

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

July 9, 2009

Vol. 51, No. 27

50¢

General strike resists Honduras coup

Mass movements oppose military regime

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

June 30—Some 200 heavily armed soldiers from the Honduran army surrounded the house of democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya at dawn on June 28. After firing on the house, soldiers forced their way in, pointed their rifles at Zelaya's head and chest, and forced him into a vehicle. They drove him to an airplane that flew him to Costa Rica.

This blatant military coup has thrown down a challenge to all of progressive Latin America. It aroused immediate mass resistance from Honduran mass organizations and active hostility from progressive governments throughout Latin America and progressive organizations worldwide. It has received no open diplomatic support anywhere in the world, even from reactionary imperialist powers.

According to a Cuban press agency report from Honduras, "The main trade unions, farmers, youth and social organizations in Honduras are on the second day of a strike against the dictatorial government in the country." (June 30, Prensa Latina)

Zelaya has promised to return to Honduras after he addresses the Organization of American States in Washington. OAS Secretary-General José Miguel Insulza, United Nations General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto, Argentine President Cristina Fernandez and Ecuador President Rafael Correa will accompany him.

Though the coup forces have already issued an arrest warrant for Zelaya should he come home, every social and progressive sector is organizing to welcome Zelaya with a massive march.

Who backs the coup

This military coup served the interests of the tiny group of wealthy oligarchs and right-wing, pro-U.S. political forces in Honduras that oppose the Zelaya administration. These rightists are against reforms Zelaya has been making that aim to help low-income people, workers and the disadvantaged. They abhor Honduras' decision last year to join the Bolivarian

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Israeli navy seizes aid ship

Viva Palestina USA to defy blockade of Gaza

By John Parker

June 30—Today units of the Israeli navy blockading Gaza attacked and boarded the Free Gaza Movement boat, the Spirit of Humanity, abducting 21 human rights workers from 11 countries. The passengers and crew, including Noble laureate Mairead Maguire and former U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney, are being forcibly dragged toward Israel. The boat is carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza with an international delegation that set sail from Cyprus, Greece.

McKinney was a 2008 presidential candidate on the Green Party ticket. She is also one of the main participants in another heroic campaign, along with New York City Councilmember Charles Barron and British MP George Galloway, sending medical supplies to Gaza.

Viva Palestina USA will leave July 4 from New York City, with hundreds of people taking a convoy of trucks through Egypt to the border of Gaza to deliver much-needed medical supplies to the besieged people of Gaza.

This is the second trip initiated by Galloway — the first was launched in February from Europe — and is being done in cooperation with Ron Kovic, the anti-war activist, veteran and author. This is the first trip organized by Viva Palestina USA.

The national office of Viva Palestina USA is in Chicago, but organizing from the ground up is being enthusiastically initiated from many areas and sectors — from anti-war organizations to human rights and social justice organizations and activists, to local mosques and other religious groups, including anti-Zion-



PHOTO: ANNIE JOHNSTON

Viva Palestina banner in San Francisco Gay Pride march.

ist Jewish organizations.

These organizations and individuals are determined to have their voices heard in opposition to U.S.-Israeli aggression, especially since the latest war crimes escalated by Israel against Gaza last year.

According to Palestinian officials and human rights groups, that one-sided war by Israel — funded and armed by the United States — killed at least 1,440 Palestinians, 900 of whom were civilians, including 431 children. It is estimated that 20 percent of children in Gaza suffer post-traumatic stress syndrome as a result of witnessing Israel's violence.

Half of Gaza's hospitals were destroyed, exacerbating the medical emergency for many civilians wounded in the attacks. None of this horror even takes into account the many people yet to fall victim to leukemia and other illnesses resulting

from the 75 tons of depleted uranium left by Israel during its illegal war. (AlJazeera.net, June 27)

Concrete solidarity with Palestinian people

This is why the effort by Viva Palestina, along with the call for an international boycott against Israel and actions to close down Israeli embassies, is receiving wide support.

"There's a new atmosphere in the U.S. over Palestine," stated Galloway on the homepage of the Viva Palestina Web site, "The phenomenal response to this tour demonstrates that." (vivapalestina.org)

Judy Greenspan from the International Action Center (IAC) will be traveling from Oakland, Calif., as part of the delegation

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San Francisco

Leonard Peltier demands his freedom

By Judy Greenspan
San Francisco

A press conference and vigil were held at the downtown federal building June 26 to support Leonard Peltier and his upcoming parole effort on July 28. Supporters are being asked to write letters on behalf of Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement and one of the longest-held political prisoners in the U.S.

The press conference marked the 34th anniversary of the attack by FBI agents and other police on Oglala-Lakota Native American activists on Pine Ridge Reservation. On June 26, 1975, two FBI agents were shot and killed during a shoot-out and Peltier was charged with their murders. Despite the absence of eyewitnesses and any evidence proving Peltier's involvement in the shootings, this Native American leader was sentenced to two consecutive life terms in prison.

The press conference was attended by Peltier's daughter, Kathy Peltier, who urged everyone to continue to support her father's parole bid for freedom. Tony Gonzales and Sampson Wolfe, two local Native American leaders of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, also spoke.

A short statement by Peltier was read at the press conference, which stated in part: "I am not a philosopher or poet or a singer or any of those things that particularly inspire people, but the one thing that I am is the evidence that this country lied when they said there was justice for all. I am the evidence that the attitude, the powers that be still hold us in a grip.

"They hold us in an emotional grip. They hold us in a poverty grip. They hold us in a cultural deprivation grip. And we as a people are the evidence that this coun-



Supporters of Leonard Peltier rally in front of San Francisco Federal Building. (Kathy Peltier, center)

try fails to keep its treaties, this country fails to keep its word. This country has failed to follow its own Constitution - the treaty between the people and the government. We are that evidence." Peltier's full statement can be read at <http://freepeltiernow.blogspot.com/2009>.

During his more than 33 years of incarceration, Peltier has continued to speak out in support of Native peoples' rights. He has won international acclaim and support for his tireless activism on behalf of human rights for Indigenous peoples. Peltier is an internationally acclaimed writer and artist. In 2004, Leonard Peltier ran for U.S. president on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket.

Letters supporting Peltier's parole effort should be addressed to the U.S. Parole Commission, 5550 Friendship Blvd., Suite 420, Chevy Chase, MD 20815-7286. Your letter must reference Peltier's prison number, 20815-7286. Free Leonard Peltier! □

As ranks of exonerated grow

Supreme Court denies prisoners' right to DNA evidence

By Greg Butterfield

Marches and rallies were held in state capitals and other cities June 27 to mark the National Day of Action for the Wrongly Convicted. Organizers of the actions, including families whose loved ones were put to death or died in prison, said that up to 10 percent of the 2.3 million-strong U.S. prison population may be wrongfully convicted.

"It can happen to anybody," Walter Swift told protesters outside the Michigan capitol in Lansing. Swift, a Black man from Detroit, was convicted of rape in 1982 and sentenced to 55 years in prison. He was exonerated and released last year after DNA testing proved his innocence. (Lansing State Journal, June 28)

The protests came just nine days after a 5-4 U.S. Supreme Court decision overturned a lower court ruling in the case of William Osborne, an Alaska prisoner who had argued for and won his right to DNA testing in a 1994 sexual assault case. Osborne had offered to pay for the test himself.

In denying prisoners' rights to DNA testing, the Supreme Court's far-right majority, led by George W. Bush-appointed Chief Justice John Roberts, claimed that "to

suddenly constitutionalize this area would short-circuit what looks to be a prompt and considered legislative response" by the individual states.

Alaska is one of three states that still have no laws on the books giving prisoners access to genetic evidence. However, many states that have such laws also severely limit prisoners' rights to testing, including time limits and no access for those who admitted guilt under coercion or for plea bargains.

Justice John Paul Stevens, in his dissenting opinion, noted, "The DNA test Osborne seeks is a simple one, its cost modest, and its results uniquely precise. Yet for reasons the State has been unable or unwilling to articulate, it refuses to allow Osborne to test the evidence at his own expense and to thereby ascertain the truth once and for all."

Osborne was represented by attorney Peter Neufeld of the Innocence Project, the group that helped Swift win his freedom. Since 1989, some 240 prisoners have been exonerated because of DNA testing, according to the Innocence Project.

Seventeen people sentenced to death row have been freed so far because DNA testing proved their innocence.

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Vol. 51, No. 27 • July 9, 2009
Closing date: June 30, 2009

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

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

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

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

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Solidarity needed to stop war on immigrants

By Teresa Gutierrez

There is a war going on inside this country—a war against immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants. This war is escalating, and like most wars, it is taking many casualties. The casualties are innocent children, women and men whose only crime is the need to survive, to find a way to live and work in the United States.

This unrelenting war demands that the progressive and working-class movements pay close attention as it has great bearing on the class struggle. Current developments regarding immigration policy in the U.S. are both encouraging and ominous.

Phoenix Sheriff Joe Arpaio is nationally and internationally infamous for what can only be described as a reign of terror against not only immigrants but against people of color and the poor. Inmates of all nationalities are treated brutally and constantly humiliated in Arpaio's jails. The sheriff's practices have become so appalling that a national outcry has forced the Justice Department to investigate Arpaio's conduct as well as that of his deputies.

On June 19, well-known civil rights activist Rev. Al Sharpton traveled to Phoenix. His trip shed much-needed light on what is going on in this region of the country. Meeting in a predominantly African-American church, it also helped build unity between the Black and Latina/o communities around the immigration issue.

Rev. Sharpton daringly met with Arpaio, primarily to discuss the sheriff's notorious racial profiling. "We didn't come to start trouble," said Sharpton in response to attacks from Arpaio. "We came to stop trouble." (BET, Jun 22) The meeting between Sharpton and Arpaio followed a meeting with victims of racial profiling conducted by Arpaio's department.

What is happening in Arizona is just a sample of the attacks against immigrants sweeping the country. Racial profiling against "foreign-looking" workers has become epidemic. Driving while Latina/o, Jamaican or Nigerian has become a reason to be stopped, victimized, detained and deported. Should a seat belt break or



Protesters in Arizona target Arpaio.

WW PHOTO: PAUL TEITELBAUM

a tail light bust, you might land in jail for a night or in a hellish detention cell.

Anti-immigrant attacks on the rise

Spurred by the economic crisis, the right wing is sharpening their weapons, escalating their racist diatribe. This dangerous rhetoric is leading to more and more anti-immigrant crimes.

In Mount Vernon, Ohio, a group of teenagers was charged with putting a noose around the neck of a Latino boy in May 2008 and dragging him in a parking lot. Were it not for the intervention of some strangers who stopped the attack, the youth, Roberto Cantu, might have been lynched.

Despite this noose attack and yelling racist epithets, including "Get the Mexican," Cantu said, only one attacker was sentenced to only 10 days in jail and the charges of aggravated assault were dropped. (Mansfield News Journal, June 17)

Other equally repugnant episodes are taking place around the country. There are horror stories of children placed in foster homes after their parents are detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement

agents. One case involved a Guatemalan woman whose children were taken from her in a round-up. She spent years trying to get her children out of foster care.

