Salud!,” a recent film highlighting Cuba’s accomplishments in health care, estimates that this small country has approximately 28,000 health professionals now providing care in 68 countries. Cuban doctors and nurses serve the poorest of the poor in countries like Honduras, Haiti and Guatemala. Another 21,000 international students are studying free of charge in Cuba’s medical schools on the condition that they provide care to underserved populations in their country of origin.

Workers and oppressed people living in the United States would be well served by a socialized medicine system similar to Cuba’s. If the crisis in U.S. health care has demonstrated anything, it is that capitalist health care places private health industry profits before patient care in a way that threatens the lives of many thousands each year and leaves many more in suffering and pain. □

Coca-Cola workers strike in California

More than 600 drivers and warehouse staff at Coca-Cola Enterprises in San Diego walked off the job July 1 in solidarity with workers in nearby Oceanside, who went on strike June 30 to get parity with other CCE workers in Southern California. The strike affected deliveries at more than 800 stores in the area. To add teeth to the strike, the Teamster-represented workers called on the public to boycott all Coca-Cola products until the workers’ just demands are met. Of course, many unionists and progressives already boycott Coca-Cola products because the company has been accused of links to the murder of unionists in Colombia.

Letter Carriers support Colombian tribunal

Branch 214 of the Letter Carriers union, which has 2,700 members in San Francisco, passed a resolution July 2 in solidarity with the struggle to defend labor organizations in Colombia. The resolution specifically supported the Peoples Permanent Tribunal hearing in Bogotá from July 21 to 23 “to expose the continuing murderous campaign by government-supported paramilitary death squads against trade union activists in Colombia.” It also joined with the AFL-CIO in opposing the Colombian Free Trade Agreement and any additional U.S. aid to Colombia until the government there vigorously prosecutes and punishes those who have systematically killed more than 2,500 unionists over the last 20 years.

Wis. boilermakers on strike

Members of Boilermakers Local 487 voted to turn down the second offer of Kewaunee Fabrications, a subsidiary of Oshkosh Corp., on June 18. On strike since May 12, the workers figured out that a 3.5 percent increase over four years would only amount to a 15-cent-an-hour raise after a hike in health-care payments. Union members have been picketing entrances to the factory 24/7 in alternating six-hour shifts after scabs were brought in on May 19. (Kewaunee County News, June 23) Supporters can send support resolutions and needed monetary donations to Boilermakers Local 487, attention John Zielonka, 523 Harrison St., Kewaunee, WI 54216; phone 920-246-1692.

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Millions go hungry

Continued from page 1

attempted to link higher food prices to increased demand in India and China.

Fidel was right!

Early on in the push for ethanol use in the U.S., Fidel Castro, Cuba’s revolutionary leader and at that time president, condemned the “sinister idea of turning foodstuffs into fuel.” Predicting the situation now at hand, Castro stated: “Let this formula be applied to the Third World countries, and the world will see how many hungry people on this planet will cease to consume corn. What is worse, let the poor countries receive some financing to produce ethanol from corn or any other foodstuff and very soon not a single tree will be left standing to protect humanity from climate change.”

The use of ethanol has served as a convenient ruse for politicians, auto corporations and the oil industry—who all want

to be perceived as “green-friendly” and yet still make a profit off their endeavors. Yet an April 2007 editorial in the London Economist entitled “Castro was right” pointed out that corn-based ethanol isn’t even better for the environment, in that it requires almost as much energy to produce, if not more, as it releases when it is burned. (April 7)

Castro had noted that the production of ethanol “will happen after a great number of investments, which could only be afforded by the most powerful companies whose operations are based on the consumption of electricity and fuel.”

Biofuel use not only shifts the production of grain for food to fuel, but it encourages farmers to use more of their land for biofuel production—particularly in the U.S., with large subsidies coming from the government. With less land to produce these other foodstuffs, their prices

Continued on page page 5

PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

Wal-Mart guilty millions of times!

A state judge in Minnesota ruled on July 1 that Wal-Mart violated state laws on rest breaks and other wage matters more than 2 million times and could face more than \$2 billion in fines. The judge threatened to impose a \$1,000 penalty for each violation. The judge also ruled on June 30 that Wal-Mart owed \$6.5 million to 56,000 current and former employees because of contractual violations, including failure to give workers rest breaks at least 1.5 million times. The class-action suit was filed nearly seven years ago. The second phase of the trial will be held in October to determine punitive damages and the amount of statutory penalties.

This case is one of 70 in which employees charge Wal-Mart with making them work off the clock or miss required breaks.

Three strikes averted in NYC; one continues

New York could have been renamed "strike city" on July 4 except that nearly 9,000 workers at the utility monopoly Con Edison, hundreds of Broadway actors and stage managers, and the staff at the free weekly Village Voice were all able to negotiate decent contracts before then. But one strike of more than 400 concrete-truck drivers represented by Teamsters Local 282 has had the real estate biz in a tizzy since it started July 1. The strike has shut down the multibillion-dollar construction industry in all five boroughs, including sites like Freedom Tower. But the carpenters, electricians, wire lathers and other highly skilled workers are all supporting the drivers because, as one union official put it, "They're entitled to what they can get." (New York Times, June 30-July 3)

SAG deadline fast approaching

The contract of 122,000 members of the Screen Actors Guild, who act in television shows and movies, will soon expire. Even though SAG has been in negotiations for months, no agreement has been reached. A strike is not likely until after Aug. 1, however, because before SAG can call a strike, a strike authorization vote must get 75 percent approval. Stay tuned. (New York Times, June 30) □

increase as well.

It also encourages farmers to use conservation lands to produce more ethanol—the disastrous effects of which were seen in the Midwest flooding, where lands filled with naturally water-absorbing grasses had been pulled out of conservation programs to allow more acreage for corn.

And with the floods come a new concern for working people. Should crops be affected by extreme weather—and preliminary estimates indicate that as much as 15 percent less corn will be produced this year because of the floods—the potential exists for gas prices to increase even more as the push to add ethanol to gasoline grows. The New York Times reports that the floods helped the price of ethanol increase by 19 percent in one month. (July 1)

Since the World Bank report was leaked, the EU has made moves to reduce its targets for biofuel use, while the U.S. has not. For many suffering under the weight of high food prices—victims to the chaos of capitalist "planning"—the damage has already been done. □

Gov't abuses grand jury system to indict Al-Arian

Special to Workers World

If a prisoner in the U.S. has been found guilty, the Constitution says that person should not be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment. Shouldn't this be even more so if the prisoner is innocent, if no charges have been proven against him or her? But the only way one can describe the authorities' treatment of Dr. Sami Al-Arian is cruel, although in the U.S. it is all too usual.

On June 26, after he had spent over three years in prison, and two years after both the defense and the state had agreed on a deal to release and deport Al-Arian, the U.S. authorities brought new charges against him: two counts of contempt of court. His supporters have said this attempt to force him to testify is a clear perjury trap. Since there is no limit on sentencing for contempt, the court may sentence this father of five to life in prison.

Al-Arian, while a tenured professor

at the University of South Florida, was arrested in 2003. At that time, Attorney General John Ashcroft called this seizure the "arrest of the most dangerous financier of Islamic Jihad in the Western world." What this Palestinian man had done was raise funds for orphans and charities back home.

Through the last five years, his case has been viewed as one of the most extreme examples of racist and anti-Muslim persecution. The Justice Department spent \$50 million prosecuting the case. After a six-month trial, a jury found no evidence that any crime had been committed.

Despite the failure to convict and in violation of the terms of release and deportation set by the Justice Department in the 2006 agreement, the authorities continued to refuse to release Al-Arian. Instead, they have tried to use and abuse the grand jury system to force him to give testimony against others. This he courageously has refused to do.

Supporters of the persecuted comput-

er scientist are circulating a petition on his behalf. It can be found on the site of the International Action Center at iacenter.org. The petition, signed by human-rights and civil liberties activists and leaders of the Muslim community in the United States, demands that Al-Arian be released immediately.

Signers include, among others, human-rights activist Ramsey Clark; Laila Al-Arian, daughter of Sami Al-Arian; Muhammad Salim Akhtar, chair of American Muslim Alliance—Midwest Region; Malaak Shabazz, daughter of El Hajj Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X); Imam Talib Abdur-Rashid; Naib Ameer, MANA; Heidi Boghosian, executive director of the National Lawyers' Guild; Ghazi KhanKan, American Muslim Alliance; Aliya Latif, civil rights director of Council on American-Islamic Relations; and Sara Flounders, co-director of International Action Center.

For more information on Al-Arian, see freesamialarian.com. □

Racist baseball owners sideline home-run great

By Susan Schnur
Cleveland

Rosie Bonds-Kreidler presented a spirited defense of her nephew, baseball great Barry Bonds, at a panel here on June 27. It was organized by Mike Gimbel as part of the Society for American Baseball Research's annual convention.

