

# WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

GCM

July 30, 2009 Vol. 51, No. 30 50¢

## Gov't says 'Things are getting better' as Record job losses follow mortgage debacle

By Jerry Goldberg

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics published a report on July 2 confirming the growing economic disaster facing the working class. In June 14.7 million people were unemployed and the unemployment rate was 9.5 percent. Since the start of the recession in December 2007, the number of unemployed workers has increased by 7.2 million and the unemployment rate has risen by 4.6 percentage points. (bls.gov)

African Americans have a 14.7 percent unemployment rate, with 12.2 percent for Latina/os. The unemployment rate for teenagers is 24 percent. The number of long-term unemployed, those jobless for 27 weeks or more, increased by 433,000 to 4.4 million people, or three in 10 unemployed workers.

The number of people working part-time for "economic reasons," meaning involuntary part-time workers, was 9 million, up 4.4 million since the start of the recession. Another 2.2 million unemployed workers were not counted in the official statistics because they had not searched for work in the previous four weeks, including 793,000 "discouraged" workers. The average workweek for production and nonsupervisory workers fell to 33 hours, the lowest level on record for the Bureau, which began keeping records in 1964.

In Michigan, the jobless rate has surpassed 15 percent, the first time in 25 years that any state has had an unemployment rate so high. Fourteen other states and the District of Columbia have official unemployment rates surpassing 10 percent: Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Tennessee.

The Federal Reserve projects that the national unemployment rate may surpass 10 percent by year's end and warned that the economy may not return to full health for at least five years. (Washington Post, July 16)

Despite these devastating statistics and projections, President Barack Obama's top economic adviser, Lawrence Summers, seems to see a rosy picture. In a

speech on July 17, Summers pronounced that the federal economic stimulus plan was working and had averted an economic collapse. (New York Times, July 18)

### Roots of the economic crisis

The current recession with its growing unemployment is rooted in the lowering of wages and elimination of decent-paying union jobs. In "Low-Wage Capitalism," author Fred Goldstein cited studies which confirm this trend. The State of Working America 2006/2007 study reflected that from 1973 until 2005 there was a drop of close to \$40 or 7 percent in the weekly earnings of 80 percent of the working class. A Bureau of Labor Statistics chart noted a drop of \$55 a week in earnings from 1973 to 2004, calculated in 1982 dollars. (page 106)

When wages decline, workers become increasingly unable to buy back the goods and services they produce, leading to capitalist overproduction, recession and unemployment.

What staved off the current crisis for a number of years were the trillions of dollars that were poured into the capitalist economy through credit schemes. First the banks extended easy credit through credit cards for a number of years. When the cards maxed out, the capitalists turned people's homes into sources of credit and cash by illegally and artificially pushing up home values and luring people to put their homes up for collateral in home refinancing schemes. The banks made tremendous profits by charging huge fees as well as high interest rates in the subprime

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WW PHOTO: JOHN PARKER

**THEY MADE IT!**  
Viva Palestina delivers aid to Gaza

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By John Parker

The largest U.S. humanitarian aid convoy to Palestine in history went over the Rafah border crossing into Gaza in the late evening of July 15. The 218-person contingent of activists brought more than \$1 million in 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. Israeli bombs

and rockets destroyed more than 47,000 homes, and many thousands of Gaza Palestinians now live in tents.

That the Viva Palestina caravan came from the U.S. is especially important, as Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. government aid in the world. Israel uses U.S. weapons and missiles against the Palestinian people on a daily basis.

Overcoming obstacles imposed by the U.S., Egyptian and Israeli regimes to lead the Viva Palestina group across the border were New York City Councilperson and

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**MORE ON VIVA PALESTINA** • Participants comment • War crimes in Gaza • Petition 6,7

# Struggle continues in Benton Harbor, Mich. Rev. Pinkney wins sentencing reversal

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

Benton Harbor community leader Rev. Edward Pinkney has won an appeal of his revocation of probation sentence which was handed down in June 2008. Pinkney, the leader of the Black Autonomy Network of Community Organizers (BANCO), was ordered to prison for three to 10 years after a Berrien County judge ruled that he had threatened the life of another jurist by quoting scriptures in an article published in December 2007.

The Michigan Court of Appeals handed down the ruling on July 14. However, the court rendered a mixed decision when it upheld Rev. Pinkney's original conviction by an all-white jury in May 2007. He was charged and convicted of vote fraud and sentenced to one year in jail and five years' probation.

Rev. Pinkney was placed on a tether in May 2007 and confined to his home for one year. After the publication of an article in the People's Tribune newspaper based in Chicago, he was taken from his home and placed in the Berrien County Jail in St. Joseph, Mich. At a later hearing he was sentenced to three to 10 years in prison. Over the course of six months Pinkney was transferred to eight different correctional facilities throughout the state.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan took up his appeal of the revocation of probation sentence on the grounds that this sentence violated his right to free speech. Michael Steinberg, legal director of the ACLU, represented Rev. Pinkney in the June 9 Court of Appeals hearing held in Grand Rapids.

A July 15 statement issued by the ACLU said in part: "In its ruling today, the Court of Appeals said that the trial court's probation condition that prohibited 'defamatory and demeaning' communications is unconstitutional.

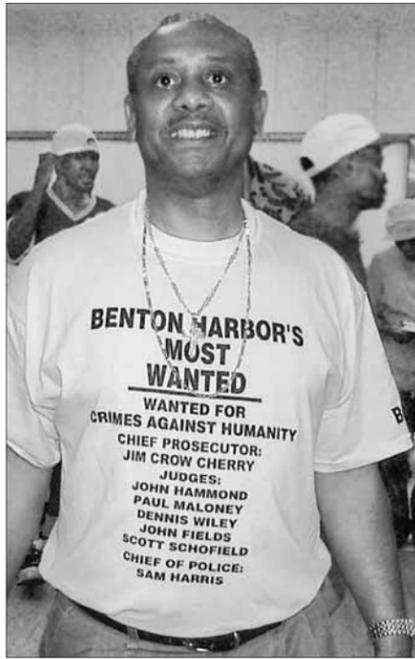
"To the extent that the prohibition of defamatory and demeaning behavior impinges on defendant's first amendment rights," wrote the judges, "the prohibition was not proper, as it was not directly related to defendant's rehabilitation or to the protection of the public."

"The ACLU of Michigan represented Rev. Edward Pinkney's first amendment claims; however, the organization was not involved in the underlying voter fraud conviction, which was upheld today. Due to this conviction, Rev. Pinkney's probation will be reinstated."

