

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

July 23, 2009 Vol. 51, No. 29 50¢

Viva Palestina delegation faces hurdles as Convoy presses on with aid for besieged Gaza

By John Parker in Cairo, Egypt,
and Sara Flounders in New York

July 14—Organizers of the largest U.S. humanitarian aid convoy to Palestine in history spoke today by telephone from Cairo to 50 people protesting outside the Egyptian United Nations Mission in New York. They updated supporters on the progress of the Viva Palestina effort. The news was that the Egyptian government had agreed to allow more than \$1 million in medical aid into Gaza, and that the convoy was expected to reach the border with Gaza on July 15.

During the day it had appeared that the Egyptian government was going to deny passage into Gaza. This earlier news sparked emergency demonstrations in New York, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago and other cities throughout the U.S.

The 218-person contingent of activists plans to bring wheelchairs, walkers and medical supplies to the people of Gaza. A genocidal attack on Gaza in December and January, on top of a two-year Israeli siege and blockade of the area, makes this aid essential for the people there.

The fact that the caravan hails from the U.S. gives the convoy added resonance, as Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. government aid in the world. And Israel uses U.S. weapons and missiles against the Palestinian people on a daily basis.

Viva Palestina was organized by British Member of Parliament George Galloway, who organized a caravan from Britain under the same name in March. Galloway intends to organize future aid convoys to Gaza this year from Venezuela, Moscow, and again from Britain and the U.S. on Dec. 27, the year anniversary of the opening of Israel's attack on Gaza.

Participants in the delegation include former U.S. Congressperson Cynthia McKinney, who was imprisoned in early July by Israeli forces for attempting to bring aid into Gaza by sea with the Free Gaza Movement. Also participating are representatives of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Middle East Children's Alliance, Cuba Coalition, Malcolm

X Grassroots Movement, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA), International Action Center, International Socialist Organization, Workers World Party and the Answer Coalition.

Bill Doares of the International Action Center and then Galloway, McKinney and New York City Councilperson Charles Barron all spoke by phone to the New York rally in front of the Egyptian U.N. Mission. They told the protesters that they expected to leave in three hours for Gaza and that all the participants were expected to get into the enclave, bringing more than \$1 million in medicines and medical equipment.

The 218 people in Egypt with the convoy from the United States plan to carry the medical materiel across the border by hand if necessary.

The question of trucks had still not been settled. Egyptian officials had told negotiators with the convoy earlier that of 47 vehicles donated to Gaza, only the two ambulances will be allowed to enter Gaza. Gazans desperately need new vehicles in the area to provide various public services.

The Viva Palestina U.S. convoy, which left New York on July 4 for Cairo, Egypt, had faced an increasing number of hurdles laid out by the Egyptian government.

Barron told the protesters, "The revolutionary spirit of Palestine has ignited the struggle. Those taking to the streets in the U.S. and worldwide have earned the credit for this breakthrough with the Egyptian government."

"They don't want this to be successful because they don't want any more convoys," said Barron. "They want to set an example with us. They were hoping that they would discourage us." But Barron stressed that the convoy remains firmly committed to deliver the supplies and break the siege of Gaza.

He and the other speakers appealed to the people demonstrating in New York to keep the pressure on to get the trucks and all aid supplies through the Rafah border crossing. This crossing has been closed since June of 2007.

A petition being circulated by the International Action Center (available at www.iacenter.org under the Action Alerts heading) states: "It is a violation of international law to deny [the Viva Palestina convoy] passage or to detain and harass them in any way." The petition demands safe passage for the convoy as well as an end to the siege of Gaza.

For updates on the Viva Palestina convoy, visit www.vivapalestina-us.org □

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WWW PHOTO: MIKE EISENFELD

'LA LUCHA CONTINUA'

At Stella D'Oro bakery 4

RACIST SWIM CLUB

Met with protests 6



Protest at Egyptian Consulate in New York on July 13 demanding the convoy be given safe passage to Gaza. WWW PHOTO: SARA FLOUNDERS

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Detroit salutes Cuba's 50 years of revolution

By Cheryl LaBash
Detroit

A three-day summer celebration of the Cuban Revolution's 50th anniversary here in Detroit also welcomed the 20th Pastors for Peace Friendship Caravan. The message carried by this caravan is: "The time is now! President Barack Obama: free the Cuban Five, end the blockade of Cuba, end the travel ban and normalize relations."

Programs reviewing 50 years of Cuban cinema and music preceded the July 10 finale of a dinner, live salsa music and an awards presentation. Honored for their work in solidarity with the Cuban



Detroit youth, with artist Tyree Guyton (center rear), painted the van behind them in honor of the Cuban Five.

people were Detroit City Councilmember JoAnn Watson and attorneys Julie Hurwitz and Jerry Goldberg. Angeles Meneses, a student at the University of Michigan and intern at the Hurwitz-Goodman law firm, read a statement from Hurwitz, accepting the award on her behalf.

Representing Pastors for Peace, the Rev. Tom Smith accepted a very special vehicle joining the Friendship Caravan—a passenger van donated to the Cuban Workers Confederation by the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange. Renowned Detroit artist Tyree Guyton of the

Heidelberg Project transformed the van into a mobile work of art dedicated to freeing the Cuban Five.

Ignacio Meneses of the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange reviewed the history of Cuba's struggle for independence and self-determination and the advances in health care and literacy won by the workers of Cuba and shared with a widening circle of humanity throughout Latin America and the Caribbean—progress now threatened by the U.S.-backed military coup in Honduras.

The Hon. Claudia Morcom exceeded the program, which included an appeal for renewed struggle to free the Cuban Five, Mumia Abu-Jamal and all U.S. political prisoners. Noted local photographers Jack Kenny, Kenneth Snodgrass and Frank Hammer displayed pictures from Cuba.

The caravan's message will be heard in more than 130 cities along 14 routes as it gathers tons of humanitarian aid destined for Cuba. The caravan travels to the socialist island without U.S. government approval, along with the Venceremos Brigade, the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange and African Awareness, in an annual challenge to the blockade. The groups are scheduled to return to the U.S. on Aug. 3 at border crossings in Texas and in Buffalo, N.Y. □

Celebrate life of Irving Fierstein, people's artist

The International Action Center in New York will host a memorial for people's artist Irving Fierstein on July 19 from 3-6 p.m. at 55 W. 17th St., 5th floor. The memorial will include speeches, cultural performances and photo displays of Fierstein's revolutionary art. Food and refreshments will be provided. Call 212-633-6646 for more information. □



Save this date—
Nov. 14-15
Join us in the fight for a socialist future!
WORKERS WORLD PARTY—
50 years of struggle
Nov. 14-15 national conference in NYC
More details to follow.

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Tenants win first round against illegal evictions

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

Residents of the Wellington Commons on Detroit's west side have won the right to remain in their apartments for another month. After receiving an informal letter from management on July 9 stating that they would be required to leave the following day, the tenants began to ask why they should have to move because of financial problems faced by the building owners.

Organizers from the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions went to the apartment building to inform the tenants of their rights and encourage them to struggle against the eviction. The coalition issued a news release and attracted the local NBC-TV affiliate, which covered the struggle extensively from the evening of July 9 through July 10.

When a representative of the management company arrived at Wellington Commons after 11:00 a.m. on July 10, he was questioned by tenants, journalists and members of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition. A spokesperson for Elite Property, the management firm now controlling the building, said that it was not true that tenants had to leave by July 10.

Also, the management firm acknowledged that DTE Energy would not shut off the utilities services on July 10. The Elite Property representative, who identified himself only as "Bob," said the company wanted to place the residents in other apartment buildings it manages.

"Bob" told the Pan-African News Wire that the apartment building was owned by a hedge fund from New York and that the firm had decided to go out of business. One resident of the Wellington Commons told the PANW correspondent that a firm

called Stillwater Capital was actually the owner.

Later two officers from the Detroit Police Department arrived and went into the building to talk with the management. The cops later told the residents that the owners of the building owed over \$100,000 in past-due utilities bills.

The actual amount of the bill could not be substantiated. Moreover, this was not the fault of the tenants, whose utility costs are included in their monthly rent payments.

Later, the representative of Elite said that any resident could move into another building supervised by the firm without paying a deposit.

The epidemic of foreclosures and evictions is a serious problem in Detroit and throughout the United States. In many cases, where people rent homes and apartments, tenants are not aware of the finan-

cial difficulties facing the owners. When they are ordered to move by the management firms that take over operations, many residents are not aware of their rights.

A great number of the evictions that are carried out by the private interests controlling the properties are in fact illegal because they are not conducted through the courts.

According to government statistics, more than 4 million people have lost their jobs since late 2007. Altogether nearly 30 million workers are either unemployed or underemployed. The rate of foreclosures increased by more than 30 percent during the first quarter of 2009.

These problems reflect the need for a declaration of an economic state of emergency in Michigan and throughout the country. A general moratorium on all foreclosures and evictions in the U.S. is needed. □

Atlanta's homeless under siege

By **Dianne Mathiowetz**
Atlanta

On June 22, when temperatures soared into the mid 90s during a heat wave, Atlanta's water department turned off the water at the city's largest homeless shelter.

The Midtown facility, which is operated by the Task Force for the Homeless, houses some 700 men every night. Its 24-hour helpline also gives daily assistance to hundreds of low-income women, men and children.

Community activists quickly responded to this crisis. Calls for water went out over the radio airwaves and to e-mail lists. Cars, pick-up trucks and even the Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition's bio-fuel bus, "Rosa," pulled up to the shelter's doors to unload cases and jugs of water. Porta-potties and pallets of ice were donated. Alternate shower and bathroom facilities were made available.

The shelter stayed open despite city officials' threats to padlock the doors.

The next day, Task Force lawyers and supporters won a temporary injunction and restraining order from Fulton County Superior Court Judge Ural Glanville, who ordered the city to restore the building's water service.

Moreover, the judge authorized the Task Force to pursue legal actions to prove "tortious interference" by the city administration. He ordered the city to turn over documents referring to the shelter. Task Force attorneys will take depositions from city officials with the aim of revealing any city collusion with business interests to defund the shelter's operations.

While local media reported the court's order to restore the building's water, there was no coverage of the ruling that the city should stop its interference in the shelter's funding operations.

From its founding in 1981, the Task Force for the Homeless has gained a reputation as a fierce advocate for the right of all to decent and affordable housing and for human dignity. Unlike many other agencies that provide only emergency shelter, food, medical care and clothing for low-income and homeless people, the Task Force has also been a political voice, championing their rights and demanding policy change, not charity.

This adamant position has often

brought the Task Force into open and public opposition to powerful political and economic forces, especially since the run-up to the 1996 Olympics, when the floodgates were opened to large developers and corporate interests.

At that time, the Task Force filed suit against the city challenging an ordinance banning "urban camping"; it criminalized sleeping or lying in public places, i.e., parks. The organization has also effectively challenged other so-called "quality of life" ordinances which criminalize being poor or homeless and encourage racial profiling.

The city has supported the removal of all public housing projects, beginning with the destruction of Techwood Homes in the mid 1990s to build housing for Olympic athletes. This policy has displaced thousands of low-income families.

However, the Task Force, working with tenants at Bowen Homes—the latest project to be bulldozed—has kept affordable housing on the political agenda. It has mobilized for City Council meetings, pushed through resolutions calling for a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions, challenged the Department of Housing and Urban Development's policies, and demonstrated at national meetings and conventions.

The first U.S. Social Forum in 2007 used the Task Force building; the participation of homeless people and housing advocates was an achievement of that gathering.

Over the last 15 years, the number of homeless people has grown, given the lack of affordable housing and the low-wage service economy. They're living on the streets of Atlanta, under bridges, in abandoned buildings, in their cars and in parks.