Gimbel has written extensively about the obvious collusion by baseball team owners to keep Barry Bonds out of the game. Gimbel pointed out how ridiculous the U.S. Congress has looked, carrying out a high-profile investigation of steroid use in baseball while giving its blessing as the U.S. destroyed a sovereign nation (Iraq) and hung its leader, bombed Afghanistan to smithereens, covered up who really ordered the atrocities at Abu Ghraib prison, and so far has let the bankers off the hook for the foreclosure crisis sweeping

across the country.

While Bonds, the greatest home-run hitter in the history of the game, has never been found guilty of any crime, he is today sitting on the sidelines after being cut loose by the San Francisco Giants. Even while under immense pressure last year, Bonds maintained his focus and broke one of baseball's most coveted records—Henry Aaron's career home-run record.

Rosie Bonds started her presentation by talking about diapering little Barry, son of her brother, Bobby Bonds, a baseball great in his own right. Many members of the family are great athletes, including Rosie Bonds herself, who ran in the 1964 Olympics. She spoke about making friends around the world through sports and learning about other cultures while competing in various host countries. "That is how you make friends, not

by bombing and occupying other people's land," said Bonds.

Bonds stated emphatically that she believes in her nephew's assertion about not knowingly using illegal supplements. She said she thought people were supposed to be innocent until proven guilty. The only reason Bonds sees for the hideous treatment of her nephew is that he is an African American who has made lots of money playing ball. She asked the audience, "Who turns down money at work, especially when the boss is making billions off your skill?"

The panel was held at the Baseball Heritage Museum in Cleveland, Ohio, which focuses on the history of African-American baseball in the days before Jackie Robinson of the National League and Larry Doby of the American League were signed and broke the hold of segregationists in major league baseball. □

Limbaugh's \$400 M contract

Rich reward their hateful lackeys

By Caleb T. Maupin

Big money never lacks a voice. The corporations and bankers are very good at getting their message across. When it doesn't come through headlines attacking liberation movements across the globe, or nightly news broadcasts painting pictures of "progress" in Iraq, there is always the interesting world of talk radio.

Rush Limbaugh is known for his hateful right-wing rhetoric. His favorite targets for verbal assaults include feminists, Black people, the LGBT community, the poor, and anyone politically to the left of George W. Bush.

Limbaugh's daily three-hour rants fill a range of topics, including denial of global warming, downplaying poverty, and accusing those who disagree with his views of being "un-American."

The ruling class of bankers and capi-

talists has recently rewarded Limbaugh for his hate speech. Through the Clear Channel network, which gets a lucrative income from corporate advertisers, they gave him a contract valued at more than \$400 million.

This contract would award Limbaugh \$38 million a year for the next eight years, plus a "nine figure signing bonus," but the official amount was undisclosed. (Entertainment Weekly, July 3)

Radio journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, who exposed this system rather than defend it, was not awarded with such wealth but was framed up for murder. He sits on death row.

Rev. Edward Pinkney of Benton Harbor, Mich., was not rewarded for his sermons, which spoke opposition to the powers that be. He is now sentenced to spend years in prison for daring to quote scripture in reference to a judge.

Even the liberal democratic voices of

Air America were forced into bankruptcy—not for lack of listeners, but because the private capitalists whom the radio network depends upon for advertising income didn't like what they were saying.

This commentator was removed from his college newspaper's staff last spring, the only explanation being that he had "ravid [sic] political opinions."

But Rush Limbaugh, who spews the pro-Bush message, which according to the latest polls reflects the views of less than 28 percent of the U.S. population, at most, now finds himself on 600 radio stations. His ranting and raving reach 14 million people daily.

This should shed some light on the beliefs of those who think that in the U.S. there is a "free marketplace of ideas." While ideas are clearly subject to a "marketplace," the "free" part of this common cliché deserves a bit of reconsidering. □

Fourth of July protest stands up for Mumia

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

As tourists lined up to visit the Liberty Bell here, chants of “Brick by brick, wall by wall; we’re gonna free Mumia Abu-Jamal” echoed across Independence Plaza. It was the annual gathering to demand justice for an innocent political prisoner who has spent 26 years on Pennsylvania’s death row.

On July 1, 1982, Judge Albert Sabo, known as the “hanging judge,” encouraged jurors in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal to return a verdict “quickly,” in time to “enjoy your Fourth of July holiday.” On July 2, a guilty verdict came in. On July 3, Abu-Jamal was sentenced to death.

By July 4, the jurists were home to celebrate with their families. While evidence of Mumia Abu-Jamal’s innocence clearly exists, jurors were never shown it, nor has any court of law agreed to hear it to this day.

Twenty-six years later the people are still demanding justice, vowing that the Fourth of July will never be celebrated in Philadelphia without protest until Mumia is free.

Children of members of the MOVE organization drove home this point by carrying signs reading “9,491 days since Mumia Abu-Jamal was illegally sentenced to death.” Nine-year-old Chad Africa told the crowd, “Police murdered my fam-

ily and they are still murdering political activists.”

Pam Africa of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal addressed the crowd on the links between struggles for political prisoners like Mumia and the MOVE 9 and the war in Iraq. “Today the government uses bombs and planes against innocent people in Iraq, while 40 years ago the Philadelphia police used hand grenades and thousands of pounds of ammunition in Powelton Village against the MOVE family.

“Just like with Mumia, there is evidence that MOVE members are innocent, but the court won’t parole them if they don’t admit ‘remorse.’ They’re not guilty—what do they have to apologize for? In 1978 the state was waging a war on the Black community. Today our sons and daughters are sent overseas to fight for these same forces.”

Several hip-hop artists provided edutainment for the participants. They included Taina Asili, Rebel Diaz and Tha Truth.

Attorneys for Abu-Jamal are currently appealing recent rulings by the Federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals. The rulings upheld a 2000 decision by Judge William Yohn to lift the death sentence, yet denied Abu-Jamal’s appeals for a new trial based on racism in jury selection and prosecutorial misconduct in his 1982 hearing and 1995 appeal. □

Memphis cops brutally beat trans woman

By **LeiLani Dowell**

Yet another incident of police brutality has been captured on videotape—this time against a transgender woman in Memphis, Tenn.

While in the booking room of the Shelby County Criminal Justice Center in Memphis on Feb. 12, Duanna Johnson was taunted by a police officer, who called her over to be fingerprinted by using an anti-LGBT slur and the term “he/she.” When Johnson courageously told the officer that she would not respond to that language, the officer put on gloves, wrapped a set of handcuffs around his knuckles and proceeded to beat Johnson with them.

The videotape, which was leaked to the press in June, shows an officer holding Johnson’s shoulders while another officer continuously beats Johnson across the face and head with the handcuffs. She is then maced, handcuffed and left on the

ground. A nurse appears later in the tape, only to walk past Johnson—who suffered a gash to her head—and treat one of the officers for a scrape.

Johnson is now filing a \$1.3 million lawsuit against the City of Memphis. Her lawyer, Murray Wells, told local WMC-TV on June 18, “We were optimistic that [the Memphis Police Department] would be as outraged about this as we are, and we haven’t gotten any indication that they’re interested in it at all.”

One of the officers involved, James Swain, was a new officer serving a probationary period, and has since been fired. The other, Bridges McRae, has been placed on administrative duty until a hearing is held.

Meanwhile, Johnson’s lawyer told Media Archive that they were not allowed to file a complaint about the incident. The reason? It is being “investigated” by the police department’s Internal Affairs and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. □

Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World. Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

Racism, national oppression and self-determination by Larry Holmes

Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery by Sam Marcy

Harriet Tubman: woman warrior by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Black youth: repression & resistance by LeiLani Dowell

Black & Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice! by Saladin Muhammad

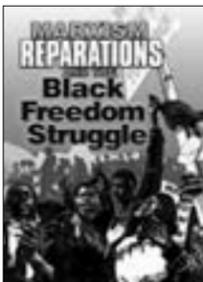
Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion by John Parker

Racism and poverty in the Delta by Larry Hales

Domestic Workers United demand passage of a bill of rights by Imani Henry

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Taina Asili speaks and sings at Mumia rally.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

POLITICAL PRISONER UPDATES

By **LeiLani Dowell**



Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox spent 30 years in solidarity confinement for a crime they didn’t commit.

Albert Woodfox conviction overturned!

A victory has been won in the case of the Angola Three, political prisoners and former Black Panthers who were convicted on trumped-up charges in the death of a prison guard. On July 8, a federal judge overturned the conviction of Albert Woodfox, one of the two still remaining in prison.

Woodfox spent more than three decades in solitary confinement in the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, La.—a notorious plantation where Black prisoners are made to work like slaves. In March, however, he and Herman Wallace were moved to a maximum-security dormitory with other prisoners after Rep. John Conyers, chairperson of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee, visited the prison to investigate the case.

Woodfox’s conviction was overturned on the grounds that two of his lawyers failed to raise objections to questionable prosecutor testimony. He now faces the possibility that prosecutors will ask for a retrial.

Meanwhile, Wallace continues to appeal his conviction. The third member of the Angola Three, Robert King Wilkerson, was freed in 2001 after his conviction was overturned.

Demand effective medical treatment for Peltier



The Leonard Peltier Defense Offense Committee is requesting that Peltier supporters contact prison officials to demand that Peltier, who has diabetes, be allowed to have his own diabetes kit so that he can accurately monitor and control his condition.

