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IN 100 U.S. CITIES Activists demand: 'Hands Off Iran!'

By Monica Moorehead
New York

"No War on Iran" was a slogan and chant that resonated across the U.S. on the weekend of Aug. 1-2 as emergency marches, rallies, vigils, teach-ins, honk-for-peace picketlines and leaflet distributions were held to protest U.S.-Israeli war threats against Iran.

Under the leadership of the Stop War on Iran Campaign, anti-war activists in 100 cities voiced their opposition boldly in the streets despite the short notice in which the initial call was made, the difficulty of organizing during the summer and the sometimes paralyzing effects on organizing during a presidential election.

No matter how modest the numerical turnout of the protests, activists were excited to be part of nationally coordinated actions to help bring a broader awareness of the devastating impact that another U.S.-orchestrated war of aggression will mean for the people in the Middle East region as well as for the U.S. population, which faces a growing avalanche of foreclosures, evictions, massive unemployment, high gas and food prices, and more.

Besides bringing attention to the real threat of a military strike against the sovereign country of Iran, activists also raised the new round of economic sanctions against Iran, which is another form of war. Activists connected Iran to the wars and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, which have cost hundreds of billions

of dollars and maimed and killed an untold number of civilians and soldiers.

NEW YORK CITY

An estimated 700 to 1,000 activists refused to allow two torrential thunderstorms to dampen their spirits and determination to rally in Times Square and then take to the streets Aug. 2. Thousands more who were passing by stopped to listen to speeches, chants and songs that connected the wars abroad with the wars at home against the workers, the poor and the oppressed. Joyce Chediak, a Lebanese-American activist and journalist, and LeiLani Dowell, a FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) organizer, chaired the rally.

Larry Holmes, a leader of the Troops Out Now Coalition, spoke on the imperialist nature of U.S. wars and why it is in the interest of the people in the U.S. to support self-determination, not the U.S. government. Kazem Azin, a long-time Iranian activist, told the crowd that the Iranian people will continue to defend their homeland against U.S. and Israeli aggression. Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark urged the crowd to keep organizing and resisting wars.

Other rally participants represented the American Iranian Friendship Committee, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Million Worker March Movement, New York

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Alba, a Colombian flower worker, and flower factory WW PHOTO: B. PIETTE

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ABOVE, WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO PHOTO RIGHT: AIAF
Protesters in New York City, above, and Kolkata, India, on Aug. 2.



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100,000 March on Pentagon

New Movement unites against war, racism, cutbacks

Workers World is in its 50th year of publication. We reprint this article from the May 8, 1981, issue of the paper as part of our special archival series.

By Joyce Chediac

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 3—It was the opening shot of a new progressive movement in this country. Over 100,000 people marched on the Pentagon here today under the slogans: stop the U.S. war buildup, U.S. hands off El Salvador and no intervention in Southern Africa. They marched to demand money for jobs and human needs, not for the Pentagon. They marched to stop racist violence, to end racism, repression, and lesbian and gay oppression, and to stop the draft.

Sponsored by the People's Anti-War Mobilization/May 3 Coalition (PAM/May 3), today's militant and anti-imperialist action was co-sponsored by over 1,000 individuals and organizations across the country. More than 120 cities organized for the event, making it clear that this is a new movement that speaks for the many millions who are sick and tired of war, of economic attacks, of racism and all forms of bigotry. This was the biggest anti-war demonstration in a decade.

For those who could not make it to Washington, similar demonstrations were held in the West today. Some 15,000 took to the streets under the same banners in San Francisco, and 5,000 came out in Seattle. Other actions were held in Tucson, Denver and Kansas City.

This action had broad support without subordinating the revolutionary struggle and support for the liberation movements. Protesters represented a cross section of the grassroots of this society: rank-and-file trade unionists, oppressed Black, Latin, Native and Asian people, women, lesbians and gay men, progressive clergy, environmentalists. There were contingents from liberation struggles around the world.

The march itself was led by hundreds of Black people, especially Black youth, brought there by the National Black United Front, and marching 25 abreast behind the lead banner which read, "Jobs, not war—U.S. out of El Salvador!"

This wave of militant, chanting humanity marched from the Lincoln Memorial area past the State Department and then over the Memorial Bridge to end their protest at the Pentagon, the seat of imperialist war plans.

From the time the first contingent arrived, it took the marchers three-and-a-half hours to file into the Pentagon

rally site where they were greeted by a bright green banner which read, "Stop the U.S. war drive!" attached to part of the entrance to this military fortress.

This was a massive march. All in all, almost 500 buses filed into Washington. Some 160 buses came from New York City alone, more than 20 brought by the trade unions. There were 35 buses from New Jersey, 27 from Boston, 25 from Philadelphia, many from upstate New York, seven from Detroit, seven from Rhode Island. People came from Texas to participate. Car and van pools were organized from cities near and far.

A sizeable delegation came from Florida, including Haitian refugees. Students came from all over, and many swamped button sellers for one of the most popular official march buttons, "Defend Atlanta's children, not El Salvador's junta!" Participants in the last anti-war movement came, as well as many, many people who had never been on a demonstration before in their lives.

Speakers at two rallies ranged from working-class and progressive leaders here to representatives of the national liberation struggles, including Arnaldo Ramos of the FDR [Frente Democrático Revolucionario] in El Salvador. For the first time at a major anti-war mobilization, representatives of the gay and lesbian struggle, the Native struggle and the Palestinian struggle were given a forum.

Solidarity messages to the march were announced from Black U.S. Congressmen John Conyers and Ron Dellums, from Philip Agee, from the Democratic Revolutionary Front of El Salvador, from the African National Congress, from the South West Africa People's Organization, from a group of progressives in Juneau, Alaska, and from the Guardian newspaper.

Led by most oppressed

There were many firsts in this demonstration. Unique to an anti-war movement in this country was the participation of many oppressed people. The National Black United Front and the Black Vets for Social Justice brought six busloads from Brooklyn's Black community alone.

Other Black, Latin, Native and Asian and poor people participated from around the country, including two busloads of welfare recipients from Boston. Welfare mothers of Detroit carried a banner, which read, "Bread, not bullets!"

According to Larry Holmes, PAM leader and march

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WW PHOTO: NEVILLE EDWARDS

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Unemployed youth face a sweltering summer

By Jaimeson Champion

This summer has seen record-breaking temperatures in many parts of the United States. It has been particularly hot for millions of young people who have spent the sweltering summer days hitting the pavement in search of a job, only to return home sweaty and still unemployed.

Youth unemployment has risen by an alarming 555,000 over the past three months, according to the latest report from the U.S. Department of Labor. Even Labor Department statistics—which deliberately understate U.S. job loss—can't hide the miserable fact that youth in the U.S. are losing their jobs at an unprecedented rate.

The unemployment rate for workers under 25 years of age has increased by 2.4 percent over the past three months, according to the Labor Department. In comparison, the unemployment rate for workers 25 years of age and older has increased by 0.5 percent in the same time period.

These “official” rates are deliberately understated, as they count involuntary part-time jobs as full jobs and don't count

as unemployed the youth who no longer search for jobs because they know that no jobs exist for them. Real unemployment rates are much higher.

Many of the low-wage service sector jobs that have historically been filled by younger workers are increasingly being staffed by older workers who have lost better paying jobs in the deepening U.S. recession.

Young people of color have felt the spike in youth unemployment most acutely. According to a recent study published by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, Black and Latin@ youth are suffering real unemployment rates well over 80 percent. The CLMS research study concluded that “low income Black and Hispanic teens face the equivalent of a Great Depression.”

Overall, youth unemployment is the highest it has been in more than six decades, according to the CLMS. It found that only 37 percent of U.S. youth are actually employed.

According to the report, the highest youth unemployment rates are in the major U.S. cities. Washington, D.C., has

the highest youth unemployment rate at 86 percent. New York City, Detroit and Chicago all have youth unemployment rates over 80 percent.

The spike in unemployment could not come at a worse time for working-class young people in the U.S., as it is occurring at the same time that relatively low-cost student loans are disappearing. The continuing crisis in the financial markets has sent interest rates skyrocketing on student loans. An increasing number of working-class youth, particularly those who go to community colleges, cannot get access to student loans at all.

Since March, nearly 100 lenders have suspended their participation in federally backed fixed-rate loan programs, according to the National Association for Student Financial Aid Administrators. Many more of the fixed-rate loans that low-income students are counting on to finance this coming term are likely to become unavailable in the coming months. Working-class students seeking loans for school are facing what amounts to a form of 21st-century redlining, that is, an automatic and prejudicial rejection.



On July 28 the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority—which secures more than \$500 million in student loans for more than 40,000 students—announced that it was shutting down lending operations for the 2008/2009 school year. MEFA cited deteriorating conditions in global capital markets as the reason for the shutdown. As many of the largest and most integral financial institutions in the U.S. continue to barrel toward insolvency, the subsequent credit contraction has spread to every debt market from mortgage loans to auto loans to student loans.

The utter absurdity of an economic system that makes access to education dependent on the profit margins of Wall Street is daily becoming more apparent. The need to intensify the struggle for free and universal education and more jobs for young people has never been greater. With no jobs and no money for the coming school year, this summer has been hot and miserable for millions of young people. It's time to turn up the heat on the student lenders, bankers and bosses. □

Suicide in Massachusetts

Women hit hard by economic crisis

By Phebe Eckfeldt
Boston

Carlene Balderrama's suicide epitomizes the extreme desperation that women in particular are feeling as a result of the capitalist economic crisis. A 53-year-old mother living an hour south of Boston in working-class Taunton, Mass., Balderrama had faxed a letter to PHH Mortgage two hours before the corporation was to foreclose on her home on July 22. The letter read in part, “By the time you foreclose on my home, I'll be dead.”

Balderrama instructed her spouse and son to “take the [life] insurance money and pay for the house.” Her body was still inside her home while people gathered outside to attend the foreclosure auction. She had shot herself because she was unable to keep up with the ever-increasing monthly payments demanded for her adjustable rate mortgage.

Will there be more horrible deaths like this? More workers essentially slaughtered by sexist, racist predatory lenders? According to Massachusetts home-foreclosure activists, August and September are months when many sub-prime mortgages are due to be reset to higher interest rates and monthly payments will skyrocket.

Massachusetts is the ninth highest state in the country for foreclosures. (Trackur.com) Foreclosures grew in the state by 50 percent in June 2008. (Warren Group study) Thousands of tenants will be facing evictions when the houses they live in are foreclosed.

According to 2006 census data collated by the National Women's Law Center, 15 million women live in poverty in the United States. The NWLC study shows that poverty is especially high among women of color, older women and single mothers. One in five female seniors are poor and one in three single mothers are poor. Black and Latina women are twice as likely as white women to be poor. In addition, immigrant women are super-exploited and oppressed.

Capitalism provides no safety net for

the poorest and most vulnerable members. The system claims no responsibility for their well-being. When President Bill Clinton and Congress eliminated welfare in 1996, it threw millions of women and their children off welfare, forcing the women to work at very low-paying jobs and driving down wages even more by intensifying wage competition among workers.

According to a July 3 Women's E-News article, “Economic downturns hit women the hardest because they earn less than men; are more likely to work part-time; are less likely to be eligible for unemployment insurance; are less likely to have health insurance and are more likely to leave their jobs because of care-giving responsibilities, domestic violence, or harassment or stalking.