In 2003, Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin announced with great fanfare a plan to end chronic homelessness in 10 years. Millions of dollars were spent to rehabilitate an unused jail. The Gateway Center was opened two years later, not as a shelter but with 270 spaces for men and 30 for women who enter into programs geared to address the underlying reasons for their homelessness, such as unemployment, addictions, mental illness or domestic abuse. Those who do not participate are labeled "non-compliant" and are refused services at other agencies linked to the Gateway funding apparatus.



PHOTO: ART4THEHOMELESS

As other private and city-funded facilities have closed, the Task Force facility has become the shelter of last resort. The Gateway shuttle bus drops off homeless people there in the middle of the night. Homeless patients released from Grady Hospital arrive there still in their hospital gowns.

The Task Force is legally prevented from offering bed space to women and children in the same facility as men. However, on many nights its lobby is crowded with dozens of women and their children sleeping upright in folding chairs.

Critics throw scurrilous charges at the Task Force for its alleged "lack of results." They accuse the facility, by its very existence, of encouraging people to remain homeless. Debi Starnes, a former City Councilmember and the city administration's "homeless czar" is the leading voice in demonizing the shelter's residents as "criminal elements" in the Midtown area. She falsely blames the Task Force's funding cutbacks on "ineffectiveness."

When Starnes told the media that housing was available for everyone staying at the shelter following the recent water cutoff, the Task Force challenged the City to provide it. No housing was forthcoming.

The Task Force's lawsuit seeks the documentation that would show that Starnes' actions and those of other city government officials and business associations led to the blocking of federal, state and private funding to the shelter. The facility was legally eligible for the funding and had complied with all requirements.

The city has refused to approve an annual \$100,000 federal grant which the

Task Force has been in line to receive for the last three years. The mayor's office has even sent letters urging the grant be denied. Despite the judge's order of June 23, that the city administration stop interfering in the shelter's fundraising efforts, the mayor's office, once again, urged the grant be denied.

The Task Force says it has lost nearly 50 percent of its annual budget due to interference by political and business interests which seek to gain the land occupied by the shelter. It is across the street from Emory University's private Crawford Long Hospital and within blocks of newly built million-dollar condominiums.

The facilities' operations—keeping it clean and functioning, providing security, staffing the offices and more—are largely done by current residents and formerly homeless people. The building houses an art gallery and studio space where homeless artists can paint and express their creativity.

A projected coffee house and community gathering place awaits the full restoration of water to become an ongoing performance venue. Already, at a weekly open-mike night, spoken-word artists and musical performers from among the homeless population and the community gather to share their talents. Programs teach computer, photography and video skills and bicycle repair, and there are literacy and voter registration campaigns.

Anita Beaty, the Task Force's director, stresses that the coordinated attack on the shelter is not the central issue, even though it is an important facet of the struggle. The presence of thousands of homeless women, men and children, mostly African-American, on the main street of Atlanta, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthplace, and the home of the Civil Rights Movement, makes it clear that "the city claims a history of progressive social change that it does not want to live."

Task Force supporters are gearing up to pack the courtroom when its lawsuit against the city goes to court on Sept. 21.

And the water crisis continues. On July 15, unless another \$8,000 is paid, the city once again vows to disrupt service. The Task Force for the Homeless is soliciting donations of water and money. For information, call 404-230-5000 or see homelesstaskforce.org. □

'La lucha continua'

After NLRB victory, bakery workers threatened with plant closing

By Mike Eilenfeldt
Bronx, N.Y.

The chant "La lucha continua!" (the struggle goes on) resonated on July 2 as an elevated train rumbled high above a large crowd of Stella D'Oro workers and their supporters. The workers, members of Local 50 of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union, were returning to their jobs after a strike of nearly 11 months.

Mostly immigrant women, the workers were not intimidated by the watchful eyes of Brynwood Partners security and city police as they prepared to enter the plant one by one. They had just won an important victory from the National Labor Relations Board, which ordered their reinstatement by the company and back pay.

But Brynwood Partners, a venture capital firm that bought the plant in 2006 and then demanded draconian cuts in pay and benefits, is appealing the NLRB decision and threatening to close the Bronx plant down entirely in 90 days. And so, "The struggle goes on."

At a rally outside the plant, workers, union officials and supporters denounced Brynwood for trying to break their union in a drive for superprofits.

Mike Filippou, shop steward and strike leader, expressed the militant mood of the multinational workers to this reporter, "We were prepared from the beginning, before we went out on strike. They have no respect for us."

Stella D'Oro workers believed they had no choice but to strike. A \$5-per-hour wage cut for "unskilled" workers, most of them women, plus huge slashes in benefits would grievously harm them and their union. So every single worker honored the picket line as support for their strike grew.

Workers earning \$18 or less per hour would have been cut to \$13. However, in an attempt to divide them, a few skilled workers earning up to \$22 would get a raise. Every worker would lose vacation, holiday and sick pay coupled with health insurance and pension cuts.

Lupe Alvarado, with 31 years at Stella D'Oro, had seen the original Italian immigrant owners sell out to RJR Nabisco, which was then swallowed up by KKR in an historic leveraged buyout. Nabisco was then plucked by Kraft, which spun off Stella D'Oro to Brynwood while the union contract was outstanding. Lupe protested, "What are we going to do with \$10 in our pockets? What do we do with no health insurance? We made Stella D'Oro. When Stella D'Oro started, they didn't have what they have now. Now it's a rich company."

The elite law firm Weil, Gotshal and Manges has contracts with Chrysler and General Electric. Gotshal lawyers represented General Motors in recent bankruptcy proceedings. This union-busting monster with 2,300 lawyers stood in for Brynwood Partners during the



Marta Macia, one of Stella D'Oro strike leaders, on left.

WW PHOTO: MIKE EILENFELDT

three-day National Labor Relations Board hearing. However, the judge found Brynwood guilty of unfair labor practices and ordered it to return the workers to their jobs with back pay and to negotiate under the previous contract.

Local 50 President Joyce Alston, who spoke passionately and eloquently at the NLRB hearing, told this reporter, "The strike has gone beyond Stella D'Oro. It has become a symbol for the entire labor movement. We have to stick together if we're going to survive in this country. It's time for working people who may not be in a union to realize that you have to stand together in order to maintain a decent standard of living. Other than that we're all going to be at the poverty level. It's going to be rich and poor and nothing in between."

Alston promised her members just before they returned to work, "We do not intend for this to be the end. It's just the beginning of a new stage. We intend to pursue every avenue available to us to stop this plant from being closed."

At the end of the day, workers reported filthy conditions in the plant, especially in the restrooms. They were angered to find 26 video cameras surveying every corner of the factory—cameras that are monitored in Connecticut. The union will file a grievance, stating that such cameras violate their contract under the court order.

Judy Sheridan-Gonzalez of the Stella D'Oro Strike Support Committee, who carried a sign reading

"Keep Stella D'Oro in the Bronx! Kick out Brynwood," told the crowd: "We hope that we can galvanize the entire Bronx community behind the workers and Local 50 to keep this factory in the Bronx. Stop these predatory hedge funds and investment firms from destroying our community. It takes a village to raise a child. It takes a village to save a factory."

Edwin Molina, member of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3 and a leader in the Stella D'Oro Support Committee, told Workers World: "We played a major role in organizing community support for the workers and developed a far-reaching network of communication. We conducted rallies, marches and fundraisers. We instituted a successful boycott which ended when our workers got their jobs back. Members gained support from many local unions including Professional Staff Congress, New York State United Teachers, United Federation of Teachers, United Food & Commercial Workers, Transport Workers Union Local 100, AFSCME District Council 37, New York State Nurses Association and the Teachers Federation of Puerto Rico.

"Members of our committee and Stella D'Oro workers met with militant leaders from the United Electrical Workers of Chicago, who were on a national tour in January. They had successfully occupied the Republic Windows and Doors plant in December 2008 to keep it from closing." □

Low-Wage Capitalism

What the new globalized high-tech imperialism means for the class struggle in the U.S.

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx's law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval, the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.



Available at
www.Leftbooks.com

On The Picketline

By Sue Davis

Union victory at Smithfield!

After nearly 17 years of up-hill struggle, more than 5,000 workers at the Smithfield pork processing plant in Tar Heel, N.C., went to work July 2 under a union contract. Eighty-four percent of the workers, mostly African Americans and Latina/o immigrants, voted for the four-year contract negotiated by Food and Commercial Workers Local 1208. The contract, effective immediately, guarantees such basic benefits as sick leave, time-and-a-half holiday pay, and a \$1.50 raise to be phased in starting with an immediate 40 cents. It also established a sorely needed grievance process to address unsafe working conditions and to stop management's practice of disciplining or firing workers who protested injuries or disrespectful, racist treatment. The contract also guarantees the workers at least 30 hours of work each week, establishment of a safety committee and company-funded safety training. "We really did accomplish something with this union," Mattie Fulcher commented about the workers' hard-fought victory. It's especially impressive given that North Carolina is a so-called "right-to-work" state with the lowest rate of unionization in the country. (Raleigh News & Observer, July 3)

BART workers to hold strike vote

Two BART unions, whose workers keep 350,000 San Francisco Bay Area riders on the move daily, will vote on whether to strike the week of July 13. The contracts of Transit Union Local 1555, which represents about 900 train operators, station agents and power workers, and Service Employees Local 1021, which represents about 1,400 mechanics, custodians, safety inspectors and clerical employees, expired July 8. Management has offered a four-year contract with no raises for the workers for three years and only a small increase in the fourth, unpaid days off, and an increase in benefit contributions by employees. They say all this will save the transit agency \$100 million over four years. The July 13 San Francisco Examiner reports that the unions' counterproposal, designed to save \$60 million in the first two years and \$760 million over 25 years—by postponing lifetime medical benefits for both workers and management from five to 15 years—"has been largely ignored during negotiations." If the workers reject the contract, the unions plan to ask for a 90-day cooling-off period before returning to the table. Stay tuned.

Hawai`i workers contest furloughs

Two Hawai`i state unions have united to block Gov. Linda Lingle from unilaterally ordering thousands of state workers to take three unpaid days off per month, starting in July. The AFL-CIO blog reported June 29 that, according to the unions, Lingle and top aides "apparently contend that furloughs are not a required subject of collective bargaining. But that is obviously wrong. The furloughs involve significant reductions in both wages and hours, which are both core subjects for collective bargaining."

N.J. workers ratify no-layoffs contract

State workers in New Jersey overwhelmingly ratified a new agreement that provides a no-layoff guarantee for 18 months and creates a seven-day paid leave bank to offset 10 furlough days. The agreement will help save as many as 7,000 jobs in jeopardy due to the state's budget shortfall. The contract covers members of seven Communication Workers locals.

Unions swarm U.S. Capitol demanding health care

About 10,000 union members converged on the U.S. Capitol on June 25 chanting "We want health care" to the tune of Queen's "We Will Rock You." One of the biggest, liveliest labor demonstrations in many years, the turnout was organized by Health Care for America Now, a broad-based labor-community coalition that drew unionists from up and down the East Coast and from the Midwest. (Metro Washington AFL-CIO's Union City, June 26)

NYC supermarkets forced to pay back wages

More than 50 workers at two supermarkets in Brooklyn, N.Y., will each receive \$20,000 in back pay, according to a settlement announced July 1. The workers were not paid for overtime or only worked for tips. The owners of the stores pled guilty to criminal charges earlier the same week. (New York Daily News, July 2) □

GM's 'quick rinse' bankruptcy

Dirty deal for workers and retirees

By Martha Grevatt

A 100-year-old towering structure was razed to the ground July 10. From its wreckage a new General Motors Company—miniature by comparison—has emerged.