Peltier, a participant in the American Indian Movement, was wrongfully convicted in 1976 of the death of two Federal Bureau of Investigation agents in a shootout at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. He has been imprisoned ever since, despite revelations of coerced testimonies, fabricated and suppressed evidence, and federal officials stating that it is unknown who fired the shots or what role Peltier may have played.

The infirmary at Lewisburg Penitentiary, where Peltier is being imprisoned, has a general diabetes kit for all prisoners. The committee has raised concerns that due to the embedded memory in the device, Peltier could be receiving false readings. Furthermore, Peltier has reported that there are often no medical personnel on hand when he goes to the infirmary, and he must return over and over until someone is there to assist him.

In addition, all the prisoners at Lewisburg had been on lockdown for five days as of July 7. For Peltier, this means no access to the infirmary, making it all the more important he have access to a diabetes testing kit at the pharmacy; as his committee has requested.

Supporters are asked to contact: Warden Bledsoe, USP Lewisburg, 2400 Robert F. Miller Dr., Lewisburg, PA 17837; phone 570-523-1251; fax 570-522-7745, e-mail lew/execassistant@bop.gov.

For more information, visit www.whoisleonardpeltier.info. □

Black reverend sentenced to 3-10 years for quoting scriptures

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

Rev. Edward Pinkney, leader of the Benton Harbor Black Autonomy Network of Community Organizers (BANCO), was sentenced on June 26 by Berrien County Judge Dennis Wiley to a term of three to ten years in prison. The minister, based in this southwest Michigan city, was already serving a year in jail and five years probation for trumped-up charges related to a recall campaign held during 2006.

The most recent sentence stemmed not from any act but from an article written by Rev. Pinkney and published in the People's Tribune newspaper in December 2007. Berrien County Chief Judge Alfred Butzbaugh claimed that the article, which stated in part that "The Lord shall smite thee with consumption and with a fever and with an inflammation and with extreme burning," threatened him and his family.

The BANCO leader had been convicted in Butzbaugh's courtroom by an all-white jury in March 2007 for four felonies and one misdemeanor for alleged vote fraud and ballot tampering. Pinkney had been kept under house arrest on a tether between May and December 2007, when he was ordered to jail for one year by Butzbaugh. Jim Pjesky, a probations officer with the State Department of Corrections, said that Pinkney did not deny writing the article but never meant it as a threat.

After claiming that it was a threat directed at him, Judge Butzbaugh recused himself from the case, leaving the way open for Wiley to hand down the severe decision. The decision was given by Wiley after claiming that the contents of the article written by Rev. Pinkney were not protected under U.S. constitutional rights to free speech and represented a threat.

Rev. Pinkney was visited by guards at 4:00 a.m. in the Berrien County Jail on July 3 and transported to Jackson Prison. Pinkney's wife, Dorothy Pinkney, and his supporters in Benton Harbor say he will be transferred from Jackson to a permanent facility after 30 days.

Rev. Edward Pinkney has been a long-time activist in the Berrien County area. He became outspoken when increasing incidents of police misconduct and perceived judicial bias led to a mass rebellion during the summer of 2003. In the aftermath of the rebellion, Pinkney led a successful recall campaign against Glenn Yarborough, Benton Harbor City Commissioner.

Politicians in Berrien County, which includes Benton Harbor, Benton Township and the more affluent St. Joseph, have long been beholden to the Upton family, the owners of Whirlpool Corp. In 2005 Rev. Pinkney set out to bring employment opportunities to Benton Harbor—unemployment is extremely high in this overwhelmingly majority African-American town.

After being blocked from carrying out this effort, BANCO organized the recall of Commissioner Yarborough. Soon afterwards, Rev. Pinkney, the BANCO leader, was charged with vote fraud and a Berrien County judge overturned the results of the recall vote.

A massive scheme to establish a so-called development project in Berrien County, utilizing land that could encroach on the African-American community in Benton Harbor, is moving straight ahead. It appears that authorities in the county are hoping that, with Rev. Pinkney likely to be locked away in prison for many years to come, they can get away with a greater relocation of the city's African-American population.

The rate of foreclosure in Benton Harbor is astronomical. This is another mechanism to force large segments of the African-American people to abandon the city.

Activists in the Michigan area are planning activities where people can protest their outrage over the treatment of the local leader and organizer.

Police gun down two African Americans in Detroit

Meanwhile, in Detroit, Michigan's largest city, two recent killings by police officers of African-American men have drawn attention to the fact that police are continuing their terrorist activity against the peo-

ple despite two federal consent decrees, which have been in effect for five years.

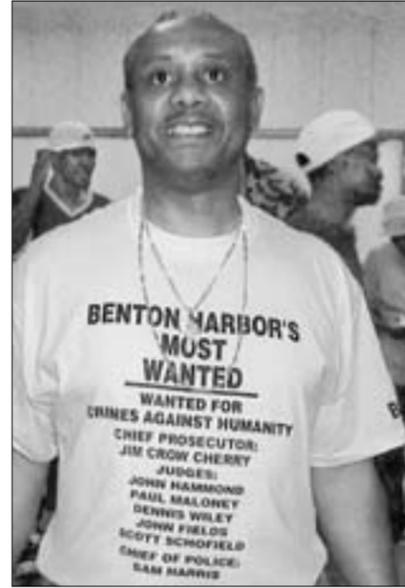
On June 2, Tommy Staples Jr., 54, was shot several times in the head and back by Detroit police officers on the northwest side of the city. Police claim that Staples had a gun, but his daughter and son stated over the "Fighting for Justice" radio program hosted by the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality that Staples did not even own a gun.

In response to the killing of Staples, the community gathered on June 24 near the site of the shooting for a candlelight vigil and speak-out. Over 200 people—community residents as well as the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality—attended this event organized by the Staples family.

The family and friends of Staples are demanding that the two police officers involved in the shooting be charged with murder. The Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality is also demanding that the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office pursue the case aggressively in order to uncover the circumstances surrounding the killing of this well-respected community resident and family man.

While the community began to mobilize around the death of Staples, another killing of a civilian by the police took place in the early morning hours of July 1. This time the victim was a 16-year-old named Sheldon Robert Bell. According to police, Bell attempted to carjack an off-duty police officer at a gasoline station located on the northwest side of the city.

This youth was reportedly shot eight times by the officer. Members of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality went to the scene of the shooting immediately and interviewed witnesses as well as members



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Rev. Pinkney, leader of the Benton Harbor Black Autonomy Network of Community Organizers (BANCO).

of the victim's family. According to the coalition, the shooting of Bell raises serious questions involving the use of lethal force. Some witnesses claim that after the young man was hit by bullets and was lying face down, he was shot an additional four times at close range.

Repression escalates as economic crisis deepens

The state of Michigan has been one of the areas hardest hit by the economic downturn sweeping the United States. There have been massive layoffs in the automotive and other industrial sectors of the labor force. Since 2000 approximately 500,000 jobs have been lost in the state.

In addition, the state has one of the highest foreclosure rates in the country. At present the Moratorium Now! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions is mounting a statewide campaign demanding the passage of Senate Bill 1306, sponsored by State Sen. Hansen Clarke.

Both the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality and the Moratorium Now! Coalition see a direct relationship between the growing layoffs and foreclosures and the ongoing wars of occupation, the so-called war on terrorism and the adoption of torture as a method of interrogation by the United States.

The failure of the present system to offer people a living wage and the basic necessities of life is being enforced by the use of more deadly law-enforcement techniques by the local police agencies. Only a popular fightback campaign to confront both the growing economic downturn as well as the increasing repression by the police can provide any hope for the people to reverse the current situation. □

A PEOPLE'S VICTORY

Charges dropped against civil rights attorneys

By **Larry Hales**
New York

On July 2, in a Brooklyn courtroom filled with supporters of Michael Tarif Warren and Evelyn Warren, the district attorney admitted that the state's case against them was inadequate. All charges were dropped.

The two attorneys and activists had been assaulted by cops and arrested in Brooklyn on June 21, 2007. This followed their witnessing the beating of a young Black male, who they say was on the ground and handcuffed but was being kicked in the head repeatedly by cops, specifically by Sgt. Steven Talvy.

After witnessing the attack Michael Tarif Warren asked Talvy, "Why are you beating him? He's handcuffed. He's not a threat. Take him to the precinct." They were ordered to return to their vehicle.

According to the Warrens, the two then got into their car and began writing

down information about the cops' vehicles. Talvy approached their car and was told that they were both attorneys. Talvy then hit Warren more than once, pulled him out of the car, and assaulted Evelyn Warren when she questioned him. Both the Warrens were arrested. All this took place during the evening rush hour in front of many witnesses.

The Warrens were taken to the 77th Precinct and charged with disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.

Cases of police brutality are routine in oppressed communities, as cops in an oppressive and racist society are trained and paid to uphold order—no matter how brutal and repressive it is.

Often, when people are attacked, profiled or harassed by a cop, they are without resources to attain proper defense or to mount a public campaign to bring pressure down on the cops or the local government.