## Fighting racism, exploitation

Rev. Pinkney was allowed by the Berrien County courts on July 19 to attend religious services for the first time in two years. He still remains on probation for the initial conviction of vote fraud and continues to be monitored by a tether.

A statement issued by BANCO regarding the Appeals Court's upholding of the underlying conviction makes clear: "As for the voter charges, the Appeals court denied Pinkney a new trial. The decision states that Berrien



County committed 13 errors which were 'harmless.' Rev. Pinkney says that all of the errors were, in fact, harmful." (bhbanco.blogspot.com, July 15)

A letter by K.T. Schmidt, published by BANCO on July 17, expresses outrage over the theft of lake-front property in Benton Harbor in order to build a golf course for the elites. Neighboring St. Joseph, the seat of Berrien County where the courts are located, is a predominantly white city that is a center of commerce and tourism. Benton

Harbor is majority African American and is afflicted by high unemployment, home foreclosures and poverty.

Schmidt calls for a boycott of St. Joseph in response to the usurpation of public land located in Jean Klock Park, which is the center of the so-called Harbor Shores development project that will construct the golf course as well as expensive housing. The Whirlpool Corporation, which is connected with the Upton family, is criticized in the letter for its support of the ongoing exploitation and impoverishment of the majority African-American population in Benton Harbor.

"The promises made by the original Upton family, the founders of Whirlpool, have become a distant echo. Their fraternity heir, [Congressperson] Fred Upton, continues to parade his false face while voting against the stimulus package, against the environmental bill, against policies that would benefit the poor. He disguises himself by occasionally working on a program for children. Most people in his district are fed up with him and he was seriously challenged in the last election by a last-minute candidate. Only the elite like him," Schmidt said.

In addition to the criticism of Whirlpool, Schmidt points to the role of the state government in perpetuating the national oppression of the people of Benton Harbor. "The governor of Michigan has lost credibility due to her allegiance with corporations, her promises to create jobs in Benton Harbor by buddying up with Whirlpool, and the recent acceptance of the people's park land [Jean Klock Park] going to Whirlpool developers.

"No one has been hired from Benton Harbor for this heinous project. No Benton Harbor resident has been hired despite excessive promises made by the governor/developers."

The people of Benton Harbor, while celebrating the victory of Rev. Pinkney in having one of his sentences overturned, are continuing to fight for the elimination of racism and exploitation in Berrien County.

*Azikiwe attended the Court of Appeals hearing in Grand Rapids on June 9. He has traveled to Benton Harbor and St. Joseph on numerous occasions to cover events there since the Benton Harbor rebellion of 2003.*

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## Family, community blame DTE as

# Four family members die after utility shut-off

By Bryan G. Pfeifer  
Detroit

The greed of DTE Energy Co. led to the July 16 deaths of four members of an African-American family in Detroit. The Reed-Owens family had their electricity cut off on July 15 by DTE for nonpayment.

The family was desperate when their power was cut off because several family members suffered from serious medical conditions—including asthma, neurofibromatosis and bronchitis—and required the use of electric breathing machines.

The Reed-Owenses went to their church to borrow a gas-powered generator which they placed in their basement, unaware of the danger of doing so. Only hours later four of the five family members died due to suspected carbon monoxide poisoning. The mother, Marquetta Owens, was the only survivor. Her partner, Vaughn Reed, and their children Mar'Keisha Reed, 17, DeMarco Owens, 12, and DeMonte Owens, 6, perished in their home. (Detroit News, July 17).

Like millions of other families in the United States, the Reed-Owens family,

through no fault of their own, had fallen victim to unemployment. Mr. Reed was laid off from an auto parts supplier in January, which created many financial hardships for the family, including the foreclosure of their home.

The Reed-Owens tragedy is particularly heart-wrenching and outrageous as the family had filed for bankruptcy protection, making it illegal for DTE to shut off their utilities. The U.S. Bankruptcy Court on June 25 sent DTE an electronic notification of the Reed-Owens bankruptcy filing. But DTE didn't stop the shutoff. Instead the corporation claims the shutoff notice was sent to the wrong address—not to the home where the Reed-Owenses resided.

Although Reed telephoned DTE on July 15 and told the company he had filed for bankruptcy, power wasn't restored immediately. DTE claimed it was going to turn the power back on the next day, but by then it was too late.

Neighbors and family members of the Reed-Owenses are outraged and aghast over DTE's criminal actions. "At these times of crisis, what is the problem?" asked Pamela Jackson, Owen's cousin,

who said DTE never should have turned off the power.

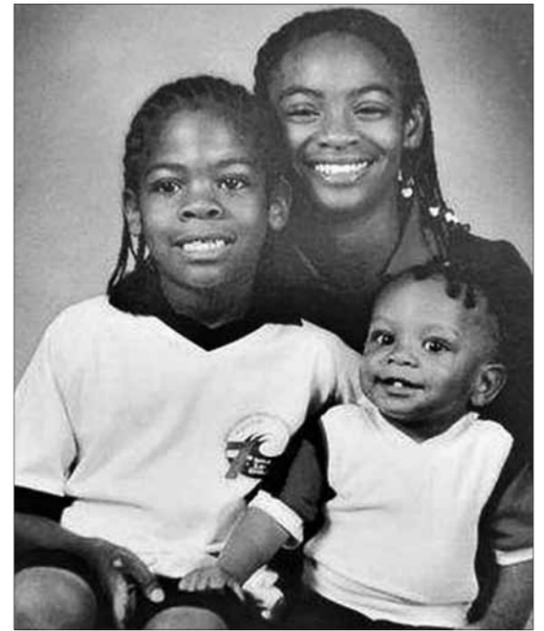
### People before profits! Utilities are a right!

DTE Energy is a monopoly corporation whose 2008 operating revenues were \$9.3 billion. The company claims over \$24 billion in assets and \$546 million in net income, according to its 2008 financial filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

DTE's two primary utilities are Detroit Edison, an electric utility with 2.2 million customers in Michigan, and the Michigan Consolidated Gas Company (MichCon), its natural gas utility with 1.3 million customers.

DTE's board of directors is crawling with Chrysler, Ford, Comerica Bank and other corporate thieves, including investment "advisors" and a former general who worked for the Pentagon and the Army's 1st Infantry Division. (www.dteenergy.com)

Despite the corporation's slogan of "making dreams real," the reality is that DTE's top priority is making profits, no matter what the consequences are in



From left, DeMarco, Mar'Keisha and DeMonte as a toddler.

terms of life and death for real people who need gas and electricity.