“Since the welfare overhaul,” the article continued, “the number of single mothers who are unemployed and who receive no welfare assistance has doubled, from 16 percent in 1996 to nearly 33 percent in 2005, or one in three single parents.”

How are these women and their families surviving? Many are homeless and live in extreme poverty. Fourteen percent of Massachusetts children live in poverty. (Masskids.org) Many women have their children taken away by the state, are forced to stay in abusive relationships, go to prison for “crimes of survival” or turn to substance abuse to quietly escape the anxiety and hopelessness they feel.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health states that the number of women who died of drug abuse almost doubled from 2005 to 2006, up from 29 to 54.

The Joint Economic Committee of Congress found that women have been retreating from the workforce. Researchers thought this was due to women deciding to stay home to care for their children, but



Phebe Eckfeldt at NSTAR Electric Co. at a July 3 picket line initiated by the Women's Fightback Network and the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together.

they deduced it was in reality due to the economy—“downturns, layoffs, outsourcing, stagnant wages or pay cuts.” (New York Times, July 22)

“Women bring home about one-third of family income,” said Carolyn Maloney, vice chair of JEC. “And only those families with a working wife have seen real improvement in their living standards.”

Many have given up looking for work, since it is impossible to pay for childcare, food and the gas needed to commute when the only jobs available often pay \$7 to \$8 an hour.

All signs point to the fact that economic conditions will only get worse this winter in New England. NSTAR Electric and Gas Company sent more than 125,000 families shutoff notices this spring, yet company revenues are up 11.4 percent since last year. Forty percent of homes in Massachusetts heat with oil. The oil companies are making record profits, so the average household in 2009 could be paying more than \$3,000 this year to heat their home.

“Any type of increase [in cost] especially of this magnitude is just going to make life so precarious, so difficult—perhaps even unlivable—unless we can subsidize those households so that they can make

it,” said John J. Drew, executive vice president of action for Boston Community Development. “I can't even think about the next two winters. It's obviously a horror show in the making.”

'Housing, food, fuel are a right'

The Boston Women's Fightback Network has launched a campaign under the slogan, “Shut off the war, not our lights. Housing, fuel and food are a right.” The activist group is demanding that Gov. Deval Patrick implement a state of emergency and carry-out an executive order to stop utility shutoffs and restore services immediately; roll-back food and fuel prices; and declare a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions.

Miya X, a leader of WFN and the youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together), told Workers World, “The economy is so bad that summer jobs, once designed for youth, are now being taken up by unemployed adults who need them. Compound this with the foreclosure crisis in the communities, and youth are under a lot of pressure to contribute to their families' income. But lack of jobs often drives them to make choices that put them at risk in the struggle to survive.

“Here in Massachusetts we have seen an increase in domestic violence against women in part due to economic hard times. We are taking it to the streets to demand money for jobs, education, youth programs and women's programs, food and housing.”

Nan Genger of WFN told Workers World, “The capitalist banks, bosses and the Bush administration all want women to be quiet, depressed and isolated. They are responsible for the tragic suicide of Carlene Balderrama—for creating the conditions of desperation. Working, poor and oppressed people, immigrants, lesbian, gay, bi and trans people—together we can combat the war budget and big-business greed.” □

Housing bill rewards lenders, ignores plight of workers

By David Hoskins

President Bush recently signed into law a \$300-billion bailout plan for mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The Democratic leadership in the House and Senate tout the bi-partisan bailout as a rescue package for homeowners struggling against foreclosure.

In reality the bill does little more than prop up Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which own or guarantee almost half of the nation's mortgages. The bill essentially rewards Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac with hundreds of billions of dollars for their role in the subprime lending crisis that threatens the U.S. economy with worsening recession and even potential depression.

The bill also guarantees the continuation of the exorbitant salaries the two companies pay their top executives. The combined 2007 total compensation paid to both companies' CEOs exceeded \$31 million.

Meanwhile, the millions of workers whose dreams are being foreclosed along with their homes receive barely a pittance to help them survive the crisis.

Crisis worsens

The foreclosure crisis shows no signs of receding anytime soon. The current crisis in subprime loans is causing the foreclosure of more than 8,500 homes a day. A steadily increasing unemployment rate and skyrocketing gas prices will likely push that figure significantly higher in the months ahead.

The official U.S. unemployment rate climbed to 5.7 percent as 51,000 more workers lost their jobs in July. The average workweek dropped to its lowest point since November 2004 as employers cut back on the number of hours available to workers still employed.

Employment consulting firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas Inc. reported that planned layoffs for July jumped 26 percent over June to 103,312. The transportation, financial and retail industries were the hardest hit by the expected layoffs. The average price of gas continues to hover around \$4 a gallon, taxing the limited resources of workers as they travel to and from work.

The daily struggle workers face to make ends meet is beginning to reverberate as housing lenders brace them-

selves for a larger wave of loan defaults. The current rate of foreclosures is mostly driven by workers who can no longer afford the subprime loans they were offered by predatory lenders.

Analysts are starting to see signs that segments of the mortgage market outside of subprime lending are increasingly at risk of dramatic increases in foreclosures. The percentage of Alternative-A mortgages in arrears quadrupled to 12 percent in April over the 2007 figure. Alternative-A mortgages are low- or no-documentation loans that are considered a step above subprime. Alternative-A mortgages are often targeted for workers who have no credit score or have high debt-to-income ratios only slightly better than those of subprime borrowers.

Delinquent payments also increased for prime loans, which doubled to 2.7 percent during the same period. Prime loans account for most of the \$12 trillion mortgage market.

Thomas H. Atteberry, president of First Pacific Advisors, an investment firm that trades mortgage securities, warned: "Subprime was the tip of the iceberg. Prime will be far bigger in its impact." (New York Times, Aug. 4) Prime and Alternative-A mortgage loan defaults have the potential to threaten the solvency of banks in a way that subprime loan defaults do not because banks hold many more of these loans compared with subprime loans.

Bill an insult to workers

The housing bill Bush signed into law in late July is an insult to the millions of workers struggling to keep their homes. The Congressional Budget Office optimistically estimates the bill will help 400,000 homeowners stave off foreclosure through a provision in the bill that allows lenders to bring failing mortgages to the Federal Housing Authority for a guaranteed new mortgage at 85 percent of the home's current market value. The CBO admits that it will take three years for all 400,000 mortgages to be brought



to the FHA and that 140,000 of these homes could go into foreclosure a second time on the new mortgage.

Even in the best-case scenario—that 400,000 homeowners could potentially keep their homes—the housing bill does not even dent the current crisis. At the current rate of 8,500 foreclosures a day, the housing bill would at best stave off less than seven weeks' worth of foreclosures. Meanwhile, the bill says nothing about providing a moratorium on home foreclosures, providing housing for all as a right or any of the other measures that would actually help the vast majority of workers keep their homes. The current bill provides only a modicum of assistance to less than 5 percent of the workers at risk of home foreclosure.

The corporate media has consistently touted a provision in the bill that purports to provide a tax credit of \$7,500, or 10 percent of the home's purchase price, whichever is less, to first-time home buyers. This credit does nothing to provide relief to current homeowners. Furthermore, the \$7,500 "credit" is not even really a tax credit—workers who choose to purchase a home in exchange for the credit are required to pay it back over the course of 15 years through their annual tax filings.

The \$7,500 is actually an interest-free government loan designed to mislead potential buyers into believing they are receiving a tax credit for the purchase of a new home. Such tricks only add insult to the injury current and potential homeowners are experiencing due to the foreclosure crisis.

Arizona Democratic Rep. Raul Grijalva has proposed a bill known as the Saving Family Homes Act, HR 6116. This bill would allow many struggling homeowners facing foreclosure to at least stay in their homes as renters for up to 20 years by paying the fair market rent.

HR 6116 is flawed and inadequate. The bill does not provide a moratorium on foreclosures and potentially forces workers to trade the dream of owning their own home for a decades-long tenancy agreement. But by refusing to seriously consider even moderate measures such as HR 6116, the Democratic House leadership has clearly demonstrated that it is in the pockets of the big mortgage lenders that seduced workers with their predatory lending practices. □

California gov't workers protest wage cuts

Delegates to the national convention of the State, County and Municipal Employees union took to the streets in San Francisco on July 30, upon hearing that California's Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger intended to temporarily slash the hourly wages of more than 200,000 state workers to the federal minimum wage of \$6.55 to pressure the Democratic-controlled legislature to agree to budget cuts.

Given the hikes in gas and food prices, the workers refuse to be victimized because of a \$14.8 billion state budget deficit they didn't create. According to the California Budget Project, tax cuts enacted since 1993 will cost the state \$12 billion this year. (Associated Press, July 30)

Meanwhile, demonstrations are continuing in cities and towns all over the state. Workers at the Department of Motor Vehicles, who will be penalized by the cuts, demonstrated in San Diego and surrounding towns July 31 and Aug. 4. (San Diego Tribune, Aug. 4)

Democratic State Controller John Chiang has said he will refuse to obey the governor's order and that the state has the money to pay the workers full salaries through September.

Verizon workers postpone strike

The Communications and Electrical Workers unions, which represent 65,000 Verizon workers from Maine to Virginia, agreed to put off their Aug. 3 strike because of progress in negotiations.

Thousands of workers rallied outside Verizon headquarters in New York City on July 25 to demand no change in health care coverage for current and retired workers and for job security provisions in their new contract.

One of the major sticking points is that Verizon has moved thousands of union jobs to non-union contractors or its non-union business division. The unions, which represent landline workers, also want to unionize wireless workers. (New York Times, July 27 & Aug. 4)

Protest Wal-Mart's latest attack

Wal-Mart, the largest U.S. private employer that banks billions in profits each year, has abused workers' rights yet again by trying to influence how they vote.

On Aug. 1 the Wall Street Journal reported that Wal-Mart has been holding meetings for store managers and department supervisors in seven states in which they assert that a vote for Democrats in November will lead to passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. That, they warn, will usher in unions and force companies to pay workers higher wages and provide health care benefits. One supervisor reported that "voting for Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama would be tantamount to inviting unions in."

To counter Wal-Mart, which planned to take its coercive voting campaign nationwide, the AFL-CIO immediately set up a petition demanding that Wal-Mart stop violating labor and voting laws. You can access the petition though the corresponding article posted on <http://blog.aflcio.org/>.

In a revealing aside, the WSJ noted that Wal-Mart is the leading member of the Retail Industry Leaders Association, which is a major funder of the \$30 million anti-union campaign misnamed the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace.

ExxonMobil gets rich, the earth dies

By Caleb T. Maupin

Workers in the U.S. are suffering the horrors of an economic crisis. They are losing their homes and being laid off in record numbers. They are forced to pay skyrocketing prices to fill their gas tanks and to put food on the table. But the big corporations and bankers aren't suffering with them.

In fact, ExxonMobil, the giant oil company, just reported the "largest ever quarterly operating profits for a U.S. company," according to the Associated Press (July 31). While workers suffered, ExxonMobil raked in an unprecedented \$11.68 billion in three months.

ExxonMobil has another record—a record of crimes the oil giant committed against the people and the environment. ExxonMobil's recklessness in the famous Exxon Valdez oil spill caused 11 million gallons of oil to be dumped into

the ocean. The state of Alaska says this "is widely considered the number-one spill worldwide in terms of damage to the environment."

Record profits do not stop this oil giant from pressing for more and more wealth. Greed, the fundamental driving force of the capitalist economic system, is alive and well in the boardrooms of ExxonMobil. Now the company wants to revoke the regulations preventing offshore drilling and drilling on Federal Wildlife Reserves in Alaska!