However, when the victims are well-

known attorneys and activists, their resources and political know-how are ample. The resources abound from the community's love and respect engendered by years of being involved in political struggles and defending high-profile human rights cases.

The respect and love was evident in the response to the attack and arrest of the Warrens. Hours after the attack, the local Pacifica station, WBAI-FM, broadcast the news over the airwaves. After exchanging text messages, e-mails and telephone calls, activists from many groups descended upon the 77th Precinct and packed the waiting room, spilling into the stairwell and outside the precinct.

This mini-rebellion procured the release of the Warrens that day. A small march with chants broke out as people from the neighborhood looked on from their windows and doors. It was a victory.

The dropping of the charges after a vigorous campaign had been mounted is



PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO

Michael Tarif Warren and Evelyn Warren

an even more important victory. It shows that when the people organize and fight back, great things can happen. □

Israeli political cops beat prize-winning Gazan journalist

By John Catalinotto

He writes and speaks in vivid language, bringing to life the daily sufferings of an oppressed nation under siege by a vicious occupying power. Other top journalists call him the “voice of the voiceless.” He is insulted and brutalized by a repressive police force in an attempt to humiliate and break him.

That description may fit the young Mumia Abu-Jamal, before he became the most-published U.S. political prisoner, writing and speaking from death row. But it's also a description of the 24-year-old prize-winning journalist and Gaza-strip resident Mohammed Omer, whose own ordeal at the hands of Israeli border police has exposed their daily brutality.

Omer, whose brother was gunned down by the Israeli Army, has been reporting and documenting daily life in Rafah, Gaza, for six years now with skill and accuracy. His description of his own recent beating by Israeli police illustrates how he pays attention to detail, reports all the relevant facts and brings the events to life before the reader's eyes, ears and imagination. On top of that, he lives daily the dangerous life of a Palestinian in Gaza, where few independent foreign journalists can get by Israeli checkpoints.

The young reporter only recently was able to leave Gaza for a few weeks to tour Europe and receive the Martha Gellhorn Prize after international pressure on the Israeli state to let him go. According to the Gellhorn Web site, this prize “is awarded to a journalist whose work has penetrated the established version of events and told an unpalatable truth, validated by powerful facts, that exposes establishment propaganda, or ‘official drivel,’ as Martha Gellhorn called it.”

Omer and Dahr Jamail, whose reporting from Iraq many Workers World readers may be familiar with, received the prize for 2007 this June. Both these reporters had to overcome mountains of “official drivel.”

“Every day, he reports from a war zone, where he is also a prisoner,” read the statement giving Omer the award. “His homeland, Gaza, is surrounded, starved, attacked, forgotten. He is a profoundly humane witness to one of the great injustices of our time. He is the voice of the voiceless.”

Israelis punish reporter

What he wrote counted enough that the Israeli political police, Shin Bet, made sure Omer was punished when he tried to return to Gaza in late June.

Eight of the cops forced him to undress, strip-searched and beat him. In a July 7 phone interview from Gaza broadcast on Pacifica's Democracy Now! program, Omer described a small part of this experience:

“I fainted and—on the ground. And I started vomiting everywhere. And then the soldiers, they started gathering around me. I estimate nearly one hour and a half vomiting on the ground. ... I was unconscious for most of the time, but I can remember one of the things that they were doing to me. He was using his nail fingers and pinching me all the way, trying to cause me pain under my eyes and under the soft part of my eye. I thought what these people are doing is basically they are trying to torture me. ... [A]nd then one other of them who tried to—who put his shoes on my neck. I could feel actually the outline of his shoes on my neck, moving right and left.”

Omer wound up at the hospital in Jericho that day, and now he vows to continue his reporting from Gaza. “The Israelis were trying to punish me for the work I am doing and getting the message out,” Omer told his main employer, Inter Press Service, from his bed in the European Hospital in Gaza. “But they won't break me. ... They have made me

more determined than ever.”

The Israeli police agents treat many ordinary Palestinians trying to cross the border with the same vicious cruelty they showed to Omer. In his case, since officials of the Netherlands' Embassy were waiting for him and he had just won a journalism award, it meant they were willing to flout all international norms and risk broad exposure of their police-state style handling of Palestinians.

What they obviously had no fear of risking was Israel's close ties with U.S. imperialism, Washington's funding and its diplomatic support as well as friendly handling by the U.S. corporate media.

In the U.S., both major parties—the Republicans and the Democrats—have made it clear through their national leaders and their candidates in the upcoming election that they will maintain the close relationship between U.S. imperialism and the Israeli settler state in carrying out Middle East policy. This up-front pledge of support strengthens the most reactionary Israeli politicians and generals as well as the most aggressive elements in U.S. ruling circles. It can lead not only to police state tactics against Palestinians and repression of journalists, but to new military adventures.

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

Canadian court re-opens door for U.S. war resisters

By Dee Knight

A Canadian court on July 4 ordered Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board to review U.S. war resister Joshua Key's claim for asylum. In a ruling that could affect many other U.S. war resisters, the court said, “Military action which systematically degrades, abuses or humiliates either combatants or non-combatants is capable of supporting a refugee claim.”

The court concluded that the Immigration and Refugee Board imposed “a too restrictive legal standard” on Key. In a clear statement affecting other U.S. war resisters, the court also found that “similarly situated individuals” should have their refugee claims reviewed.

Key's lawyer, Jeffrey House, said the ruling is “a huge victory for numerous soldiers who are here [in Canada] and maybe others who are thinking of coming here.” House himself is a Vietnam-era war resister. A spokeswoman for Canadian Immigration Minister Diane Finley said her ministry was reviewing the court decision, which adds another layer of pressure

to let the war resisters stay.

The decision could not come at a better time. A large-scale campaign is under way in both Canada and the U.S. to press the Canadian government to stop the deportation of Corey Glass, slated for July 10. Glass would be the first U.S. war resister to be deported from Canada. The Toronto-based War Resisters Support Campaign has led a massive effort in Canada to force the Canadian government to stop his deportation and respect a majority vote in Parliament on June 3 that called on the government to stop deportation of U.S. war resisters and let them stay permanently.

A national poll in June showed that 64 percent of Canadians favor letting the war resisters stay. Meanwhile, in the U.S., vigils and demonstrations are taking place at Canadian consulates in 14 cities, organized by Courage to Resist, Veterans For Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War and Project Safe Haven.

Elliott Adams, the national president of Veterans For Peace, will visit the Canadian Embassy in Washington July 10 to deliver



Joshua and Brandi Key and their four children at home in Canada.

PHOTO: COURAGE TO RESIST

an “Open Letter to the Canadian People and their Government.” The letter says, in part:

“U.S. soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen who have refused to participate in this war have shown great moral courage. Unlike many governments around the world, these war resisters are respecting international law and following their own consciences. They witnessed war crimes with their own eyes. They were sickened by the racist attitudes that the U.S. military fostered toward the Iraqi people. Some are struggling with the psychological wounds of war, commonly known as Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

“So it is from the bottom of our hearts that we thank the many Canadians who have sheltered our war resisters,” the letter says, and concludes with a strong demand that the Canadian government respect the Parliamentary vote and the will of the Canadian people, and let the war resisters stay.

Joshua Key went to Canada with his wife Brandi and their four small children following 16 months living underground

in the United States after he decided not to return to Iraq. He served as a combat engineer in Iraq for eight months in 2003. His book, “The Deserter's Tale,” has been an international best seller. He said he and his family have felt support from “about 95 percent of the Canadian people.”

Key's lawyer, Jeffrey House, said there are about 200 U.S. war resisters in Canada now. While that is “no comparison to the later period of the Vietnam War,” he said, it does compare with the early Vietnam War period. “Early on during Vietnam there were only a small number, but later the doors opened more widely,” he said. “By November 1969 [Canadian Prime Minister] Trudeau declared Canada ‘should be a refuge from militarism,’ and the doors opened and people flooded in.” More than 50,000 U.S. war resisters found refuge—or a new home—in Canada during the Vietnam War.

According to Gerry Condon of Project Safe Haven, making it possible for war resisters to stay in Canada is an integral part of building the GI resistance. □

Picket of Dalai Lama planned

By Betsy Yoon
New York

A protest of Washington's anti-China policies is planned for July 17 when the Dalai Lama will be speaking at Radio City Music Hall here. The U.S. government has been involved in the “Free Tibet” campaign from the beginning, while the media facilitates its execution.

The latest efforts began in mid-March, when the Dalai Lama covertly encouraged Tibetans to riot. The rioters looted, burned and attacked non-Tibetan ethnic groups, killing and wounding scores. Then in April, protesters attacked Olympic torch runners in several countries in a

clear campaign against this year's Beijing Olympics. These attacks and accompanying protests were glorified by a media that has failed to exhibit similar enthusiasm for covering anti-war protests.

The Dalai Lama and the U.S. imperialists have worked hard to erase the Dalai Lama's past as a feudal leader, and these days hardly anyone in the Western media questions the fact that he is supposed to be a living deity. “Spiritual” leaders, it seems, are condemned or elevated according to their strategic utility to the ruling class. In the U.S., the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, for example, was raked over the coals by the media for his preaching against racism.