A protest and press conference called by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions will take place on July 24 at DTE headquarters in Detroit, One Energy Plaza, beginning at 4 p.m. to express the community's outrage over the Reed-Owens deaths and other atrocities committed by DTE.

The demonstration will also demand that Gov. Jennifer Granholm declare an immediate state of economic emergency in Michigan, including a moratorium on all foreclosures, evictions, utility shutoffs, layoffs and plant closings. For more information, visit [www.moratorium-mi.org](http://www.moratorium-mi.org) or call 313-887-4344. □

# Lawsuit charges racism in Philly Police Dept.

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

Charging that city computers were used by on- and off-duty white police officers to post blatantly racist and offensive comments to a Web site, the Guardian Civic League, an association of Black Philadelphia police, filed a federal lawsuit against the department on July 16.

The suit, joined by the NAACP and the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers, seeks to have the racist Web site [domelights.com](http://domelights.com) shut down and the police department punish its users.

Speaking at a press conference to announce the suit, Rochelle Bilal, head of the League, said she has come across hundreds of disparaging remarks about Blacks made by white officers. The League has been monitoring the Web site for two years.

One such statement—"Guns don't kill

people. Dangerous minorities do"—was posted last year. A recent racist post referred to young Black and Latina/o summer campers who were subjected to vile, racist names at a Huntington Valley swim club.

The suit names the city of Philadelphia, the police department, and a number of unidentified site users as defendants. It also says [domelights.com](http://domelights.com) was founded by a Philadelphia police sergeant who uses the screen name "McQ" and "encourages the racially offensive conduct." Even the word "domelights," which normally refers to the police lights on top of cruisers, has taken on an "insulting connotation" among Black officers, according to the lawsuit.

Lawyer Brian Mildenberg filed the suit. He charged that by ignoring the Black officers' complaints, the police department has created a hostile environment for

Black officers in the workplace. "The site founder creates this thing and it starts to go viral with white racists over the years," he said. Mildenberg is also representing some parents of the summer campers in discrimination lawsuits against the Valley Swim Club.

The Web site was created in 2000. Now it has more than 6,000 users and claims to be "devoted to the abolition of political correctness." The site bills itself as "the voice of the good guys."

Speaking of Web site supporters, Bilal said, "If you're a police officer, a sworn officer of the law, and you think that way toward people of color, you shouldn't be here."

Mildenberg charged that responsibility for the Web site's content goes beyond its administrator and falls on the police department, which had been made aware of the problem but failed to act. Philadelphia

Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey acknowledged that he knew of the Web site. The police department does control who gets Internet access on the job.

Mildenberg said that police policy should also prohibit officers from posting racist material on their own time. The lawsuit notes that regulations require officers "to avoid engaging in racially offensive speech or conduct in public." Mildenberg noted that there is no First Amendment protection on an employer's computer. "The employer owns your e-mail, your computer."

This is not the first time that the Guardian Civic League and the National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers have challenged racist Philadelphia police officers and the Fraternal Order of Police. Both Black organizations have also taken public stands calling for a new trial for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. □

# Support Stella D'Oro workers!

The Stella D'Oro Support Committee is asking allies in the labor movement and other supporters to sign on to a petition asking for an injunction to stop the sale of the Stella D'Oro company.

After the National Labor Relations Board ordered Brynwood Partners, private owners of Stella D'Oro, to reinstate 136 bakery workers with the same pay and benefits they had before their 11-month strike, the company announced plans to shut down the Bronx, N.Y., facility within 90 days. Brynwood Partners is reportedly in negotiations with Lance, Inc., a North Carolina-based, non-union company.

The Stella D'Oro workers are members of Local 50 of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union, and have vowed to continue to fight to keep their factory open. Throughout the entire 11-month strike, not one worker crossed the picket line to return to



work. The Stella D'Oro workers have received the support of many labor unions as well as the support of the neighboring Bronx community.

The support committee requests messages and petitions supporting the workers' request for an injunction be e-mailed

to [BCTGMLocal50@aol.com](mailto:BCTGMLocal50@aol.com), [rscannell@bctgm.org](mailto:rscannell@bctgm.org), [stevekindredny@verizon.net](mailto:stevekindredny@verizon.net), and [rscannell@bctgm.org](mailto:rscannell@bctgm.org).

A sample message states: "To Celeste Mattina, NLRB Regional Director, 26 Federal Plaza, Room 3614, New York, NY 10278-0104. We, the undersigned,

understand that BCGM Local #50 has sought an injunction in the Stella D'Oro case under Article 10-J of the National Labor Relations Act. We support their request. We urge you to support it and take speedy action to act on it."

—LeiLani Dowell

## Democrats cave in to big business as

# Card check provision dropped from EFCA

By Scott Williams

Six Democrats in the Senate announced July 16 that they will drop the card check provision in the Employee Free Choice Act, a bill designed to force bosses to acknowledge a union if a majority of workers sign cards to join the union.

Capitalist media, Republicans, bankers and bosses from all sectors have come out in support of this compromise, since dropping the card check provision greatly weakens EFCA and stunts workers' ability to organize against the millions of layoffs now occurring and for better wages and benefits.

EFCA, which originally passed the House of Representatives in 2008, is a desperately-needed reform for work-

ers. The economic crisis has caused an increase in union-busting by bosses, including massive layoffs of workers and union organizers, outsourcing and offshoring of union jobs, and the weakening of major union contracts such as the recently-brokered contracts between the United Auto Workers and General Motors and Chrysler.

EFCA would support workers' right to organize a union and win contracts with their bosses. The legislation proposes to stop bosses from delaying union certification through intimidation, threats or firing pro-union workers. Originally, EFCA required bosses to acknowledge a union and begin negotiations after a majority of workers sign cards or approve direct union certification, rather than mandating a so-called "secret bal-

lot." EFCA would even allow for fines and penalties including triple back pay against the bosses for "unfair labor practices."

With the labor movement significantly weakened by the exploitative nature of global capitalism, EFCA is necessary for workers to organize unions and fight back during this new period of "jobless recovery" and low-wage capitalism.

Even after labor unions spent hundreds of millions of dollars to elect President Barack Obama and other Democrats in 2008, the betrayal of right-wing "moderate" Democrats in the Senate, such as Arlen Specter, in compromising on EFCA is nothing new. Definitely no friends of workers, Specter and other Democratic senators receive lots of money each year from investment banks

such as Goldman Sachs, as well as from construction companies, health care corporations, and other superrich anti-union lobbies.

Business owners and other capitalists, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Bank of America, have spent countless millions to defeat the bill. They have their Democratic and Republican mouthpieces complaining that EFCA is unfair to the bosses.