ExxonMobil has spent millions of dollars to undermine and counter the scientific fact of global warming. While the horrors of ecological disaster loom, ExxonMobil has funded efforts to deny reality.

ExxonMobil is what the capitalist system is all about. Workers in Venezuela have realized that. The Chavez government has used the nationalized oil company profits to serve the needs of

the people, thereby eliminating profits for the rich as the motivation behind oil production. As a result, in Venezuela, a gallon of gasoline currently costs less than 50 cents. The revenue reaped from oil production goes to building schools and health care clinics, not to line some capitalist's pockets.

There is no fundamental difference between ExxonMobil and other major capitalist corporations. They all exist to make profits. Period.

The workers in Venezuela and Bolivia had the right idea when they stood up and fought back. As workers continue to suffer here, a real and lasting solution to the economic crisis demands a struggle to smash these heartless bloodsuckers of the working class, take back the earth's natural resources, and build a world where the ruthlessness, exploitation, and corruption incarnated in ExxonMobil can no longer exist. □

PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

Black farmers' settlement grows

Passage of a farm bill by Congress in May opened up the possibility of justice for Black farmers who were not able to collect when the Agriculture Department settled a class-action lawsuit in 1998. In settling the suit, the government admitted that it had systematically discriminated against Black farmers, mainly from rural areas in the South, by routinely denying them loans, disaster assistance and other aid frequently given to white farmers.

At the time the suit was filed, 22,500 farmers filed claims and nearly two-thirds were awarded a total of \$981 million in damages. Now claims of more than 70,000 other Black farmers could exceed \$3 billion, far outstripping the \$100 million lawmakers had budgeted. (New York Times, June 29)

Update on TWU dues check-off

After the heroic 2005 New York City transit strike, one of the penalties levied against Transit Workers Local 100 was revoking its right to dues check-off for its 33,000 members as of June 1, 2007. But the good news is that has not severely affected the TWU, reported the July 17-23 New York Amsterdam News.

Union President Roger Toussaint told the Harlem-based weekly that the union's campaign to have members pay dues voluntarily "has been more successful than our friends would have hoped and our enemies would have anticipated."

Although less than 10 percent of members are still delinquent, Toussaint said, "Bringing these members into good standing and in the process, showing them what the union does for them, will ultimately make the union a more powerful fighting force on the ground."

Although the union was badly hurt by a similar penalty after the 1980 transit strike, this time technological advances like online banking and automatic checking or credit/debit card deductions are helping to keep dues flowing.

When a hearing was held to restore dues check-off in Brooklyn Supreme Court in October, the judge went beyond the Taylor Law, which makes it illegal for transit workers to strike, and demanded that all the union's top officers and executive board sign an affidavit forever pledging not to strike. Asserting that will never happen, Toussaint said the union is appealing the judge's ruling. If that fails to restore dues check-off, the next step is an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Federal minimum wage up slightly

The federal minimum wage rose to \$6.55 on July 24. A final increase to \$7.75 is due in 2009. That only raises the minimum wage in 25 states; the other 25 have minimums higher than \$6.55. But do the math: Earning \$7.75 for a 40-hour week for a full year adds up to \$14,880—poverty wages for a single parent with two kids. Since mostly women of color earn the lowest wages, it's high time to end sexist and racist underpayment of women and make the minimum wage a living wage. □



July 29 rally to stop the attacks on San Francisco's sanctuary status.

WWW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

Frontal assault on immigrants attacks San Francisco 'sanctuary' status

By Judy Greenspan
San Francisco

Aug. 3—Led by the San Francisco Chronicle and Mayor Gavin Newsome, this formerly "friendly" city is making a frontal assault on the very livelihood of immigrant workers, their families and, in particular, their children.

San Francisco, which has been a "sanctuary city" since 1989 with a long-time commitment to sheltering and providing services for undocumented immigrants, is caving under tremendous pressure to cooperate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents regarding the deportation of undocumented youth charged with a crime.

But back-to-back protest rallies by immigrant families, progressive legal and social service agencies, and activists put the city on notice that there will be no turning back the clock—San Francisco will remain a sanctuary city.

On July 29 more than 150 immigrant family members and their supporters, including representatives from more than 27 community organizations, gathered at the steps of City Hall to demand that San Francisco defend the rights of undocumented youth in the criminal justice system. Immigrants, clergy, legal advocates, city officials and others addressed the crowd.

Angela Chan of the Asian Law Caucus led off the rally, stating that "the city's sanctuary ordinance saves lives." She criticized the Chronicle and other big business media for "scapegoating immigrants" and leading the attack against this city's history of supporting them.

Several children and young people also spoke at the rally. "It's unfair to deport children," said Alma Pozos, an 8-year-old girl with La Voz Latina. Youth testimony at the rally was supported by chants of "Let the youth be youth" and "No child is illegal."

Tom Ammiano, a city supervisor and activist in many struggles, challenged the attacks on the sanctuary ordinance and the undocumented communities. "Our sanctuary ordinance is not the cause of

crime. It is a means to increase public safety," Ammiano said. He also challenged U.S. immigration policy when he said, "We won't give up on our youth. If there was a way for them to be here legally, they wouldn't be in the trouble they are in."

Julio Escobar, a chaplain in this city's juvenile facilities and the director of Comunidad San Dimas, put it this way: "Our young people are in jail because there are no opportunities for them." He stated that he held Mayor Newsom accountable for the treatment of this city's youth.

Mayor Newsom recently ended this city's long-standing practice of not cooperating with ICE by turning over names of undocumented jail detainees. ICE has, over the past year, been responsible for dozens of raids on the city's restaurants and other workplaces.

San Francisco School Board President Mark Sanchez reminded protesters that the city school district unanimously voted not to allow ICE to conduct raids on public school campuses. He called on Mayor Newsom not to bow to the pressure of the "fear-mongering" media.

On July 30, in a continuing attack on immigrants and the sanctuary ordinance,

about a dozen members of the Minutemen Project—the armed vigilante group which has declared war against immigrants trying to enter this country from the south—held their own rally on the steps of City Hall. In response, more than 300 immigrants, advocates and activists countered the small racist rally.

Renee Saucedo, an attorney and activist with La Raza Centro Legal, denounced the Minutemen as "hatemongers" and demanded that San Francisco affirm its sanctuary law. Later, Mayor Newsom, who continues to waffle on the issue, was forced to defend the city's status as a sanctuary city that offers support and services to all immigrants.

The battle against the deportation of immigrant youth (and adults) who have been charged with a crime is far from over. Mayor Newsom has not rescinded his decision to cooperate with ICE in criminal justice matters concerning undocumented jail detainees. However, the San Francisco immigrant communities—Latin@, Chinese, Filipino and many others—have expressed their determination to continue to fight for sanctuary and human rights for all immigrants, documented and undocumented. □

Ohioans demand

'STOP THE RAIDS'

By Martha Grevatt

"Stop the Raids" was the theme of a march and speak-out held July 31 in Oberlin, Ohio, to protest the July 23 Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid of Casa Fiesta. Casa Fiesta operates Mexican restaurants in Youngstown and seven smaller towns west of Cleveland, including Oberlin.

Fifty-eight workers were arrested for alleged "administrative immigration violations." Of the five Oberlin employees arrested, four have been deported

to Mexico, while a fifth, a Honduran, remains in jail. The 58 arrests leave 11 spouses without a partner and 27 children without a parent. Prior to the raids Casa Fiesta was the subject of a year-long ICE spying operation.

Local residents and others from northeast Ohio came out to support the immigrants. As a gesture of solidarity with the arrested workers, the marchers took turns laying flowers by the restaurant entrance. Workers from a nearby restaurant came out and applauded the demonstration.

Student, religious and community leaders denounced the arrests at a speak-out in a town park. Activists discussed other ways to support immigrant rights, such as broadening the network of church sanctuaries and establishing sanctuary cities in Ohio. □

MARKET ELECTIONS How Democracy Serves the Rich By Vince Copeland

Every four years, big money chooses the presidential candidates. Their war chests filled to the brim, they are then packaged by the media as 'the people's choice.' It's U.S.-style democracy—of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. But how do these chosen politicians win the votes of the millions as well as the millionaires?

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WW PHOTOS: LEFT, JOHN CATALINOTTO; ABOVE, LIZ GREEN

Left, Christina Hilo, BAYAN-USA and LeiLani Dowell, FIST, NYC.; Above, Boston.

In 100 U.S. cities, activists dem

Continued from page 1

Katrina/Rita Solidarity Coalition, World Can't Wait, Al-Awda Palestine Right to Return Coalition, Justice Committee, BAYAN-USA, New York Free Mumia Coalition, International Action Center, Pakistan USA Freedom Forum, Veterans for Peace, Raging Grannies and many more.

Following the rally, a youth-dominated, multinational and militant march took to the streets. When the police tried to force the marchers onto the sidewalk, they stood their ground and stayed in the streets until the march ended. Activists included a large youth contingent from Nodutdol for Korean Community Development along with organizers from the Iraq Veterans Against the War, FIST, IAC and many other groups.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

A protest took place Aug. 2 in front of the White House. One hundred and fifty protesters carried signs that included "Iran Didn't Foreclose on My House" and "U.S. Out of the Middle East." At a rally in a park, Rostam Pourzal from Campaign Against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran spoke, along with David Hoskins from the D.C. Stop War on Iran Campaign.

The protest was multinational, with a large number of people from the Iranian community along with Black activists, particularly youth, as well as Code Pink members and other anti-war activists. Media coverage of this protest included Al Jazeera, CNN and Youth and Politics Beat. The Baltimore All-Peoples Congress also participated. Activists are meeting on Aug. 12 to plan future actions.

LOS ANGELES

Two hundred anti-war protesters gathered and marched in downtown Los Angeles Aug. 2 despite 20 violent pro-shah and pro-U.S.-war counter-protestors who tried to stop it. The counter-protestors were violating a permit obtained by the Stop the War on Iran Coalition. In fact, the only action the police took was to attempt to arrest one of the coalition monitors defending the Stop War on Iran protest.

To allow the program to resume, about 15 demonstration monitors were able to isolate and force the counter-protestors out of the park. Speakers and initiators of the march represented BAYAN-USA, World Can't Wait, FMLN, FIST and the IAC. Other speakers represented South Asian Network, USLAW-Los Angeles, Service Employees Local 721, Al-Awda,

Anti-Racist Action, Union of Progressive Iranians and more. The militant march was very visible along Broadway's mostly Latin@ and working class neighborhood, and some observers joined in. Press included Fox News, local Pacifica station KPFK and Tehran News.

RALEIGH, N.C.

A protest convened at the State Capitol building, with Rima L'Amir from FIST making opening remarks. Twenty pro-war men with U.S. flags tried to provoke the anti-war activists but were unsuccessful. The march stopped at U.S. Congressman Bob Ethridge's office downtown, where Larkin Coffey from FIST and a speaker from the Durham Bill of Rights Defense Committee spoke. The march then went to Barack Obama's local campaign headquarters where Rev. David Foy from Black Workers for Justice spoke. FIST's Dante Strobino talked about the pro-war role of the Democratic Party. When the march passed the bus station, many riders joined in the anti-war chants and took Stop War on Iran literature. Ben Carroll from FIST was interviewed on National Public Radio.