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A setback to peace process

What really happened in Colombia?

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Colombia made prime news around the world on July 2 like never before. We learned that former Colombian presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt had been freed from a Marxist guerrilla group along with three U.S. Pentagon contractors—Tom Howes, Marc Gonsalves and Keith Stansell—and 11 members of the Colombian army and police.

They had been taken prisoner by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) at different times in an effort to force the government toward a political, negotiated solution of the 60-year-old Colombian conflict. FARC had proposed exchanging 500 of its members held in Colombian prisons and three in federal jails in the U.S. for the several hundred people it had held in the jungle.

More importantly, the negotiated solution would involve a treaty whereby the FARC would sit down with the Colombian government to seek avenues for a real peace with economic and social justice for the majority of the Colombian masses, who are overwhelmingly poor.

Freedom in three versions

However, the news on prime time was a distortion of the facts, concocted by the Colombian government, which is very experienced in releasing half-truths and false propaganda. It dubbed the action “Operation Jaque” (checkmate).

According to Colombian Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos, the 15 held by the FARC were handed over to military forces disguised as members of a “humanitarian mission.” The government stressed that it was a peaceful operation with not a single shot fired by either side. Their explanation was that it was an undercover operation facilitated by “infiltrating high layers of the FARC” and making them believe that the prisoners were going to meet Alfonso Cano, the current FARC top leader, who supposedly had sent the helicopter to pick them up.

With this story, they portrayed the armed insurgency as a group in disarray after the recent deaths of three of its Secretariat members—Raul Reyes and Ivan Rios, who were killed, and Manuel Marulanda, its founder, who died of natural causes.

They called it a perfect operation that signaled the end of the guerrilla group.

While Santos stressed that it was a 100-percent Colombian operation, with no involvement of foreign governments or organizations, White House spokeswoman Dana Perino stated on July 3 that it “was conceived by the Colombians and executed by the Colombians with our full support.” U.S. Ambassador to Colombia William Brownfield told CNN about the “technical support” the U.S. provided for the operation.

What was this “support”? MSNBC reported on July 3 that “On Thursday, Col. William Costello, spokesman for the U.S. Southern Command, said the command made 3,600 intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance flights, followed up on 175 intelligence leads and spent \$250 million trying.”

It then quoted U.S. officials who “spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record and the Bush administration was adamant about giving the Colombians the credit.” These sources said, according to MSNBC, that “the U.S. Special Operations Command helped with surveillance that positively located the hostages within

the past year using satellites, aircraft and ground reconnaissance—and had tracked them since then.”

A second version of what happened comes from France.

The French online news site MediaPart and Radio Suisse Romande both reported that the operation was not a rescue but a “\$20-million-dollar transaction” and that the Colombian government had paid that amount—provided by the U.S. government—for the release of Betancourt and the three Pentagon contractors.

Reportedly, secret negotiations took place through the wife of one of the men in charge of watching over Betancourt. The woman had been seized by the Colombian military and forced to make her FARC husband change sides and agree to the bribe. Needless to say, the Colombian government vehemently rejects this version, but admits that it does pay for information.

Two European envoys—French diplomat Noel Saez and his Swiss counterpart, Jean Pierre Gontard—were in Colombia at the time. They had requested permission from the Colombian government to further negotiations with the FARC for the release of Betancourt, who holds French and Colombian citizenship, and the others. The Colombian government granted them permission and vowed to help the effort. This was widely known; the government itself had publicized it earlier. It had been reported in France that the two had already communicated with the FARC leadership.

Narciso Isa Conde, a Dominican left leader, has presented a third version of the events. Isa Conde is part of the Continental

Bolivarian Coordinating Group and has the authority to speak on this matter since he had participated in earlier negotiations for the release of Betancourt. In a widely circulated article written July 3 and entitled “There was no such rescue,” he wrote that the operation was really “an initiative stolen from the FARC.”

Isa Conde says that the FARC was about to release the 15 to the French-Swiss team, so they had to be brought to one point from their locations in three different parts of the jungle. The detainees were to be transported in civilian helicopters to a place where they would meet with the FARC leadership in a ceremony to hand them over to the Europeans.

However, the Colombian military, with the help of U.S. surveillance, located the helicopters and substituted military pilots dressed as FARC members, wearing Che tee shirts, who kept up the pretense until all the detainees were inside the helicopters.

This certainly would explain why the rest of the guerrillas were so willing to hand over the prisoners without a shot being fired.

Role of Israel

Many reports mention how “swift” and “smooth” the operation was. Ingrid Betancourt, on her arrival in France, mentioned “the Israelis” and their “extraordinary commando operations, that resemble the coup that occurred today.”

In fact, Israel is part of Plan Colombia, the U.S. strategy to control Colombia. There is ample documentation on how the Israeli secret services Mossad and Shin

Beth have assisted Uribe’s government in Colombian territory. The Israeli newspaper Maariv reported in 2007 that Gen. Israel Ziv, who had commanded Israeli forces in Gaza, was a consultant on “security” for the Colombian government.

According to a recent report in TeleSur, Colombian Defense Minister Santos traveled last February to Israel to meet with the leadership of Mossad—Israel’s equivalent of the CIA. On the same trip, he went to the U.S. to meet with Defense Secretary Robert Gates, a former CIA director.

Beneficiary: Uribe!

One thing is crystal clear. The person who gains most from this operation is President Alvaro Uribe himself.

Up to his neck in a corruption and parapolitical scandal, he needed a smoke-screen. With the help of the capitalist media worldwide, but particularly the Colombian oligarchy’s media, Uribe’s administration has mounted a campaign to present him as a hero and the greatest defender of peace—even as his closest allies in government are being implicated in massacres and other crimes perpetrated by paramilitaries. Many are already serving prison time.

He really needed this, and the U.S. gave it to him.

His reelection in 2006 has been ruled illegal by the Colombian Supreme Court of Justice because he offered positions and favors to a congressman who provided the critical vote approving his reelection, since it was not permitted in the Constitution. In spite of that, he is

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Meeting of capitalist world leaders in Japan draws protests

By G. Dunkel

Trade unionists and the Ainu people played a central role in protests against the meeting of the G8 set to open July 7 in a remote lakeside resort in Hokkaido, Japan’s northernmost island. The Ainu are an indigenous people whose homeland lies on Hokkaido.

The G8 is an informal group of the seven most powerful imperialist nations plus capitalist Russia. Among them, they control worldwide banking, are the dominant military powers, and control 70 percent of the world’s economic output. The G8 meet in a different member country each year to discuss how to impose their economic demands on the rest of the world, within the limits of their competing political and economic interests.

This year their agenda includes the high price of oil, global warming and the rising cost of food, which is plunging the poorest countries of the world into hunger and famine, raising the specter of mass resistance.

Wherever the G8 meet, a wide range of progressive organizations mount protests. Since 1999, some of these protests have been quite large and militant, which is why recent G8 meetings have been held in remote and inaccessible locations. The Hokkaido resort is so remote that the cops warned the international press corps against wild bears.

But the Japanese government is not just relying on remoteness. It barred South Korean farmers and some other international groups that wanted to protest from entering Japan. And it has deployed 20,000 cops to Hokkaido and another



Protester in Tokyo is dragged out of his van by cops.

20,000 in Tokyo to repress the protests.

The cops are being very aggressive. On July 5 in Sapporo, the nearest large city to the G8 site (about 90 miles), 2,500 activists from Japan and European, Southeast Asian and African countries marched with signs reading “Stop global warming!” and “Crush G8.” During the march, the riot police arrested four people on “suspicion of obstructing police officers from performing their duties,” according to a dispatch on Kyodo News Service.

The previous weekend in Tokyo over 1,000 union members and students marched with signs reading “G8 no! Workers yes!” (The Statesman of India) Kyodo News Service reported that a popular chant was “Smash the summit!” A video clip on BBC News showed cops breaking

into a van when the driver got too close to their line. Five cops dragged off the driver as he shouted in English, “G8 no!”

The Japanese government has also set up three camping sites for 300 to 600 people on the other side of the lake from the G8 summit as another way to contain the protests. Kiyokazu Shinbo, an organizer for one of the anti-summit networks that is going to camp, told the French Press Agency, “We will shout slogans at the summit venue from the other side of the lake.” Shinbo’s organization plans to perform a prayer ritual of the Ainu, Hokkaido’s indigenous people who have endured centuries of discrimination. “We will perform the ritual of ‘Kamui,’ praying to the gods for our successful movement,” he said. □



Human rights at home?

Have the Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo prison scandals slowed down U.S. politicians' jibes and attacks about "human rights" against governments that don't bow to Washington? Not a bit. Imperialism's spokespeople treat these concentration camps as if they are exceptions or as if they don't exist at all. In truth, these two world-class crimes are only an extension of U.S. imperialism's home-grown police state.