Saying card checks are undemocratic while heralding secret-ballot elections, which are heavily influenced by the bosses' scare tactics including firings and harassment of pro-union workers, comes straight from the ruling-class perspective of the bankers and Wall Street billionaires. This is true for any boss-worker relationship under capitalism. Laws are passed in favor of bosses and against workers and our right to organize, along with our rights to education, decent food, childcare and adequate housing.

Like the passage of the historic National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which set the legal framework and protections for unions to build workers' power and take back some of the billions they created in profits from the bosses, the only way EFCA will pass with the card check provision intact is by workers getting in the streets and fighting back.

Putting a filibuster-proof majority of Democrats in any office will never bring about protections for workers. Rebuilding the labor movement and fighting for the right to organize will build the skills and organization needed for the liberation of workers from the exploitative capitalist system.

*Williams is a Raleigh, N.C., student, worker and organizer with FIST—Fight Imperialist, Stand Together—and University of North Carolina Student Action*

## Workers win showdown at Acme Markets

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

When 4,000 unionized workers at 40 Acme supermarkets, who had been working under a contract extension since February 2008, received notice in late June that the company planned to terminate existing benefits and impose draconian cuts, the workers made their struggle public.

The United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1776 took out full-page ads in local newspapers exposing the company threats and asking for shoppers and the general public to pressure the company to resume negotiations. Local 1776 had been bargaining for the workers.

Acme management threatened to freeze wages, cut pensions and benefits, and outsource jobs, despite the fact that many of the workers had been with the company for 20 to 40 years. These outright union-busting tactics must have hit a nerve with lots of people because by mid-July Acme was back at the bargaining table.

Local 1776 President Wendell Young IV had also told management that the workers would strike if the bosses tried to impose the company's take-back contract.

With a 985-to-19 vote on July 16, the unionized workers overwhelmingly approved a new contract that includes the equivalent of a 2-percent raise, preserves

health and pension benefits, and protects union jobs.

Provisions of the new four-year agreement include preventing Acme from covering pensions with wages or health insurance contributions; and giving raises in four lump-sum payments over the life of the contract. Acme will be allowed to outsource certain departments, but core departments will remain staffed by union members.

Workers credited union solidarity for their victory. Walt O'Connor, 60, a produce clerk at the Woodhaven Acme in Northeast Philadelphia, told the Philadelphia Inquirer, "I saw the union membership come together more closely than they ever had in the past." (July 16) □



## Gov't says 'Things are getting better' as

# Record job losses follow mortgage debacle

Continued from page 1

and predatory lending boom.

"Sources and Uses of Equity Extracted from Homes," a study published by Alan Greenspan and James Kennedy in March 2007, points out just how much cash was artificially infused into the capitalist economy because of this. They estimated the amount of this "free cash," which they defined as the value of home sales, refinancing or home equity loans, minus mortgage debt paid off at the time of closing and closing costs.

The figures are enormous. The amount of "free cash" generated was \$757.8 billion in 2002, \$1.003 trillion in 2003, \$1.170 trillion in 2004, and \$1.4289 trillion in 2005. This infusion of trillions of dollars helped stave off a recession as it allowed workers and the poor to keep buying consumer goods and services even as their wages fell.

### The artificial bubble bursts

The over \$1 trillion a year that fueled consumer spending through the housing boom has now been eliminated from the economy. The housing bubble has burst and home values are on a free fall. As a result, home refinancing and equity loans have virtually halted. Homes are not selling.

Homeowners are paying overvalued mortgages, often with high, upwardly adjusted interest rates, resulting in the still-growing and record-breaking

foreclosure crisis. RealtyTrac reported on July 15 that the numbers of homes on the verge of foreclosure rose 15 percent in the first half of 2009. (realtytrac.com)

To put this in perspective, the Obama stimulus plan, which plans to pump \$787 billion into the capitalist economy during 2009 and 2010, is about one-half of the \$1.43 trillion that was injected into the economy in 2005 alone through overvaluing homes and then extending credit on that basis. Workers' credit cards are still maxed out, so that source of stimulus has also dried up.

When Summers speaks about the Obama economic plan succeeding, he is probably looking at bank profits which have rebounded at least temporarily. The banks were the beneficiaries of a \$750 billion federal bailout, trillions more in cheap money poured in by the Federal Reserve, and hundreds of billions more through the bailout of AIG.

Even the Home Affordable Program put in place by the Secretary of Treasury is really a disguised bailout for the banks, while affording relatively minimal relief

to homeowners facing foreclosures.

While some homeowners have been able to utilize the program to get their interest rates reduced, by calculating payments based on 31 percent of income, the principal on their loans remains high, though these homeowners do end up paying a more reasonable rate for an overpriced mortgage. This allows the banks to keep the mortgages on their books as assets, rather than having to write off the decline in the real value of the homes.

The lenders are also receiving billions of dollars to participate in the Home Affordable Program, such as \$3.5 billion for Chase, \$2.83 billion for Wells Fargo, \$2.6 billion for Bank of America—which includes its subsidiary Countrywide—and \$2 billion for Citi Mortgage (financialstability.gov) This is on top of the \$750 billion in bailout funds they have already received.

Despite these handouts, the banks have been so slow to implement the Treasury plan that Secretary Timothy Geithner is actually holding a meeting with them on July 28 to beg the banks to do more.

### What can workers do?

A simple moratorium on foreclosures would go a long way to give the Home Affordable Program some teeth, but despite talk about a moratorium on foreclosures in his campaign, President Obama has not uttered the word since being elected.

The structural basis for the current unemployment crisis hitting the working class—the lowering of wages and elimination of decent-paying union jobs in this era of globalization and low-wage capitalism—has not changed. Unemployment and lower wages continue to manifest in the growing crisis now that the capitalists have exhausted artificial means of pumping cash into the economy.

The only answer to the growing unemployment and deepening crisis for the workers and the poor is for the working class to fight back with an independent program for jobs or income now and for a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions. Workers also need to demand a real stimulus plan with trillions of dollars allocated to rebuild our cities and keep the factories open and producing for human need and not profit.

Workers must demand enforcement of the federal Full Employment Act, a law on the books which says that maintaining full employment is the top priority of the government and Federal Reserve. The demonstrations in September at the G20 summit in Pittsburgh are the next step in building such a movement.

*Goldberg is a leader of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions and a Detroit attorney who represents homeowners and renters in their struggle against the banks and lenders.*

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.