GM's Chapter 11 filing, and its exit a record-breaking 40 days later, has been called a "surgical" or "quick rinse" bankruptcy. For workers and retirees, however, the damage can hardly be compared to having an appendix removed or to cleaning soiled linens.

The Pontiac brand is gone. The Saab, Opel, Vauxhall, Hummer and Saturn brands are in the process of being sold. By the end of this year GM's total U.S. employment will stand at 67,000—down from 91,000 at this year's start. This in-

cludes another wave of job cuts for 4,000 non-unionized salaried employees on top of the 20,000-plus union jobs on the chopping block as part of the government-ordered restructuring. Between now and December 2011, 13 plants will close.

Workers suffer heavy cuts

Workers represented by the United Auto Workers took huge wage and benefit cuts. Wages for newly hired workers are frozen at \$14 an hour—one-and-a-half times the poverty level for a family of four—for the next six years. Retirees lost vision and dental coverage.

For the next contract, which will run from 2011 to 2016, the UAW agreed to allow an arbitrator to impose a "competitive wage." Under the terms of the U.S. Treasury loan to GM, workers are forbid-

den to strike.

The attack on the UAW membership is just the tip of the iceberg. GM plans to close at least 1,300 dealerships next year employing around 60,000 mechanics, salespeople and other workers. New York Bankruptcy Court Judge Robert Gerber overruled dealer objections, allowing the sale of GM's remaining assets to proceed.

Objections were also raised in bankruptcy court by the International Union of Electrical Workers-Communication Workers of America. The IUE-CWA represents just less than 10 percent of GM's 550,000 union retirees, while a few thousand more belong to the Steelworkers or the Operating Engineers. The costs of their health benefits are not being transferred to the UAW-administered Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association.

The Treasury had demanded that the UAW VEBA take half of GM's contractual obligations in company stock. The other unions were not part of this deal, so their retired members will soon be losing most of their health care coverage. The IUE-CWA retirees demonstrated outside the bankruptcy court, but their objections too were overruled.

Also left behind in "Old Motor Co." were potential liabilities in a class-action asbestos exposure lawsuit and individual defective product lawsuits. The plaintiffs may have no means of holding GM accountable for their suffering.

Moreover, because the auto industry is considered a "multiplier" industry, the drastic cuts in auto production are already hurting workers in steel, rubber,

Continued on page 11

Protests stop deportations and breakup of family

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

The Barillas family just won a big victory against the war on immigrants. They had faced imminent deportation and family separation this month from the repressive federal agency, Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Due to a barrage of support messages to government officials and two public protests, five family members who had been detained won release.

On July 6, Marlon Barillas, suffering greatly from a heart condition, was released from the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Wash. The same day four other adults from this same Guatemalan family, accompanied by supporter Kathryn Scott, had their ankle bracelets removed at the nearby Immigration Assistance Center.

Marlon Barillas was arrested more than a month ago while washing his car in his driveway. The arrest was due to al-

leged "gang activity in the neighborhood." He was racially profiled and locked up in the detention center. Four other family members were put in ankle bracelets.

Back in 1989, when Marlon and his sisters were little children, the family had traveled across country to visit Conrado Barillas' ailing mother in New York. At that time a deportation order was issued against the whole family. The three-generation family has now lived in Des Moines, Wash., for 22 years. The children have grown up and had children of their own, who are U.S. citizens. But this old order has come back to haunt them. It is another example of the unjust laws and racist persecution of this country's huge immigrant population.

Members of the Barillas family, wearing ankle bracelets, together with their 10 children and supporters from the International Action Center, held demonstrations in front of the Northwest Detention Center on June 20 and 26. They chanted,

"Don't separate the family."

On July 3, Marlon Barillas was taken to sign his deportation order and be fingerprinted. He refused both. He was handcuffed, roughed up and thrown into solitary, where for three days he suffered from severe chest pains associated with a previous heart condition. His arms swelled up. Supporters called 911 paramedics to the prison twice over the July 4 weekend. They were turned away. The family says he was tortured to try to make him sign the deportation order but Marlon remained steadfast and refused. On Monday, July 6, he was released and the four others' ankle bracelets removed.

The children were ecstatic. Four of them faced becoming orphans if their mothers were deported. The family and supporters from the International Action Center had put out a widely circulated appeal with a picture of the children and headlined, "Please don't take our mothers away from us!" It urged people to call

President Barack Obama, Homeland Security head Janet Napolitano and other public officials. Congressman Adam Smith's office was reported swamped with calls.

Officials told the family they had received orders from Washington, D.C., to release them.

The Barillas family members were given applications for work permits and asylum. They now have a lawyer who will seek to reopen and get a long extension of their case. This will stop imminent deportation.

This is a victory for all immigrants fighting against the separation of families and against raids, jailing and deportations. Legalization for all undocumented workers!

Donations for the Barillas family's legal fees can be sent to: St. Matthew San Mateo Church (earmarked "Barillas family legal fees"), 123 "L" St. NE, Auburn, WA 98002. This fight will continue! □

Immigrants' art exhibit opens in Harlem

By Dee Knight
New York

The first in a series of Immigrants' Art Exhibits opened July 10 at the Rio II Gallery in Harlem, in a beautiful ceremony complete with music, refreshments and opportunities to meet the artists. The show will be open there until July 24. It will then move to Arts Horizons LeRoy Neiman Art Center, also in Harlem, for another two weeks.

The show is a remarkable mix of work by dozens of artists from across Latin America, Africa and Asia. The opening was also graced by the hypnotic music of Chilean guitarist Pancho and stirring comments by leaders of Mujeres Trabajadoras por la Paz (Working Women for Peace), based at La Peña del Bronx. The hosts encouraged guests to meet the artists and buy their work—and take it home when the show ends later this month.

Victor Toro, a founder of the Chilean Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR) who is currently fighting deportation, spoke eloquently about the link between artistic expression and mass struggle for immigrant and workers' rights. He and other speakers highlighted the critical need for legalization for between 12 and 20 million immigrants in the U.S. who lack official papers.

All who attended the gallery opening were asked to sign an open letter to President Barack Obama demanding a moratorium on Immigrant and Customs Enforcement raids, release of all immigrant detainees, and reunification of families divided because of detention. The letter calls for a "single-tiered, full and unconditional process for acquiring citizenship for all undocumented immigrants currently living in the U.S."

It also demands full rights for workers regardless of immigrant status, no guest worker program, removal or demolition of the border fence on the U.S.-Mexico border, and a halt to state and local police or sheriffs acting as part of the immigration law enforcement system. Significantly, it also calls for migration services to be separated from the "national security" administration in the Department of Homeland Security and moved to the Department of Labor.

Much of the artwork on display powerfully dramatizes the anguish and suffering of immigrants, as well as their



struggles. All of it is a testament to the powerful creative genius and rich cultural contributions of the growing immigrant population. The show is an example of how the flood of workers from other countries has immeasurably strengthened the working class and progressive movement in the U.S.

Sponsors include the May 1 Coali-

tion for Worker and Immigrant Rights, Mujeres Trabajadoras por la Paz, Taller Experimental de Arte (Experimental Art Workshop), La Peña del Bronx, Arts Horizons, Rio II Gallery, The Shore Institute of the Contemporary Arts, and Rebel Diaz Arts Collective. For information contact Artexhibit09@gmail.com or call 212-568-2030, ext. 208. □

Storm of outrage vs. swim club's racism

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

The racist treatment and rejection of 65 Black and Latina/o summer camp youth at a predominantly white, private swim club here in late June has unleashed a storm of outrage from around the region and across the country, forcing the club to reverse its stance.

Creative Steps Inc. day camp paid \$1,950 to the Valley Swim Club in Huntington Valley, Pa., a suburb of Philadelphia, so that the school-age campers—kindergarten through seventh graders—would have a place to swim on Mondays. Budget cuts that closed several public pools in Philadelphia forced the camp to seek alternate arrangements.

However, when the African-American and Latina/o campers arrived at the private pool on June 29 for their first weekly visit, the children were subjected to overt racism by white members of the club. Children reported overhearing club members making racial remarks and witnessed at least 20 white parents removing their children from the pool soon after the campers arrived.

Marcus Wright, one of the young campers, told CNN about hearing remarks “that we ‘might do something to their children’ or we ‘might try to steal something from them.’ One of the members shouted out that they would make sure we never returned.” Another Black youth reported hearing a white woman say, “What are all

these Black kids doing. I’m scared they might do something to my child.” (July 11)

A few days after this incident Creative Steps’ check was returned. Their legal contract with the club was rescinded by club president John Duesler, who later told NBC10 television, “There was concern that a lot of kids would change the complexion and the atmosphere of the club.” (July 9) Contracts with two other summer camps were also cancelled.

“They didn’t like the color of my skin,” camper Jabriel Brown, 12, told the Philadelphia Inquirer. “It makes me feel mad. And sad.” (July 9)

Parents, their children and other concerned community members gathered outside the padlocked gates of the Valley Swim Club on July 9 to protest the discrimination. Protesters carried signs reading “Drown racism” and “Jim Crow swims here.” The swim club claims it has a diverse, multiethnic membership, but Amy Goldman, a member for two years, said she couldn’t remember seeing a Black member this year.

Parents and staff at Creative Steps Inc. are considering legal action against the Valley Club, according to executive director Alethea Wright. The club’s actions appear to be a violation of section 1981 of the Civil Rights Act. The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission has also launched an investigation.

Wright told CNN, “Parents are still outraged. We are trying to explain racism

to the kids. We should not be experiencing this in 2009. It’s a slap in the face of where we are trying to move. We need to send a message that this is not acceptable.” (July 11)

“Whether or not any laws were violated, a “whites only” pool should be something every American condemns,” noted ColorofChange.org in an email urging action.

Struggle against racism—then and now

Speaking on WHYY’s Radio Times with host Marty Moss-Coane on July 13, Jeffrey Wiltse, author of “Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America,” offered a historic look at desegregation of pools in the U.S.

In the 1920s and 1930s thousands of municipal pools opened throughout the U.S. accessible to everyone. But after World War II, municipal pools went into decline and private club pools proliferated, particularly in predominantly white suburbs, Wiltse explained.

Around the country civil rights activists were challenging federal laws restricting access of Black children to use public pools. Black children who attempted to use municipal public pools were frequently physically beaten by whites.

In 1951, Rev. Harrison DeShields of South Philadelphia sued pool operators across the city and suburbs, alleging discrimination. Two years later, State Sen. Charles R. Weiner (R.-Phila.) offered a bill to desegregate all public pools.

When the movements of the 1950s and 1960s eventually led to legislation prohibiting this type of overt racial bias, many whites with financial means established private pools. The Valley Club, for example, was established just outside Philadelphia’s city limits in 1954 when pressure was growing within the city to integrate municipal pools. The Lansdowne Swim Club outside Philadelphia was integrated only in 1989 following a federal lawsuit.

“Most Americans today live and recreate in homogeneous social environments, created in the post WWII period,” Wiltse noted.

“Residentially the U.S. is more segregated now than we were in the 1950s,” Mary Catherine Roper, a staff attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania’s Philadelphia Office, speaking on Radio Times July 13, concurred.

The storm of controversy has forced club members to vote to retract their actions and Duesler has re-invited the campers back to the pool, but Roper pointed out that the apology won’t erase the harm done to the children. “The club has claimed it wasn’t racial but a safety issue, yet I understand there was another group of 80 children invited to the pool, and there weren’t any questions raised about safety,” Roper said.

Creative Steps Inc. has not responded to Duesler’s offer. Alethea Wright told CNN, “They should have done that before. These children are scarred. How can I take the children back there?” (July 11) □

Reparations for some, not others

By **Dolores Cox**
New York

After Bernard Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in prison for his Ponzi scheme, one of his victims was interviewed by a local television reporter while leaving the courtroom. She spoke about how justice was finally served; that he got what he deserved. And, she stated, “It was important that the damage be repaired.”