In Ann Arbor, Mich., immigrant rights activists report that undocumented workers who cannot show certain papers are not allowed to receive their children's birth certificates.

The right wing is fueling anti-immigrant sentiment in other ways as well. They are blaming immigrants for the high cost of health care. The real culprit, of course, is the pharmaceutical and medical industry, which is behind the for-profit instead of for-people health care system.

This blaming the undocumented for all the ills of society, however, resonates among a sector of the population and must be challenged.

Government policy at a standstill

The Obama administration has not yet moved forward on passing a progressive, humane, pro-worker immigration policy. In fact, a meeting with members of Congress regarding immigration was postponed several times, much to the ire

of immigrant rights activists.

Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel said, as the postponed meeting was finally held on June 25, that the "votes aren't there" for immigration reform. (Christian Science Monitor, June 25) Neither is the political will to challenge the right wing.

Some in the movement say that the Obama administration is caving in to right-wing anti-immigrant sentiments and the administration is fearful of taking a progressive stand.

Not long ago, Vice President Joe Biden was quoted as saying that as long as the economic crisis looms, it will be "difficult" to provide legalization for undocumented workers. This kind of statement promotes further divisions among U.S.-born and foreign-born workers.

Ignacio Meneses, a leader of Latinos Unidos in Detroit and a key organizer of that city's May Day rally, addressed union and progressive activists during the People's Summit and Tent City in Detroit June 14-17. There Meneses debunked this lie.

Meneses pointed out that legalizing the undocumented would raise the standard of living of all workers; that this would help the economy as the undocumented could come out of the shadows, join unions, buy cars and homes, and join the fight for workers' rights.

Not legalizing the undocumented continues the age-old ruling-class tactic of divide and conquer. In addition, as the "Buy America" campaign fills the air, that also leads to a dead end. Instead of building class solidarity, "Buy America" only fuels competition among workers here and abroad. It also leads to anti-immigrant attacks as Mexican or Chinese workers are seen as the enemy by those influenced by this reactionary rhetoric.

The only solution to the war on immigrants—and to the war against all workers in this country—is solidarity, organizing and fighting back. Together in unity, workers can meet the challenges ahead.

Gutierrez is a coordinator of the New York May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights.

Newburgh 4 meeting exposes

Another case of FBI entrapment

By Joe Piette
White Plains, N.Y.

Relatives of the Newburgh 4 spoke on June 18 at a forum in White Plains, N.Y. Everything they said reinforced charges by the Islamic community that the FBI is entrapping innocent Muslim men for political reasons.

Sensational headlines in May accused James Cromitie (aka Abdul Rahman), David Williams, Onta Williams and Laguerre Payen with conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction within the U.S., which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison, and conspiracy to acquire and use anti-aircraft missiles, which carries a mandatory minimum of 25 years and maximum of life in prison.

All four men were ex-prisoners struggling to make a living.

Alicia McWilliams, aunt of David Williams, asked why his parole officer never intervened during the year-long government operation. She questioned how a petty drug dealer like her nephew could suddenly become a terrorist mastermind.

Explaining that all the defendants were poor, uneducated and Black, McWilliams compared agent provocateur Shahed

Hussain, who used the name Maqsood, to a "drug dealer preying on poor kids" or a "pimp targeting young girls right off the bus in Times Square."

Hussain is the same agent who was used by the FBI in the widely publicized terrorism case against Albany, N.Y., pizza-shop owner Mohammed Mosharref Hossain and Yassin Muhiddin Aref in 2004. Instead of wasting taxpayer money on frame-ups, McWilliams wants the government to "give men coming from jail something solid," like jobs they can feel proud of and raise families with.

McWilliams' sister, Elizabeth, mother of David Williams, described how she and her sick son, who needs a liver transplant, were swarmed by an army of cops. She said both were handcuffed and held for five hours, even though Homeland Security must have known Williams did not live there. She reported that Williams had said he knew a man who was soon going to "help with the medical bills" for his brother. Now she is torn over which son she has to help the most.

Kathleen Barnes, fiancé of James Cromitie, described how the informant stalked Cromitie and her family. She said Maqsood showed up often in his Hum-

mer, BMW or other expensive vehicle, asking for James and offering money to her and their children. Cromitie avoided him for weeks at a time, telling Barnes, "Don't take nothing from him."

But the agent eventually caught Cromitie at home, and on May 21, five SWAT vans and a truckload of armed men attacked Barnes' home, slammed her to the ground and held a gun to her head. No search warrant was ever shown.

Another speaker at the forum, who was afraid of losing her job, refused to reveal her name. She had already lost her long-time job as a housekeeper when her boss found out about the charges against her partner, Onta Williams. She described Newburgh as an impoverished city, and could not understand why the FBI picked her town in which to stage this frame-up.

Nada Khader, representing the WESPAC Foundation which hosted the event, explained that Laguerre Payen, who was unemployed and took medication for schizophrenia before his arrest, was not represented by counsel because he is from Haiti and has no family in the New York area.

Pointing to the 50 percent unemployment rate for African-American men in

Newburgh, Khader said targeting these men by the FBI is entrapment and called the four "victims of capitalism."

Lynne Jackson of Project SALAM raised the similarities among many of the FBI entrapment cases, including the use of informants who suggest the crime, recruit and organize the conspiracy, and finally arrange the purchase of weapons.

Ferik Duka, father of three of the Fort Dix 5, spoke on the phony terrorism cases since 9/11, with many "arrests and convictions despite no facts." He explained that by targeting innocent Muslim men here, the U.S. justifies its "wars against terrorism" abroad.

Mauri Saalakhani of the Peace and Justice Foundation ended the meeting by announcing a July 3 rally in Washington, at which family members of Muslim defendants are invited to speak. Among the issues to be addressed will be the relentless targeting of Muslim organizations, the use of agent provocateurs in Islamic communities, and harsh sentencing of up to life in prison for convictions in cases in which no one was harmed. For more details, contact peacethrujustice@aol.com or call 301-762-9162. □

San Francisco

Disabled activists protest budget threats



WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

By Judy Greenspan
San Francisco

Chanting “They say cut back, we say fight back!” over 400 disabled activists and their supporters took over the street in front of the State Office Building in San Francisco June 23 to “Stop the governor from slashing programs for people with disabilities, kids, and poor people.” Seventeen people both in and out of wheelchairs were arrested in a civil disobedience action.

The demonstration was called a “People’s Day of Reckoning” and coincided with the 10th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Olmstead* decision, which stated that people with disabilities have a right to live in the community, not just in nursing homes. The action was organized by a diverse group of disabled people, seniors, single-payer health care advocates, union members and others.

Not only did the action target the anti-people budget currently being proposed

by legislators and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, but it specifically exposed the inhumane cuts aimed at disabled people in California. Under Governor Schwarzenegger’s budget proposal, disabled people would lose their independence without attendants and aid and be forced into institutions and nursing homes.

Speaker after speaker challenged everyone to fight against the “cuts-only” budget and to support the rights of people with disabilities. A large group went into the streets and held a die-in during the protest. Jean Stewart, a long-time disabled writer and activist, addressed the crowd from the street before she was arrested: “The governor is doing this deliberately. He is saying ‘screw the people.’ We should be shutting down this country.”

Several other rallies were held around the state by the People’s Day of Reckoning Coalition which said loudly and clearly, “The state budget is killing us!”

Greenspan was arrested as part of the civil disobedience action.

Struggle vs. General Motors

South African workers fight for jobs

By Martha Grevatt

In just eight months, over 20,000 South African autoworkers have been “re-trenched.” In response to these and other layoffs in manufacturing, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa has launched a “fight for jobs” campaign. NUMSA won a major victory on June 17 in the Johannesburg Labor Court against General Motors South Africa.

South Africa’s labor law requires a company to consult with the workers’ union before laying them off. Displaying the

same arrogant contempt for law and contract that autoworkers here are familiar with, in April GMSA unilaterally laid off 280 workers, followed soon after by another 130. NUMSA sued and won a court ruling that the retrenchments (South African term for layoffs) were illegal.

In a news release issued on the day of the court victory, NUMSA stated: “The Labor Court in Johannesburg has today found that the retrenchments initiated by GMSA during April this year were procedurally unfair. Following this the Labor Court shall determine the amount of compensa-

tion to which the retrenched workers are entitled. GMSA has further been ordered to consult with NUMSA in order to reach consensus should it contemplate any other retrenchments. This order means that the letters of retrenchments that GMSA issued in April to 130 workers who are still in its employ are null and void.

“NUMSA welcomes the Labor Court judgment and shall zealously continue defending and advancing the interests of all its members.

“The union will further study the judgment to determine whether to challenge the substantive fairness of GMSA’s April 2009 notorious retrenchments. We shall also leave no stone unturned in ensuring that the retrenched workers receive a fair compensation in terms of the wages that they would have earned had they not been illegally and unlawfully retrenched as well as in terms of other losses that they have incurred as a result of GMSA’s barbaric retrenchments.

“We hope that today’s Labor Court ruling and NUMSA’s determination in defending workers against unscrupulous employers such as GMSA provide a future

lesson to other employers across sectors that South Africa is not a banana republic.

“Otherwise we shall also unleash mass strikes if and when we find it necessary in defense of workers.”

This fight with GMSA is in line with resolutions passed by NUMSA’s Job Security Conference held in Gauteng April 23-26. “The time of endless talks is over,” the chairperson of the union’s Wits Central region, Motsamai Ponya, stated at that event. “We need concrete steps on the part of employers and government to save our jobs.” NUMSA’s Job Security program also included a call “to agitate for worker and state takeovers of companies that are on the verge of liquidation.”

It was the determination to take the struggle to the streets that won the workers’ victory in court. These South African autoworkers are demonstrating to the world that through militant class struggle jobs can in fact be saved. All who work in this ruthless industry must follow their example and declare a halt to “endless talks.”

Martha Grevatt has worked 22 years at the Chrysler plant in Twinsburg, Ohio. Email: mgrevatt@workers.org.

Transit Workers election signals progressive shift

By G. Dunkel
New York

Subways and buses move New York City—delivering over 6 million rides per workday and running 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Transit Workers Union Local 100 represents the 37,000 workers who operate the system. These workers have the power to shut down New York when they strike, as they last did in December 2005.

Because New York bosses need mass transit to run in order to make profits, transit workers are subject to harsh, unrelenting pressure from management at the Metropolitan Transit Authority and the city administration of billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

The union paid a big fine for the 2005 strike, which was illegal under New York’s anti-union Taylor Law. Members lost two days’ pay for every day they were out, and Local 100 also lost its dues check-off. This means the local has to collect dues individually from each member, an arduous organizational task.

Roger Toussaint, who led the 2005 strike, recently gave up his post as president of Local 100 to take a top job with the national TWU in Washington. Curtis Tate, acting president of Local 100, is running for a full term on the United Invincible caucus slate backed by Toussaint.

Running against Tate is John Samu-

elson, a track worker and union activist, representing the Take Back Our Union caucus. Members of TBOU have been active in the Million Worker March Movement and the Stella D’Oro solidarity campaign, as well as working closely to fight cutbacks with the union that represents faculty and staff at the City University of New York.