## What about workers, homeowners, renters?

# Wall Street profits soar

By G. Dunkel

Goldman Sachs reported quarterly earnings of \$3.4 billion on July 14. JP Morgan Chase reported \$2.7 billion in profits on July 16. The next day Bank of America reported a quarterly profit of \$3.2 billion and Citigroup \$4.3 billion.

Goldman Sachs told the New York Times July 15 that “it had earmarked \$11.4 billion so far this year to compensate its workers,” which average \$770,000 per worker. Lloyd C. Blankfein, its chief executive, is quoted saying, “We pay for performance.”

While Goldman Sachs received Troubled Asset Relief Program bailout money, which it has repaid, it and other banks have substantially benefited by being able to issue debt cheaply because the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation backs it.

Goldman Sachs has also gotten tens of billions of dollars from AIG (the American International Group) when it was paid 100 cents on the dollar for its bets on securities that turned sour. Estimates of the total payout Goldman got from AIG range from \$13 billion to \$40 billion.

AIG is now essentially controlled by the U.S. government. While Blankfein didn't admit it, this government backing is certainly a performance-enhancer.

While JP Morgan Chase has repaid its TARP funds, Bank of America and Citigroup have not, and their financial position is a lot shakier. They are more susceptible to credit card and home-equity defaults.

Workers are still losing their jobs, even with the “stimulus” package, which indicates the production of goods and services is declining, a sign of a deepening recession. It also means that workers can't pay their bills or their mortgages.

According to a report released July 16 from the Government Accountability Office, which is part of Congress, the government has spent \$339 billion on TARP, out of the \$700 billion allocated, and has promised \$102 billion more. That leaves \$259 billion in the fund, plus \$70 billion that the banks have repaid.

### Bailout vs. ‘chaos in the streets’

An interchange between former Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson and the House committee investigating the formation of the TARP explains why the Bush administration so quickly devoted over \$700 billion to the TARP bailout.

Paulson said: “If you have a situation where a banking system is frozen and money can't move between financial institutions, what ultimately happens is that every business, even businesses that seem to be solvent and small businesses across America, will not be able to fund their inventory. They won't be able to meet their payroll.

“You will have a—when a financial system breaks down, the kinds of numbers that we were looking at in terms of unemployment was much greater than the numbers we're looking at now. People in the streets ... but if we had a meltdown of

the system, this could even lead to chaos or people even questioning the basic system.” (Wall Street Journal, July 16)

Paulson knows in his bones that the health of banks, which concentrate and disburse money—the lifeblood of the capitalist process—is key to the health of capitalism. What is surprising is that he feared a rapid rise in joblessness in the midst of a financial crisis would lead to people in the streets taking and demanding actions that would challenge the current capitalist system.

The current banking system is still fragile, and could collapse under the weight of the recession, but parts of it are doing well. Foreclosures and defaulted real estate loans are still a big problem, both for the capitalists who see their system crumbling and workers who lose their jobs, then their homes, and see themselves and their loved ones suffering.

It's not surprising that the Obama administration came up with a \$75 billion program to reduce foreclosures and released details on it in early March. However, this program has created only 190,000 mortgage modifications with lower monthly payments, according to the Treasury Department. Many homeowners complain about unreturned phone calls and inaccurate information from lenders. (USA Today, June 18)

During the time Pres. Barack Obama's plan has been in effect, lenders either have started or advanced foreclosures against more than 1 million homes, ac-

ording to RealtyTrac. About 20 percent of these actions were completed, resulting in homes repossessed by the banks. The Center for Responsible Lending says 2.4 million U.S. residents are at risk of foreclosure in 2009, and 8.1 million could face foreclosure over the next four years.

Figures on the effect that foreclosures have on renters in properties seized by the banks are hard to come by, but tens of millions of people are at risk.

In New York City, where 1 million apartments have government-regulated, lower-than-market rents, many hedge and equity funds have been speculating by spending hundreds of billions of dollars on rental apartments in the hope of being able to drive out regulated tenants by means fair or foul. (New York Times, July 15)

While bankers have poured vast sums of money on fancy schemes to dice, slice, automate and disguise their transactions, creating derivatives over derivatives in deliberate mishmashes of such complexity that it is hard to tell who owns what, workers living in their mortgaged homes know they have to pay every month.

But one thing is very clear. Without workers creating surplus value for the capitalists to expropriate, bankers would be out of a job. And when they are, when the whole intricate system they are so integral in maintaining and directing is replaced, then the allocation of resources will be far simpler and far fairer for working people. □

## Detroiters tell President: ‘We need jobs’

By Kris Hamel

Detroit

Advocates for a moratorium on foreclosures, evictions and utility shutoffs joined environmentalists and supporters of single-payer health care on July 14 when President Barack Obama visited metro Detroit. Obama gave a speech at Macomb Community College in Warren, where he announced an initiative to increase student financial aid and funding for community colleges. Salaried auto workers were also there with a message to the president to save their pensions.

In his speech, Obama praised Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm and her “No Worker Left Behind” program that provides funds for unemployed workers to further their education. Organizers with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions and the People's Summit Coalition point out that Michigan's official 15.2 percent unemployment rate belies any optimism that



People's Summit demands jobs program

WW PHOTO: KRIS HAMEL

workers are getting back to work.

More than 310,000 jobs have been lost in the state so far in 2009. According to the Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics Michigan Forecast, published July 2 by the University of Michigan, “the 10-year downturn between mid-2000 and the summer of 2010 is forecast to cost the

state 950,000 jobs, 20 percent of its workforce.” (www.rsqe.econ.lsa.umich.edu)

The People's Summit Coalition distributed a “People's Bill of Rights for Economic and Social Justice” to the crowd entering to hear Obama's speech. This draft document states: “The economic crisis has drastically impacted the working class

and the poor, increasing the official ranks of unemployed workers to over 12 million, almost one in 10, not counting those who can only find part-time jobs or who have given up looking for a job altogether because there are none.

“The unemployment crisis along with record home foreclosures, 50 million people with no health care insurance, and severe state and local budget cuts, is a matter of life and death for millions of people. We are in a state of emergency! The federal government must take responsibility and declare a State of Economic Emergency and implement immediate steps to relieve the mass suffering.”

The People's Bill of Rights calls for a massive federal program to provide jobs or income for all at livable wages; an immediate moratorium on all layoffs, plant closings, pension thefts and union busting; and the reopening of closed plants and putting workers back to work. For more information, visit [www.peoplesummit.org](http://www.peoplesummit.org). □

## Gov. Rendell: Guess who's coming to dinner?

By Betsey Piette  
Philadelphia

Pennsylvania state employees facing “payless paydays” took their message that this is “totally unacceptable” straight to Governor Ed Rendell's house in the East Falls section of the city on July 17. Workers had just received only 70 percent of their normal pay in what likely will be their last pay until the state's budget crisis is solved.