The damage she was referring to was the loss of the money she had invested in his scheme. The repair was the punishment for his crime and the hope that she would be recuperating some of that money. The crime was stealing and the perpetrator had been punished. At least one amend had been made. The key issues here are loss, greed and theft, crime, damage and reparations.

The judicial system looked out for those individuals who had enough money to invest in his scheme and who demanded justice for their losses. They received swift

legal justice to help repair the damage. Those who never have amassed enough money to invest in Wall Street schemes on such a scale, however, get no such recognition of their demands for social or economic justice.

In 2009, millions of descendants of the victims of crimes against humanity perpetrated during the transatlantic slave trade and U.S. slavery still await their justice. They still await restitution for being stolen from their land; for the loss of lives, family, culture, language, even their names; for theft of labor and services; for the loss of income and benefits denied them from their ancestors’ labor; for the hundreds of years of pain and suffering, and for the legacy of slavery and discrimination that continues to inflict harm.

Present-day capitalist rulers, those who have benefited from enslaved Africans’ free labor, continue to hold fast to the practice of oppression, exploitation and placing profit before people. The perpe-

trators continue to operate with impunity. They give lip service in the form of recent empty “apologies” without true remorse. They show no intent or attempt to

make restitution towards eliminating all forms of institutional racism,

towards leveling the playing field or towards repairing the resulting damages.

There was no bailout for the enslaved Africans, just as there are no bailouts for the poor, unemployed and marginalized sectors of the working class today. Yet we’ve seen repeated bailouts for greedy Wall Street bankers and investors—all at the taxpayers’ expense. Most of the banks are prospering. AIG is paying out another round of million-dollar bonuses to reward the guilty criminals. Bernie Madoff going to jail was the exception to the rule; what we have seen, in general, is that if you are rich and guilty of defrauding people, you are allowed to still maintain a lavish lifestyle, unregulated.

On June 19 the U.S. Senate passed a

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resolution apologizing for slavery and racial discrimination. It was timed to coincide with the celebration of Juneteenth, the day commemorating the release from bondage of enslaved Africans in Texas, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect. This resolution, however, is a non-binding empty gesture and only symbolic. It contains a disclaimer stating that nothing in it supports or authorizes reparations by the U.S. government.

This resolution is coupled with the seemingly steady erosion of affirmative action programs designed to close racial gaps and disparities and repair the damages rooted in racism. Even the 1965 Voting Rights Act has been challenged and weakened this past June by the U.S. Supreme Court. This court’s ruling allowed more state and local jurisdictions to change their election procedures and lessen federal oversight. It can have the effect of weakening the right to political representation for Black and other oppressed people. □

Outpouring of love for Michael Jackson

By **Julia La Riva**
Staples Center, Los Angeles

Behind the scenes of the elaborate July 7 memorial service here for Michael Jackson were the thousands of fans who had come from all over the world. Without a ticket or a hope of attending the service, held at Staples Arena in Los Angeles, they came from every continent to pay tribute to an artist who had personally touched their lives. Upon hearing of his death on June 25, people jumped on planes from every corner of the earth, most without a plan. They just knew they had to be near him.

As the City of Los Angeles clamped down on security, creating a protective barrier for blocks around the arena—re-

stricting movement on the day of the memorial—fans arrived days early in order to sign the large billboard-sized cards with Michael’s image. They also wanted to hover around one of the last known places Michael had been while rehearsing for his upcoming London tour, or to get a glimpse of Michael’s former home, Neverland. Throngs of people hung over freeway overpasses, peering from skyscrapers and street corners, in hopes of getting a glimpse of the funeral procession.

Fans without the “golden” ticket to attend the memorial were not satisfied watching on television—as police, city officials and media insisted—but traveled near and far. They were drawn to pock-ets of downtown where they could be

with others who shared the same passion for the man, his music and his artistry. Countless stories were told to this reporter on July 6 by people who waited hours in line to sign memorial cards. Michael had been the “theme music of their lives.” Everybody grew up with Michael and the rest of the Jackson Five.

From young children to senior citizens, they spoke as if Michael had personally touched their lives and sang or written songs just for them. Individuals from countless countries exchanged their stories with Angelenos, sharing the common thread of love for the music of the beloved Jackson family. True devotion and unflinching loyalty were the shared language on the streets, tempered by sadness at the



PHOTO: JULIA LA RIVA

Some of the thousands outside the arena.

loss of a young, great talent. People were not deterred from coming to Los Angeles even when they lacked access to the memorial service.

While many gathered for the extremely moving Michael Jackson Memorial inside the arena, thousands were out on the streets of downtown Los Angeles paying their respects and showing their great appreciation. From the entertainment capital of the world, Michael Jackson reigns supreme. Long live the King of Pop. □

NAACP asked to support civil rights investigation for Mumia

The New York Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition organized a press conference across the street from the national NAACP conference held in mid-town Manhattan on the morning of July 13.

According to the coalition's press release, the main goal of the picket line was to call on the NAACP "to fulfill a promise it made in 2004, in a resolution that passed unanimously, to the international community for a 'new and fair trial' for Mumia. The NAACP is commemorating its centennial anniversary.

The coalition has organized a campaign demanding that U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder call for a civil rights investigation

into the case of Mumia, a Black political prisoner who has been on Pennsylvania's death row for more than 27 years.

Holder, who spoke at the NAACP conference on July 13, has the authority to instruct the Department of Justice to conduct such investigations when there is evidence of prosecutorial and judicial misconduct. Mumia was railroaded to death row due to suppressed evidence and a racist conspiracy involving the presiding judge, prosecutor and the police during the original trial. Just recently, the Supreme Court refused to rule on one of his appeals.

Members of the coalition met with



leaders of the NAACP on July 11 about Mumia's case. The NAACP is considering introducing a resolution at the conference in support of Mumia's right to a civil rights investigation. Prominent individuals who have called for a civil rights investigation include actor Ruby Dee, Congressperson Charles Rangel, former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and others.

Those who spoke at the press conference included Suzanne Ross and Sundiata Sadiq from the coalition; Rev. Claudia de la Cruz, Iglesia San Romero de las Américas; James McIntosh, Committee to Eliminate Media Offense to African People; Lynne Stewart, people's attorney; Nada

Khader, WESPAC; Monica Moorehead, Millions for Mumia of the International Action Center; Daniel Myers, National Lawyers Guild and Zayid Muhammad, New Black Panther Party. Above, Rebel Diaz, a Latino hip-hop duo, did a cultural presentation.

The coalition and its supporters plan to leaflet NAACP delegates with Mumia literature until the conference ends. Another rally is planned by the coalition for when President Barack Obama is scheduled to speak at the NAACP conference on July 16.

—Report & photo
by Monica Moorehead

From death row
Mumia Abu-Jamal on

Hypocrites on the hill

Taken from a June 20 audio column at www.prisonradio.org. Read updates on Mumia's case at www.millions-4mumia.org.

As politicians rush resolutions through Congress supporting the protesters in Tehran, defending the principle of freedom to protest, their hypocrisy is even more blinding than their own myopia.

For it takes only a moment's reflection to recognize that they don't give a tinker's dam about the protesters. This is about using resolutions as a weapon to further mark Iran as the enemy, the dangerous other which "threatens" U.S. hegemony.

As proof of political hypocrisy, one can cock an ear to hear the hiss of silence when protests erupt here in America, and demonstrators get beaten, locked up and prosecuted for practicing their alleged rights under the First Amendment.

Think back to the massive street protests against the police murder of Oscar Grant in Oakland, Calif. People were beaten, busted and had their cell phone cameras confiscated by the police.

Did Congress support these protesters? Well, not yet.

State and local politicians, when they said anything, called for calm, an end to protests and some dissed the protesters as "animals."

Sound familiar?

I don't speak Farsi, but it's my guess that they don't sound too different in tone from Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei — in other words, 'the system works — trust the system!'

Why? Because that's what states always say.

Protesters here in the U.S. have had their butts kicked for years—yes, years—in spite of so-called guarantees in the constitution to free expression and the right to protest.

Indeed, we need look no farther than the hallowed halls of Congress itself, specifically Rep. John Lewis (D.-GA), whose head still sports the scars from the police batons that battered him in Selma, when he protested against American apartheid.

A half a century later, and protesters still get beat downs from coast to coast for demonstrating. And if they don't get beat down physically, they get beaten economically by lawyers, judges and DAs, who squeeze them—as they pay for the right to practice the freedom to demonstrate.

The U.S. Congress, which just a few generations ago supported the brutal, savage reign of repression over Iran under the Shah (Mohammad Reza Pahlavi), and also supported his nuclear ambitions, could care less about the Iranian people.

This is politics—pure and simple—and about using these protests as pretexts for other, more nefarious goals.

Because of the brutish, bone-headed policies of the Bush regime, Iran emerged from the carnage of the Iraq war period as the strongest player on the board. That's because the U.S. took down their deadliest enemy, Saddam Hussein.

The U.S. wants to reset the wheel by sparking internal conflict and thereby weakening the Iranian government. We have been here before and it didn't turn out well the last time. □

Order Mumia's book 'Jailhouse Lawyers' at Leftbooks.com



Black firefighters fight for justice

By Stephen Millies

The opinion rendered by Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy on June 29 upholding a firefighter promotion test in New Haven, Conn., that prolongs the racist status quo never mentioned a noose. That's what Black firefighter Abdul Lanaird Granger found draped across his boots in his Brooklyn firehouse in 2005. (Daily Challenge, Feb. 11, 2005)

The noose was a death threat to Granger. Thousands of African Americans, Mexicans and Chinese in the United States have been lynched with nooses.

The Fire Department of New York—not far from New Haven—is the country's largest with 11,500 firefighters. More than 2 million African Americans live in New York City. As of March 2007 the city had only 335 Black firefighters—just 3 percent.

A mere 7.4 percent of New York's firefighters were Black or Latina/o. (Center for Constitutional Rights news release, July 17, 2007)

Even Bush's Justice Department was compelled to file a discrimination suit against the FDNY in 2007. Billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg did nothing.

In 2006 there were only 32 women firefighters in New York City. (Courier-Life, Sept. 15, 2006) Firehouses could also be dangerous for lesbian and gay firefighters.

Anthony Kennedy and the other four Supreme Court justices who voted with him in the New Haven case ignored this record of bigotry, which is widespread in fire departments across the country.

"Firefighting is a profession in which the legacy of racial discrimination casts

an especially long shadow," wrote Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in her dissent. "It is against this backdrop of entrenched inequality that the promotion process at issue in this litigation should be assessed."

Admission tests didn't keep the FDNY from hiring Edward McMillan after he and three other white cops fired 41 bullets at Amadou Diallo, unjustly killing the African immigrant on Feb. 4, 1999. The city had to pay Diallo's family \$3 million in compensation.

Compared with other cities in the United States, the FDNY's hiring record is atrocious.

Fifty-seven percent of Los Angeles' firefighters, 51 percent of Philadelphia's and 40 percent of Boston's are people of color. The fire departments are 30 percent Black in Baltimore and 23 percent Black in Chicago. (CCR, July 17, 2007)

One third of Cincinnati's firefighters were Black in 2003.

Behind the racism of New York's fire department is the racism of Wall Street. The New York Stock Exchange refused to close its doors for Martin Luther King's birthday until 1998—a dozen years after it had become a federal holiday.

Eight years ago Les Payne wrote a series of columns in Newsday about the miserably small number of Black firefighters in New York City. Payne pointed out that authorities don't want African Americans seen as heroes and she-roses. (Newsday, May 6, 2001)

Billionaires consider it socially dangerous for a Black or Latina/o firefighter to rescue a white child in Howard Beach or Maspeth. Such lifesaving can cut through

racism in all-white neighborhoods.