On June 25 the New York Daily News reported that United Invincible “suffered a series of stunning defeats ... when ballots for delegates to the international’s convention were counted. [They] lost about 40 of 67 of the head-to-head contests against the anti-Toussaint ‘Take Back Our Union.’”

“The TBOU is excited and pleased over such overwhelming support from our membership,” TBOU spokesperson Charles Jenkins told *Workers World*. “Our members made an outcry for change after 8-and-a-half years of misdirection. They seemed to agree with our program.”

While ballots for the executive offices in the union—president, vice-presidents and others—won’t be counted until December, Jenkins said, “Our members cast both ballots at the same time. Our victory in the delegate races indicates we will do well in the executive races.”

The TBOU intends to try to push the national TWU in a more militant direction, concluded Jenkins, who won election as a delegate and is running for elected office in his division. □

UFCW vs. Acme supermarkets

Workers stand up to anti-union threats

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Four thousand workers at Acme supermarkets in Philadelphia and its suburbs have worked under a contract extension since February 2008 while their union, Food and Commercial Workers Local 1776, bargained with the company.

Even though the union has never threatened to strike or take job actions, on June 9 Acme gave the union its “last and best” final offer and threatened to terminate the existing contract and implement its own proposal unilaterally.

This gun-to-the-head approach by Acme management mirrors auto industry executives’ tactics earlier this year when United Auto Workers were forced, under

threat of their livelihood, into no-strike pledges, wage freezes, pension cuts and significant losses in benefits.

In a full page ad in the Philadelphia Inquirer on June 26 exposing the company’s threats, the union wrote: “The company is trying to take advantage of a challenging economic environment to wring concessions from its workers. Its proposals would gut their health care benefits, decimate their pension benefits and lower the standard of living for workers who have labored for Acme for many years.”

Food prices at Acme, as at most local markets, continue to rise as the cost of the economic downturn is passed onto working and poor families. It is doubtful that this giant supermarket chain would pass

Continued on page 5

SAN FRANCISCO

40 years of Pride

By Judy Greenspan
San Francisco

This year's LGBT parade on June 28 was led by a contingent of veteran activists from the early years of the Gay Liberation Front. In the spirit of Stonewall and to mark the 40th anniversary of the early struggle for LGBT liberation, two exciting actions were held along the LGBT parade march route.

At the beginning of the day, queer members and their supporters in the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN) pushed their way into the Jews for

Pride contingent, which was filled with people carrying blue and white balloons and Israeli flags. Despite pressure from the pro-Israeli leadership of the contingent, loud chants of "Free, free Palestine, end, end the occupation" filled the street.

Carrying banners that read, "Queer Jews Against Israeli Injustices," the IJAN grouping was met with cheers and peace signs by hundreds of people along the LGBT parade route. Later, IJAN joined with the Viva Palestina contingent to deliver a strong message in support of Palestine.

Later in the afternoon, a coalition of



PHOTO: ANNIE JOHNSTON

LGBT activists fighting the budget cuts held a die-in in front of San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom's convertible that was in the parade. Newsom has recently

announced severe cuts to LGBT-friendly drop-in health clinics, trans-focus clinics, HIV/AIDS outreach, homeless youth programs and other essential services. □



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

NEW YORK



WW PHOTO: BRENDA SANDBURG

'Bail out LGBT people, not banks!'

PRIDE weekend kicked off in New York City on June 26 with a militant march for trans and gender non-conforming (TGNC) peoples' rights. The Trans Day of Action marched from Union Square past New York's Human Resources Administration to demand that all people receiving public assistance, including TGNC people of color, be treated with respect and dignity.

The annual event is led by TransJustice, a project of the Audre Lorde Project, New York's lesbian, gay, bisexual, two spirit, trans and gender non-conforming people of color center for community organizing.

On June 28, a contingent that included the Bail Out the People Movement, Workers World Party, the International Action Center and the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together marched under the slogans "40 years and counting—Stonewall means fight back!" and "LGBT people need a bailout, not the banks!"

—LeiLani Dowell

UFCW vs. Acme

Continued from page 4

onto its customers any profits made from cutting employee expenses.

UFCW Local 1776 used the ad to seek support from Acme customers and to pressure the company to resume contract negotiations. Letters calling for management to return to the bargaining table should be sent to Acme/Supervalu, P.O. Box 990, Eden Prairie, MN 55440. Acme is owned by Supervalu, which can be contacted at www.supervalu.com or by calling 952-828-4000. □

'STRANGE FRUIT' describes horrors of lynchings

By Dolores Cox
Harlem, N.Y.

June is Black Music Month, proclaimed so by former President Jimmy Carter. In honor of Black Music Month, there was a film series showing in New York at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture based in Harlem.

One of the films, "Strange Fruit," is the first documentary exploring the history and legacy of the famous Black singer, Billie Holiday, who popularized the song "Strange Fruit." The song tells a dramatic story of the U.S.'s grim past. "Strange Fruit" is a protest song highlighting the thousands of rampant racist lynchings of African Americans in the South. It was originally performed by Holiday in the first integrated New York City nightclub, Cafe Society, in 1939.

The profound lyrics are: "Southern trees bear a strange fruit. Blood on the leaves and blood at the roots. Black bodies swinging in the summer breeze. Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees. Pastoral scene of the gallant South. The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth. Scent of magnolia sweet and fresh; and the sudden smell of burning flesh. Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck. For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck. For the sun to rot, for the tree to drop. Here is the strange and bitter crop."

"Strange Fruit" was banned from radio airways as being too radical, and turned down by record companies because they did not want to offend white Southern customers. During the many decades of terrorism against Black people by white extremists the lynchings were brought to the public's attention by the NAACP, Black newspaper editor and activist Ida B. Wells, the Communist Party USA, union leader A. Philip Randolph and other civil rights activists. A federal anti-lynching bill was also introduced in the U.S. Congress. However, it was successfully filibustered and permanently defeated by white Southern members of Congress.

The song was published in the 1930s in "N.Y. Teacher," a union magazine. The music and lyrics were written by a Jewish poet named Abel Meeropol. He was inspired to write it after seeing a photo of several Black men hanging from a tree with a cheering white crowd below them. He wrote it under the name of Lewis Allan.

Meeropol was a New York high school teacher, an active union member and Communist Party member. He was among the numerous people interrogated by the U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities during the McCarthy-era witch hunts.

The 2002 documentary contains file footage of the thousands of Communist Party members, unions and other activist groups who took to the streets of New York marching against racism and for workers' rights during the 1900s. It also shows file footage of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, which revived the song. And it contains interviews of past and present human rights activists.

The songwriter died in 1968, and "Strange Fruit" was played at his funeral.

Robert and Michael Rosenberg were the adopted children of Abel Meeropol and Ann Meeropol. Their parents were Julius Rosenberg and Ethel Rosenberg, Jewish-American communists found guilty of providing secret atomic bomb information to the Soviet Union. They were executed in New York's Sing Sing Correctional Facility in 1953. They were the only two U.S. citizens executed for espionage during the Cold War; the case against them was built on an anti-Semitic Red Scare campaign. Despite worldwide protests against this legal lynching, President Dwight Eisenhower refused to stay their execution.

The Black historian, writer and activist Elombe Brath, in a 1995 N.Y. Amsterdam News newspaper article, described "Strange Fruit" as "Capitalism's bitter crop." □

FILM
review

Still no recovery in sight for workers

By Fred Goldstein

Bob Herbert, who is an op-ed columnist for the New York Times and also an African American, wrote in a recent piece: "There are now five unemployed workers for every job opening in the United States. The ranks of the poor are growing, welfare rolls are rising" and young male workers over a broad front "are falling into an abyss of joblessness."

Herbert goes on to show that official unemployment, now 9.4 percent, is heading toward 10 percent at a good clip. He continues: "Economists are currently spreading the word that the recession may end sometime this year, but the unemployment rate will continue to climb. That's not recovery. That's mumbo jumbo."

For the working class, employed and unemployed, truer words were never spoken.

Herbert shows that in November 2007 the officially unemployed numbered 7 million. Now the figure is about 14 million. He cites a study by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University in Boston showing that, during this period, so-called "underutilized workers" had increased from more than 15 million to close to 30 million.

He points out that three quarters of the 6 million workers laid off in the last year were given permanent layoffs—meaning their jobs were destroyed. And he highlights the plight of young workers. Half of the 7 million job losses since November 2007 were sustained by workers under 30.

Herbert, one of the few Black voices allowed any expression by the rich-white-

male-dominated New York Times, shows perplexed frustration: "Why rampant joblessness is not viewed as a crisis and approached with a sense of urgency and commitment the crisis warrants, is beyond me."

To bosses, revival means profits

Of course, in a newspaper that is really one of the central organs of big business, it is natural that there could be no truthful discussion of this crisis. In the first place, the bosses regard this as a crisis of profits, of lost business. Uppermost in their minds and the minds of the vast majority of their economists and economic advisers is the revival of profits.

But in addition, this is a crisis of a new type. If there should be any sort of "capitalist recovery," it will be a recovery for the capitalists, not the workers. This sort of recovery first showed itself after the 1991 downturn. It appeared again, even more strongly, after the 2000-2001 downturn in which the high-tech bubble had burst. These were the first "jobless recoveries."

Herbert points out that the Obama administration is talking about a recovery this year—and yet, at the same time, the administration concedes that unemployment may go up to 10 percent!

The big business economists, when asked about this, mumble about the "lag" between the economic upturn and an upturn in employment. But, after the 1991 downturn, it took 18 months to get back to pre-downturn levels. After the 2001-2002 downturn, it took 27 months. During the present crisis, the drop of 7 million jobs in the 19 months of this recession is

the biggest absolute decline and the largest percentage jump in the 68 years since the Great Depression ended. (Real Unemployment Rate Hits a 68-Year High, www.dollarsandsense.org)

What is behind this? There are many factors, but the most important is that this is the age of the scientific-technological revolution. The bosses are in a race to make more profits and reduce their labor costs; they do this by bringing in technology to replace workers. This shows itself in each boom-and-bust cycle.

Each new round of technology puts workers' skills into machines. This lowers the workers' skills required. Lower skills mean lower wages and more competition among workers. And the workers have less buying power.

At the same time the development of technology raises the productivity of labor. More goods and services are turned out in less time. With more productive labor, more commodities to sell and less buying power in society, it becomes more and more difficult for the capitalist system to start up the boom part of the boom-and-bust cycle.

It also means that it is harder and harder to bring jobs back into the economy after each bust is over.

With 30 million workers officially unemployed or underemployed—many of them discouraged from even looking for jobs or forced into part-time work—should there be an upturn in business (and that is not guaranteed at all!) massive unemployment will still remain, along with low wages.

Capitalism operates by the boom-and-

bust cycle. But those cycles are changing—a lot less boom and a lot more bust, certainly as far as the workers are concerned. The bosses have more and more been relying on artificially created bubbles to revive the profit system. They increasingly rely on paper profits and speculation. This shows the sickness of the capitalist system, that it is in a stage of decline and decay.