The state has been operating without a budget since July 1, when the fiscal year began. With the economic downturn and high unemployment driving revenue collections to an all-time low, state lawmakers have been debating whether to cut

program spending or to raise taxes, both of which would have a severe negative impact on poor and working-class families.

Now the state is saying its workers must bear the brunt of the economic crisis by working without pay. A flier calling for Friday's picket from Service Employees International Union Local 668, Pennsylvania Social Services Union, noted, “Rendell claims that most state workers should be able to get interest free loans and ‘they should put a statue of me upon their mantel place.’ How arrogant!”

Pennsylvania's budget stalemate has also led to Philadelphia putting a temporary hold on payments to contractors and vendors. The city had anticipated receiving nearly \$100 million in state payments

in July and August for child welfare and juvenile services. These payments have been frozen until the new budget passes.

The 77,000 state workers scheduled to get paid July 24 will get just 20 percent of their pay. After that, no more paychecks will be issued until a three-week-long budget impasse has ended.

Yet workers are still expected to show up for work.

The workers who protested outside Rendell's private home carried paper plates to symbolize that they were inviting themselves over to Rendell's for dinner. “We have families, children to feed,” said Sharon Boyd. “I think they need to pass a budget. They're not working as hard as we are.”

Rendell has also proposed a 16-percent increase in the state's wage tax for three years, a move that would hit lower-paid workers the hardest. However, some state legislators, including Democratic Rep. Dwight Evans, are proposing that the state use its \$750-million Rainy Day savings fund, impose new taxes on gas drilling, and set aside a planned reduction in certain business taxes to cover any shortfall.

Only 33,000 of the 77,000 state employees are eligible to apply for \$1,000 no-interest loans through the Pennsylvania State Employees Credit Union. Workers at the rally noted, however, that these loans won't go far to cover expenses for their families, mortgages and other bills they are obligated to pay. □

## Convoy participants speak

# 'The Gaza in all of us revives our hearts'

*The following were written prior to Viva Palestina's entry into Gaza. The first is by Tarek Abedrabb, a young Syrian man who took part in the delegation.*

Freedom lies not on a land, nor on a country's borders that separate people. Freedom lies in the hearts of individuals. Sometimes, the hearts of these individuals are filled with so much love that it spreads to others all across the globe. That was what we experienced in the last eight days—the love spread to us by the people in Gaza. Their solidarity has united the masses that many have tried to divide.

With the 100-degree weather all day and night, consistent surprises of a bureaucratic system that seems strange to many, and the gathering of over 200 people from different races and cultures in one confined place—something developed, beautifully unique in the world we live in, outside of the Viva Palestina project: the bond of people of all races and religions coming together as sisters and brothers, caring for each other.

I have personally added 218 family members in the last week. They consist of Christians, rabbis, priests and atheists. A family of black, white, yellow and brown. Gaza has united people that would have never thought to be eating together under the hot sun of Egypt, and soon Gaza.

Maybe it's Gaza, maybe it's the eyes of the children in Gaza, and maybe it's the

Gaza in all of us that revives our hearts. We must acknowledge that Gaza has given us back our hearts, our souls and our minds. The love for Gaza has spread to all the free hearts of this world; I do admire the free souls of Gaza.

The tactics used to slow us might physically drain us, but as for our goal, these tactics only make us stronger and more determined than ever to cross that border. To unite with our other half of freedom.

As we prepare to face more obstacles on this convoy, one thing remains certain, our convoy and our members will enter Gaza. We will enter with our hearts. We will enter with the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "An individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law."

*Below are excerpts written by a young Egyptian health care worker who took part in the convoy to Gaza.*

It was half past midnight at the Grand Giza Hotel in the busy and bustling city of Gaza. The general restlessness of the convoy was broken by a report that after days of negotiations with Egyptian authorities, we received permission to head east toward the blockaded city of Gaza. Suddenly the hotel came alive with con-

voy members hurrying back and forth to prepare the trucks loaded with medical relief supplies.

All of us were operating so that we would be able to hit the road by 3 a.m. However, it was pushed forward first to 5 a.m., then finally at 9 a.m. before the convoy was on the move.

In the front were the trucks with medical aid, followed by the buses. The first few hours were spent sleeping to recover from the previous night's work. But our spirits began to soar as we approached and the buses broke out in singing and Palestinian music.

At last we arrived, after many doubts about whether the Egyptian authorities would use bureaucracy as a weapon of attrition or outright prevent us from entering Gaza altogether.

This is not to say they have been anywhere near flexible in the logistical aspects of the mission. So tight is the blockade on Gaza that we were only allowed entry for a 24-hour period. Beyond that, we were warned, we would be trapped within Gaza until the next border opening several months later.

As a public health professional, I respectfully asked if 24 hours is nearly enough to cover even one public health aspect in a city that has been blockaded by more than three years and ravaged by Israel's most recent military offensive, "Operation Cast Lead."

Would I be able to explore the toxic effects of Israel's use of white phosphorous, an agent deemed by the U.N. as forbidden for use against civilians? Would I have time to study the impact of malnutrition on children and mothers given the scarcity of nutritious food, or the rise of infectious disease in hospitals and scarcity following destruction of the civil infrastructure, including sewer, water and other sanitation systems?

Would I have time to explore the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological trauma borne from air raids, artillery, deaths of entire families overnight, and execution-style killings of civilians by Israeli troops in border regions of the city?

There is a more personal meaning to this convoy. My grandfather was a medic in the Egyptian military during the six-day war in June 1967. He and others were taken as POWs at Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza. To return to the place where my grandfather first served, also for the cause of medical relief, brings me closer to him even in his absence.

But, as we drive through these checkpoints, I am thinking of only one aspect of the convoy, the humanitarian effort to break the siege on this oppressed people. Representing the U.S. in this mission as an ambassador of peace will also hopefully establish ties between these two freedom-loving peoples. □

## THEY MADE IT! Viva Palestina delivers aid to Gaza

*Continued from page 1*

lead negotiator for Viva Palestina-USA, Charles Barron; former Congressperson Cynthia McKinney, just out of an Israeli prison for attempting to deliver aid by sea to Gaza with the Free Gaza Movement; and British MP George Galloway, who organized a caravan from Britain under the same name in March.

In spite of dishonest negotiations, arbitrary enforcement and ever-changing requirements for travel through Egypt to Gaza on the part of U.S. and Egyptian authorities, Viva Palestina was able to enter Gaza after making it through the Egyptian-enforced Israeli blockade. The challenges began on July 5 when the convoy arrived in Cairo.