Legacy of struggle

Judge Kennedy, who's from California, ought to visit the African American Firefighter Museum in Los Angeles. It's located in what was a segregated firehouse at Central Avenue and 14th Street.

The Stentorians of Los Angeles City, an organization of Black firefighters, helped start the museum.

Stentorian member Arnett Hartsfield tells the story of what Black firefighters had to put up with in his book "The Old Stentorians." Hartsfield also remembered courageous white firefighters who defended their African-American comrades.

Black firefighter George W. Bright joined the Los Angeles Fire Department in 1897. After being promoted to lieutenant, all the city's African-American and Latino firefighters were put under his command. But Bright wasn't allowed to command white men.

Black firefighters were allowed in only two Los Angeles firehouses until the mid 1950s. An African-American firefighter could only become a captain when a Black captain retired or died. (Los Angeles Times, Dec. 13, 1997)

In 1919 Wesley Williams became the third Black male hired by the New York City fire department. Williams had to fight racist whites in order to keep his job. He helped form the Vulcan Society, the organization of New York's Black firefighters, in 1940. ("So Others Might Live," by Joseph F. Kett and Terry Golway.)

This is the legacy of struggle that the Supreme Court wants to reverse. □

Africa and the G-8

Broken promises & worsening poverty

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

This year's Group of 8 Summit in L'Aquila, Italy, once again demonstrated the failure of capitalist economic policies to bring genuine development to the African continent. The summit's final day discussed the G-8 providing aid to Africa for agricultural programs. The fact that previous pledges of \$50 billion made at the 2005 meeting in Gleneagles, Scotland, have not been met, however, made African leaders even more skeptical about the role of Europe and the United States in the future of the continent.

The current economic crisis is having a devastating impact on African states. The continuation of the current system will widen further the income gap between the Western capitalist states and the countries that have emerged from colonial and semi-colonial rule. The declining standard of living and increasing poverty rate in Africa will result in more job losses, greater food insecurity and social instability.

ActionAid spokesperson Meredith Alexander said of the L'Aquila Summit that: "Although the G-8 leaders reaffirmed their Gleneagles promises this week, their own accountability report does not even acknowledge how far off track they are. This suggests that the Gleneagles promises are increasingly unlikely to be met. It is another failure for the world's poor." (Independent, July 11)

United Nations figures indicate that the number of malnourished people around the world has risen since 2007. By the conclusion of 2009 the number is expected to surpass one billion, reversing declines made since the 1960s. Consequently, the world economic crisis is effectively eliminating the limited progress made since the triumphs of the national independence movements during the 1960s and 1970s.

Jeremy Hobbs of the British-based aid organization Oxfam said of the G-8 Summit, "For Obama it was 'yes we can.' For Berlusconi's G-8, it's 'no we won't.' This summit has been a shambles, it did nothing for Africa, and the world is still being cooked." Referring to the next G-8 meeting, he continued, "Canada 2010 is the end of the road for the G-8—all the promises they have made are due. They have 12 short months to avoid being remembered as the ones who let the poor and the planet die." (Independent, July 11)

Joanne Green of the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development stressed the need for aid to go directly to African farmers and not to agribusiness companies: "Tonight one billion people will go to bed hungry because the food system that rich countries have created isn't working. Cli-

mate change will only increase the vulnerability of poor people as land and water are degraded. Supporting small-scale farmers is vital, so that they are less reliant on the peaks and troughs of the global food market and the multinational players who dominate." (Independent, July 11)

Robert Fox, the executive director of Oxfam Canada, said in a blog on July 8 that "Performance on aid varies greatly among G-8 members but together they fall \$23 billion short of the target they set in 2005. The result? At least 3 million lives have been lost—women who die needlessly in childbirth; children who fall victim to preventable diseases; persons with AIDS whose lives are cut short because they could not get treatment." (All-Africa.com, July 8)

Capitalist crisis: impact on women

The declining economic and social conditions in Africa and other so-called developing areas will inevitably have a damaging impact on efforts aimed at achieving gender equality. If there is an increase in assistance for agricultural production, it is necessary to ensure that the bulk of resources allocated go directly to women. In many African countries, women are responsible for 80 percent or more of food production.

Sabina Zaccaro writes, "The problem is funding. According to the World Bank, the economic crisis and the new rise in food prices could lead to 2.8 million more children dying by 2015 if no concrete action is taken. Sixty billion dollars are needed over the next five years to fight infectious diseases and strengthen health systems in the developing world." (IPS, July 8)

Consequently, if no direct attention is paid to the plight of women and children in the current global capitalist crisis, more people will be driven into poverty through shrinking incomes, increases in infant mortality, malnutrition and the decline in labor productivity.

Obama's message in Ghana blames the victims

Following the G-8 Summit in Italy, U.S. President Barack Obama flew to the West African state of Ghana for an official visit. Media pundits proclaimed that this was his first trip to Africa since taking office, overlooking his recent speech in Cairo.

These corporate media statements reveal the ongoing racist notion of two Africas, one north of the Sahara and so-called sub-Saharan Africa. The progressive forces on the continent have rejected these colonial divisions and categories.

Despite all its challenges, the African Union held serious discussions at its summit in Libya July 1-3 around creating greater economic, political and military cooperation on the continent.

The symbolic return home of the first U.S. president of African descent was well received by both the governments and the people. Nonetheless, Obama's message represented no real departure from the traditional post-independence approach of U.S. foreign policy towards Africa.

The bulk of Obama's remarks criticized corruption and inefficiency on the part of African states, with implications that these problems were the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment. He made little reference to the legacies of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism as the real source of underdevelopment.

The president visited the slave castle at Cape Coast where he reflected on the tragedy of the four-century-long Atlantic slave trade. In his address before the Ghana parliament, however, he stated that although colonialism created division and conflict on the continent, this could no longer be viewed as a major impediment to African progress.

Obama's remark that "the economic problems in Zimbabwe could not be blamed on the West" received a cool response from parliamentarians. It totally missed the mark in regard to the ongoing unequal relations between former colonial states and the imperialist countries. In Zimbabwe, the revolutionary African National Union, Patriotic Front and the western-backed Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) factions have formed an inclusive government, yet the United States and the United Kingdom continue to maintain economic sanctions.

Ghana was praised for its ostensible progress related to the notions of "good governance." Yet this state, which achieved national independence from Britain in 1957, fell victim to U.S. imperialist intervention after President Kwame Nkrumah sought to place pan-Africanism and socialism as the principal objectives of the nation's domestic and foreign policy. A coup against Nkrumah in 1966 was financed and engineered by U.S. imperialism through the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency.

Since 1966, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have sought to remake Ghana in the image of the West. Consequently, it is not surprising that the Obama administration selected this country for the presidential visit instead of states such as Sudan and Zimbabwe, which take a more independent stand.

By blaming Africa's economic and social problems on its governments and people, Obama's talk provides a rationale for the G8's failure to honor its commitments to provide development assistance to the continent.

An article published in the Malaysian Star noted that, "The decline in agriculture in many African countries was due to

the structural adjustment policies of the IMF and World Bank. These countries were asked or advised to dismantle marketing boards and guaranteed prices for farmers' products; phase out or eliminate subsidies and support such as fertilizer, machines, agricultural infrastructure, and reduce tariffs of food products to very low levels." (July 13)

Consequently, the rhetoric of Obama is not fundamentally different than what has been advanced through successive U.S. administrations. What is needed is an independent domestic and foreign policy based on the needs of African people themselves, and not the policy imperatives of the U.S. and European imperialists.

From the G-8 to the G-20 in Pittsburgh

The next G-20 Summit is set for Pittsburgh, Pa., this September. The G-20 represents an attempt by the imperialists to broaden the discussions around economic issues to involve not only the so-called High Income Countries but to also engage other states such as China, India, Brazil, South Africa, etc., which are former colonial and semi-colonial states that have experienced economic development resulting from the evolving international division of labor and economic power.

That the High Income Countries face grave economic difficulties provides openings for workers and the oppressed in both the developed and developing regions to open a dialogue and plan joint efforts to tackle the main forces behind the crisis in capitalist globalization. Anti-imperialists, social justice advocates and other mass organizations are mobilizing to go to Pittsburgh in order to advance an alternative agenda that places the workers, nationally oppressed and women at the center of any development program.

Efforts must be made to involve broad forces in the demonstrations surrounding the G-20 Summit. Special appeals should be made to the African-American, Latina/o, Asian-American, Native and LGBT communities and other oppressed groups to attend and participate fully in the resistance efforts.

Rank-and-file workers and unemployed people should be encouraged to go to Pittsburgh and put forward an agenda that transcends and refutes the failed "buy American" sloganeering that has led nowhere in regard to preserving workers' jobs and homes in the United States.

It is only when the workers and oppressed in the United States recognize the common interests they have with the plight of the peoples of the developing world that a real international movement can be built that will effectively end capitalism and imperialism and create the conditions for socialism on a worldwide scale. □

Quake victims, activists unite to protest G-8 summit

By **Greg Butterfield**

Residents of L'Aquila in Italy united with labor unions and anti-capitalist activists from around Italy and Europe for a 10,000-strong march through the earthquake-stricken town on July 10, the final day of the Group of 8 summit meeting. Through the march and other actions, they overcame Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's attempts to turn the groups against each other with violence-baiting.

"We are all residents of L'Aquila," chanted demonstrators, many of whom

took buses from Rome, Milan, and the regions of Tuscany, Puglia and Campania. They marched from another quake-affected town, Paganica, to a park in the center of L'Aquila.

An earthquake struck the area on April 6, killing 300 people and leaving 70,000 homeless. Some 23,000 are still living in tent cities, while up to 30,000 more have been shifted to temporary housing in other parts of the country. The disaster, and the lack of action by media mogul Berlusconi's right-wing government, have been compared to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in the U.S.

"The reconstruction hasn't really started yet and for the last three months the government has been getting ready for the G-8, not helping victims of the quake," said union activist Enrico Bernocchi. (Agence France-Presse, July 10)

Throughout the G-8 summit, L'Aquila residents displayed signs and banners reading "Yes we camp." A play on U.S. President Barack Obama's campaign slogan "Yes we can," it aimed to draw global attention to the plight of the region and Berlusconi's hypocrisy in shifting the summit to L'Aquila in order to defuse militant protests against the global capitalist crisis.

The G-8—composed of the seven major imperialist powers plus Russia—held their usual back-slapping photo-ops and promised to take tepid measures against global warming and poverty. President Obama used the platform to insist that no further "economic stimulus" was forthcoming and that people suffering hunger, unemployment and foreclosures should be content to wait.

"When the G-8 talk about a crisis, it's about supporting the same banks who provoked the crisis, and it never does anything to help workers who bear the full

Continued on page 10

Anti-war movement debates Iran, the Middle East and U.S. wars

By John Catalinotto

The conflict in Iran that opened up with the June presidential elections there has had an impact on the progressive and anti-imperialist movement worldwide, including in the United States. Misunderstanding the events has created some confusion in anti-war ranks. This is especially dangerous after Vice President Joe Biden on July 5 gave a virtual green light to an Israeli attack on Iran. The anti-war movement must stay alert to protest any move in that direction.

When very large crowds of people took to the streets in Tehran on June 15 to protest the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, it appeared that this was an authentic popular movement, even if its strongest base was in the more affluent parts of the city.

Young people and women apparently were playing a large role in the protests. Some of the demands were for women's rights and other democratic rights that were constrained by the religious political leadership of Iran's revolution. It was easy for Western secular progressives to identify with the protests.

But some big questions remained.