Growth 'based on bubbles'

This was expressed indirectly by one of the more renowned financial experts in the academic establishment, Nouriel Roubini of New York University. Roubini became a renowned figure after the present economic crisis broke out.

Prior to the crisis, in 2006, he challenged all the financial experts who said the housing bubble was no problem and would not really spill over into the economy. He predicted that the masses were overloaded with debt and that the problem was far larger than just the housing bubble. He predicted that the bubble would burst and be followed by a global economic crisis.

When he first put forward his prognosis at a conference of the International Monetary Fund, he was labeled "Dr. Doom." Now, since the crisis he predicted in detail has materialized, he is one of the most celebrated economists on the lecture circuit.

An interview with Roubini by James Fallows, called "Dr. Doom Has Some Good News," appeared in the April issue of the Atlantic Monthly. Toward the end of the interview, Fallows asked him about the economic future.

Roubini observed that "We have a growth model that has been based on bubbles. The only time we are growing is when there's a big bubble. The question is, can the U.S. grow in a non-bubble way?"

When Fallows turned the question back to him, "he answered by returning to the damage caused by the boom-and-bust cycles and the need to find a different path."

Capitalism has no "different path." It has been following the boom-and-bust cycle since it began. Now the repetition of that cycle requires bigger and bigger bubbles which lead to bigger and bigger crises for the workers.

The bigger the crisis, the more the bosses try to push it off on the workers. Capital tries even harder to lower its labor costs as a means of restoring profits, lowering wages and replacing workers with machines. This destroys jobs, creating more poverty and more unemployment.

The working class needs a "different path," all right. It needs a path that leads out of capitalist exploitation and production, a path out of this system where profits come before the rights and the very lives of the workers and the oppressed.

The present crisis must be fought by organizing, by international working class solidarity, by mass mobilization, by organizing the unemployed, by fighting to stop layoffs, by occupying plants before they can be shut down, by demanding the right to a good-paying job, by refusing to accept the capitalist scheme of things and, above all, by putting the rights of workers before the rights of bosses. □

READER
REVIEW

The Great Crash: 'Articles encourage action'

"The Great Crash: How and Why It Happened, What Workers Can Do to Fight Back," a compilation of articles from Workers World newspaper; \$5, available from Leftbooks.com

By Jay Rothermel

"The Great Crash" collects 23 articles that originally appeared in Workers World weekly newspaper from 2006 to 2009. This 47-page booklet should be read by everyone grappling with the current world capitalist crisis. "The Great Crash" is no dry, opaque economic treatise. The articles are written in a plain, clear, accessible style and are free of jargon and sectarianism.

The earliest article in the collection is from the fall of 2006, entitled "As Housing Market Falls, Is \$10 Trillion Bubble Ready to Burst?" The article noted, "The capitalist economy is drowning in debt, deficits, and the crisis of hyper-speculation in non-traditional mortgage lending."

Stories that follow focus on the consequences of debt-fueled overproduction,

which brought down the curtain on 20 years of Wall Street's globalization utopia.

At every turn the articles seek to encourage independent labor and political action and resist attempts by the chieftains of U.S. finance capital to shift all costs of the crisis onto the backs of working people and the oppressed. An article from October 2008 (page 26) spells this out: "... it is vital for workers to have a clear and unambiguous program of demands that meet their own needs and put the burden on the bankers and the rich to pay. ... As the unemployment rate rises, it is urgent to demand a freeze on all workplace closings and job layoffs and an extension of unemployment benefits. There must be a freeze on utility cutoffs and a rollback in gas, food and utility prices."

One of the first areas of resistance to the crash and crisis developed around foreclosures and evictions between 2007 and 2008. Community activists, neighbors and friends of victimized homeowners came together using militant direct-action tactics to turn back the evictions bailiffs. According to the article "The Housing Crisis and a Fightback Program" (page 31): "There must be a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions to keep people in their homes and stop the destruction of our communities by racist, predatory banks. ... The billions being given to the mortgage companies to bail out their failing loans should be used instead to train youth as plumbers and electricians and carpenters, in a city like Detroit, to repair the 18 percent of homes that are vacant due to foreclosures and turn them over to the homeless."

Articles in "The Great Crash" com-

bine sensible, well-proportioned Marxist journalism with a rank-and-file action program for the labor movement. From "Capitalist Bosses Plan Permanent Job Loss" (page 38): "In the present crisis the historic methods of reviving the profitability of capitalism, of restoring capitalist accumulation and prosperity, appear to have run their course, as they did during the Great Depression. This is what has the ruling class running scared."

"Working class leaders, labor leaders, community organizers and activists in all spheres must come to grips with the prospect that there is no way out of the crisis except for mass intervention and mass struggle."

"The Great Crash" does not stop explaining and motivating at the trade union level of political activism. The articles spell out clearly that while the labor movement must start bringing its social weight to bear around specific issues today, only by connecting these fights to broader questions can the struggle for socialism be put on the agenda in the United States and around the world. To quote from the booklet's final article (page 47): "What are we waiting for? Let's organize ... and fight for it!"

Jay Rothermel is a Workers World subscriber in Cleveland.

Low-Wage Capitalism by Fred Goldstein is a most timely and important work, as the working class prepares for a "fightback" during the greatest crisis of capitalism since the Great Depression.

— Clarence Thomas, Executive Board ILWU Local 10 & Co-chair, Million Worker March Movement

WW articles on the BIG CRASH

New publication! What is behind the devastating onslaught on workers' jobs and homes? This compilation of articles from Workers World, beginning in 2006, analyzes the developing worldwide economic crisis and provides strategies for a fight-back movement against the corporations and banks.

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September protests

Organizers announce plans to confront G20 in Pittsburgh

By John Catalinotto
New York

Organizers from the Bail Out the People Movement and the Million Worker March Movement held a news conference here on June 26 at the United Nations Church Center, along with other community organizers and some of the participants at the U.N. Economic Summit. They announced plans for protests at the next G20 summit scheduled in Pittsburgh on Sept. 24-25.

Larry Holmes, a spokesperson for BOPM, said the group wants to bring a large enough number of unemployed people to Pittsburgh so that the cry would be heard on a global scale for "the right to a job or income for all at living wages." This would be the first step in addressing growing unemployment on both a national and international scale and would be organized in the spirit of international solidarity—jobs or income for all.

The G20 meeting had originally been set for New York in September, but the fear of major protests resulted in the capitalist summit being moved to Pittsburgh.



From left, Paul Quintos, Jan Loenn, Sara Flounders, Larry Holmes, Ramsey Clark, Brenda Stokely, Emelia Dorsu.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

BOPM is planning "a major mobilization on the weekend before the meeting," said Holmes, "and will have a presence throughout the week, including on Thursday and Friday, Sept. 24 and 25. There will be many other groups—from unions to anarchist youth—who will be demonstrating."

Human rights activist and attorney Ramsey Clark discussed the conference that wrapped up June 26 at the U.N. known as the G192. He congratulated U.N. General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto Brockman, who was the driving force in seeing that such a meeting

was held at all, independent of what it was able to agree on. It was apparent that the elite powers of the G8 especially had done everything possible to sabotage the G192 conference on the economic crisis. Unable to cancel it, these big powers did their best to water down the conference's conclusions.

Others at the news conference included Paul Quintos of the Ibon Foundation in the Philippines, Jan Loenn, secretary-general of the International Student & Youth Movement for the U.N., and Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center.

Brenda Stokely of the Million Worker March and the New York Solidarity Coalition for Katrina/Rita Survivors spoke, as did Emelia Dorsu, originally of Ghana, who is an 18-year veteran worker at Stella D'Oro in the Bronx and a strike spokesperson. Dorsu explained the struggle of her union and the workers for a decent contract.

Victor Toro, a Chilean activist and immigrant threatened with deportation, explained the connection of his personal struggle to that of all undocumented immigrants for their rights and asked people to support him in court on Aug. 26. □

As bank forces closure of plant

Actions target Wells Fargo, support UE workers

By Betsey Piette

"Wells Fargo got bailed out, the workers got sold out!" was the message delivered by UE members and allies in more than 20 cities from Boston to Los Angeles on June 26 in coordinated, nationwide protests.

Wells Fargo, one of the country's largest banks, received a \$25 billion taxpayer bailout supposedly designed to save jobs and businesses. Yet the bank is unfairly forcing the closure of Quad City Die Casting, a viable factory in Moline, Ill., where members of UE Local 1174 work, by cutting off the normal line of credit needed by the company to stay in business.

In **Boston**, 30 picketers braved a strong "noreasterner" storm to march outside the Boston Wells Fargo Commercial Building. Protesters included members of UE locals 204, 262 and 279, and strong participation from USWA 8751 Boston School Bus Drivers Union, International Action Center, Women's Fightback Network, Jobs with Justice, students and housing groups.

Over 30 people picketed outside the Center City branch of Wachovia Bank in **Philadelphia** where UE Local 155 President Ron McCullough explained the struggle by members of Local 1174 to save their jobs and Wells Fargo's role in forcing the pending plant closing. Wachovia, a giant regional bank, was bought out by Wells Fargo in October during the banking industry meltdown.

"Workers are the ones who built this country and who make the economy grow," McCullough stated. "It's the CEOs like the ones at General Motors who are running the country into the ground. Workers have to stick together and make our voices heard."

A delegation, including McCullough



LOS ANGELES

PHOTO: SAKOU PARKER



CHICAGO

PHOTOS: UE UNION.ORG



NEW HAVEN



BOSTON

and John Braxton, co-president of AFT Local 2026 and a leader of Jobs with Justice, went into the bank to deliver a "notice of default" on Wells Fargo's obligations to the people of the United States. At first bank officials refused to call the manager and instead called the police, but when customers in the lobby began to stop and listen to the protesters a manager finally came to receive the letter.

Amekin Jackson, a young, underemployed and homeless Black worker, was in the bank looking for a first-time homebuyers loan when she received a leaflet. Jackson was so incensed by Wells Fargo's action that she came out to join the protest.

As picketers at Wells Fargo's main center in downtown **Los Angeles** chanted "Wells Fargo, Shame on You," their message echoed off the high-rise building. They distributed hundreds of leaflets

explaining the struggle to bus riders and building workers. The action was organized by the Los Angeles Bail Out the People Movement.

In **Chicago**, more than 75 protesters from unions and community groups used crime scene tape to cordon off the parking lot of a Wells Fargo Home Mortgage branch. They drew chalk outlines of the bank's worker-victims on the pavement and wrote messages charging the bank with "jobicide" and "homeicide." Protesters chanted "Wells Fargo, this sucks. Where's our 25 billion bucks?"

Demonstrators, including members of the **Atlanta** Fighting Foreclosures Coalition, picketed in front of the midtown Wachovia branch. Protesters linked Wells Fargo's denial of credit to Quad City Die Casting to their demands for a foreclosure moratorium and reasonable

settlements for people in Atlanta at risk of losing their homes.

Other cities where protests took place included Costa Mesa, Calif.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Davenport, Pa.; Charleston, W.Va.; New Haven, Conn.; Portland, Ore.; LaCrosse, Wis.; Erie, Pa.; and Raleigh, N.C. In Washington, D.C., UE lobbying teams visited over 100 congressional offices, including every member of the Senate Banking Committee and the House Financial Services Committee, with information on the injustice being perpetuated by Wells Fargo.