Militant, unified protest actions met and overcame every challenge. The actions included letter-writing campaigns solicited instantly over the Internet and human chains surrounding buses at the Suez Canal. McKinney led an impromptu loud, chanted protest session in Egyptian Customs.

When it appeared on July 13 that the Egyptian government was going to deny passage into Gaza, Viva Palestina supporters held emergency demonstrations at Egyptian consulates in New York, San Francisco, Houston, Chicago and other cities throughout the United States.



One such hurdle, however, could not be overcome. The new vehicles purchased for medical agencies remain impounded by the Egyptian government in spite of the long back-and-forth sessions endured by the negotiating team. One of the seemingly final offers by the government of Egypt left vehicles impounded, no entrance into Gaza until most participants were scheduled to leave, and the stipulation that medical aid could be delivered only by the Israelis.

At a Viva Palestina meeting led by Barron in Cairo two days before the departure to Gaza, this option was presented for discussion with alternative offers to the government.

Galloway stated the desires of the inhabitants of Gaza, whose homes the Israelis destroyed and who have lost half of the hospitals with little access to basic necessities. They wanted the delegation's help in this order: first, convoy participants enter, then medical aid and finally the much-needed vehicles.

Why were the people in the contingent the most important for this effort in the eyes of the besieged people of Gaza? The mission had two goals. One was to provide medical supplies. The other was to expose the genocidal nature of this blockade and help create a political atmosphere that, if repeated enough, would chip



away at the international silence and complicity in tolerating Israeli genocide.

All the aid in the world would be useless if Israel were allowed to stop its delivery. Putting pressure on people like President Barack Obama, who represents the country that holds the purse strings for Israel, is part of that political struggle.

The Viva Palestina-USA delegation, from the country Obama represents, entered Gaza and not only with the medical aid, but with the determination to continue to increase exposure and visibility of this crisis and put one more nail in the coffin of Israeli occupation and genocide



WW PHOTOS

against the people of Palestine.

Also participating in Viva Palestina-USA were 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, Answer Coalition, International Socialist Organization and Workers World Party.

For news of more Viva Palestina efforts, visit [www.vivapalestina-us.org](http://www.vivapalestina-us.org).

*Parker was responsible for much of the media contact on the Viva Palestina convoy.*

## Petition struggle generates a quarter-million messages

A petition circulated by the International Action Center 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. See [www.iacenter.org](http://www.iacenter.org) under the Action Alerts heading.

In the first week this petition was posted, there were 1,775 responses, generating a total of over 250,000 e-mail messages to public officials, governments and media representatives worldwide.

Each response sent messages to Egyp-

tian President Mubarak and other Egyptian officials, President Barack Obama and other U.S. officials, over 40 Senate and Congressional leaders, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and the entire Israeli cabinet, the United Nations secretary general, the members of the U.N. Security Council, and many of the U.N. ambassadors, plus the Associated Press, AFP, Reuters, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, Haaretz, Al Jazeera, Egypt Today, Beirut Times, North Africa Journal, Jakarta Post and Sudan Mail.

—Frank Neisser



# Israeli soldiers reveal Gaza war crimes

By Dee Knight

A new publication by the group Breaking the Silence was announced on July 15. The group is composed of veteran Israeli soldiers who “demand accountability regarding Israel’s military actions in the Occupied territories perpetrated by us and in our name.”

Interviews and testimony by 30 Israeli soldiers regarding their experiences in “Operation Cast Lead” confirm that war crimes were specific policy in last winter’s Gaza massacre. The testimony, gathered in soldier-to-soldier interviews, began to surface in Israel shortly after the end of the December-January war.

Israel’s leading newspaper Haaretz reported on March 20, “The soldiers describe the killing of innocent civilians, pointless destruction, expulsions of families from homes seized as temporary outposts, disregard for human life and a tendency toward brutalization.”

London’s Guardian reported March 22 that the testimony “suggests widespread abuses stemming from orders originating with the Israeli military chain of command.” It adds that soldiers said they were “specifically warned by officers not to discuss what they had seen and done in Gaza.”

## Soldier describes killings, destruction

The following are excerpts from that testimony: “What shocked me was a talk we had with ... a colonel. Usually in such talks the commanders mention the lives



of civilians and showing consideration to civilians. He didn’t even mention this. Just ‘go in there brutally.’ He said, ‘In case of any doubt, take down houses. You don’t need confirmation for anything.’

“The instruction was explicit—if you’re not sure, kill. The minute we got to our starting line, we simply began to fire at suspect places. ... You see a house, a window, shoot at the window. You don’t see a terrorist there? Fire at the window. It was real urban warfare. ... In urban warfare, anyone is your enemy. No innocents.

“From the onset, the brigade commander and other officers made it very clear to us that ... if you see any signs of movement at all, you shoot. No consideration of civilians was to be taken.”

“The Battalion Commander said, ‘Don’t let morality become an issue. That will come up later. ... It’s not that you’re out to carry out a massacre, but ...’ this was the restraint to everything he had said before, and in between his own jokes. Like, ‘We have an Arabic-speaking grenade launcher and a heavy machine-gun that speaks Arabic.’

“Our objective was to demolish houses. ... Houses were demolished everywhere. You see clearly that these houses had been fired at with tremendous power. We didn’t see a single house that remained intact. ... The entire infrastructure, tracks, fields, roads—was in total ruin. ... Nothing much was left in our designated area. ... A totally destroyed city.

“This was fire-power such as I had never known. There were blasts all the time. The earth was constantly shaking. Explosions were heard all day long, the night was filled with flashes, an intensity we had never experienced before. ... The air force bombed all the time. ...”

## White phosphorous ‘fun’?

“Most of the mosques were demolished. That brigade commander I mentioned explicitly told us we should not hesitate to target mosques. Nothing is immune, nothing and no area. He explicitly mentioned mosques.

“Our battalion mortars were also using phosphorus. I know of an officer’s tank that fired phosphorus, too. The company commander gives the mortar platoon commander a target and orders him to fire. ... They define targets. ... Sometimes you’d hear on radio ‘Permitted, phosphorus in the air.’ That’s it.”

An interviewer asked the soldier: “Why fire phosphorus?”

“Because it’s fun. Cool. ... I don’t know what it’s used for. I was just talking about this yesterday. I don’t understand what it’s even doing in our supplies if we’re not supposed to use such ammo. It’s ridiculous. In training you learn that white phosphorus is not used, and you’re taught that it’s not humane. You watch films and see what it does to people who are hit, and you say, ‘There, we’re doing it too.’ That’s not what I expected to see.”