HOUSTON

TONC organized an open mic protest Aug. 1 in 100-degree heat for two hours at the Mickey Leland Federal Building. "We have so many issues to fight right here at home. We don't need to make war on Iran," said Alma Diaz, co-host of KPFT Pacifica's show "Proyecto Latino Americano." She announced, "Tomorrow morning we are going to confront the racist Border Watch at a job site and we urge you to join us."

Signs that read "Honk to Stop War" evoked continuous honking by drivers, who also waved and made peace signs. People signed petitions for "No War on Iran." Council on American-Islamic Relations representative Ali Khalili stated, "Enough is enough. In our name, with our money, they are killing people across the world. We waged war in Iraq. More than a million innocent men, women and children have died."

Other activists represented the Harris County Green Party, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Houston Peace Forum, Houston Peace and Justice Center, Code Pink and Houston Coalition for Justice. Njeri Shakur from the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement stated, "People's lives are in a crisis with the rising gas prices, rising rents and food costs. ... People are sick of war and want our tax money to be spent on the real needs of the people."

MASSACHUSETTS

More than 200 activists picketed the Army Recruitment Center Aug. 2 in downtown **Boston** in an action jointly organized as a Counter-Recruitment Day called by the UMass/Boston Antiwar Coalition and Boston Stop War on Iran Campaign.

Shouting "We support war resisters, they're our brothers. They're our sisters," the picket line stretched an entire block and was joined by activists from TONC, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Greater Boston Stop the Wars Coalition, Workers World Party, International Socialist Organization, Vets for Peace, Smedley Butler Brigade, Women's Fightback Network, Stonewall Warriors and Boston School Bus Drivers Union, Steelworkers Local 8751.

Mike Spinnato from IVAW told WW, "Reading Howard Zinn's 'People's History of the United States' opened my eyes to the reality of what armed forces recruitment was really about."

FIST organizer Miya spoke on the connection between the military recruiting oppressed youth to fight and die abroad and the need for jobs for youth, not jails and war.

In **Springfield**, 50 people attended an Aug. 2 news conference in Court Square, across from City Hall, followed by a public speak-out. The speakers included State Representative Benjamin Swan, a civil rights activist who marched with Dr. King, and award-winning Latino poet Martin Espada. Iranian-born Behzad Samimi, now a U.S. citizen, made a strong case against a U.S.-Israeli attack on Iran.

They were joined by Don James, president of Arise, a poor people's rights group; Dr. "Marty" Nathan of Physicians for Social Responsibility; student John Collura of the STCC Mobilization Against Poverty, Racism and War, along with representatives from Out Now, Wally Nelson Veterans for Peace and the American Friends Service Committee.

All three Springfield TV stations covered the news conference as well as The Springfield Republican newspaper. Nick Camerota of the Western Massachusetts IAC was interviewed prior to Aug. 2 on two African-American radio programs about the protest. Other protests in the state were held in **Pittsfield**, **Orange** and **Tisbury**.

DETROIT

More than 100 multinational activists joined a spirited protest in downtown Detroit at Hart Plaza Aug. 1, declaring "U.S.-Israel: Hands off Iran" and "Money for Housing, Not for War!"

The emergency action, sponsored by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against

War and Injustice, was joined by members of Peace Action, the Teachers and Auto Workers unions, the Moratorium NOW! coalition, Latinos Unidos, Pax Christi, the Green Party, the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, 11th Hour 4 Peace, Iranian community members and others.

During a speak-out activists linked the U.S.'s planned war on Iran to the domestic war, most notably in relation to foreclosures, school closings, police brutality and the increasing cost of living. A similar action took place in **Ann Arbor** Aug. 2.

CHICAGO

To oppose the bipartisan war threats against Iran, more than 125 anti-war and progressive activists attended a rally at the State of Illinois Building organized by the Chicago Coalition against War and Racism.

The speakers' list included public housing activist Beauty Turner; immigrant rights activist Jorge Mujica from the March 10th Coalition; Iranian activist Ali Akbari from Evanston Neighbors for Peace; Al Sutton of Chicago Labor against War; and Angie Haban of the "Holy Name 6," activists who face charges for staging an anti-war protest during the 2008 Easter service at Holy Name Cathedral. The protestors marched to the Cook County Republican Headquarters, the Israeli consulate and the Democratic National Committee headquarters.

OTHER AUG. 2 PROTESTS

In **Cleveland** anti-war groups demanded "Don't Iraq Iran" as they marched past the federal building to a rally at a downtown park. Congressperson Dennis Kucinich made opening remarks charging the Bush administration with using the same lie—weapons of mass destruction—to justify another war. Other speakers represented the Iranian community, Peace Action, World Can't Wait, U.S. Labor Against the War, AFSC, WILPF, Vets for Peace, Greater Cleveland Immigrant Support Network, TONC, Middle East Peace Forum and others. A protest was also held in **Columbus**.

In **Buffalo** a demonstration was sponsored by Buffalo Forum, the Western New York Peace Center, IAC and WWP. The anti-war coalition in Buffalo recently shouted John McCain out of Buffalo.

A rush-hour protest in downtown **Baltimore** was held Aug. 1. Hundreds of workers honked their horns and waved as activists held signs that read "Foreclose the war, not our homes" and "Roll back gas prices, not war on Iran."



WW PHOTOS: ABOVE, HEATHER COTTIN; RIGHT, GLORIA RUBAC

Hicksville, Long Island, N.Y.



Houston

and: 'HANDS OFF IRAN!'

In **Hicksville**, Long Island, N.Y. 65 people rallied, joined in a lively action at the railroad station and then took a "peace" train to the NYC rally. Activists from Vets for Peace, Code Pink, L.I. TONC, Pax Christi, Hicksville SDS, as well as Hicksville Students Against War participated.

More than 80 anti-war activists lined both sides of a busy midtown **Atlanta** street to oppose any economic sanctions or military attack on Iran. There were honks of approval from many passing cars and cheers from pedestrians. Leaflets urging people to contact their elected officials and voice their rejection of any blockade of Iran as contained in House Resolution 362 were distributed to shoppers.

The IAC and the Georgia Peace and

Justice Coalition/**Atlanta** action drew a number of youth and students as well as members of the Iranian community, some of whom came in response to a half-page "No War on Iran" ad placed in a weekly newspaper.

The IAC organized a Stop War on Iran picket line at the Federal Courthouse in **Seattle** and then marched to City Center. This march joined forces with a vigil against the U.S.-Israeli war and occupation against Palestine called by Voices of Palestine. Another demonstration organized by IVAW, GI Voice and Olympia SDS at the gates of **Ft. Lewis** appealed to the soldiers not to fight in Iran.

Nearly fifty people came out in 103-degree heat in **Denver** to protest war

threats against Iran by the Bush regime. Banners and signs held by the activists received many positive responses from passing motorists.

In **Bozeman, Mont.**, a vigil to Stop Wars on Iraq and Iran was held at the Gallatin County Courthouse. Overwhelmingly, passersby, many on their way to and from a local fair, supported the demands by honking car horns, giving peace signs or raising their fists in support.

In **Tucson** a discussion was held on how the local anti-war movement can educate people about the Bush administration's lies regarding Iran. One speaker, who visited Iran last summer, gave a firsthand account of the gains the Iranian people have made since overthrowing the shah in 1978.

Other Stop War on Iran protests were held in **Kennebunkport, Maine; Salt Lake City; Louisville, Ky.; Fairbanks, Alaska; Hilo, Hawaii;** Gate 1 of the Norfolk Naval Amphibious Base in **Norfolk, Va.; Naples and Miami, Fla.; Madison, Wis.;** and many more. Go to www.StopWarOnIran.org for report-backs on other actions and what's next.

Contributors to this report include Steven Ceci, Heather Cottin, Catherine Donaghy, Martha Grevatt, Larry Hales, David Hoskins, John Lewis, John Long, Dianne Mathiowetz, Jim McMahon, Frank Neisser, John Parker, Lou Paulsen, Bryan G. Pfeifer, Gloria Rubac, Tom Scahill, Gerry Scoppettuolo, Dante Strobino and Paul Teitelbaum.

International coalitions work to stop attack on Iran

By John Catalinotto

Anti-imperialists around the world paid close attention to the Aug. 2 Stop War on Iran actions taking place in the United States, and in some places they joined these actions. A picket in Vienna on July 11, an action in Östersund, Sweden, on Aug. 1, a vigil in Norwich, England, and a march of 1,000 in Kolkata, India, on Aug. 2 and many actions throughout Canada were some of them.

Statements of solidarity from three international coalitions showed resonance with the U.S. anti-imperialists' call.

Jose Maria Sison, chairperson of the International Coordinating Committee of the International League of Peoples Struggle and a renowned leader of the Philippines movement for self-determination, wrote the following in his July 31 statement:

"Once more as in the case of the war on Iraq the U.S. is using as pretext for a war of aggression against Iran and the Iranian people the false charge that the Iranian government is engaged in a program of nuclear weapons development, despite negative results of very intrusive inspections by the U.N. nuclear inspection mission. Both U.S. imperialism and Zionist Israel are beating the drums of war to threaten Iran and the Iranian people and prepare for a war in violation of the Iranian people's national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of their country.

"The [U.S.] American people need to be vigilant, resolute and militant against the aggressive imperialist character of the U.S. government, which is nothing but an instrument of the monopoly bourgeoisie for subjugating other peoples and seizing territory for economic exploitation. It is not only the power-crazed and

overreaching neo-conservative clique attached to the Republican Party but also most importantly the oil monopolies and entire military industrial complex that are always trying to use both the Republican and Democratic parties in devising a bipartisan policy for dominating the entire Middle East and controlling its oil resources and other economic aspects. ...

"We regard the August 2 nationwide demonstration in the U.S. as a signal for a worldwide campaign to stop the war on Iran before it starts."

West Bengal workers' leader Manik Mukherjee of the International Anti-Imperialist People's Solidarity Coordinating Committee wrote the following on July 28, five days before his organization's Aug. 2 march in Kolkata:

"There is only one government that has used nuclear weapons against civilian populations, and that same nation has the largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction on the planet. Most dangerous and incredible, it is at this very moment developing a new generation of tactical nuclear weapons that it intends to use, not merely to threaten. That country is, of course, the United States. Shouldn't any real discussion of the dangers of nuclear weapons include the weapons

1,000 march in Kolkata, India, burn Bush's effigy

PHOTO: AIAIF

stockpiled by the Pentagon and the history of U.S. aggression and interventions?

"Iran has suffered greatly at the hands of the U.S. We recall the U.S. overthrew the democratically elected government of Dr. M. Mossadegh and returned the shah to the Peacock Throne—'the proudest achievement of the CIA.' For 25 years the shah ruled Iran with an iron fist for the benefit of U.S. oil corporations before the people of Iran, in the millions, overthrew his tyranny at a terrible cost in lives. For the past 27 years U.S. sanctions have impeded Iran's right to development and brought great suffering to the people."

The Anti-Imperialist Camp, based in Europe, wrote the following on June 28:

"After Palestine, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq it is now the turn of Iran.

Tehran has been long named head of the 'axis of the evil,' but Washington had other pressing bellicose needs on the way to global predominance. ...

"The U.S. and its allies keep turning the spiral of escalation. This time they have learnt their lesson from their hubris of omnipotence and have brought their European allies on board. It is actually Germany, France and England who are preparing the aggression. We have to build a broad movement against the war-mongers, defending Iran's national sovereignty, drawing also the lessons of the Iraq war, namely, that it will not be the Europeans to stop the U.S. but the resistance of the aggressed peoples themselves which we must support."