Sen. Barbara Mikluski of Maryland responded, "Everyone is mad at Wells Fargo." The largest city in her state, Baltimore, is suing Wells Fargo for racially discriminatory and predatory mortgage lending practices that resulted in massive home foreclosures. □

ILWU Convention says

'Free the Cuban 5, end U.S. blockade'

By Clarence Thomas
Seattle

International Longshore and Warehouse Union members from Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia, gathered in Seattle for the 34th ILWU Convention from June 8 to 12. The delegates adopted resolutions introduced by Local 10 calling for freedom for the Cuban 5 and by Local 34 to end the U.S. blockade of Cuba. These resolutions are evidence that ILWU international solidarity is alive and well.

The ILWU international president was instructed to write to President Barack Obama asking him to look into the case of the Cuban 5 and immediately free them.

The ILWU tradition of solidarity has been guided by the principle that "ILWU policies and actions on foreign affairs have always been built on the belief that international labor solidarity and world peace are the cornerstones of social and economic justice for all workers including the membership of the ILWU."

In late April an ILWU delegation spent 12 days in Havana. While there they met with spouses and mothers of the Cuban 5 and made a commitment to them to take the issue of their loved ones' imprisonment to the ILWU Convention.

The Cuban 5 have been imprisoned for more than 10 years for monitoring the activities of right-wing paramilitary groups in south Florida that plot attacks against Cuba. On June 15, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to review their appeal.

Ricardo Alarcon, president of the Cuban National Assembly, told "Democracy Now" on June 17 that even the June 2008 negative decision by the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals shed some important light on the case. Five times that U.S. court stated the Cuban 5 didn't gather or transmit secret information affecting U.S. national security, resulting in its decision to order resentencing for three of the Cuban 5. Even during their trial in 2001, three U.S. generals and a rear admiral acknowledged that the accused had not committed espionage against the U.S.

As a result of the recent Supreme Court



Clarence Thomas (right) hands a card to Magali Llorca, mother of Fernando González.



Right to left: Mirta Rodriguez, Maria Eugenia Rodriguez, mother and sister of Antonio Guerrero imprisoned in Florence, Co.; Adriana Pérez, spouse of Gerardo Hernández imprisoned in Victorville, Calif., denied any visitation; Rosa Aurora Freijanes, spouse of Fernando González, imprisoned in Terra Haute, Ind.

PHOTOS: DELORES LEMON-THOMAS

decision not to review the Cuban 5 case, it becomes more critical for union leaders and others to demand their freedom.

The convention also reaffirmed the union's decades-long opposition to the U.S. trade embargo. The resolution adopted by the convention calls on the Obama administration to seize the moment and finally bring an end to the embargo and travel ban against Cuba.

One of the things this writer learned from the recent visit to Cuba was that the U.S. government wants to make the Cuban people lose affection for Fidel Castro and their commitment to the revolution by way of economic hardship. The U.S. plan has tried to create an atmosphere of desperation brought on by lack of resources, food, medicine and medical equipment that would lead to the overthrow of the Cuban government. The plan has failed.

During my visit to Havana I learned first hand of the impact of the embargo on the Cuban people. Construction supplies are scarce. Certain fruits like bananas are not available all year round. People who were part of the delegation that visited Cuba during the "special period" after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 described tremendous food shortages on the island. Now there is new "eco-socialism" where organic gardens thrive throughout the city, even on top of buildings.

A growing wave of voices beyond the progressive community in the U.S. is calling for an end to the embargo. These voices represent shipping companies, port commissioners, farmers and the

business sector.

In an interview on CNN on May 13 with correspondent Jim Acosta, a port commissioner from Tampa, Fla., a shipping company tycoon and a U.S. cigar maker agreed that it's time to end the embargo. With the collapse of the capitalist economy, various sectors view an end of the blockade as an opportunity for business to create jobs.

Acosta reported that ports along the Gulf Coast are drawing up business plans hoping for an end to the 47-year-old trade embargo against the island. "Port officials with the Port of Mobile, Ala., are planning their own trade mission to Cuba this July," he said.

Arthur Savage, a Tampa shipping owner, said, "If we increase the ships, that ties right to jobs."

Cuba was once a playground for the rich, powerful and famous, with casinos, prostitution and swank hotels. U.S. corporations and organized crime worked hand in hand with the colonial Cuban government. There was racism and a color and caste system, high rates of illiteracy and

exploitation. All that changed with the revolution that triumphed on Jan. 1, 1959.

Workers in the U.S. have much to learn from a socialist society like Cuba which, despite the U.S. blockade, provides free education from kindergarten through graduate school and has eradicated illiteracy. Despite the U.S. blockade, the Latin American School of Medicine annually provides 4,500 medical students from around the world with entirely free tuition and produces doctors, including U.S. graduates, who agree to practice medicine for five years in poor communities and/or communities of color.

Once the blockade is lifted, workers from the U.S. can learn firsthand the benefits of living in a socialist country. Even with the U.S. travel ban, tens of thousands of U.S. residents travel to Cuba every year. It is time for the blockade and travel restrictions to end.

Clarence Thomas is a member of ILWU Local 10 in San Francisco, a convention observer and co-chair of the Million Worker March Movement.

Protest at UN hits Honduras coup, U.S. role



Chanting in Spanish, "Zelaya, friend, the people are with you!" and "Army of the coup, imperialist instrument!" 200 demonstrators rallied and marched to the United Nations in New York on June 29 protesting the military coup in Honduras. Coup leader Romeo Vasquez got his training at the U.S. Army's "School of the Americas" in Fort Benning, Ga., along with the rest of the Honduran military officers.

—Heather Cottin

Koreans rally against U.S. aggression



PHOTOS: KOREAN CENTRAL NEWS AGENCY

By Caleb T. Maupin

Some 100,000 people poured into Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang, capital city of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on June 25. This massive crowd in a country of only 22 million people gathered at a rally and commemoration entitled "June 25, The Day of Struggle Against U.S. Imperialism." The event marked the anniversary of the day in 1950 when the U.S. started the war which killed millions of Korean people. (isria.com)

Revolutionary and anti-imperialist speeches were given by representatives of urban and agricultural workers, youth and student organizations. Pak Pyong Jong, vice-chair of the Pyongyang City People's Committee, said that the people of North Korea must "wage a staunch struggle to protect the ideology, the system and cause of the DPRK and win a final victory in the confrontation with the U.S." (Korean Central News Agency, June 25)

The New York Times reported that speakers at the rally referred to the recent testing of atomic weapons as a "nuclear

deterrent," meaning that having such weapons at its disposal for self-defense would protect the DPRK from attack by the U.S. (June 25)

Thousands of troops remain stationed on the border between north and south decades after the Korean War unofficially ended. Successive U.S. administrations have refused to sign a peace treaty.

Three days after the rally, BBC News reported that the DPRK's economy is growing substantially despite the continued political and economic attacks from the U.S. and its allies. Agricultural production in the DPRK has increased 11 percent this year, giving the people greater nutritional sustainability in the face of brutal sanctions. (June 28)

Despite the attacks from the United States and world capitalism, the DPRK under the leadership of Kim Jong Il continues to resist the attempts to reinstate colonialism and imperialist oppression and fights to maintain its system of socialism and self-reliance. □

Humanitarian aid bound for Gaza defies blockade

Israeli navy seizes aid ship; Viva Palestina USA set to go

Continued from page 1

and says she is determined to help build solidarity. "I am honored to be part of the Viva Palestina convoy to Gaza. As a long-time anti-Zionist Jewish activist, I embrace Viva Palestina as a critical part of the international solidarity movement worldwide," said Greenspan.

According to national organizers, Viva Palestina USA has raised several million dollars to fund this material aid effort, and in the beginning of July, hundreds of Palestine solidarity activists will drive in a convoy of trucks and other vehicles to deliver this humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza.

Along with Cynthia McKinney and Charles Barron, who will be at a send-off event at the House of Lords Church in Brooklyn, N.Y., on July 3, Ron Kovic—whose Vietnam War experience was portrayed by Tom Cruise in the film "Born on the Fourth of July"—is a major participant in Viva Palestina USA. Not only was Kovic born on the date the convoy is leaving, but he is also deeply committed to justice.

Addressing the participants of the convoy in a statement, Kovic said: "I want all of you to know how much I admire everyone involved and committed to this most extraordinary and historic mission. What you do ... is of great importance, the inspiring words that you speak, the



Cement ready for loading on boat bound for Gaza.

crucial funds that you raise will literally be saving lives, comforting the afflicted, and giving hope to those who have suffered for far too long.

"You will be representing your country, ... not with rockets and bombs, helicopter gun ships, and weapons of war, but with love, compassion, and a sincere respect for the lives and dignity of all human beings. That is what Viva Palestina USA is about and that is why we must do all we can ... in the days to come to make this courageous and extraordinary journey to Gaza a reality."

June 6 was the 42nd anniversary of the Israeli seizure of Gaza from the

Palestinian people. Yet, like the U.S. attempts at re-colonizing Iraq, none of Israel's U.S.-supplied weapons of mass destruction has been capable of destroying the Palestinian people's will to continue fighting the illegal occupation.

It is this spirit of resistance that will continue to inspire many more Spirit of Humanity trips and Viva Palestina convoys loaded with medical supplies and various other forms of international solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Parker is an organizer with the International Action Center in Los Angeles and is part of the Viva Palestina USA delegation.

By Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Stateless 'state' of Palestine

From a June 15 audio column at www.prison-radio.org. Go to www.millions-4mumia.org to read updates on Mumia's case.



The presidential election of Barack Obama has so electrified the world that expectations have swept past reality into the realm of the silly.

Some of this is surely driven by the corporate media, which no longer covers the news, but engages in what might be called "pre-news"—as it tends to predict what will or may happen—the better to not be scooped by competitors. And as news makes its hard turn to opinion, it sometimes builds up Obama as a world leader, in ways that are simply unreasonable.

This was seen in the run-up to the Iranian presidential elections, where news coverage all but predicted the election of opposition candidate, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, and the fall of the irascible Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The result predicted, talking heads opined about the global influence of Obama over the elections. As for stolen elections, did millions of Americans take to the streets to protest the stolen elections here in 2000?

Similarly, much news coverage centered on Obama's hard line on the Israelis, as in his Cairo address when he called for a freeze in settlements.

So slanted is U.S. policy toward Israel that a halt in construction in illegal settlements is seen as somehow "hard line."

For their part, Israeli right-wingers, many supporters of newly elected president Binyamin Netanyahu, have posterized Tel Aviv with images of Obama wearing an Arab headdress (known as a kaffiyeh), emblazoned with the words "Jew Hater" and "Anti-Semite" in English and Hebrew (an allusion to his Muslim name and family background).

To "freeze" a situation that is fundamentally unjust is to preserve the status quo—a state of affairs that leaves the Palestinian people in an unjust and untenable situation.