Let's look at the numbers:

The United States is number one. Not in Olympic medals, but in number of prisoners. With 2.3 million total prisoners, that's far ahead of China's 1.6 million, even though China's population is four times larger. And the U.S. is number one in prisoners per 100,000 residents. The figure is 690, compared to France's 80, Italy's 40 and nearby Canada's 120.

Like most of U.S. social relations, the phenomenal prison growth is rooted in racism and national oppression. Black people are imprisoned at a rate of 1,815 per 100,000. Latin@s at 609. Native incarceration tops even these rates.

Central to this is the deeply ingrained, institutionalized extent of racist discrimination. But this shouldn't obscure the fact that among whites, 235 per 100,000 are in prison. That is still three times the rate for all French people and six times the rate for Italians. Most of those in prison, of course, are poor. These figures show how socially corrosive U.S. corporate rule has become and how severe state repression must be for them to maintain control.

Enough statistics. The heavy police and prison repression is an especially vicious and racist weapon against the oppressed nations of African American, Latin@ and Native peoples. After 9/11, it also has turned with a vengeance against Arabs and South Asians.

Political dissidents in prison?

At this point, someone still trying to defend the U.S. record will argue, "These 2.3 million prisoners are criminals. There are no political prisoners."

A look at this week's Workers World puts that argument to rest.

Rev. Edward Pinkney, a Black civil rights leader in a small Michigan city, was sentenced to three to ten years in prison for something he wrote. Yes, something he wrote. In it he quoted the Bible. A judge called the quote "a threat." It's hard to imagine a more flagrant vio-

lation of Pinkney's right to free speech. You don't believe it? Read the article.

Native leader Leonard Peltier, a participant in the Wounded Knee uprising in 1973, who has already done over 30 years in prison after being framed up in the death of FBI agents at the Pine Ridge Reservation, was refused permission to have accessible a medical device to help control his life-threatening diabetes.

Professor Sami Al-Arian, who already has done three years for collecting funds for Palestinian charities, now has two new charges for contempt of a grand jury. Much like the Brooklyn grand jury aimed at Puerto Rican independence activists, this one is trying to squeeze Al-Arian and force him to turn on his friends.

Even the good news illustrates racism and repression.

In Louisiana, Albert Woodfox of the Angola Three had his frame-up conviction reversed. That was after this African-American man had done 30-plus years in solitary confinement! He still may be retried. But it took a broad campaign that mobilized to support him and a visit to the prison from Rep. John Conyers to get this far.

Charges were finally dropped against Michael Tarif Warren and Evelyn Warren. Cops had beaten and arrested them last year after the two witnessed the cops abusing a young man in Brooklyn. It had taken a crowd surrounding the precinct to get these two popular African-American attorneys out of jail the night of their arrest.

Anti-war activist Ed Lewinson, too, got out of federal prison after serving 90 days for protesting at the "School of the Americas," where the U.S. trains killers to keep Latin America out of the hands of its people. Lewinson, who is 78 years old and blind, was kept in solitary confinement most of those days.

All that and the ongoing struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal are in this week's Workers World. Plus there's still the case of the Cuban Five and many other political prisoners in the U.S.

Meanwhile, U.S. politicians still deliver pious sermons to the leaders of Zimbabwe and Cuba regarding human rights and U.S. Reps. Chris Smith (R-N.J.) and Frank Wolf (R-Va.) just visited China to demand they "release jailed dissidents" before the Olympics.

The two need their noses rubbed in the U.S. legal system's destruction of human rights. □

Philippine labor leader:

'Unite worker and anti-imperialist struggles'



Revolutionary Philippine workers' leader Crispin Beltran—"Ka Bel"—died May 20 at age 75. Ka Bel founded the taxi drivers' union, escaped from political imprisonment under the Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship, served as general secretary of the May First Labor Movement (KMU) and was serving his third term in Congress on the Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) List.

Below we excerpt the speech he prepared for the Third International Assembly of the International League of People's Struggle June 18-20 in Hong Kong. KMU chair Elmer Labog read the speech.

According to understated official figures, there are already close to 190 million unemployed workers in 2007, compared to 187 million in 2006. The International Labor Organization in its Global Employment Trends expects that, with the global slowdown, 5 million more workers will be unemployed this year. Moreover, the ILO estimates that some 1.3 billion workers live on less than \$1 a day. ...

Imperialism, global finance and government-sponsored wars are having their feast on the backs of oppressed peoples and nations, neocolonial and dependent countries, and even former socialist countries turned capitalist. Imperialist states are engaged in cutthroat competition and are taking advantage of each other in a struggle for redivision of the world. They are bitterly fighting for sources of cheap raw materials and labor markets, fields of investment and spheres of influence. The crisis of overproduction is becoming worse as monopoly capitalism presses down the wage levels and incomes of all working people, and consequently the markets keep on shrinking. This is happening in the imperialist countries, the so-called "emerging markets" like China and India, and in all the underdeveloped countries.

But even more striking are the rising waves of mass mobilizations and protest movements across the globe—labor unrest and workers' struggles included. Even inside capitalist countries, the epic struggle between labor and capital has come to resurgent historic proportions. ...

All are not just about wages, jobs and labor rights. ... Workers, peoples and nations are resisting and fighting back, not only against the adverse effects but to root out the fundamental causes of the neoliberal crisis. Oppressed nations are not only seeking to improve their working and living conditions but are waging all forms of struggle in order to change the world they live in.

In South Korea, about 1,000 actors, directors and movie executives staged a demonstration to condemn the government's decision to slash screen quotas for domestic films. The decision was made under pressure from the United States, which set the screen quota issue as a precondition for the free trade talks. [This talk was written before the explosion of mass demonstrations against U.S. beef imports—WW.]

In a bold display of class solidarity, the [U.S.] International Longshore and Warehouse Union declared an eight-hour strike last May Day to protest the war in Iraq. The ILWU demanded "an immediate end to the war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan and the withdrawal of

U.S. troops from the Middle East." The strike demonstrated the collective power of the workers.

In India major, central trade unions are calling a general strike Aug. 20 to protest the "fallout of the anti-worker, anti-people neoliberal policies" of the government. In the Philippines militant workers' movements, despite political repression, are active on all fronts of the struggle against oil price hikes, power rates, food crisis, corruption and poverty, and are linking these issues together as bases for the movement to oust the president of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. ...

Nations are asserting their sovereignty. The Venezuelans' struggle to unshackle themselves from foreign domination and develop a self-reliant economy through nationalization of vital industries is setting a good example for the unity of the government with the people against foreign corporate power. Cuba is leading the way in its steadfast stand to move toward socialism even as it parries U.S. threats of aggression, double embargo and countless assassination attempts. The armed revolutionary liberation movements in several countries, like India, Colombia and, in my own country, the Philippines, where the people want liberation from the semi-feudal and semi-colonial system, are giving heavy blows against the reactionary state.

Labor, more exploited and oppressed under neoliberal globalization, must encompass and reach out not only to industrial workers but also to those in agriculture, services, migrant labor, the "informal" sectors, the marginalized young workers, women workers and the jobless, rural and urban poor, unionized and non-unionized. We must reach out to them in their homes, communities, streets and public places.

We must mobilize them not only for economic welfare issues but also for political and national issues and link them with the aspiration of the entire people for national freedom and democracy. Struggles waged in various parts of the globe ... are real expressions of the workers' international solidarity against a common enemy—monopoly capitalism and state terrorism.

Labor facing the onslaught of imperialist degradation must have ideological, political and organizational strength beyond that of trade unions. Workers must take the lead through their revolutionary parties and together with other oppressed sectors of society must carry out democratic political struggles against exploitation and oppression, against imperialism and local reaction. ...

As we hold this assembly, let us match our fighting words and resolutions with the firm determination to forge greater unity and muster militancy against imperialism. With this assembly, we affirm our commitment to arouse, organize and mobilize the masses of our people! Only thus can we strengthen the struggle. Only thus can we build a new world of genuine social and human progress for our peoples!

Salute to the militant working class!

Strengthen the unity among oppressed peoples and nations!

Long live the International League of People's Struggle! □

Picket of Dalai Lama planned

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But Washington, which was comfortable with Tibet's status as a part of China before the Chinese Revolution, now considers the Dalai Lama to be of great importance and therefore greatly "spiritual."

The Dalai Lama also supports past and present U.S. military operations in south Korea, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia and Iraq. He is hardly a representative of peace.

Not everyone has such short memo-

ries, however. The twelfth Samding Dorje Phagmo, Tibet's only living female Buddha, a critic of the Dalai Lama and vice-chairwoman of Tibet's regional government, says that "Old Tibet was dark and cruel, the serfs lived worse than horses and cattle." (Reuters)

Join FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) at 2 p.m. on July 17 at 1260 Sixth Ave. to protest the Dalai Lama and his policies. □

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WORKERS WORLD

Rebellion of poor in New York City

Workers World is in its 50th year of publication. We reprint this article from the July 22, 1977, issue of the paper as part of our special archival series.

By Deirdre Griswold
New York

It started as a citywide power failure of the Con Edison system, but it ended up as a night of rebellion by New York City's poor.