E-mail: jcat@workers.org



COLOMBIA'S FLOWER INDUSTRY

Exporting the fruit of mass exploitation

By **Betsey Piette**
Bogotá, Colombia

From Shakespeare's rose in "Romeo & Juliet" to Van Gogh's sunflowers, flowers have been integral to many cultures, marking rites of passage from birth to death.

Leave it to capitalist greed, however, to turn an object of beauty and affection into a source of super-profits. For thousands of women workers in Colombia's flower industry, flowers aren't so much a symbol of love as a source of mass exploitation.

Colombia, Ecuador, Kenya and Holland grow 83 percent of the world's cut flowers, but 85 percent of Colombia's crop—\$870 million annually—is exported to the U.S. More than 800,000 Colombian workers depend on the flower industry, with 100,000 directly employed and the rest seasonal. Seventy percent of the workers are women. Most have no job security and are often fired if they attempt to form a union. Nearly all work on temporary, often verbal contracts.

After attending the recent Permanent Peoples' Tribunal in Bogotá from July 21 to 23, a U.S. delegation had the opportunity to meet with women flower workers in Madrid, in the Sabana region of western Bogotá where the industry originated.

Once occupied by small farms that supplied produce and livestock to local towns as well as Bogotá, by the late 1960s family enterprises began producing roses, pom-poms, carnations and alstroemerias. By 1995, exports climbed to \$475 million.



WW PHOTO: B. PIETTE
Leilani Dowell, second from left, and Berta Joubert-Ceci, far right, with Colombian flower workers.

In 1998 U.S.-based multinational giant Dole Foods entered the business, buying Splendor Flowers. The company became one of Latin America's largest companies, with more than 2,500 workers. This changed the industry; flower cultivation spread throughout the area.

The delegation, organized by the International Action Center and the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange, met with five flower workers at a child care center which provides for their children. It was built by the women flower workers, who pay 5,000 pesos for tuition each month—roughly equivalent to \$2.50. Wages for these women are around \$350 a year. Industry average wages are under \$2 per day.

Of the five workers we met, only one, Alba, was working at the time. Many are being laid off as owners blame the devaluated U.S. dollar for driving down the demand for flowers.

Alba, a mother of four, gets up at 4:30

a.m. in order to have her children dressed, fed and to the center. She then boards a bus to report for her 6:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. shift. During prime seasons like Valentine's and Mother's Day, Alba may work up to 15 hours a day, not returning to her family until 10:30 p.m.

Throughout the day, Alba is exposed to strong, toxic chemicals as she prepares flowerbeds and plants and also harvests and processes flowers for shipping. A

typical flower worker in Colombia faces routine exposure to more than 125 chemicals, some of which are known to cause cancers and reproductive, respiratory and neurological problems. The workers must return to the greenhouses as soon as the flowers are sprayed with the pesticides, although the World Health Organization says it's unsafe for them to enter for at least 24 hours after spraying.

Pregnant women workers have miscarried in the fields. Rather than providing protection from the chemicals, these companies that grow flowers for Mother's Day summarily dismiss women workers who become pregnant.

Agrochemicals also leach into the water, soil and food consumed by produce animals. Cows fed on carnation residue produce milk contaminated with pesticides at concentrations higher than WHO allowances. Birth defects are common. Ten percent of Madrid's 70,000 residents suffer some form of physical disability or neurological disorders.

The greenhouses we saw in Madrid were sheathed in plastic, used not so much to maintain humidity levels as to hide conditions there. Workers complained that the resulting excessively high temperatures make them dizzy. They have trouble with asthma and high blood pressure after breathing in chemicals in these enclosed environments.

A major problem for women in the flower industry is carpal tunnel syndrome. Throughout an average day a woman may pick 400 carnations. Some companies require a work rate of 350 cut buds per hour. This can double in peak weeks before major holidays, when the flowers these women pick sell for up to \$800 a bunch in the U.S. and Europe.

However, the workers are not allowed to rotate between different jobs, such as

cutting flowers, packing them or stripping stems. Flower workers constitute 32 percent of all carpal tunnel patients in Colombia, and 89 percent are women.

Although two-thirds of Colombia's flower workers suffer from health problems associated with pesticide exposure and repetitive motion work, access to health care is sporadic. Companies may pay the workers' health benefits one month but then stop paying for months at a time. By law, the companies are supposed to provide benefits, but they know there are many other workers desperate to take temporary jobs.

During peak seasons companies like Dole hire temporary workers supplied by the Associated Work Cooperatives (CTA) promoted by Colombian President Alvaro Uribe's 2002 "labor reform" act. Hiring temporary workers relieves producers from direct responsibility for making social security payments. The CTAs take advantage of high rates of unemployment in Colombia, where millions of displaced people are desperately in need of income.

With annual revenues of more than \$6.2 billion, Dole Foods, through their subsidiary Dole Fresh Flowers, remains one of the leading suppliers of cut flowers to supermarkets in the U.S.

For several years workers at two Dole plantations in Colombia—Splendor and La Fragancia—have been struggling for the right to unionize. Forced to recognize the union, Dole then resisted efforts to negotiate contracts and finally closed the Splendor plantation last year.

Yet in January Dole announced it had received a Florverde certification that it grows flowers "in compliance with environmental, social, labor and occupational health and safety standards."

Thirteen national religious leaders from the U.S. sent a letter last Feb. 12 to Dole Fresh Flowers, pointing out Dole's anti-union history and asking that they deal justly with workers at their La Fragancia plantation. In spite of widespread fear of reprisals, almost half the workers there are members of the Untrafragancia union, an affiliate of the industrywide Untraflores.

The proposed Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and Colombia would maintain tariff exemptions already in place for Colombia's flower industry. It contains no provisions for higher pay or improved working conditions for industry workers. □

Solidarity with Colombian workers

City councilors demand a 'Coke-free' Boston

By **Frank Neisser**

Trade union and community activists joined City Councilor Chuck Turner and staff members from the offices of "Team Unity" Councilors Turner, Charles Yancey and Sam Yoon at Boston City Hall's Piemonte Room on July 23, where they took concrete action-steps in solidarity with trade unionists in Colombia, declaring the City of Boston off limits to Coca-Cola.

The solidarity meeting was organized to coincide with the People's Permanent Tribunal, which took place July 21-23 in Bogotá, Colombia. The PPT examined testimony on the crimes of multinational corporations like Coca-Cola, Chiquita Brands and others in the assassination of trade union leaders in Colombia. The PPT jury panel found the corporations guilty.

The meeting supported a resolution Turner introduced to make Boston a "Coke-Free" city. Turner's resolution recognizes the international boycott of Coca-Cola called for by the Sinaltrainal food and beverage workers union of Colombia and the United Steelworkers International, as well as the support of that boycott by local unions, including District Council 35 of the Painters and Allied Trades and the Boston School Bus Drivers, USW Local 8751.

The Painters union has removed Coke vending machines from its buildings, and the Bus Drivers have had Coke vending machines removed from all school bus yards in Boston.

The resolution concludes: "The Boston City Council ... does hereby declare that Boston, Massachusetts is a 'Coke-Free' city and asks the city administration to not serve Coca-Cola products or stock them in

any vending machines that are located on city property; and the Boston City Council encourages all businesses to immediately cease and desist from the stocking and selling of all Coca-Cola products until the international boycott has been resolved."

Bishop Filipe Teixeira, OFSJC, opened the meeting by calling for worldwide solidarity of workers and poor. USW Local 8751 President Frantz Mendes and Grievance Committee Chair Stevan Kirschbaum chaired the meeting. Kirschbaum described his socially active union's fact-finding solidarity mission to Colombia, where the bus-driver unionists witnessed the armored barricades at the Sinaltrainal union hall and the armored cars and bullet-proof vests required just to attend union meetings.

With the 8,000-delegate convention of the Letter Carriers union in Boston starting July 18, three NALC officials—Dave Welsh of San Francisco, Kenneth Lerch of Rockville, Md., and Richard Coritz from North Carolina—all addressed the City Hall meeting and expressed their solidarity. These delegates had handed out leaflets to the entire NALC convention calling for support for the solidarity meeting at City Hall, and worked to bring a resolution in support of the Coke boycott and removal of Coke vending machines to the convention.

The meeting, organized by the Community Labor Solidarity Committee of the Boston International Action Center and USW Local 8751, also heard from Colombian activist Dario Zapata, Painters' organizer Tony Hernandez and Richard Krushnik of the Greater Boston Latin American and Caribbean Coalition about a fact-finding trip exposing Colombian strip mining.

Toto Constant convicted of fraud, guilty of mass murder

By **G. Dunkel**

Emmanuel "Toto" Constant was convicted at the end of July for bank and mortgage fraud. He faces 15 to 45 years when he is sentenced Sept. 10. Constant just finished a two-year sentence for mortgage fraud in Suffolk County, N.Y., earlier this year.

Constant is wanted in Haiti for mass murder and rape. He was the organizer of the so-called Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti, the paramilitary group the army used from 1991 to 1994 to terrorize the Haitian people and keep them in line. FRAPH was responsible for 3,000 to 5,000 murders and countless rapes.

Constant has admitted in open court that he was the "leader" of FRAPH, not just a member. He also claimed, on the TV show "60 Minutes" in 1995, that the

CIA paid him \$700 a month while he was running FRAPH. ("Frap" in Creole, Haiti's language, means "punch" or "blow.")

Whether or not Constant was a CIA "asset" in Haiti, he had enough support in the U.S. government to get de facto political asylum when the Haitian government requested his extradition in 1996.

Before the trial started last spring, the Department of Homeland Security urged Constant's immediate deportation to Haiti. Haitian and U.S. human rights attorneys and activists told the judge hearing the case about Constant's violent leadership of FRAPH and asked him to set aside the plea bargain, which he did.

With the unsettled state of Haiti's justice system and the powerful influence of ex-Tonton Macoutes—another violent paramilitary organization—and ex-

Continued on page 9

EYEWITNESS VENEZUELA

Bolivarian process revealed in a place called Chuao

By Larry Hales

One judge of the revolutionary process ongoing in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is how far it reaches. To understand how deep the process is, how far and wide-reaching the aspirations of the Venezuelan people are, one needs to look in remote areas long neglected before the revolution began. One needs to seek out a little town called Chuao.

Chuao is not easily accessible. It is surrounded by mountains and rainforests to the south, part of Rancho Grande and Henri Pittier National Park, and by the Caribbean Sea to the north. To get to Chuao, one has to traverse mountains, pass through dense rainforests or go by boat from the beach of Puerto Colombia.

Part of the state of Aragua, located in the north-central region of the Bolivarian Republic, Chuao is a fishing village known for producing world-famous cocoa beans.

According to UNESCO, Chuao has been continually inhabited since the 16th century. The population now is primarily Afro-Venezuelan, whose descendents were brought from Africa as chattel slaves by the Spanish colonizers.

Many tourists flock to Chuao now, as it is just across the bay from Puerto Colombia, has a large Afro-Venezuelan population and a distinct culture, and is renown for its cacao cultivation, with beans that come from pods that look like huge fruit.

However, before the Bolivarian process, Chuao was in extreme disrepair. The people lived in near isolation, as access to the rest of the country was tenuous, and

the people lived in severe poverty. The roads were not paved, the septic system inadequate, leading to many illnesses, and the communally built homes were crumbling. The people of Chuao had no access to health care. They assert that they survived by practicing a "primitive" form of socialism.