On top of that, Netanyahu recently announced an essential rejection of Obama's "freeze" and an alleged support of the establishment of a Palestinian state—albeit a demilitarized one, with foreign affairs to be overseen by Israel.

This is a state only in the sense that the old South African Bantustans were independent territories; that is to say, not at all.

The Palestinians have had their best lands seized and Swiss-cheesed by settlements; their parliament has been cast into prison; their water is rationed; and their homes have been bulldozed, all while Western leaders crow about a "peace process" that is, ultimately, a freeze in oppression.

Meanwhile, Israel, not only the most powerful military in the region, but an undeclared nuclear-armed state, accepts the idea of a Palestinian state but only if demilitarized—and this is seen as progress! □

Order Mumia Abu-Jamal's book, 'Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners v. the USA,' at www.Leftbooks.com

El Salvador's 'date with history'

By Oscar Faria
San Salvador, El Salvador

"And that wave of anger at its very limit, of yearning for justice, of trampled rights that begin to rise from the soil of Latin America, that wave could no longer be stopped. That wave of anger growing every day that passes because that wave shapes the majority in all aspects, those who with their work accumulate wealth, create values, make the wheels of history turn and who now are waking up from the long, brutalizing sleep to which they have been subject."

Apparently the wave, which Commandante Ernesto Che Guevara spoke of at the General Assembly meeting at the United Nations in 1964, arrived at the borders of the Salvadoran Sea, when on June 1, Mauritius Funes took office as the head of the smallest country in the Americas.

"Funes! Funes! Funes!" shouted the sea of red, which vibrated with the songs of the people—people who, under the trusteeship of the right-wing party, saw their currency replaced by the dollar and fled to the cities.

"Today is a day of hope and of joy," commented one of the supporters armed with a handkerchief on her head, an FMLN flag [Spanish acronym for Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front], a Che shirt and vibrant with an energy that she had maintained throughout the day while waiting for the main event—"Chávez and Funes."

The event began late, and when the masters of ceremony announced that it would be only a few more minutes until Funes arrived, there were people with sad faces leaving the celebration because they had been there for more than eight hours awaiting the arrival of the new president,



El Salvador President Mauritius Funes.

the first in El Salvador from the left.

After revolutionary singers from Cuba and Mexico, President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua began his speech. Praising ALBA, PetroCaribe and the Central American Union CA-4, he presented regrets from his counterpart Hugo Chavez, president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Chavez could not attend the event for "security reasons of which we will not enter into detail," said Ortega. "The FMLN and FSLN [Sandinista Front] are brothers, not only because our countries are brothers, but because we shared the same struggles for more than 40 years."

Cuban vice-Ambassador Esteban Lazo Hernandez declared: "Salvadoran sisters and brothers, I am happy to express my gratitude and my congratulations from our President Raul Castro, former-President Fidel Castro and all the Cuban people." He opened his speech expressing support to Funes and emphasizing his happiness because finally, after 50 years, Cuba and El Salvador were to resume political and commercial relations.

After a short but strong speech praising the FMLN and the struggle in Central America for a Latin American union,

Nicolas Maduro, representing Venezuela, gave way to the main focus of the evening, President of El Salvador Mauritius Funes.

"I could not govern this country, knowing that we did not have relations with a country so filled with solidarity and as strong as is Cuba. I would be ashamed to be president of a separatist country," commented Funes, who was about to resume relations with Cuba the same day that he took office.

From the beginning, Funes signaled that he was exhausted from his long day and apologized for the delay in his arrival. He began his speech: "Thanks to all who are here, to all the countries that have come to this celebration, to this date with history."

As Funes took the microphone and began to talk, the crowd, already diminished by fatigue and a short rain typical of the Salvadoran winter, watched him. "To fight against corruption, to fight against organized crime, a government that always supports the poor and the needy before it takes care of its family and/or the privileged groups"—these were the three outstanding points of Funes' speech that showed his political tendency or indicated what might be the methodology of his government.

The new government must develop a new plan to confront the worldwide economic crisis already reaching El Salvador—such as a new plan to arouse activists to retake the reins of the destiny of the country. After more than 12 years of war and 20 years of rightist regimes, the people of El Salvador are waking from a long and brutal sleep.

The writer is an activist and member of FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together—in Raleigh, N.C. This article was translated from Spanish.



U.S. Imperialism: Hands off Iran

The media's focus shifted June 29 from Central Asia to Central America. The lies continued in the corporate media, only with fewer items on Iran, at least this side of the Atlantic. It still showed the power of the Big Lie—two Big Lies in this case, where an omnipresent media machine gives the impression that everyone believes something and therefore it must be true.

The first lie is that there was significant electoral fraud that stole the election for the incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. There is no evidence that this is so. A landslide Ahmadinejad victory is consistent with earlier polls, with the strength of his political organization that held 60 meetings for him in every corner of Iran—his opponent only campaigned in the major cities—and his record in the 2005 election.

Iran has held 10 presidential elections since the 1979 revolution and elected six different presidents. The country has 46,000 polling places, with 14 poll workers—including the opposition—who watched each other quickly count the 860 ballots in each place and send in the totals to Tehran. These are uncomplicated ballots, with only four candidates for only one office—president. No chads. No misaligned names. Compared to Florida in 2000 Iran is above suspicion.

In addition, Ahmadinejad and his opponents, including his main opponent Mir Hossein Mousavi, are all part of the Iranian governing power structure. All of them have allies in powerful positions. A massive fraud under those conditions would be virtually impossible.

To top it off, as a concession to those Iranians who believed in fraud because their candidate lost, the top electoral body held a recount of 10 percent of the ballots on television for all to see, the ballot places chosen at random throughout the country. When Ahmadinejad was ahead by about the same amount as in the election, it was past time to call the election over. And they did.

Remember Florida? A group of right-wing Republicans, mainly counter-revolutionary Cubans of Dade County, counted behind closed doors. Rather than challenging this real electoral fraud—and the disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of African Americans—Al Gore avoided an open battle among the ruling-class parties and instead threw the election to the Supreme Court. He lost. George W. Bush won.

Washington has no business lecturing the Islamic Republic on alleged electoral fraud.

The second point of exaggeration involves charges of state repression against demonstrators. For context, however, consider two of Iran's neighbors. Over the eastern border lies Afghanistan, to the southwest, Iraq.

Bush, U.S. president by fraud, presided over an invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 and Iraq in March 2003. The occupations have continued.

Over a million Iraqis have been killed, some in battles with the U.S., some in battles with the puppet regime or death squads, many by state repression. Maybe 4 million of the 25 million Iraqis are refugees. The country has been left in ruins. When the Pentagon pulled U.S. troops out of the cities June 30, even the U.S. puppet regime celebrated.

A similar story applies for Afghanistan. Even the puppet regime of Hamid Karzai complained that the U.S. was slaughtering his own police, not to speak of the regular killing of civilians.

Washington has no business lecturing Tehran about state repression.

And no one, whatever their opinion of the Iranian government, or their sympathies with women's struggle for equality or workers' right to organize, has any business adopting the Big Lies of the imperialist media. Anyone against colonialism and the subjugation of peoples and nations must say first and foremost: "U.S. imperialism, hands off Iran!" □

Honduras strike resists Mass movements oppose military

Continued from page 1

Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), an organization promoting regional cooperation that already includes Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, the Grenadines, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and Venezuela.

ALBA member countries commit to work for the benefit of the peoples, not the multinational corporations, to put people first before profits, to make solidarity their slogan for trade and cooperation in cultural, sports, science and every other endeavor, and to work as a non-competitive group for the integration of the region.

This is in sharp contrast to trading relations with the U.S., the Honduran economy's dominant trading partner.

Zelaya took office in 2005. Although he comes from the center-right Liberal Party, he has more recently taken progressive positions, even expressing solidarity with the Cuban Revolution.

Leading up to the coup

The coup plotters struck just as a poll was about to take place. The voters were being asked to express their opinion about having a non-binding poll during the next elections in November on the question of whether they wanted to change Honduras' Constitution. The poll was non-binding because the Legislature's anti-Zelaya majority had passed a law preventing any referendum from being conducted 180 days before the end of a president's term, and Zelaya's term ends in early 2010.

The Honduran people had sent 400,000 signatures to the president's office requesting a referendum on changing the current Constitution, which they perceive as inadequate for the needs of the majority of the population.

On June 24, Zelaya ordered Chief of Staff Gen. Romeo Vásquez, a graduate of the notorious School of the Americas in the U.S., to distribute the polling material to the voting centers throughout the country. Vásquez refused, claiming the consultation was "illegal." Zelaya then ordered Vásquez removed from office. Later the Supreme Court, also opposed to Zelaya, reinstated Vásquez.

The ballot boxes, which had been held on a military airbase, were later liberated by the people and by Zelaya himself.

Before the coup, many sectors allied to the oligarchy, including members of Congress, opposition groups, clergy and businesspeople, called on people to stay home and abstain from voting.

Zelaya and his cabinet under attack

When Zelaya arrived at the airport in Costa Rica on June 28, he and Costa Rican President Oscar Arias gave a joint press conference. Arias expressed his opposition to the coup and solidarity with Zelaya, who for the first time was able to publicly denounce the coup.

Back in the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa, the military tried to hunt down every one of Zelaya's cabinet members, who are still at risk. The army surrounded the home of Foreign Minister Patricia Rodas, who called on the ambassadors of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela for

protection. As the military broke into the house, the ambassadors embraced Rodas to prevent the troops from harming her.

Soldiers beat them away and then took Rodas and the Cuban ambassador away with them. They forcibly took Rodas to a military air force base and sent her to Mexico. They left the Cuban Ambassador in the middle of a road.

People's resistance to the coup regime

Roberto Micheletti, president of the National Congress and the main coup plotter, was quickly sworn in as the "new president" of Honduras in a replay of the 2002 Venezuela coup against President Hugo Chávez. Micheletti read a phony June 25 "letter of resignation" alleged to be from Zelaya, but where his signature had been forged. A few minutes later, Zelaya appeared on TeleSur television and on CNN in Spanish from Costa Rica saying that he did not resign at all, but was forcibly removed from office.

Upon learning of the coup, Honduran social movements began to gather before the Presidential Palace in support of Zelaya and rejecting the coup regime. They defied a curfew Micheletti had imposed and stayed through the night, vowing they would stop the usurper from reaching the palace. The people built barricades in several streets surrounding the palace, wrote pro-Zelaya and anti-Micheletti graffiti on walls, set tires on fire and parked water trucks in front of the presidential building.

Unions, students, women and other social sectors mobilized. An effective national strike was started on June 29 and all schools were closed. The next day three major public-sector labor unions launched a general strike. About 100,000 workers joined the strike, according to Oscar Garcia, vice president of SANAA, the Honduran water workers union. (CNN, June 30)

Micheletti started a reign of terror, ordering the dispersal of the demonstrators, by force if needed. The country was militarized. The army closed the roads, preventing groups of Indigenous peoples and others from traveling to Tegucigalpa to join the resistance.

Electricity was cut in most of Tegucigalpa, making both phone and Internet communication extremely difficult. The official television channel was shut down as were several other stations that had been reporting about the coup. Only private channels were on the air, broadcasting cartoons and other programs that had nothing to do with the events, and falsely reporting that there was complete calm in the country.