If the protests were progressive, why did all the imperialist politicians in Europe and the United States and their corporate media take the sides of the opposition? This is especially strange since the key players in the opposition, the candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi and former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, were themselves identified with the regime in the past. At the time, U.S. sources even charged Mousavi with responsibility for overseeing the 1983 blast in Lebanon that killed over 200 U.S. Marines, since he was Iran's premier then.

Rafsanjani, who is one of the richest people in Iran, is associated with increased privatization of industry and banking and with opening friendlier relations with U.S. imperialism. This would necessarily include cutting back on support for the Hamas and Hezbollah liberation movements and perhaps for Syria, and increasing cooperation with the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan. How would privatization and cooperation with the U.S. increase democratic rights inside Iran?

A serious consideration of these questions must include an examination of U.S. imperialism's goals regarding the entire Middle East and Central Asia. The George W. Bush administration used the 9/11 attack as a pretext to justify U.S. military aggression in the entire region—although the real goal was to conquer its world-important energy resources. A look at the news in the second week of July shows that this basic strategy remains in place.

U.S. troops still in Iraq

Some deceptive headlines gave the false impression that U.S. troops essentially withdrew from Iraq on June 30. Yet 134,000 troops remain in the country. They pulled out of 142 posts that were inside Iraqi cities, turning these posts over to Iraqi troops, but remain in 320 other posts around Iraq.

In some cases, rather than moving, the U.S. and Iraqi forces simply redefined the city boundaries, leaving the troops where they were. Such was the case with the U.S. Army's Forward Operating Base Falcon, which used to be located inside Baghdad. Now, with a new boundary drawn, the 3,000 U.S. troops there are "outside" the city limits.

U.S. troops and higher paid mercenaries are expanding and improving their rural bases and even building new ones. Even if the Obama administration sticks to the announced timetable, at least 50,000 U.S. troops will remain in Iraq until at least the end of 2011. A war-spending bill the Democrat-controlled Congress just passed pours another \$100 billion into the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. (Information from the website of Iraq expert Dahr Jamail—dahrjamailiraq.com)

Washington escalates war on Afghanistan and Pakistan

Meanwhile in Afghanistan, U.S. troop levels have already grown to 57,000 and are set to rise to 68,000 during the year. According to McClatchy News Service, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said July 13 "that when he gives his assessment to the Obama administration next month of what is needed to defeat the Taliban, he won't be deterred by administration

statements that he cannot have more U.S. troops."

Britain, too, has escalated its presence in Afghanistan, with the result that 15 British troops died in the two weeks ending July 13. The Afghan occupation is nominally under NATO command. European leaders have ignored popular anti-war sentiment to send troops to the Afghan front, basing their appeal on President Obama's reviving U.S. popularity in Europe after Bush brought its ratings to an all-time low.

Support for the war is waning quickly as the casualties mount, in Britain as well as in the rest of Europe and Canada.

Even the New York Times has had to admit that the increased troop strength and military activity in Afghanistan, with an increase in civilian casualties, is helping recruiting by the Taliban and other resistance forces. (July 3)

Along with Afghanistan is increased U.S. intervention in Pakistan. Both drones and planes are sent to bomb and rocket alleged "insurgent" targets, while the Pentagon pushes the Pakistani regime to send its army into border areas. Both activities have increased civilian deaths and created millions of refugees inside Pakistan. They have also increased recruiting by opposition forces, some allied with the Afghan resistance.

U.S. policies in Palestine

Washington's policy toward Palestine has been to continue support for the Israeli state, despite Israel's refusal to even stop new settlements in the occupied West Bank and its brutal blockade of the Gaza territory. It is based on U.S. strategic interests in the region, which involve relying on the Israeli state as a weapon against any liberation movement or sovereign government in the region.

The U.S.-based media attacked the Iranian elections as fraudulent. But remember that in Palestine, Washington and Israel refused to recognize what they knew were honest elections that made Hamas the leading party in 2006. Since then the U.S.-Israeli alliance has used force and withheld aid to try to drive Hamas from office.

Washington hasn't altered its basic policy of occupation and control since

the replacement of the neo-con regime fronted by Bush. So it's consistent with their past misdeeds that the corporate media and all imperialist politicians—at least in North America and Europe—have targeted the Iranian government over the elections and have praised the opposition demonstrations.

Whatever the motive of the protesters themselves in Tehran, the imperialists' motive is to eliminate Iranian sovereignty and reverse the 1979 revolution.

N.E.D.-funded group calls anti-Iran protest

A group in the U.S. calling itself United 4 Iran has called for protests on July 25 targeting the Iranian government. It says this is in sympathy with the youth and women involved in opposition demonstrations there. The anti-imperialist Stop War on Iran group, in response, issued a statement exposing the connections of United 4 Iran with funding groups closely associated with U.S. foreign policy—like the National Endowment for Democracy—and argues against any support for these protests.

"U.S. Vice President Joe Biden's new public threat against Iran underlines the dangers of a new war in the Middle East and the desperate need for political clarity within the anti-war movement concerning Iran," the SWOI statement begins.

"With his July 5 comments on ABC's This Week, Biden opened the door to a military attack when he said that the U.S. would not stand in the way of an Israeli strike against Iranian nuclear facilities, calling such an attack Israel's 'sovereign right.'"

SWOI notes that some anti-war organizations have endorsed the United 4 Iran action, including United for Peace and Justice, and "urges them and other honest anti-war forces to reconsider their endorsement of the anti-Iran actions."

SWOI urges everyone instead to "come out AGAINST current U.S. wars and the threats of a new war on the following week in a National Day of Coordinated Actions on Saturday, Aug. 1." To read the full statement and/or to participate, see stopwaroniran.org.

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

70,000 construction workers strike in So. Africa

By G. Dunkel

South Africa is in a frenzy of construction in order to host the 2010 World Cup soccer competition. Complaining of low wages, the 70,000 construction workers hired for the project walked off the job July 8.

The union representing them, the National Union of Mineworkers, says they want a wage increase of 13.5 percent and more benefits, like parental leave. According to the NUM, all the involved worksites in the country have been hit by the strike and 90 percent of the workers are respecting the call to stay away.

Bush Radio web site reports that Danny Jordaan, spokesperson for the local organizing committee for the World Cup, says, "The workers have the right to strike if they feel they have legitimate grievances." He of course hopes "the strike can be resolved soon so that the stadiums can be finished on schedule."

South Africa is upgrading five stadiums and building five new ones. A new airport

for Durban, the country's major port on the Indian Ocean, as well as power stations and a rapid rail line from the international airport to Johannesburg and Pretoria, the capital, are also being constructed.

The average salary of construction workers is 2,500 rand a month—about \$300. The anger over management's counteroffer is so high that 2,000 construction workers not in the union also walked out in Cape Town. They disrupted traffic, doing the protest dance toyi-toyi through the streets, chanting and singing. It was reported that the cops used stun grenades to disperse them. (News 24 web site)

The World Cup of soccer, known as football everywhere but in North America, is the biggest sporting event on the globe. Some 2 billion to 3 billion people watch it on television and hundreds of thousands of fans through the stadiums. Next year the World Cup will be held for the first time on the continent of Africa.

Dispatches from both Reuters and AP say an agreement has been reached on the wage issue which could be brought to



Striking construction workers march in Cape Town.

the union members for a vote by July 13.

Testifying to the significance of the strike, the South African Minister of Labor, Membathisi Mdladlana, served as mediator for the talks. Besides representatives from NUM/Building Trades, the employers' council and the local organizing committee for the World Cup, General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi of the Congress of South African Trade Unions attended, along with the chair of the parliamentary committee on labor, Lumka Yengen.

When the strike started on July 8, the employers predicted it would last a day or two at most. They pointed to the unemployment rate, which Statistics South Africa puts at 23.5 percent, and the financial weakness of the union and its members, who have no strike fund and no savings.

They failed to take into account the whip of inflation, which is running at 8 percent, and the workers' perception that their employers were under a tight deadline.

It was the employers who buckled first.

□



The butcher of Vietnam

The death of Robert S. McNamara on July 6 at age 93 gives new meaning to the old adage that “only the good die young.” McNamara was secretary of defense under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson and was the principal architect of the U.S. war against Vietnam.

As early as 1964 the war was aptly referred to as “McNamara’s war,” which didn’t bother McNamara one bit. “I am pleased to be identified with it, and do whatever I can to win it,” he said at the time. (New York Times, July 6)

He started his ignoble career as a statistical and systems analyst who became a “Whiz Kid” at Ford Motor Co. and its eventual president. McNamara was convinced that his analysis of the war proved the U.S. would conquer Vietnam within a few years.

As the war escalated and he realized the failure of his prediction, McNamara began to have “deep misgivings” about the war. Although he realized the futility of the U.S. war in Vietnam as early as 1967, he kept those thoughts to himself.

McNamara’s seven-year tenure as secretary of defense also included the disastrous “Bay of Pigs” invasion of Cuba and the missile crisis that nearly led to a nuclear showdown with the Soviet Union. It included the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965.

Under McNamara’s tenure, the war budget and influence of the Pentagon increased exponentially and increased its domination over the civilian life of the United States, which continues to this day.

McNamara left the Pentagon to work for 13 years as head of the World Bank. There he ensured the domination of U.S. capital in underdeveloped and poor countries around the world, helping to condemn millions more to lives of poverty and misery.

Despite McNamara’s private “misgivings” about the war in Vietnam, the number of U.S. soldiers dead, missing and wounded went from 7,466 to more than 100,000 during his watch.

(Associated Press, July 6) Over 58,000 GIs ended up dead, with hundreds of thousands more wounded physically and psychologically.

But by far the greatest damage was to the Vietnamese nation. Over 3 million Vietnamese—2 million of them civilians—were killed during the war. The land was razed by carpet bombing. Napalm and Agent Orange used by the U.S. destroyed the country’s arable land and killed and maimed millions more people. The deadly effects are manifest even today, generations later.

McNamara’s book “In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam” was published in 1995. “We of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations acted according to what we thought were the principles and traditions of our country. But we were wrong. We were terribly wrong,” said McNamara in an interview prior to the book’s release.

The 2003 documentary “The Fog of War” also featured McNamara ruminating on his moral misgivings about Vietnam. Some even call McNamara a “liberal” for being so contrite in his later years, but this is a misguided attribute. He was sorry because he lost. He was sorry because his statistical analysis left out what history proved: the will of the Vietnamese people to defeat U.S. imperialism.

McNamara spent his later years being “sorry” while walking free. Did he voluntarily surrender himself to the Vietnamese people for prosecution of his many war crimes and crimes against humanity? Did he denounce the role of the Pentagon in subjugating oppressed peoples around the globe? Did he lead any anti-war demonstrations?

What the world’s people need are not apologies from those who have exploited and tormented them. They need solidarity from their class sisters and brothers in the imperialist countries to help overthrow this vicious system so that the criminal inequality caused by imperialism can be rectified. □

U.S. spreads poverty in Central Asia

By Heather Cottin

Kyrgyzstan’s June 22 decision to keep the U.S./NATO military base open at Manas will enhance the U.S. government’s ability to wage its brutal war on Afghanistan. Seventeen miles from Kyrgyzstan’s capital Bishkek, the Manas base houses over a thousand U.S. military personnel and hosts transport aircraft and mid-air fuelling vehicles.

U.S. forces have had access to the Manas air base outside Bishkek since 2001. The base has been a transit point for 15,000 troops and 500 tons of cargo per month en route to the war in Afghanistan. After Washington increased greatly the amount given to the Kyrgyzstan government for use of the base, the regime decided to renew the lease. (Workers World, July 16)

A continuing conflict between Washington and Bishkek has been over legal immunity, which U.S. soldiers had in Kyrgyzstan. In at least one case a soldier from the Manas base was involved in the death of a local resident, and Kyrgyz authorities could not prosecute him, spurring a scandal in the country. (Russia Today, June 23)

Kyrgyzstan (formerly Kirghizia) is a rugged country; the Tien Shan mountain range covers approximately 95 percent of the whole territory. Kyrgyzstan borders Kazakhstan on the north and northwest, Uzbekistan in the southwest, Tajikistan on the south, and China in the southeast.