Their primary means of subsistence, fishing, was threatened because of bottom-trawling, a commercial fishing method in which a huge net is dragged along the ocean floor, destroying the seabed, killing coral, displacing boulders and removing seaweed.

According to the April 28 issue of *Venezuela Analysis*, "Restrictions were placed on trawling with the Enabling Law in 2001, forcing the commercial fishing companies to only use the method in deeper waters, thus benefiting local fisherman." The practice has now been completely outlawed under the new Law of Fishing and Agriculture, passed in March.

President Hugo Chavez said of the new law, "We have approved the law prohibiting trawling because we decided that what we had done was not enough. ... We will help [commercial fishers] convert over to traditional fishing methods."

Because of the conditions imposed upon the people of Chuao—conditions that go all the way back to colonization, slavery and neglect by successive governments—the people of Chuao had begun to leave, putting the town and its culture in danger.

But now the roads in Chuao are paved, as part of an ongoing process to revitalize



Larry Hales, squatting left, and Mike Martinez, center in front of banner, of FIST during U.S. delegation to Venezuela.

the town for its original inhabitants. The septic system has been rebuilt. Houses have been rebuilt, and there is now a health clinic that provides free medical care. A fish house was built so that fish can now be frozen and stored, and the government has leased the people of Chuao boats at 1 percent interest to be paid over 25 years.

The cacao plantation is now in the hands of a co-operative of 130 people. Cooperatives can be entered into at anytime, and people entering can leave of their own will and take back their initial investment. The government issues loans and provides training and advice so that the co-ops can be productive for the members and the rest of society.

On his show "Alo Presidente," which was filmed from the beach of Chuao in April, President Chavez remarked on the increased production of cocoa beans there. Production went from 5,000 kilograms in

2005 to 20,000 in 2007. "The production quadrupled, a growth of 300 percent, and that's going to continue to go up," he said. (*Venezuela Analysis*, April 28)

Chavez also announced that a processing plant is being built in Aragua, so that instead of cocoa beans being shipped to foreign processing plants—where 60 percent of the beans harvested in the Bolivarian Republic currently go—they can be processed by the people of Venezuela to the benefit of the same people.

Because its infrastructure is being rebuilt, Chuao and its 1,500 inhabitants can now flourish. Whether they stay or leave, the decision does not have to be made because of poverty and neglect. The unique culture—including the feast of Corpus Christi where dancers dressed in costumes and devil masks dance to drum rhythms—can continue, thrive and develop alongside the material changes. □

U.S. 'aid' to Mexico accompanies training in torture

By Teresa Gutierrez

Almost the same day that the Bush administration was passing an aid package for Mexico, a Mexican newspaper leaked a sickening video about torture methods used in that country.

The aid package, commonly known as the Merida Initiative, was signed into law on June 30. It was attached to the reactionary Iraq war-spending bill and includes \$400 million in aid for Mexico as well as \$60 million aimed at Central America and \$2.5 million each for the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

According to the *Washington Post*: "President Bush signed [the initiative] to help Mexico fight cartels. ... The Merida Initiative was pushed through in large

FRAPH members barely checked, these activists felt that Constant would go free if he was returned to Haiti.

Ray Laforest, a well-known Haitian activist in the International Haiti Support Network, was one of those opposed to Constant's return to Haiti to serve his fraud sentence. He told Haiti-Liberté at the start of the trial, "We want people to be aware of the trial. Even though they are just prosecuting Toto today for grand larceny, we hope that one day this will lead to his being judged for his crimes against humanity in Haiti." (July 5)

What Constant's trials and convictions prove is that the United States is far more interested in punishing attacks on its financial institutions than it is in bringing justice to the victims of mass rape, murder and torture in Haiti. □

part by lawmakers who said they were impressed by Mexican President Felipe Calderón's commitment to working more closely with U.S. law enforcement. (July 11) Indeed, the law is intended to support President Felipe Calderon's "war on drugs and organized crime."

A dangerous liaison with the oppressor

The video revealed the dangerous liaison that exists between U.S. imperialism and Mexico's ruling class. This unholy alliance has resulted in the Mexican regime—with Mexico an oppressed nation dominated by its powerful neighbor to the north—becoming one of Washington's most violent and corrupt junior partners.

U.S. imperialism is, of course, "the greatest purveyor of violence" of all, as Martin Luther King Jr. said in 1967. But it has demanded of its clients the defense of imperialist and capitalist interests by any means necessary.

The video in question showed two torture-training sessions conducted by the police department in León, Guanajuato. It was leaked by *El Heraldo*, a local León paper, and led to a national outcry in Mexico and around the world. The video is not for the faint of heart as what you see is shocking and inhumane.

Officers are graphically shown dragging an alleged volunteer from the León police force, visibly weakened and sick, through his own vomit. In another nauseating scene taken in a pitch dark cave, the police officer has his head forced into a hole with "rats and excrement." His deep sighs and moans give one chills—especially if you

think you could never have such pity for a policeman.

But perhaps what is most revealing of all is the voice one hears in the video of someone speaking U.S. English. Clearly a U.S. expert in torture is giving directions on what to do in this exercise, which were then translated into Spanish and carried out by a Mexican cop.

Laura Carlson of *Americas Policy Program* wrote in the *Huffington Post* on July 9: "Kristin Bricker, an investigative reporter from the online newspaper *Narco News*, covered evidence that indicates the trainers are from a Miami-based private security company called 'Risks, Incorporated.'

"The company, incorporated in London, boasts 'Psychological torture is the main tactic used in professional interrogations, it works and leaves no physical marks. We do this interrogation technique and others on some courses to show how easy it is to break a hostage and we're being nice!'"

U.S./Mexican state at war with the people

Under Mexican law, torture is prohibited. But torture, a practice learned at the School of the Americas and fostered by U.S. imperialism, is used so much in Mexico by the ruling class that the data could fill volumes.

Torture is used not to fight drugs, as the U.S. and Mexican government claim. It is used to stop the progressive and revolutionary movements. It is used against the people who clamor for change and social justice. It is used in the fight for the bottomless swag in the most-lucrative drug trafficking industry that lines not only the

coffers of the corrupt in Mexico but primarily the banks and the corrupt in the United States.

According to the Latin America Working Group based in Washington, D.C., "More than 5,000 people have been killed in drug-related violence since Calderón took office in December 2006."

But most significant is the wave of murders, kidnappings, rapes and attacks that have been waged against the popular and revolutionary mass movements in Mexico. The leaders of and participants in the heroic movements for social change in Oaxaca, Chiapas and Atenco have all been victims of acts of torture.

Writes Carlson in the *Huffington Post*: "Mexican human rights groups report that violations have been on the rise in Mexico since the drug war sent over 25,000 soldiers out into the streets and emboldened police forces. In its annual report, the Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Center notes 'a regression in respect and protection of fundamental rights.'"

Mexico is everyday becoming more and more a militarized nation. The Mexican ruling class has become filthy rich as a result of its allegiance to U.S. imperialism. It will do anything to keep those riches and defend its relationship to the empire on the other side of the northern border.

But the people and the movements in Mexico have shown over and over that their struggle will not be stopped—torture or no torture. The U.S. government once again is sending aid to pay for this repression with the Merida Initiative. But that will not stop the struggle for change in Mexico. □

Bush's Olympic event

With the Olympics set to open Aug. 8 in Beijing—demonstrating to the world, more than anything else, the tremendous advances made by 1.3 billion Chinese people after they liberated themselves from colonialist slavery with a 1949 socialist revolution—we were astonished to learn that George Bush was going to lecture the Chinese about human rights on the eve of the opening.

Perhaps “astonished” is an exaggeration. The Bush gang has been so shameless in describing its worldwide war crimes as acts of “liberation” that nothing out of Washington can astonish any thinking human regarding its arrogance and hypocrisy.

Before allowing Bush one word against China, let's review the Bush gang's record regarding human rights, freedom of the press and repression. Leave aside for the moment the question of war, aggression, occupation and slaughter, verging on genocide, in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Chinese, by the way, have no record of interventions outside their border for the last 25 years, for any reason.

We remind the world of the following key words and names:

Abu Ghraib. Bagram.

Guantánamo. The names of these U.S.-run prisons in occupied Iraq, occupied Afghanistan and an illegally occupied piece of Cuba, respectively, have become synonymous with U.S. prison abuse and torture.

Rendition. Prevented from legally using torture on U.S. soil, the Bush administration has globalized it, outsourcing the procedure to client states where committing these atrocities have little chance of getting the torturers into trouble, either now or in the future.

Waterboarding. Alberto Gonzales. A torture technique the Bush attorney general refused to admit is a torture technique.

Raids against immigrant workers. Detention centers as modern concentration camps. Separating parents from their children. Now applied by a government police agency with the acronym ICE against thousands and thousands of immigrants that U.S.-based capitalists were happy to hire at low wages and to prevent from forming labor unions.

The prison-industrial complex. There are 2.3 million people in U.S. prisons and jails. Disproportionately Black, Latin@ and Native, reflecting institutional racism. In total, more imprisoned here than there are in the prisons of China, with its far larger population.

Journalists killed in record numbers in Iraq. Washington doesn't have to censor the news of the war. The Pentagon simply orders a tank unit to murder the messenger.

Bush will tell lots of lies on the eve of the Olympics. Let's do our best to expose them. □



Enrolling Bush in the WW Supporter Program

July 5

Dear Workers World Supporter Program,

Please do not thank me for the enclosed amount. It doesn't come from me. It comes from my president.

Mr. Bush has sent me a check for \$600 with the exhortation to stimulate the economy. As his proxy in this matter, I have devised a way to use this money combining that purpose with the many other as-yet-unmet goals on his agenda.

Firstly, the economy. I am investing Mr. Bush's \$600 in the pursuit of Socialism. I cannot think of any better cure for the present economy that ails us.

Secondly, terrorism. I think Mr. Bush is quite right in harping on this great danger and placing it above all other pressing problems, such as health care, civil liberties, poverty and other concerns of the compassionate conservative. It is indeed the terrorists who control this ailing economy and who stand in the way of ever fixing it.

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Thirdly, of course, the war in Iraq. This has drained so much from the economy that Mr. Bush is so worried about. Like a child who has started a conflagration by innocently striking a few matches, I think (again as the president's proxy) that he would like to take it all back now but is too embarrassed to say so. He is therefore leaving it up to the people of his country to clean up the mess.

To return to the above problems abandoned in hot pursuit of the terrorists—health care, civil liberties, poverty, democracy. Will they ever be solved without a change in the very economy His Excellency wants to stimulate? I doubt it.

I therefore consider it my patriotic duty to follow the spirit, if not the letter, of my president's wishes and enroll him in the Workers World Supporter Program.

Yours in patriotism,
Richard Frumess
Kingston, N.Y.

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WW in 1981: new movement against war, racism, cutbacks

Continued from page 2

organizer: “Oppressed people played a leading role in building for this march, and the slogans of the march addressed their needs. This is a real departure for the movement.”

Holmes was the 1980 Vice Presidential candidate of Workers World Party. Other WWP members played important roles in many aspects of the march organization.

Following the Black contingent was a large delegation of rank-and-file trade unionists, Black, white, Latin, women and men, organized and unorganized, documented and undocumented, skilled and unskilled, chanting against budget cuts.