The repression intensified. Helicopters hovered, heavily armed troops and tanks reinforced the military and the police were called in. The armed forces inside the Presidential Palace grounds at one point started marching towards the demonstrators, who were outside the fence. Shots rang out and tear gas was thrown against the unarmed people. By the end of the day on June 29, it was reported that one person had been

Continued on page 11

Prisoners' right to DNA evidence

Continued from page 2

Since the resumption of the death penalty in 1976, 133 prisoners facing execution have been exonerated, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. Daniel Wade Moore of Alabama was the most recent in May. About half of exonerated death-row prisoners had made confessions under police coercion.

DNA testing is no gift from on-high provided by the government, courts or police. Kirk Bloodsworth, the first death-row prisoner exonerated by modern DNA evidence, learned about the process accidentally while reading a book in a prison library. (Mountain Echo, Feb. 13, 2008)

The Supreme Court's attack on DNA testing was the latest indication that the capitalist state is continuing its relentless attack on the hard-won rights of working class and oppressed people despite the shift in power from Republicans to Democrats.

It appears, in fact, that the court is grinding ahead with a right-wing urgency driven by the sea-change in mass political consciousness indicated by last year's election of first African-American President Barack Obama and by the deepening economic crisis of the profit system, which may point to stormy class struggles ahead.

On May 27 the Supreme Court made it

easier for cops and prosecutors to interrogate suspects who have not received proper legal counsel. Again by a 5-4 vote, the court overturned a 1986 ruling that forbid police from questioning a suspect without an attorney present if the person requested one. This is a basic right that every person in the country is acquainted with, thanks to innumerable TV police shows and movies.

On April 6 the court refused to consider the appeal of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a world-renowned political prisoner on death row in Pennsylvania. And on June 15 the court indicated it would not consider the appeal of the Cuban 5 political prisoners during its next session.

Supporters of wrongfully convicted Troy Davis, a prisoner on Georgia's death row, were awaiting word if the court would take up Davis' appeal on June 29 or 30—the last two days of this term.

The U.S. Supreme Court, with its unelected, appointed-for-life status, is the wing of the capitalist state charged with regulating the degree of repression according to the needs of the ruling class. The good news is that even a reactionary court can be forced to grant concessions when confronted with a militant people's movement. Building this kind of fightback movement is the most urgent need of poor and working people today.

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coup regime

killed, more than 100 wounded and more than 300 imprisoned.

TeleSUR and the media

TeleSUR, which is based in Venezuela but serves all Latin America, was the only media consistently informing the world about this horrible event. Even CNN in Spanish showed footage from TeleSUR. This struggle showed the crucial role of the progressive media. The international progressive community was able to quickly respond because of TeleSUR. Its courageous video crews transmitted constantly, interviewing people in Tegucigalpa, showing images of the struggle that brought tears of condemnation.

Late June 29, because of their crucial role in exposing this criminal coup, the TeleSUR crew members were detained, their cell phones and personal documents confiscated. Thanks to the diligent action of many people involved in media work and the help of the Venezuelan ambassador, they were released and resumed broadcasting the next day.

Progressive Latin American leaders respond

Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa and Venezuelan President Chávez made it clear that never again would a Latin American country be abandoned to right-wing coups. Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega quickly volunteered his country for three very important emergency conferences to discuss Honduras. All were set for June 29, the day after the coup. First ALBA met, then the System of Central American Integration (SICA), and finally the Rio Group, which has 24 Latin American and Caribbean member nations. The U.S. belongs to none of these three groups.

Expressing urgency, these leaders were firmly determined to prevent a right-wing coup from taking away the advances that the popular and progressive movements and governments throughout the region have attained. Even less progressive Latin American governments denounced the coup and demanded the immediate reinstatement of Zelaya.

The ALBA and the SICA countries both vowed to recall their ambassadors from Honduras until Zelaya was reinstated. Other measures taken were the closing of the borders with Honduras, a stop to loans and funding, including for sports and cultural events, and several other measures that would paralyze the coup regime.

Even OAS and U.N. working groups held emergency meetings that condemned the coup. The full OAS will meet on July 1 in Washington, D.C.

Nearly every progressive movement worldwide has condemned the coup. Most governments have publicly opposed it. Brazil, Chile and Mexico have joined ALBA and SICA in recalling their ambassadors from Honduras. The Spanish Foreign Minister says he will recommend similar actions by the European Union. Even the U.S. president, secretary of state and ambassador to Honduras have had to publicly oppose the coup and recognize Zelaya as the only Honduran president.

The U.S. role appears to be ambiguous. Because of the ongoing connection between the Pentagon and the Honduran military, it is doubtful that the Hondurans could move without the knowledge of significant figures in the U.S. government and the Pentagon. President Barack Obama's public rejection of the coup—though relatively mild—is a first and raises the question of who in U.S. ruling circles is making policy. □

African Union summit addresses gender equality as

Global economic crisis impacts African women

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Delegates convened in Sirte, Libya, for the 13th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, a meeting of heads of state to be held July 1-3. The summit's theme is "Invest in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security."

Over the last two years Africa has been severely affected by the downturn in the world economy, resulting in 53 million more people being thrust into poverty. As a result of the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism, the prices of exports from the continent have gone down while the cost of food, fuel and other commodities imported into Africa has increased drastically.

According to Abdoulie Janneh, the United Nations Under Secretary and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the AU Executive Council—which met prior to the summit—has an essential role to play in ensuring the continent speaks with one voice on international questions involving the economic crisis, as well as the post-Kyoto negotiations related to climate change.

Janneh noted that political stability was largely dependent upon economic stability. He said the economic growth rate in Africa was 6 percent last year and could possibly drop to 2 percent by the end of 2009. Janneh appealed to the upcoming G20 summit, to be held in Pittsburgh in September, to fulfill its promises of assistance made four years ago at the gathering in Gleneagles, Scotland. Billions of dollars were promised to foster economic development in Africa.

Women say gender issues must be addressed

Prior to the AU summit, advocates for women's rights stressed the necessity of implementing existing protocols on gender equality. In a two-day pre-summit on women, AU Agricultural Commissioner Rhoda Peace Tumuslime delivered a report on the status of gender equality on the continent.

Tumuslime discussed aspects of the history of women's status in Africa and stressed the necessity of the AU to effectively address these issues, especially regarding agricultural production and food security. In many African countries women are responsible for the production of 80 percent or more of the food supply, yet women's decision-making authority falls far short of their overall economic contribution to society.

"The women have always been there and they starve in order to feed their husbands. They starve in order to feed their children, and they starve in order to look after the sick, to look out for the HIV people in the hospitals. Without women, I don't think, we would be anywhere," Tumuslime stated in her address. (VOA, June 18)

Tumuslime also examined why the existing initiatives aimed at development have not done nearly enough to guarantee women's equality. "We need to look at approaches that have been used in the past in trying to improve the status of rural women, build on what has worked and change strategies that have not worked."

Other delegates to the AU pre-summit meeting on women's affairs reported that the efforts launched to improve gender equality have made gains in Africa. Geebile Ndlove of Swaziland noted that even though equality has not been realized, "The good work that happens at the community level, it is women who are taking the lead. And then, of course, in some southern African countries, there are more and more women getting into political positions like parliament. I can't say much for Swaziland, but it's improved from what it was five years ago."

In the west-African state of Nigeria, which has the largest population of any country on the continent, Luisa Ono Ellchomun told the AU gathering that there has been an increase in awareness along with new laws that protect women's rights. "In Lagos state where I live, there's [a] law on domestic violence to protect the rights of women in marriages," said Ellchomun.

Helen Chasowa, a delegate from Malawi, said the government there has a goal of achieving 50 percent representation for women in most state institutions and agencies, including the vice-presidency. "For the past elections we had, we made sure we must have at least 50-50 in parliament — in all leading organizations. So we are coming up, we have achieved something."

However, with the worsening economic situation in most African states, activists feel that the gains that have been made could be reversed during the present period.

In a paper published prior to the AU summit, Hilary N. Ervin and Caroline Muthoni Muriithi point to the effects of the world economic crisis on Africa and the specific impact on women. "The slowdown in growth will likely deepen the deprivation of the poor and the large number of people clustered just above the poverty line, who are particularly vulnerable to economic volatility and temporary slowdowns." (Pambazuka, Issue 439)

The authors continue: "This is particularly true for African women who for a long time have been the face of poverty in Africa. In Africa many women are already struggling daily against an entrenched patriarchy, enforced through formal and informal social, cultural, political and economic practices. They often face rampant sexual and psychological abuse, which is further exacerbated by the numerous conflicts on the continent."

Ervin and Muriithi call for the adoption and implementation of the AU's Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, which has only been accepted by less than half the state structures on the continent. This document demands fundamental rights for women in society.

It calls for the "elimination of female genital mutilation, the rights of widows, the rights of women to property and inheritance; calling on states to invest in social programs for women; the right to food security and housing; a right to sustainable development; the prevention of early marriage for girls; and sexual and reproductive health rights among others."

With specific reference to the U.S.-



One of the hundreds of women who occupied the ChevronTexaco oil export terminal in Escravos, Nigeria in 2002 demanding jobs, schools, water, electricity and other necessities.

backed government in Kenya, the paper says the fact that the "government has yet to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa is indicative of the culture of male dominance that dictates many social and cultural practices in the nation. In Kenya reproductive health is not a government priority and provision of services are extremely limited with respect to family planning and maternal health."

In an attempt to chart a way forward, Ervin and Muriithi stress the significance of state structures investing in the improvement of the social conditions of women.

The authors illustrate the importance of enhancing the status of women in overall plans to foster economic development. "History demonstrates that investment in women's economic security and their place within the workforce helped pull the United States out of the Great Depression and aided the stabilization of the Latin American economies during the regional economic crisis of the 1990s. However, a focus on the massive wealth of resources available on the continent and responsible adjustments that focus on the human development and specifically women's socio-economic empowerment is important during this period of economic turmoil."

Capitalist crisis hampers women's liberation

It is important that advocates for gender equality in Africa are placing emphasis on the impact of the economic crisis on the status of women. Western capitalist financial institutions, whose policies have prevented the full realization of national independence on the continent, have been responsible in many ways for the failure of development programs to adequately address the necessity of abolishing inequality for women, which has been inherited from the legacies of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism.

In those African states where revolutionary national liberation movements and efforts to build socialist societies have occurred, there have been the greatest achievements in regard to the enhancement of the status of women. In South Africa, for example, women have achieved over 30 percent representation in parliament as well as representation in executive branch of government. The educational achievement of women has been mandated by legislation passed during the post-apartheid period.

During the period of the revolution in Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah, the nation led the continent with participation of women in government and civic affairs. Great accomplishments took place regarding education and the rights of women in family and community life. □



AU Agricultural Commissioner Rhoda Peace Tumuslime.

Tras la conmovición en Irán

Por John Catalinotto

La confrontación entre los políticos gobernantes de Irán que ha resultado en manifestaciones en las calles de Teherán no ocurre aisladamente. Está sucediendo en un país que todavía enfrenta sanciones y naves de guerra de Estados Unidos, hostilidades de parte de cada capital imperialista y reportajes venenosos de la prensa capitalista occidental.