The lights went out at 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 13, as a result of what Con Ed claimed was a freakish coincidence of lighting strikes against three of its lines bringing in electricity to the city. Unlike the blackout of 1965 (after which the giant power monopoly said it had made sure that such a disaster could never happen again), this complete shutdown of the city's power was not over in a few hours.

For more than 24 hours, residents of New York had to cope with stalled elevators and subway trains, no lights, fans, refrigeration, air conditioning, or any of the other appliances that make life in cramped city apartments more bearable.

For many, the blackout meant real disaster. Patients at Bellevue Hospital, the notorious city-owned facility that treats only the poor, were plunged into darkness



without respirators or other life-supporting equipment for hours, as the hospital's emergency generators failed almost immediately. At Brooklyn Jewish Hospital, surgery was moved to the parking lot where fire trucks provided the only lights from emergency generators. Dozens of patients were operated on and stitched up in the cluttered lot.

Anger against Con Ed, which charges some of the highest rates in the country, mounted as hour after hour dragged by without power being restored. But by the next day, the press was already turning that anger aside. Its targets were not the wealthy power barons of Con Ed or the banks that really run and run down this city, but the poor and oppressed.

The rebellion began around midnight in the South Bronx, but very quickly reports were coming in from poor neighborhoods all over the city that the people were taking food, clothing and other items out of the local stores. The reaction of the city officials and the press was instantaneous: get the "looters." The press campaign quickly built up into a racist crescendo against Black and Latin people.

Blackout of the truth

As the arrests mounted into the thousands, the real "blackout" began: a black-

out in the press of what were the real causes of the rebellion in the oppressed communities. Nowhere were there headlines about the poverty and terrible unemployment that this massive uprising revealed. None of the commentators or columnists could remember back to even a few months ago, when the same youths who were now being arrested for taking sneakers or meat out of the stores had stood in line for days by the thousands hoping to get the few city jobs that opened up for the summer.

Crisis behind the crisis

But in the oppressed communities, the causes of the uprising were known only too well. The most important is unemployment: among the youth of 16 to 19 years, the rate is as high as 60 to 75 percent. The Department of Labor admits to a nationwide figure of nearly 40 percent for "minority youth," and in areas like Brownsville, the South Bronx and Bedford-Stuyvesant everyone knows it runs even higher. In recent months, when unemployment generally has decreased slightly, it has risen even higher for Black and Latin youth.

The rebellion wasn't caused by the heat or the blackout: those were only the trigger. Its specific origins can be traced back to New York City's financial crisis of

November and December 1975, when the banks demanded—and got—tremendous layoffs, higher taxes and crippling service cuts from the city government under the threat of a "default" on the city's debt payment.

Default became another word for Armageddon—the end of the world. But what it really meant was that the city might not be able to pay all the interest it owed to the giant banks that had been bleeding the city dry for decades. In December 1975, the banks were demanding that the city pay out on its debt a sum larger than the entire city payroll for that month!

Through its illegal agencies like the Emergency Financial Control Board (EFCB) and Municipal Assistance Corporation (Big MAC), which usurped the power of the elected officials and began running New York City like a corporation (for their profits, not for the people's welfare), the banks were able to get 60,000 layoffs and cutbacks in such areas as hospitals, clinics, day care centers, libraries, mass transit, fire houses and other essential services.

The blight of poverty from these massive cutbacks spread at a time when there was already a general economic decline. Half a million jobs had dried up in the city since 1969. The poor of course felt it the most. The last-hired, first-fired Black and Latin people especially found it more and more of a struggle just to stay alive.

This rebellion was the inevitable outcome and a justified expression of the people's misery.

Those who should be held accountable are not the teenage children—who have had open admission taken away from them, who can neither get an education nor find a job, who have nowhere to go but the streets—but the capitals of high finance like investment banker Felix Rohatyn and William Ellinghaus, president of New York Telephone, who as members of the EFCB helped put this stranglehold on the people of the city.

Struggle to get prisoners released

The struggle on behalf of the oppressed communities today focuses on the nearly 4,000 prisoners who were rounded up in Gestapo-style sweeps and herded into prisons under conditions no better than the Nazi concentration camps. Two have already died in the densely packed, filthy cells where thousands endured searing heat with no food and little water for days.

Committee wins show-cause order

An Emergency Committee for Prisoner Release was formed within a few days of the arrests, and today won a show-cause order in federal court demanding that Mayor Beame, Police Commissioner Codd and other city officials be in court [July 21] to show cause why all the remaining prisoners should not be released immediately.

While the city is claiming that all the 4,000 arrested have now been processed through arraignment, Legal Aid lawyers say that at least 500 have been "lost" by the judicial system and are somewhere behind bars in this city.

The Emergency Committee publicized its demands in a press conference yesterday morning and a demonstration last evening of 500 people at the dungeon-like Tombs prison in lower Manhattan.

The committee intends to continue its struggle with more mass actions and a \$500 million suit in federal court demanding damages for all those illegally arrested and an invalidation of all the charges against them. □

What really happened in Colombia?

Continued from page 9

now proposing a referendum to change the Constitution so he can run for a third term in 2010.

His Army chief, Gen. Mario Montoya, who received a medal from the U.S. Army, was implicated in the creation of a clandestine terrorist unit in the Colombian Army. This "Anticommunist American Alliance" attacked, assassinated and took left-wing activists hostage. Montoya has a long history of criminal activity, including when he led the Joint South Task Force between 1999-2001, financed by the U.S.

Uribe's past actions regarding people held by the FARC revealed no intent to secure their release. After the FARC unilaterally released seven prisoners late last year, Uribe bombed a FARC encampment in Ecuador where Raul Reyes was pre-

paring the release of Ingrid Betancourt, together with the Ecuadorean government. That bombing, performed with U.S. technical aid, killed Reyes and 23 other people, including an Ecuadorean and four Mexican students.

Betancourt's mother, Yolanda Pulecio, said at that time, "I pray that Uribe does not find my daughter" because he might "order military operations that could kill her and then justify the war saying that the guerrillas killed her."

Human tragedy in Colombia worsens

Already this year 30 union leaders have been killed. The paramilitaries that Uribe says are "demobilized" have just changed their names from the "Self Defense Units of Colombia" (AUC) to the Black Eagles.

They continue to spread terror throughout the country with total impunity.

The situation in Colombia right now is desperate for the progressive movement, which courageously keeps demonstrating and trying to build alternatives of peace and justice in the face of criminal repression by the state and horrendous violence from the paramilitary forces.

Poverty continues and increases; the privatization of essential services is preventing the masses from having access to education and adequate health care. Millions of children have to work in order to survive. Peasants, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities continue to face displacement. Progressive leaders continue to be targets of assassination and disappearance.

As long as these conditions exist, a guerrilla movement will also exist.

Need for international solidarity

It is not surprising that the prisoners of the FARC-EP were "freed" on the very day that U.S. presidential hopeful John McCain was visiting Colombia to assure Uribe of his support for the Free Trade Agreement, now frozen in the U.S. Congress. It was also one day after the infamous Fourth Fleet of the U.S. Navy initiated its prowling in Latin American and Caribbean waters.

The progressive movement in the U.S. owes an enormous debt to the peoples south of the Rio Grande. Wall Street and Washington are the biggest threat to the stability of the region and to the development of the progressive processes taking place there.

It would be an enormous setback for the world progressive and revolutionary forces if this brutal government doing the dirty work for U.S. imperialism were to settle firmly in Colombia, able to threaten the Venezuelan Bolivarian Revolution, Bolivia and Ecuador. It is of utmost importance to show concrete solidarity with the struggling people in Colombia who are staving off the hand of fascist dictatorship. □

'Plan Colombia is the largest, most comprehensive and direct U.S. intervention in the hemisphere in the long history of U.S. interventions. It threatens Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Venezuela — countries with over 100 million people — with more than a "war on terrorism." Plan Colombia places the political and economic independence of this huge region at risk.'

—Ramsey Clark

War in Colombia: Made in the U.S.A.

powerfully counters the Pentagon and the media propaganda with facts about what's really happening in Colombia.

In this book the reader will find the truth about:

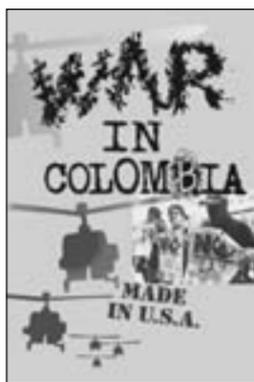
- the broad sectors who are heroically fighting inhumane policies mandated by the multinational corporations like Coca-Cola;
- the background history of the struggle;
- perspectives from the FARC-EP and the ELN insurgencies, trade unionists and human rights activists.

This book is a compilation of voices that oppose Plan Colombia and express solidarity with the Colombian people. It presents a unique and original analysis of the crisis in Colombia. It is a must read for scholars interested in the impact of Plan Colombia on the rest of Latin America. Activists who wish to shed light on the situation in Colombia will walk away with the information they need to do so.