A lead banner in this contingent, decided upon by the unions in New York who supported May 3, read, “American trade unionists say: Money for jobs and human needs, not war machines!” And unemployed autoworkers from Detroit's UAW [United Auto Workers] Local 900 carried a banner exclaiming, “Money for jobs and human needs, not war!”

Local 41 of AFGE [American Federation of Government Employees], which represents government workers in D.C., including those who work in the Pentagon itself, held high a banner which read, “Beat back the attacks on government workers and on social services.” Especially visible at this march were autoworkers and municipal workers, most hard hit by the economic crisis and the budget cuts.

While a number of union presidents and other officials endorsed the march, the push for participation came strongly from the rank and file. Many unionists put pressure on their leaders to provide the buses. The many oppressed people and women who participated exposed as untrue the commonly held misconception that the American labor movement is mainly white and male.

Many unions from New York City, including Hospital Workers District 1199, Furriers, Hatters, and municipal workers from AFSCME [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees] DC 37, were mainly from oppressed nationalities. A Needle Trades banner held by Latin workers read, “U.S. out of El Salvador!”

There were thousands of rank-and-file trade unionists, but their militancy and their strength was felt even beyond their numbers.

So many workers who provide services felt the threat of Reaganism. Being multinational, men and women, gay and straight, they felt comfortable with the demands to end racism, repression and bigotry.

In marked contrast, elements in the AFL-CIO leadership supported a pro-Reagan demonstration that unsuccessfully tried to disrupt the march. This right-wing action was supported by William Doherty, director of the AFL-

CIO's American Institute for Free Labor Development, which actually works with the CIA in the junta's phony “land reform” in El Salvador.

Lesbian and gay contingent

This was the first time lesbians and gay men had an open and visible presence in a national anti-war demonstration. One of the large and more militant contingents on the march was the lesbian and gay contingent. Marching under the banner of the Lesbian and Gay Focus of PAM, this contingent was led by Black lesbians who entered the rally site leading the whole contingent in chants against racism.

Matching them in militancy was a contingent of 300 Palestinians, carrying Palestinian flags and banners, which read, “No U.S. intervention anywhere!” “U.S. out of Lebanon!” and chanting “Palestine, El Salvador, no intervention, no more war!” This is the first time the Palestinian issue has been welcomed in an anti-war demonstration.

While the leadership of the last anti-war movement refused to raise other issues along with Viet Nam, today there were whole contingents representing liberation struggles. Many signs demanded that the U.S. get out of Southern Africa. There were contingents of Haitians demanding political asylum, of Cubans saying, “Stop economic attacks on Cuba,” of Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Puerto

Ricans, Argentineans and Iranians.

People from cities large and small had taken the slogans of the march and inked them on handmade signs and on sheets turned into banners. A banner was carried on behalf of women in Alderson Prison. The Gramercy-Stuyvesant Independent Democrats were there. Many nuns came to oppose U.S. aid to the Salvador junta. Boston school bus drivers demanded “Money for schools and jobs, not the Pentagon.”

Presbyterians for Peace was there, and a contingent of disabled people, many in wheelchairs, participated. A banner held by New Haven CISPES [Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador] exclaimed, “The people have chosen—U.S. out!” The Quakers were there along with a New American Movement contingent from Chapel Hill, N.C. A Detroit sign said, “Cut Chrysler's welfare, not people's health care,” and a banner from Miami informed, “Not a living thing wins a nuclear war.”

Students came from around the country. Campuses organized 22 buses in New York alone.

Many marchers expressed appreciation for the well-organized character of the march, especially when a small number of right-wingers tried to disrupt. This group was quickly isolated by security and guide teams. □

U.N. official tells truth behind Bosnian Serb leader's arrest

At the end of July the Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic was taken from Belgrade and placed in the Scheveningen detention center near The Hague, Netherlands, where the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia charged him with war crimes, including "genocide," during the 1991-1995 civil war in Bosnia.

Those who only learn their news from the corporate media might not realize that the ICTY was created not by the United Nations but by NATO; that it is not an impartial court but has been directed almost exclusively against Serbs; and that it was incapable of convicting its most famous defendant, President Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia, who died in custody under suspicious circumstances after demolishing the prosecution's case. They would also not learn that German and U.S. interference in Yugoslavia, with the intention of destroying the remaining socialist-leaning state in Eastern Europe, had provoked and prolonged the civil war in Bosnia, leading to thousands of additional deaths. For a different view of that history, see: www.workers.org/2006/world/milosevic/.

Any international court that failed to put the U.S. and German leaders on trial—those who ordered and carried out not only the 1999 war against Yugoslavia, but 10 years of aggression that finally dismantled that multinational country—cannot be taken seriously as an unbiased court. It is an imperialist political tool.

Below we publish excerpts from the telling remarks of U.S. citizen Phillip Corwin, taken from an interview by Cathrin Schütz in the German daily newspaper Junge Welt on July 31. (*jungewelt.de*) In the spring and summer of 1995 Corwin was the "Civil Affairs Coordinator and Delegate of the Special Representative for the UN Secretary General for Bosnia and Herzegovina," and has written a book about his experience.

Cathrin Schütz: Richard Holbrooke, Paddy Ashdown and many other Western officials once involved with the Yugoslav crisis unanimously call the arrest of Radovan Karadzic the capture of one of the most brutal war criminals in contemporary history. What was your reaction to his capture and statements like Holbrooke's: "Karadzic would have been a good Nazi"?

Phillip Corwin: Holbrooke and Ashdown used the wars in former Yugoslavia to advance their own careers. Phrases like "one of the most brutal" and "good Nazi" are purely emotional, and only remind us of the terrible biases those men held, and the crippling damage they did as so-called diplomats. Even now, they contribute to the Serbophobia that makes a fair trial in The Hague almost impossible.

In any criminal proceeding, the question of intent is paramount. From my contacts with Bosnian Serb officials, including Dr. Karadzic, I was convinced that the general intent of the Bosnian Serb leadership was to protect Serbs, not to kill Muslims or Croats or any other ethnic group.

CS: The main allegation is his alleged responsibility for genocide of Bosnian Muslims in the town of Srebrenica in July 1995. At the time Srebrenica fell to the Bosnian Serb army, you were the highest ranking United Nations civilian official in Bosnia-Herzegovina. What had happened?

PC: First, one has to realize that

the tragedy of Srebrenica was part of a larger tragedy. ... What happened in Srebrenica was not a single large massacre of Muslims by Serbs, but rather a series of very bloody attacks and counterattacks over a three-year period, which reached a crescendo in 1995.

And the number of Muslim dead in the last battle of Srebrenica, as BBC reporter Jonathan Rooper has pointed out, was most likely in the hundreds, not in the thousands. Moreover, it is likely that the number of Muslim dead was probably no more than the number of Serbs who had been killed in Srebrenica and its environs during the preceding years by Bosnian Commander Naser Oric and his predatory gangs.

The exaggeration of the number of missing Bosnian Muslims shows that the official reporting was political.

In May 1995, two months before the final battle at Srebrenica, 90 percent of the Serbs living in Western Slavonia were ethnically cleansed by the Croatian army in "Operation Flash." A month after Srebrenica, 200,000 Serbs were ethnically cleansed from their ancestral homes in the Krajina area of Croatia. The international community did nothing in either case.

Srebrenica must be placed in perspective. If, indeed, 700 innocent Muslims were massacred during the battle of Srebrenica in July 1995, then that was a war crime and the criminals should be prosecuted. But the difference between 700 and 8,000 is

political not numerical.

CS: One media article stated that "The [Yugoslavia] Tribunal was the child, in part, of Western governments' guilt over doing so little to stop the war in the former Yugoslavia and its related atrocities." Is that what you observed?

PC: I think the main reason for the destruction of Yugoslavia was the ambition of NATO to move eastward. Although the Cold War had ended, the Cold Warriors were still in power. Washington still felt Russia was its biggest threat because it had so many nuclear weapons, and Washington wanted to move up to the borders of the former Soviet Union. ICTY was an attempt to provide a legal framework for NATO's eastward expansion.

ICTY was not formed out of guilt. Imperialism never suffers from guilt. ICTY was formed to continue the pressure on those in Eastern Europe who opposed NATO expansion.

CS: Will Karadzic get a fair trial?

PC: I don't believe Dr. Karadzic can get a fair trial in The Hague.

CS: Although most of the commentators/journalists know little or nothing about Bosnia and the Bosnian war, they all "know" that Karadzic is a war criminal. How come?

PC: After the Vietnam War, the Pentagon knew it had to learn to control the press. It has been very successful in doing that. During the Yugoslav wars, the press bought the idea that NATO was fulfilling its moral duty by opposing "Serbian racism."

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

As revolutionaries gain ground

India to form anti-guerrilla force

By David Hoskins

The Interior Ministry of India recently announced plans to form a 10,000-strong elite fighting force trained to counter guerrilla-warfare tactics. The ministry says it intends to deploy this force against the revolutionary forces led by the Communist Party of India-Maoist (CPI-Maoist).

CPI-Maoist activists, who have waged an armed struggle in the countryside for decades, have recently increased their presence in major cities, including New Delhi, the capital. They have been able to embed themselves in popular urban struggles in part by forming mass organizations and alliances with other revolutionary-minded groups.

Indian police agencies have expressed particular concern about the foothold the Maoist party has been gaining in two industrial belts encompassing eight cities, including Bhilai, Ranchi and Kolkata along with Mumbai and Ahmedabad. Many of these industrial cities are Indian state capitals and all are hubs of industry and commerce.

The revolutionaries called a 24-hour armed strike in five rural eastern Bihar districts on July 11 to protest the arrest and torture of a popular area commander. Guerilla actions by the CPI-Maoist paralyzed train traffic for the day.

The CPI-Maoist's armed wing, the People's Liberation Guerilla Army (PLGA), has grown to over 22,000 full-time combatants. According to India's own top security officials, the revolutionaries have upgraded their weapons, started to encircle urban areas from liberated zones in the countryside, and have been engaging in increasing frontal attacks on state security forces. (Reuters, July 15)

The government's decision to raise an elite force of anti-insurgent fighters follows a string of military and political advances by the revolutionaries.

On July 16 the PLGA ambushed a security vehicle in Orissa, killing 24 police officers. Two weeks earlier the rebels successfully attacked and sank a police boat, killing at least 36 anti-insurgency police, on the same day that they ambushed a police patrol in Jharkhand, killing three police

and wounding four others. Hundreds of PLGA fighters also coordinated armed attacks on government offices and police stations in Bihar on the day of the strike.

Forty years of armed struggle

The Maoist revolutionaries in India trace their struggle to a 1967 peasant rebellion in the West Bengal town of Naxalbari. The past 40 years have been spent uniting many of the various revolutionary groupings and building up their rural bases.

Recent events in India indicate they have made significant advances in uniting sections of the popular movement, advancing the struggle in some urban areas and fighting the repressive state forces.

India has many left parties and groups, a number of which have strong anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist politics. However, the largest parties that call themselves communist abandoned revolutionary politics long ago and turned to parliamentarism. Some have participated in the administration of various Indian states, settling for meager reforms while accommodating to capitalist class rule.