Esta confrontación le sigue a los 30 años de intensos esfuerzos por Estados Unidos y otros imperialistas de hacer retroceder la revolución enormemente popular que tuvo lugar en 1979. Esa revolución aunque progresista, no llevó a Irán al socialismo. Pero liberó al país de las garras que los imperialistas y su títere sha tenían sobre un país que ahora tiene 71 millones de habitantes en un área que es tres veces el tamaño de Francia.

Los imperialistas no dicen nada sobre los avances de esta revolución en educación, salud y ciencia. Ellos odian su apoyo a los movimientos revolucionarios en Palestina y el Líbano. Washington ha buscado todo tipo de debilidad o conflicto interno en Irán en un esfuerzo por dividir al liderazgo y revertir la revolución.

Hasta el discurso aparentemente conciliatorio del Presidente Barack Obama en el Cairo, donde admitió la intervención de Estados Unidos en el año 1953 que derrocó al gobierno democrático de Irán reemplazándolo con el sha, estuvo dirigido a apoyar aquellos en el liderazgo de Irán que quieren adecuarse a Estados Unidos en vez de confrontarlo.

En contraposición hostil frente al discurso más suave de Obama están los buques de guerra con jets bombarderos y misiles que regularmente navegan el Golfo alrededor de Irán, amenazando con aniquilar el programa nuclear de Irán. Israel se suma a las amenazas, las cuales son observadas por muchos iraníes por medio de televisiones con señales de satélite que ven las noticias

en CNN o reciben noticias de estaciones basadas en California en el idioma Persa.

Elección presidencial: ¿Qué fuerzas?

Según las leyes iraníes, los cuatro candidatos presidenciales tienen que ser hombres religiosos nominados por el Poder Judicial y aprobados por el Parlamento. Por eso todos fueron aceptados por la estructura de poder de la República Islámica y la clase capitalista gobernante.

Los políticos imperialistas y la prensa capitalista han satanizado al Presidente incumbente Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Al él se le conoce por su apoyo a la causa palestina, por su fuerte defensa del programa nuclear de Irán y por otorgar subsidios a los sectores pobres de la sociedad iraní.

En cuanto a ideología y lucha de clases, los revolucionarios socialistas o comunistas se diferencian claramente de Ahmadinejad en muchos aspectos. Sin embargo, en el conflicto actual él está en el lado antiimperialista.

El candidato más importante de la oposición es Mir Hossein Mousavi, quien fue primer ministro del 1981 al 1989. Mousavi presidió durante la Guerra Iran-Irak y la ejecución de miles de disidentes políticos, muchos de ellos revolucionarios de izquierda. A pesar de esta historia, Mousavi se presenta ante el pueblo como un reformista, especialmente sobre cuestiones sociales.

Sin embargo, a mitad de la campaña, Mousavi se alineó con el ex presidente Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, nombrado por la revista Forbes en el 2003, una de las personas más ricas de Irán. Rafsanjani todavía tiene el puesto de presidente de la Asamblea de Expertos, la cual elige a los líderes supremos de Irán.

El nombre Rafsanjani, está asociado a riquezas, corrupción y peor aún – a la privatización económica. El promueve el acomodo entre Irán y Estados Unidos. Para que se dé esta relación, Washington definitivamente exigiría que Irán detenga su apoyo a los movimientos de liberación, como en Palestina y el Líbano.

Bajo otras circunstancias el occidente en el pasado lo ha hecho y podría hacerlo de nuevo: calumniar a ambos políticos; ahora los está alabando.

El grupo Mousavi-Rafsanjani planteó por primera vez la cuestión del presunto fraude, incluso antes de que terminara la votación. Según el primer anuncio oficial, Ahmadinejad ganó las elecciones con un 63 por ciento, mientras que Mousavi recibió un 34 por ciento de los 40 millones de votos.

La aplastante victoria electoral, aunque la oposición la considera demasiado grande para ser creíble, es consistente con encuestas anteriores y con los comicios de 2005. Los encuestadores estadounidenses Ken Ballen y Patrick Doherty escriben que su muestra de un millar de iraníes a través de las 30 provincias indicó una victoria de dos a uno para Ahmadinejad. (Washington Post, 15 de junio) Esta diferencia también se mantuvo entre los azeríes, el segundo grupo étnico más grande de Irán, aunque Mousavi es azerí. La conclusión de los dos encuestadores fue que probablemente ganó Ahmadinejad.

Para el 23 de junio, el Consejo de Guardianes de Irán había aprobado la elección. El Consejo había informado de “irregularidades” en 50 ciudades que podrían implicar hasta 3 millones de votos. Estas discrepancias podrían simplemente involucrar a personas que votaron fuera de su distrito, algo que es permitido en las elecciones iraníes. En cualquier caso, no cambiaría el resultado.

Manifestaciones en Teherán

Para el fin de semana del 20-21 de junio, la cobertura masiva de los medios de comunicación occidentales comenzó a enfatizar sobre una presunta represión de las manifestaciones en Teherán por parte del estado. Estas protestas habían alcanzado proporciones masivas en la semana del 15-20 de junio y se propagaron fuera de los barrios de la élite que son el baluarte de las fuerzas en contra de Ahmadinejad. El

tamaño de las protestas ha disminuido.

¿Qué pasó con las manifestaciones en las ciudades del occidente—más recientemente en Londres en contra de la cumbre del G20—donde las tácticas policiales fueron brutales y resultaron en muertes? El gobierno de Perú recientemente llevó a cabo una masacre de manifestantes indígenas. La policía de los EEUU rutinariamente mata a jóvenes africano-americanos/as y latinas/os. Los/as haitianos siguen siendo baleados en Puerto Príncipe por exigir el regreso de su presidente democráticamente electo, quien fue forzado al exilio por agentes estadounidenses.

Sin embargo, los medios de comunicación corporativos nunca enfocan su mirada hostil en estos países de la misma manera con que están haciendo contra el régimen de Irán.

Las manifestaciones reflejan una ira que va más allá de los resultados de las elecciones. Mousavi claramente es más popular entre los/as iraníes más acomodados. Sin embargo, parte de la ira en las calles puede reflejar demandas legítimas para mejorar los derechos de los trabajadores y de la mujer. De los 3,5 millones de estudiantes universitarios en Irán— seis veces lo que era en los tiempos del sha pro-occidental—más del 60 por ciento actualmente son mujeres. (Spiegel Online, 10 de junio) Este es un avance enorme para las mujeres, pero al mismo tiempo hay menos posibilidades para las mujeres de encontrar un trabajo que para los hombres.

Pero la presencia de algunas reivindicaciones legítimas no significa que una lucha va en una dirección progresista. Los políticos capitalistas saben cómo apelar a la insatisfacción de las masas con el fin de lograr su propia agenda. El peligro aquí es que el imperialismo de los EEUU, un poderoso enemigo de la revolución iraní, que puede dañar a Irán tanto económica como militarmente, está haciendo todo lo posible por fomentar y sacar provecho de esta lucha, en nombre de la democracia, por supuesto. □

Clima antiinmigrante provoca asesinatos

Por Paul Teitelbaum
Tucson, Arizona

El 30 de mayo, tres miembros de la reaccionaria organización Minutemen invadieron la casa de Raúl Flores en Arivaca, Arizona, asesinandolo a él, a su hija de 9 años Brisenia Flores, e hiriendo a su esposa Gina María González. Los racistas estaban vestidos con uniformes militares. Ellos le dijeron a la familia que habían estado con la Patrulla Fronteriza antes de que saquearan la casa y les dispararan.

Activistas locales inmediatamente reconocieron a los tres Minutemen que fueron arrestados por esta atrocidad como parte del grupo que atacó las actividades del Primero de Mayo 2009 en Tucson.

Residentes de Arivaca dicen que la familia Flores es muy conocida y querida. Describieron a Raúl “Junior” Flores como un buen padre y un hombre generoso. (Green Valley News, 2 de junio)

Arivaca es un pueblo pequeño del sur de Arizona que queda a 10 millas de la frontera, con una población de un poco más de 1.600 personas. Está constantemente ocupado por agentes de la Patrulla

Fronteriza y de la Seguridad de la Patria (DHS por las siglas en inglés), y es la base de las torres de vigilancia ultra tecnológicas SBINET de la DHS/Boeing.

Estos asesinatos racistas siguen al reciente asesinato del Dr. George Tiller y al ataque en el Museo del Memorial al Holocausto en Washington, D.C. donde el agente de seguridad afro-americano Stephen Johns fue asesinado por un nazi. Estos crímenes no son los actos de “asesinos individuales enloquecidos” como los medios tienden a presentarlos. Son el resultado de un ambiente racista y antiinmigrante estimulado por los anfitriones ultra derechistas de programas de televisión como son Lou Dobbs, Rush Limbaugh, el ex-representante estadounidense Tom Tancredo y otros, por las horribles redadas de terror del ICE (la Migra), y por el dinero de los impuestos asignado para mantener en operación a racistas como el Alguacil Joe Arpaio.

Hay treinta leyes antiinmigrante que han sido presentadas en la legislatura



Brisenia Flores

estatal de Arizona desde enero. Estas incluye la reciente ley propuesta SB 1175, la cual requeriría a la policía en todas las ciudades, todos los pueblos y condados del estado a implementar la ley federal de inmigración, preguntar el estado inmigratorio de cada persona detenida y entregar a las personas indocumentadas a los agentes federales si las acusaciones locales son anuladas.

La ley SB 1280 haría un delito grave el “ocultar, hospedar o evitar que se descubra” a una persona indocumentada.

La ley SB 1069 tiene el propósito de eliminar los programas de Estudios Étnicos y las organizaciones multiculturales estudiantiles en todas las escuelas del estado.

Y para añadir a este ambiente de racismo y fervor antiinmigrante, un voluntario local de ayuda humanitaria fue declarado culpable de acusaciones federales de esparcir basura en un parque federal porque dejó botellas de un galón de agua

en el Refugio Nacional de Fauna Silvestre Buenos Aires; el agua era para salvar la vida de inmigrantes indocumentados/as que atraviesan esta zona difícil y seca. Este “crimen” lleva una sentencia de hasta un año en la cárcel y una multa de \$10.000.

El mensaje dado por el juez y los fiscales federales es claro: No trate de hacer algo, ni siquiera el acto más mínimo, para mostrar solidaridad con los/as inmigrantes.

Mientras continúa la crisis económica, el estado de Arizona está recortando los presupuestos de educación, salud, y todos los programas sociales. Además está eliminando los empleos de cientos de trabajadores/as del estado, del condado y de la ciudad. La introducción de legislación antiinmigrante y la instigación de sentimientos racistas que coinciden con la crisis económica son intentos de sembrar divisiones y miedo entre el pueblo para impedirle que se una.

Pero un movimiento de resistencia está creciendo, con jóvenes y mayores, estudiantes, maestros/as, trabajadores/as—negros/as, blancos/as, y latinos/as—uniéndose para exigir el fin del racismo y la persecución de inmigrantes. □