Contributors include: Mumia Abu-Jamal, Ramón Acevedo, Arturo Alape, Nathalie Alsop, Fr. Roy Bourgeois, Fidel Castro, Ramsey Clark, Narciso Isa Conde, Javier Correa Suárez, Heather Cottin, Sara Flounders, Gloria Gaitán, Carl Glenn, Stan Goff, Ismael Guadalupe, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, Lucio Gutiérrez, Teresa Gutierrez, Imani Henry, Dr. Aristóbulo Istúriz, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Garry M. Leech, Manuel Marulanda Vélez, Dianne Mathiowetz, Rep. Cynthia McKinney, Linda Panetta, Luis Guillermo Pérez Casas, James Petras, Raúl Reyes, Rebeca Toledo, Miguel Urbano, Senator Paul Wellstone.

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Desafío a la avaricia imperialista

Activistas y trabajador@s migrantes forman alianza global

Por Teresa Gutiérrez
Hong Kong, SAR, China

“Por mucho tiempo otros han hablado por nosotros. Pero ahora hablamos por nosotros mismos.” Este llamado fue el punto principal de la asamblea fundadora de la Alianza Internacional de Migrantes (AIM), que tuvo lugar en Hong Kong entre el 14 y 17 de junio.

L@s participantes de la conferencia vinieron desde todas partes del globo. Ciento sesenta y siete delegad@s representando a 118 organizaciones de 25 países participaron en la asamblea fundadora de la primera formación internacional de migrantes.

La cifra total de participantes a esta histórica conferencia ascendió a más de 300, lo cual es impresionante cuando se toma en consideración las restricciones legales y económicas.

Algunos de los países o regiones representados fueron Taiwán, Kenia, Corea, Japón, Bangladesh, Australia, Malasia, Pakistán, México, Canadá y Estados Unidos. Una amplia delegación llegó de las Filipinas al igual que de migrantes filipin@s viviendo en otras naciones.

La asamblea hizo saber que otras organizaciones que son miembros fundadores, no pudieron asistir debido a problemas de visas y finanzas.

La asamblea fundadora de la AIM fue una idea que se ha venido formando por años. La meta era la de dirigir y organizar alrededor de la crisis de millones de trabajador@s que se ven forzad@s a emigrar—forzad@s a dejar sus países como resultado de las políticas neoliberales impuestas por la Organización Mundial del Comercio y por el Banco Mundial como también por las prácticas del imperialismo estadounidense. La Alianza tiene como base una perspectiva antiimperialista relativa a los asuntos de migración y de l@s trabajador@s.

La Organización Internacional para la Migración estima que para el año 2005 había 191 millones de inmigrantes en el mundo. Cerca de 40 millones de est@s eran indocumentad@s.

Las Filipinas solamente, son un gran exportador de seres humanos, un país agobiado por el neocolonialismo y el dominio imperialista donde cada día 3.000 personas son forzadas a salir de su patria. Las 3.000 son solo aquellas que pasaron por los llamados canales legales y no incluyen a l@s filipin@s que dejan al país sin visas de turista o de comerciante.

Es de gran importancia que esta conferencia haya ocurrido en la región asiática.

Según la Comisión Global sobre la Migración Internacional, para el 2000, había 49,9 millones de inmigrantes en Asia, representando el 1.4% de la población. Esta cifra desde luego es baja y pasada ya que ha habido una explosión de emigración forzada en años más recientes.

Los países asiáticos con una alta concentración de inmigrantes son Japón, Corea del Sur, Hong Kong, Malasia, Brunei, Singapur y Taiwán. Si se incluye Asia del



Eni Lestari, AMCBHK, presidenta.

oeste o el Medio Oriente, particularmente los países del Golfo, Arabia Saudita y los Emiratos Árabes Unidos también tienen una alta concentración de trabajador@s migrantes.

La conferencia presentó un cuidadoso análisis de alto nivel sobre las condiciones de l@s migrantes y de las políticas que estimulan la migración.

Algunas de las declaraciones producidas por la conferencia incluyen: “Ha llegado la hora de la voz de los inmigrantes de base con el éxito rotundo de la asamblea fundadora de la Alianza Internacional de Migrantes”.

“Con espíritu de solidaridad internacional, l@s participantes compartieron sus experiencias, debatieron y lograron puntos comunes que impulsarán la AIM en sus programas futuros”.

“Con la aprobación de la Constitución de la AIM, la elección de su liderato y del primer equipo de oficiales y la aprobación del Programa General de Acción, la AIM por fin nació”, declararon l@s fundador@s.

“Unid@s romperemos las cadenas de la globalización”

Uno de los momentos culminantes ocurrió el primer día, que se llevó a cabo en la Universidad de la Ciudad de Hong Kong y fue co-organizado por el Empoderamiento Femenino en el Contexto

Teresa Gutiérrez, que habla, representando la organización Coalición del Primero de Mayo para los Derechos de Inmigrantes y Trabajador@s en los Estados Unidos.

Musulmán del Centro de Investigación del Sureste de Asia. (WEMC-SEARC por las siglas en inglés)

Fue realizado un domingo así que más de 350 trabajador@s migrantes, incluyendo aproximadamente 200 trabajador@s extranjero@s, primordialmente trabajador@s doméstic@s en Hong Kong asistieron.

Un video demostró la situación que enfrentan l@s inmigrantes y la razón del porqué forjar la AIM tiene tanta importancia. La multitud quedó visiblemente conmovida por este video porque hizo a todo el mundo recordar las condiciones brutales y despiadadas que enfrentan todos los días l@s migrantes alrededor del mundo.

La conferencia, por ejemplo, condenó el comercio sexual y señaló la opresión especial de las mujeres migrantes.

El último día final de la conferencia se celebraron elecciones. Para encabezar la AIM, miembr@s de la Junta Coordinadora Internacional fueron escogid@s según las diferentes regiones globales y también en general.

Est@s 17 miembros incluyen la nueva JCI de la AIM. LA JCI luego eligió oficiales de su comité ejecutivo entre ell@s.

Miembr@s elect@s para el comité ejecutivo son Eni Lestari de AMCBHK, presidenta; Ufuk Berdan de ATIKEurope, vice-presidente; Connie Bragas-Regalado de Migrante-Filipinas, secretaria-general; Tess Tesalona del Centro de Trabajadores Inmigrantes de Canadá, tesorera; así como esta escritora.

La mujer elegida como presidenta de la AIM demuestra que la Alianza está realmente dedicada a tener migrantes en el liderato. Eni Lestari, de la Junta Coordinadora de Migrantes Asiáticos—basada en Hong Kong—es una empleada doméstica de Indonesia de 27 años de edad. Ella ha sido líder de la JCMA desde hace mucho tiempo.

En su presentación a la conferencia, Eni declaró, “Nuestra asamblea crea hoy un momento importante en la historia de nuestro movimiento. Aunque nuestra asamblea es principalmente organizativa, es también muy educativa. Sólo hay que ver el programa y los temas a discutir y se comprenderá inmediatamente que la gente que asistirá a esta conferencia son

verdaderamente migrantes, inmigrantes y refugiad@s y sus leales defensor@s que de veras abogan para nuestros derechos, bienestar y empoderamiento.

“Aunque comprendemos estos temas y cuestiones porque son parte integral de nuestra vida cotidiana, esta asamblea los ha transformado de ser un conocimiento disperso a ser un conocimiento colectivo. Y después de esta asamblea, esta comprensión colectiva se convertirá en fuerza activa para fortalecer y extender nuestro movimiento, nuestra alianza, nacional e internacionalmente.”

La conferencia y la formación de la AIM son buenas señales para la lucha de clases. La AIM es otra señal de lo que se vislumbra en el horizonte. L@s trabajador@s que están experimentando las condiciones más brutales están levantándose. Están organizándose y luchando.

Y la AIM muestra que est@s trabajador@s más oprimid@s tienen una gran conciencia de clase. Una fuerza revolucionaria está organizándose en Asia, incluyendo las Filipinas, Corea de Sur, y otros países. Es una fuerza que está en solidaridad con otras del mundo oprimido.

Por ejemplo, cuando fue presentada una mujer de Kenia, la Hermana Wahu Kaara, única representante de África en la conferencia, hubo muchos aplausos para ella.

Cuando habló el compañero de Oaxaca, México, y se mostró tanta solidaridad, quedó claro que esta organización quiere construir puentes y hacer conexiones con estas luchas.

L@s organizador@s de la conferencia reconocieron el trabajo enorme al que se enfrentan, especialmente el de unirse a l@s migrantes de África y América Latina.

Pero la voluntad política de unirse con otr@s está. La base ha sido establecida.

El objetivo de unir a l@s migrantes de todas las partes del mundo es para derrocar el imperialismo y construir la forma de sociedad en la que ningún/a trabajador/a es forzado/a a dejar su tierra o su patria. Un mundo sin fronteras o explotación se ha hecho un poco más una realidad con la fundación de la AIM.

En esta conferencia de la Alianza Internacional de Migrantes Gutiérrez fue elegida al comité ejecutivo como secretaria-general asistente representando la organización Coalición del Primero de Mayo para los Derechos de Inmigrantes y Trabajador@s en los Estados Unidos.