The Maoists have taken a different road. Through revolutionary struggle, they have gained control of a whole swath of territory in India known as the Red Corridor. This corridor runs through 12 states, beginning at Uttar Pradesh and Bihar on the border of Nepal and continuing south through West Bengal, Jharkhand, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh to Tamil Nadu, at the tip of the Indian subcontinent. Inside

the Red Corridor the revolutionaries levy taxes, operate schools and health clinics, and administer revolutionary courts to provide justice against reactionary landlords and capitalists.

The CPI-Maoist has close relations with revolutionaries in neighboring Nepal, where the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) recently placed first in that country's Constituent Assembly elections after a decade of armed struggle and two years of street protests.

Popular support for armed struggle in any given country is in part a reflection of the material conditions workers and peasants are forced to endure at the hands of the capitalist state.

India's masses are burdened by the weight of a rigid caste system that creates extreme inequality. Despite the country's rapid industrial growth, which has strengthened the ruling class and created a more privileged high-tech sector within the workforce, 35 percent of the population was living below the national poverty line in 2003. Forty percent cannot read or write. Infant mortality exceeds 32 deaths per 1,000 live births and epidemics of bacterial diarrhea, hepatitis and typhoid fever pose recurring threats to the poor and oppressed.

The success of the CPI-Maoist in battling state police forces, providing health care and education, and exacting justice against corrupt and tyrannical landlords has earned it respect and support from a large section of India's workers and peasants. □

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

HIDDEN AGENDA:

U.S./NATO takeover of Yugoslavia

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Por LeiLani Dowell
Bogotá, Colombia

El Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos en su reunión aquí el 23 de julio, condenó al gobierno colombiano “por sus acciones y sus omisiones en el cometido de genocidios.” También condenó a las corporaciones transnacionales—como la Coca Cola—por “graves, claras y persistentes violaciones de los principios generales y normas que protegen los derechos civiles, políticos, sociales y ecológicos de las comunidades e individuos de América Latina.”

“Existe una percepción de que Colombia es un paraíso—el clima, los recursos naturales y la diversidad, con costas en los océanos Atlántico y Pacífico. Pero es un paraíso para unos pocos. Es un paraíso para aquellos que extraen sus recursos, aquellos que exterminan a sus indígenas. Es un paraíso para los narcotraficantes y paramilitares.”

Esto dijo William Guzmán, líder de SINALTRAINAL, el Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos, a una delegación de Estados Unidos que visitó Colombia, organizada por el Intercambio Laboral EEUU/Cuba y por el Centro de Acción Internacional entre los días 20 y 28 de julio.

La delegación de activistas, maestr@s y jóvenes participó en la Audiencia Final del Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos, el cual examinó el papel jugado por las corporaciones multinacionales en la explotación y represión del pueblo colombiano, sus tierras y sus recursos naturales.

Un panel internacional de jueces presidió el tribunal, incluyendo profesor@s, comisionad@s de derechos humanos, doctor@s, jueces y trabajador@s sociales

de Argentina, Australia, Bélgica, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Nicaragua, España y Suecia.

Más de 30 corporaciones multinacionales fueron acusadas de transgresiones en contra del pueblo colombiano y sus tierras. Muchas corporaciones estadounidenses—incluyendo a Occidental Petroleum; la Agencia de viajes TQ3; corporaciones de alimentos y agricultura como Chiquita, Coca Cola, Del Monte y Monsanto; las compañías mineras Drummond y Muriel Mining; y la contratista militar DynCorp—fueron acusadas de cometer crímenes que van desde el uso de paramilitares para amenazar y asesinar a líderes sindicales y masacrar comunidades, hasta la destrucción del medio ambiente, la contaminación de las tierras y la súper explotación de los recursos naturales de Colombia.

Un representante de CONVOCA, el comité nacional en defensa del agua y de la vida, describió la campaña para un referéndum nacional para hacer del agua potable un derecho fundamental para tod@s l@s colombian@s. Mientras que el pueblo colombiano ha visto sus recibos por el uso de agua aumentar en un 300% en los últimos 5 años, corporaciones como la Coca Cola no pagan un centavo por el agua para sus productos.

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel de Argentina, quien ganó el Premio Noble de la Paz en 1980 por sus obras sobre América Latina, presidió el tribunal. En su declaración de apertura explicó que cada una de las corporaciones bajo investigación por el tribunal ha sido contactada antes del evento e invitadas a defenderse. Mientras que algunas proveyeron respuestas por escrito cuestionando la “legitimidad”

del tribunal popular, la mayoría rehusó responder y ninguna de ellas acudió.

En el último día del tribunal, se formaron comités para realizar un análisis más profundo y tomar acción en contra de estas corporaciones.

En los días después del tribunal, la delegación de los EEUU condujo entrevistas con trabajador@s, estudiantes e indígenas, lo cual que ofreció una continuación de la evidencia presentada en el tribunal. La delegación visitó la región de la Sabana de Bogotá, donde mujeres trabajan en la industria de las flores hasta 15 horas al día sin derecho laboral alguno, bajo condiciones terribles y salarios bajos. Como resultado de los pesticidas a los cuales las mujeres están expuestas en el trabajo y la falta de barreras protectoras entre el establecimiento de las flores y las casas de l@s trabajador@s, un 10 por ciento de la comunidad tiene alguna discapacidad o deformación física. Como la Coca Cola, estas compañías no pagan nada por el agua que roban de la región.

La delegación su reunió con miembr@s de varias comunidades indígenas, incluyendo a representantes de la Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia. Un hombre de la región costera de Taganga en el norte de Colombia, describió cómo su comunidad indígena había sido forzada fuera de sus tierras por el gobierno para crear el Parque Tairona, que luego fue entregado a una empresa turística, Aviator, para ser usado como parte de un paquete de ecoturismo. A l@s indígenas que se quedan, en su mayoría pescadores, el gobierno ahora les está negando el derecho a pescar, y Aviator está considerando expandirse en la zona circundante para construir a un hotel.

Fue explicado que todas las atrocidades cometidas por las corporaciones multinacionales ocurren en el contexto de una represión política, militar y económica por el gobierno de Colombia con fuerte ayuda de los EEUU. Colombia es el tercer país del mundo recipiente de ayuda de EEUU después de Israel y Egipto, y una proporción grande de esa ayuda es en forma de pertrechos y entrenamiento militar. Mientras el gobierno de Colombia entrega el derecho a los recursos naturales a esas empresas multinacionales, utiliza sus Fuerzas Armadas y las unidades extralegales paramilitares para aplastar la disensión, forzar el pueblo fuera de sus terrenos y sembrar un sentido de terror generalizado en la población.

Mientras países a través de América Latina están desafiando los proyectos neoliberales e imperialistas de los EEUU—en lo que el economista colombiano Libardo Sarmiento denominó “la resucitación del proyecto socialista” en América Latina—Colombia continúa siendo el aliado más grande de los EEUU y está considerada por muchos como el “Israel de América Latina”. Sarmiento calificó los recientes comentarios del derechista presidente de Colombia, Álvaro Uribe al Congreso de Colombia, en los cuales urgió que se incrementara el militarismo, como una amenaza ominosa:

Sarmiento concluyó su presentación en el Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos con un llamado: “Sólo un movimiento socialista de masas puede confrontar el gran desafío histórico para romper con el capitalismo. Esto será la verdadera justicia y la única forma de reparación a sus víctimas”.

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Ejecuciones hipotecarias y crisis económica son centrales en foro de Los Ángeles

Por John Parker
Los Ángeles, CA

Un importante foro se llevó a cabo sobre la lucha de la comunidad y l@s trabajador@s el 26 de julio en la oficina del sindicato de empleados públicos SEIU Local 721 en Los Ángeles. Más de 150 personas de diversas nacionalidades asistieron al foro por varias razones. Algunas vinieron por la información que necesitaban para confrontar de inmediato una crisis personal sobre una ejecución hipotecaria; otras vinieron por la consulta legal gratis. Pero lo que atrajo la proporción más grande del público fue el ansia de una estrategia de lucha.

El foro fue organizado por la Asociación del Bloque Harvard Boulevard, el Centro de Acción Internacional y el Local 721. Teniendo en cuenta la creciente penuria económica, no fue sorprendente que el auditorio del sindicato SEIU estuviera lleno. El 24 de julio, los titulares de la primera página del Los Angeles Times señalaban los niveles sin precedente de juicios hipotecarios y embargos de vivienda—un récord que no había sido superado desde

que esas cifras se habían registrado.

“Vamos a organizar una marcha de un millón de personas para impedir la ejecución de las hipotecas,” dijo Rosie Martínez, líder del Caucus Latino de la 721, un sindicato de 85,000 miembr@s. Martínez también avaló una marcha propuesta para el 17 de septiembre al Concejo Municipal, la cuál era parte de un plan sugerido por Evelyn Levings del Club del Bloque Harvard Boulevard. Levings leyó la resolución que será presentada al Concejo Municipal para demandar una moratoria de juicios hipotecarios y desalojos.

Las oradoras de BAYAN-USA Kuusela Hilo y Terrie Cervas explicaron cómo el sufrimiento de trabajador@s filipin@s, forzad@s a migrar a los Estados Unidos debido a su política económica neocolonialista en las Filipinas, era semejante al sufrimiento de l@s trabajador@s nacid@s aquí. Una organización de viviendas sin fines de lucro proveyó información útil sobre los efectos de la crisis de juicios hipotecarios en el Condado de Los Ángeles.

El activista Jerry Goldberg de la Coalición Moratorio Ahora para Impedir Juicios Hipotecarios y Desalojos basada

en Michigan, dejó a la audiencia aplaudiendo y muy motivada.

Él explicó cómo, como abogado, aún si ganase un caso de juicio hipotecario cada día, solo resultaría en 365 casas salvadas en un año, mientras que el número de juicios hipotecarios en solo un mes en Michigan puede alcanzar 12,000. “Los esfuerzos de un individuo como yo es como poner el pulgar en un agujero de un dique para detener el agua. Éste no es un problema de individuos. Es un problema social,” dijo Goldberg.

Un representante del Centro de Acción Internacional habló sobre las soluciones huecas ofrecidas por los políticos para esta crisis económica: “El Gobernador Schwarzenegger quiere reducir el sueldo de tod@s l@s emplead@s municipales—unas 200,000 personas—al sueldo mínimo de \$6.55 la hora, mientras suben los precios de la gasolina y la gente ya no puede pagar sus hipotecas. Es como si fuera un guión de Hollywood, pero no es así. Es lo que tienen para ofrecer como solución—una solución hecha sobre nuestras espaldas. Bien, tenemos otra solución—un moratorio—y no vamos a dejar que

todo siga como siempre, no hasta que lo consigamos.”

Los Asambleístas Estatales Mike Eng y Mike Davis acudieron y hablaron en apoyo del moratorio.

La cobertura por televisión del foro incluyó a Telemundo y al Canal 4, afiliado con NBC (KNBC), y otras estaciones nacionales y locales de radio las cuales hicieron varias entrevistas.

KNBC entrevistó a Bernice Hunt, una residente por 48 años del Sur Central de Los Ángeles quien expresó la realidad inimaginable de tener que dejar una casa donde llevaba todas las experiencias de toda la vida de su familia.

Sugerencias fueron dadas por l@s asistentes al foro sobre cuáles demandas deben ser presentadas al gobernador, al alcalde y al concejo municipal. Esta información será usada para empezar la primera reunión de la recién establecida Coalición Trabajador@s-Comunidad para Impedir Juicios Hipotecarios y Desalojos que se reunirá en la oficina del sindicato.

John Parker habló en el foro del 26 de julio y representó al Centro de Acción Internacional.