Kyrgyzstan’s natural resources lure speculators. The capitalist government is always open for business. When it was part of the Soviet Union, there was socialist planning. Now the capitalist “free market” has lowered the living standards of the workers and farmers. It’s so-called Tulip Revolution was aimed at accelerating the process of privatization.

Kyrgyzstan’s strategic location is key to U.S. military planning. Russia and China perceive that the U.S. government interference in Eastern Europe and Central Asia is encircling them militarily. The United States ruling class is working toward the privatization and takeover of the vast natural resources of Eurasia. A meeting of regional countries in Yekaterinburg, Russia, in June mounted an unsuccessful attempt to counter the presence of the U.S. and its NATO stooges in Central Asia and the Caspian region.

Kyrgyzstan has not only been vital to the U.S. war against Afghanistan. It sits on the border of China’s oil-rich Xinjiang desert province where the Open Society Institute, National Endowment for Democracy and other U.S. agencies have courted bourgeois elements in its Moslem Uighur minority. The Chinese government has accused the Washington-based World Uighur Congress,

funded by billionaire George Soros, of leading riots in Xinjiang’s capital, Urumqi. (New York Times, July 7)

These same groups have encouraged the anti-communist Tibetan followers of the Dalai Lama in an attempt to foment unrest against the Peoples Republic of China.

Economic crisis in Central Asia

Like most of the former socialist countries of Eurasia, Kyrgyzstan is a nation with high unemployment, where factories are closed after decisions made on Wall Street. Kyrgyzstan’s inflation rate in 2008 was 24 percent. In 2004, the unemployment rate was 18 percent. (www.infoplease.com) It’s much higher now. In some regions, since then, unemployment has doubled.

The economic situation has only deteriorated since the world recession began. Until now, economic troubles had been more or less confined to the private sector, but today the Kyrgyz government is cutting jobs and wages at state companies in the public sector.

For youth the situation is intolerable. The youth unemployment rate before the recent recession was 26 percent, while their share in the total population was lower than 20 percent. Now their situation is even worse.

According to the International Labor Organization, after Kyrgyzstan privatized industry “the number of poor increased to more than 60 percent of the population” of over 5 million.

This poverty has forced the migration of hundreds of thousands of Kyrgyz workers. About 70 percent of Kyrgyzstan’s poor reside in rural areas. Since the end of socialist planning, the “decline in employment has been compounded by the reduction or withdrawal of a range of subsidized goods and social services previously available to the workforce, including ongoing education, skills training, supplementary nutrition, health care, and sports and cultural facilities.” (www.ilo.org)

This migration has produced a dependence on remittances, where workers have to leave to earn enough money to support their impoverished families back home. As the world economic crisis accelerates, migrants face diminished opportunities to work and hence send fewer remittances home. They also face declining wages in the countries to which they migrate. For the workers and peasants of Kyrgyzstan, the outlook is bleak.

The U.S. government’s multi-million-dollar bribe for use of the Manas airbase is unlikely to change the deteriorating conditions for Kyrgyzstan’s poor. Corruption is rife, and unrest among the population will not be bought off, since the government is unlikely to distribute this newfound U.S. money to the suffering workers and farmers. □

Quake victims, activists unite to protest G-8 summit

Continued from page 8

brunt,” said protester Paolo Leonardi.

Actions across Italy

Protests were held in towns and cities throughout Italy in the days leading up to the G-8 meeting.

On July 4, riot police fired tear gas and clubbed marchers to prevent thousands from approaching the U.S. military base in Vicenza, a city in northeastern Italy. The Italian government has agreed to a Pentagon plan to double the size of the base, despite local opposition. Residents of Vicenza rejected the base expansion in a referendum. (Reuters, July 4)

On July 7-8, Greenpeace activists scaled coal-burning energy plants across Italy, unveiling banners demanding that the G-8 stop blowing

hot air and take action to stop global warming.

In Rome on July 7, nearly 30 protesters were arrested as students clashed with police. The demonstrators set up symbolic roadblocks on the main highway from Rome to L’Aquila.

Also July 7, residents of the port city of Abruzzo demonstrated against Berlusconi’s racist anti-immigrant measures and the harsh prison facilities for detained immigrants.

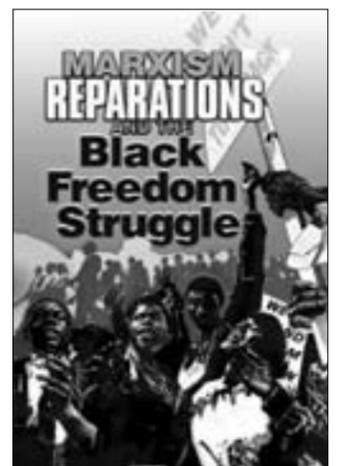
Actions were also held in Turin, Sardinia, Naples and Sulmona. (Indymedia Italy)

The next global protest mobilization will take place late September in Pittsburgh, during the G-20 Summit on the economic crisis. For more information, visit www.bailoutpeople.org. □

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'The coup dies or constitutions die'

Reflections by Comrade Fidel Castro, reprinted from Granma, July 10.

The countries of Latin America were struggling against history's worst financial crisis within relative institutional order.

When U.S. President Barack Obama—while on a trip to Moscow to discuss vital topics on the subject of nuclear weapons—was declaring that the only constitutional president of Honduras was Manuel Zelaya, the ultra right-wing and the hawks in Washington were making maneuvers for Zelaya to negotiate a humiliating pardon for the illegalities attributed to him by the perpetrators of the coup.

It was obvious that before his people and the world such an act would be tantamount to his disappearance from the political stage.

It is a proven fact that when Zelaya announced he would be returning on July 5th, he had decided to fulfill his promise to share the brutal repression of the coup with his people.

Traveling with the president was Miguel d'Escoto, the president pro tempore of the U.N. General Assembly, along with Patricia Rodas, the Honduran foreign minister, a Telesur journalist and others, a total of nine persons. Zelaya maintained his decision to land. I know for a fact that in mid-flight, when they were nearing Tegucigalpa, he was informed from the ground about Telesur broadcasting the moment

when the enormous mass of people awaiting him outside of the airport was being attacked by soldiers with tear gas and automatic rifle fire.

His immediate reaction was to request that they [gain] altitude in order to denounce the events on Telesur and to demand of the commanding officers of those troops that they cease the repression. Then he informed them that he would carry on with the landing. The high command then ordered the landing strip to be blocked. In a matter of seconds, motorized transport vehicles were obstructing the runway.

The Falcon jet made three passes, at a low altitude, over the airport. Specialists explain that the tensest and most dangerous moment for pilots is when fast, small planes—like the one carrying the president—reduce speed for touchdown. That's why I think that attempt to return to Honduras was audacious and brave.

If they wanted to put him on trial for alleged constitutional crimes, why not allow him to land?

Zelaya knows that it was not only the Constitution of Honduras that was at stake, but also the right of the peoples of Latin America to elect the people who govern them.

Today Honduras is not just a country occupied by a coup, but it is also a country occupied by the armed forces of the United States.

The military base at Soto Cano, also known by its name of Palmerola—lo-

cated less than 100 kilometers from Tegucigalpa and reactivated in 1981 under the Ronald Reagan administration—was used by Col. Oliver North when he was running the dirty war against Nicaragua, and from there the U.S. government directed the attacks against the Salvadoran and Guatemalan revolutionaries that cost tens of thousands of lives.

That is the location of U.S. Joint Task Force Bravo—made up of personnel from the three forces—which occupies 85 percent of the area of the base. Eva Golinger reveals its role in an article published on Rebelión web site on July 2, 2009, entitled, "The U.S. military base in Honduras at the center of the coup." She explains that "the Constitution of Honduras does not legally allow for foreign military presence in the country. A 'handshake-like' agreement between Washington and Honduras authorizes the important and strategic presence of hundreds of U.S. soldiers on the base, under a 'semi-permanent' deal. The agreement was reached in 1954 as part of the military aid the United States was offering Honduras ... the third poorest country in the hemisphere." She adds that "... the agreement that allows the military presence of the United States in the Central American country can be removed with no notice given."

Soto Cano is also home of the Aviation Academy of Honduras. The components of the U.S. military task force are partly made up of Honduran soldiers.

What is the objective of the military base, the planes, the helicopters and the U.S. task force in Honduras? Without any doubt they are only adequate for use in Central America. The war on drug trafficking does not require those weapons.

If President Zelaya is not returned to his position, a wave of coups threatens to sweep away many Latin American governments, or these will be at the mercy of the ultra right-wing military, educated in the security doctrine of the School of the Americas, an expert in torture, psychological warfare and terror. The authority of many civilian governments in Central and South America will become weakened. Those dark days are not very far back in time. The military perpetrators of the coup would not even pay any attention to the civilian administration of the United States. It can be very negative for a president who wants to improve that country's image, like Barack Obama does. The Pentagon formally obeys the civilian power. The legions have not yet taken over control of the empire as they did in Rome.

It would not be understandable for Zelaya to now admit to stalling maneuvers that would wear out the considerable social forces that support him and only lead to an irreparable attrition.

The illegally overthrown president does not seek power, but he defends a principle, and as Martí said: "One just principle from the depths of a cave can be mightier than an army." □

GM's 'quick rinse' bankruptcy

Dirty deal for workers and retirees

Continued from page 5

glass and a host of related industries. A number of major auto parts companies have filed or are expected to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Whole communities are affected by plant closings.

For 40 days and 40 nights workers and their families watched their futures drown. This was not a "quick rinse" but a flood of economic destruction.

Bosses happy

Not everyone is hurting, however. If one catches GM CEO Fritz Henderson or the new chairman, Edward Whitacre Jr., cracking a smile, it's for good reason. The new company has erased \$40 billion in private debt, and now only owes the government \$11 billion. Now that wages, benefits and the workforce itself have been reduced, Henderson gleefully announced, "We have the important parts of the business necessary to make the company great again." (Detroit Free Press, July 14)

The so-called industry analysts are feigning astonishment at the speed with which GM completed the sale of its assets to the new company. Even the Chrysler bankruptcy took two days longer.

In the past, the process of using Chapter 11 bankruptcy to break union contracts and force huge concessions—as in steel, airlines and auto parts—lasted several years. It was the intervention by the capitalist state, beginning with the Bush administration, which sped up the process here. By threatening to deny bailout funding and forcing GM—and also Chrysler—into liquidation, the government illegally interfered with collective bargaining and scared the workers into granting givebacks that the bosses were all too happy to accept.

The U.S. government at present holds a 60-percent stake in the new GM. The UAW VEBA, the governments of Canada and Ontario, and GM bondholders hold the other 40 percent.

Government aids big capital

The White House Auto Task Force—which orchestrated this massive transfer of wealth out of the hands of the workers and retirees who created it—was drawn entirely from the ranks of finance capital and their think tanks. Now that he's done his dirty work, Task Force Chair Stephen Rattner plans to quit and go back to Wall Street. When GM Co. is returned to private hands—which Rattner claimed will occur without much delay—stockholders

will be able to extract bigger profits from a smaller and lower-paid workforce.

Between GM and Chrysler, more than 30,000 union jobs in the plants are disappearing. Even given the unprecedented role of the state, this devastating attack on the working class seems incomprehensible. The other factor was the acquiescence of the top leadership of the UAW.

When UAW President Ron Gettelfinger spoke out over GM's plans to import a new small car to be produced in China, GM then agreed to instead keep a Michigan plant open and build the subcompact there. That's one fewer plant closing, which is good, but why didn't he demand that no plants be closed? Why

the silence over the dealer closings affecting tens of thousands of unionized mechanics, such as those around New York City who belong to UAW Local 259? What about the IUE-CWA retirees who are getting a raw deal?

What happened to the old union principle, that an injury to one is an injury to all?

Rank-and-file workers need to organize themselves at the grassroots level. Some way we must map out a strategy to fight to overturn these rotten contracts and demand our right to our jobs.

Martha Grevatt has worked at the Chrysler stamping plant in Twinsburg, Ohio, for 22 years and is an active member of UAW Local 122.

Indian court overturns anti-gay British-era law

By Leilani Dowell

A court in India's capital has made a historic decision in overturning a law that banned sex between people of the same gender. The law, section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, was imposed on the Indian people by the British when they colonized the country. It declared "carnal intercourse" to be "against the order of nature," with penalties of up to 10 years in prison. While few were criminally prosecuted under the law, many lesbian, gay, bi and trans people were persecuted and harassed because of it.

Writing in Workers World newspaper's "Lavender and Red" series, Leslie Feinberg described how, through the co-

lonialist conquest of countries around the world, the British empire criminalized homosexuality.

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

cia, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia. In the Middle East, British colonialism made 'The Indian Penal Code' the law of the land in Aden, Bahrain, Kuwait, Muscat and Oman, Qatar, Somaliland, the Sudan and what is today the United Arab Emirates." (Feb. 1, 2008)

Activists fighting for the overturn of section 377 argued that not only was the law a violation of fundamental rights, but it also discouraged safe sex in a country with 2.5 million cases of HIV. The ruling by the Delhi High Court applies only in the capital state of New Delhi; however, Indian activists are hopeful that it will serve as a stepping stone for the reversal of the bigoted British law throughout the country. □

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EN SOLIDARIDAD CON GAZA

Caravana de ayuda desafía bloqueo israelí

Por John Parker
Cairo, Egipto

6 de julio—La primera delegación de Viva Palestina USA salió el 4 de julio con el parlamentario británico George Gallo-way al Cairo desde donde 200 personas y una caravana de camiones transportarán millones de dólares en suministros médicos a la frontera de Gaza. La delegación exigirá la entrada a ese territorio, cuya población ha sido privada de las necesidades básicas debido al bloqueo israelí.

Los/as delegados pasaron el día anterior empacando los materiales y tuvieron que desempaquetarlos en el aeropuerto y llevarlos al avión.

Al vestir camisetas de color azul con la bandera palestina, los/as delegados son fácilmente identificados/as, tanto en el aeropuerto JFK en Nueva York de donde salieron y aquí en Egipto, donde la recepción ha sido buena.

Según un artículo en un periódico comercial repartido en nuestro vuelo de EgyptAir titulado "Israel considera aliviar embargo de Gaza", dice el reportaje que el Ministerio de Defensa de Israel ha recomendado un levantamiento parcial del embargo sobre Gaza como un gesto

de buena voluntad hacia los palestinos con el fin de fomentar las conversaciones para liberar a un soldado israelí en poder del gobierno de Hamas en Gaza.

Sin embargo, Hamas no lo va a liberar sin obtener a cambio la libertad de los muchos prisioneros políticos que languidecen en cárceles israelíes, que ha aumentado en más de 20 desde el secuestro por parte de Israel de Cynthia McKinney y de los/as otros delegados internacionales y la tripulación del barco Espíritu de la Humanidad en el mar fuera de la jurisdicción de Israel el pasado 30 de junio.

El artículo declaró que Israel aumentaría el suministro de café, té, sopas, carne, pescado y productos enlatados y restablecería el envío de combustible, ropa, utensilios de cocina, y gallinas ponedoras a Gaza antes de Ramadán, que comienza en agosto.

Esto debe quedar asociado a los avances que se están realizando para liberar al soldado israelí.

Aunque se crea que esta negociación por parte de Israel es genuina, los productos mencionados no incluyen algunos de los más esenciales como lo son el acero y el hormigón necesarios para la reconstrucción de las 47.000 viviendas da-

ñadas en la reciente guerra por parte de Israel, según un reportero de Al Jazeera que estaba en Gaza el 27 de junio, o para la reconstrucción de la mitad de los hospitales destruidos.

El Comité Internacional de la Cruz Roja informó el 29 de junio que las personas que viven en Gaza están "atrapadas en la desesperación." El informe señala que el pueblo de Gaza, cuyos hogares fueron destruidos durante los 23 días de la guerra relámpago israelí, sigue sin refugio a pesar de las promesas de casi \$4,5 mil millones en ayuda. Esto se debe a que Israel rehúsa permitir que el cemento y otros materiales de construcción entren a la Franja de Gaza.

Pero el genocidio por parte de Israel no se limita a negar la construcción de edificios. El informe expone que Israel imposibilita que los/as pacientes reciban asistencia médica al impedir que los suministros médicos entren a Gaza.

Todos/as en Egipto, el cual limita con Gaza y mantiene el bloqueo israelí en la frontera—desde la gente en las calles a los taxistas y toda persona que sigue los acontecimientos en Gaza—está expuesto/a al hecho de que la población de Gaza se encuentra en una intensa

necesidad de atención médica.

Se ha informado y verificado por personal médico que por lo menos 75 toneladas de uranio empobrecido se lanzaron en esta pequeña franja de tierra que contiene 1,5 millones de personas. Los efectos de la contaminación por la radiación debido al uso de estas armas fabricadas en Estados Unidos son cada vez más evidentes en la población de Gaza.

Pero los crímenes de Israel no cesaron el pasado mes de enero. Tres días antes de que nuestra delegación aterrizara en El Cairo, fue asesinado Hyam Ayash de 17 años en Mughraqa en Gaza, el 2 de julio por un proyectil disparado desde un tanque israelí.

Es evidente que toda ayuda, no importa cuán pequeña, se necesita urgentemente en Gaza, ya venga por el Espíritu de la Humanidad o por Viva Palestina. Sin embargo, lo que más se necesita, es exponer la naturaleza genocida del bloqueo israelí y ejercer presión internacional para exigir que cese de inmediato. Este es el objetivo de muchas de estas misiones a Gaza.

El escritor es miembro de la delegación Viva Palestina USA

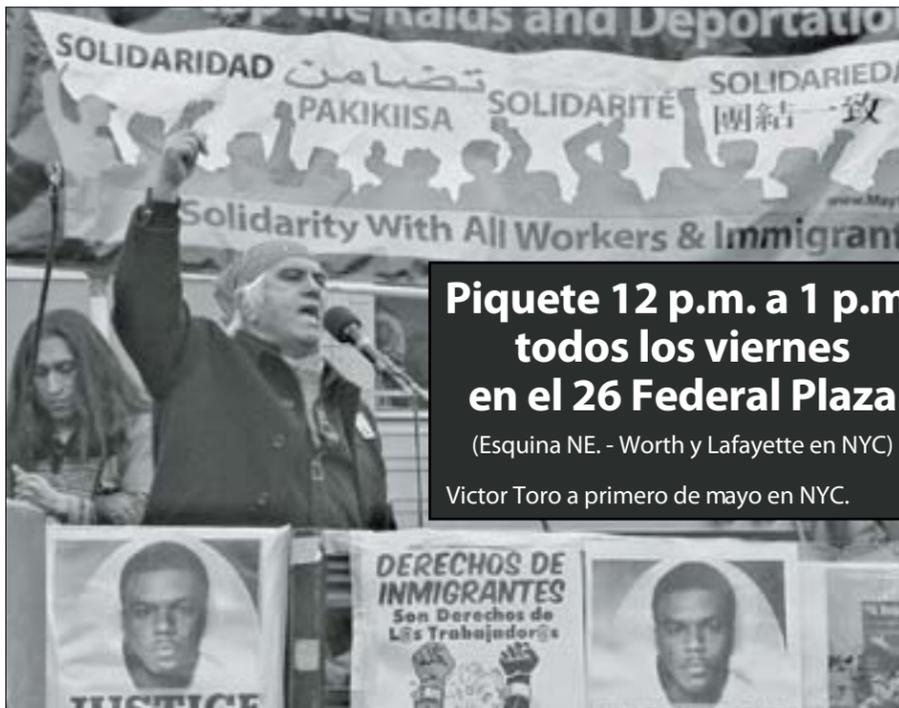
Comité de Defensa de Victor Toro

ASILO POLÍTICO PARA VICTOR TORO

¡Amnistía ahora! para millones de inmigrantes indocumentados/as

El 6 de julio de 2007, Victor Toro fue arrestado por la patrulla fronteriza de EEUU, una agencia del departamento de Seguridad de la Patria, mientras estaba a bordo de un tren de Amtrak en Rochester, Nueva York. Lo transfirieron más adelante a la cárcel de Auburn, Nueva York en el condado de Cayuga. La fianza fue fijada en 5.000 dólares el mismo día de la detención. La fianza fue pagada el lunes 9 de julio de 2007 y dejaron libre a Victor el mismo día.

Victor es un ciudadano y nacional de Chile que fue encarcelado y torturado debido a su oposición al gobierno ilegítimo de Pinochet (1973-1990), le fue dado un pasaporte para la salida solamente en 1976 y declarado muerto el año próximo por el dictador Pinochet. Él entró a EEUU sin documentos adecuados en 1984 y ha permanecido en EEUU desde entonces. La persecución de Victor está bien documentada y su trabajo político ha sido tema de libros, incluyendo el libro de Alistair Horne "Pequeño Terremoto en Chile". Además, Victor fue añadido a la lista junto al líder del MIR, Miguel Enriquez y el líder del P.S. Carlos Altamirano entre otros, como una de las trece personas más buscadas por la dictadura apoyada por EEUU de Augusto Pinochet en 1973. Su esposa, Nieves Ayress, es ciudadana estadounidense y su hija, Rosita Toro, es residente



**Piquete 12 p.m. a 1 p.m.
todos los viernes
en el 26 Federal Plaza**

(Esquina NE. - Worth y Lafayette en NYC)

Victor Toro a primero de mayo en NYC.

permanente legal de EEUU.

Un aviso para aparecer (NTA) fechado el 6 de julio de 2007 ha sido publicado ya por el Departamento de Seguridad de la Patria acusando a Victor de violación de residir y entrar en los EEUU sin documentos adecuados. Una fecha para aparecer en la corte fue fijada para el 12 de septiembre de 2007 en Búfalo, NY. El

comité de defensa de Victor Toro (VTDC) lanzó una campaña de cartas para cambiar el lugar y el equipo legal presentó una demanda para cambiar el lugar de Búfalo, Nueva York, al Bronx, Nueva York, donde vive Victor. La corte de Búfalo concedió un cambio de lugar el 10 de septiembre. La próxima y última audiencia de Victor para aparecer ante la juez de migración

Sarah M. Burr será el 26 de agosto del 2009 a las 9:00 a.m. en el 26 Federal Plaza, New York, NY 10278.

El equipo de defensa de Victor ha solicitado asilo político en la audiencia del 18 de enero del 2008, bajo sección 208 del acta, retención de retiro bajo sección 241(b)(3) del acta, relevación bajo Art. III de la Convención Contra la Tortura, así como la cancelación del retiro bajo sección 240A del Acta.

Desde su llegada a EEUU, Victor y Nieves fundaron la organización sin fines de lucro La Peña del Bronx que proporciona ayuda muy necesaria a la comunidad del sur de Bronx.

El Comité de Defensa de Victor Toro exige del Departamento de Seguridad de la Patria que concedan asilo político a Victor.

Para más información, involucrarse con el Comité de Defensa de Victor Toro, enviar donaciones o aprender más sobre sus derechos: Carlos Moreno, Esq. y Abigail Cushing, Esq. NY May 1 Coalition

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