*The full testimony is available at [BreakingtheSilence.org.il](http://BreakingtheSilence.org.il).*

## Anti-war gathering discusses Iran

# IAC leader says: ‘Don’t echo imperialist hypocrisy’

By Sara Flounders

*The following is based on a presentation by Flounders, a coordinator of the International Action Center, during a discussion of the latest events in Iran at the National Assembly anti-war conference held in Pittsburgh July 10-12.*

If the U.S. government was interested in supporting democracy or in building respect for the will of the people in a democratic election, it should have started by respecting the outcome of the 2006 Palestinian election. The Palestinian people voted in large numbers, electing Hamas candidates to parliament with large enough votes to form the Palestinian government. In Gaza, Hamas had a total sweep.

The U.S./Israeli response was a starvation blockade of Gaza, a siege and then a brutal all-out war on the entire population. When the Israelis attacked Gaza last December and January, they killed more than 1,400 Palestinians, using U.S.-supplied weapons including white phosphorous and cluster bombs.

Now more than half of the elected members of the Palestinian Parliament are in Israeli prisons. Why is the corporate media not telling us day after day about this crime against democracy?

## Don’t jump on capitalist bandwagon

We in the anti-war movement need to be especially careful not to jump on the bandwagon when the entire capitalist class, their media, the entire U.S. Congress, and numerous organizations that received direct U.S. funding from the so-called National Endowment for Democ-

racy all speak with one voice in sudden defense of a cause.

Regardless of how legitimate, genuine and concerned some individuals may seem, this kind of overwhelming imperialist pressure will distort the struggle.

The U.S. corporate media is not interested in democracy even within the United States.

The whole focus and attention of progressive, anti-imperialist and workers’ struggles, especially here in the very center of imperialism, must be to defend all those who are targeted by the Pentagon, by the police and by the corporate media, which act as an extension of the state on issues of war and peace.

## Repression in the U.S.

Just consider the mass raids, round-ups and deportations going on in immigrant communities in every major U.S. city. Think of the workers who never come home from work, the families that are ripped apart.

We cannot for a moment forget that this is the country with the largest prison population in the world, with the greatest number of people on death row. Mumia Abu-Jamal, an internationally famous journalist and human rights activist, has been on death row for decades, just 50 miles from where we are meeting here in western Pennsylvania.

When the corporate media raises their concern about “democracy” in Iran, we cannot forget the Black and Latina/o communities occupied by police. Nor the targeting of Muslim communities, which are overrun with snitches, spies and frame-ups.

We cannot forget the millions of work-

ing people who are losing their jobs, homes, health care and their future. They have no vote, no say and no control over who receives trillions of dollars in bailout money and who receives hot air. We cannot forget the police state that greets every bankers’ or international gathering, putting whole areas of cities in lock-down.

There is a certain imperialist arrogance when the corporate media, which hides the lack of democracy here in U.S., suddenly champions democracy in Iran with wall-to-wall and sympathetic coverage of demonstrations there.

Do we want our movement to be an echo of that hypocrisy? Don’t you wonder if there is another agenda? When has a demonstration in the U.S. against war or cutbacks, or for housing or human rights, ever received the kind of sympathetic coverage that we’ve seen in the last month of Iran?

Do we expect that the thousands of activists coming to Pittsburgh for the G20 summit protests will receive even 1 percent of the coverage that’s been given to demonstrations in Iran?

## No women’s rights in U.S. client states

The whole world knows the name and face of the young Iranian woman Neda. But do we know the name of even one Iraqi woman killed by the invading U.S. Army? Can you tell me the name of one Palestinian woman killed by Israeli forces? Do we know the names of any Afghan or Pakistani women killed in a drone attack?

Do we know the name of the young Latina killed on the same day as Neda died in Iran, who was shot by border militia in Arizona? Why not?

Have U.S. wars and occupations

brought democracy to countries they own and control through feudal monarchies and total dictatorships?

There are no rights for women, or for anyone today, in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Egypt or Jordan.

Nowhere in the world is U.S. imperialism a force for democracy or women’s rights. U.S. interventions bring millions of deaths, millions of orphans, millions of refugees, a whole sex industry, torture on a mass scale and massive impoverishment—but never democracy.

Of course everyone here already knows this. We know of three decades of wars, sanctions, encirclement, sabotage and coup attempts.

## Don’t echo imperialist designs

A number of so-called human-rights groups that are funded by U.S.-government NED programs have called for demonstrations on July 25 in the name of “democracy in Iran.” Unfortunately, some anti-war groups have endorsed this U.S. government-funded demonstration. We want to use every skill to persuade our movement not to be pulled in by imperialist destabilization efforts and propaganda and to withdraw their participation.

There is a class struggle in Iran today. Yes, there is. But there is also a massive U.S.-government-sponsored destabilization effort. We cannot allow ourselves to become an echo of imperialist destabilization and interference in Iran. The group Stop War On Iran has called a meeting in New York for an extended discussion of this question on Aug. 1 at 55 West 17 Street at 3 p.m. See [stopwaroniran.org](http://stopwaroniran.org) for more details. □

# Democrats change pretexts for war on Afghanistan

By John Catalinotto

Pfc. Bowe Bergdahl's capture in Afghanistan has brought that war into living rooms across the United States. The heavy media coverage should lead to the U.S. population rethinking Washington's arguments for invading and occupying Afghanistan and now escalating the war there.

The first thing is to reject the Pentagon's condemnation of Pfc. Bergdahl's captors for showing him on video, something Washington has done regularly with the captives at Guantanamo. The bulk of the original 2002 Guantanamo prisoners were accused of fighting alongside the Taliban government against the U.S. invasion in 2001-2002.

The second is to consider that Taliban commander Mulvi Sangeen has threatened to kill Bergdahl "if foreign troops continue targeting civilians in the name of search operations in Ghazni and Paktika provinces." (CNN, July 20)

The Pentagon claims it is not targeting civilians. But the Pentagon is notorious for lying about its operations. In May it tried to cover up civilian deaths in Farah province by blaming them on the Taliban, but then had to admit that U.S. military strikes caused them. The Pentagon expressed concern that the civilian deaths were strengthening the resistance to the U.S.-led occupation. (Los Angeles Times, May 19)

The third is to think of what this all means. U.S. troop strength in Afghanistan is scheduled to expand from its current 57,000 to 68,000 by the end of 2009. U.S. Commander Gen. Stanley

McChrystal has implied he may ask for more troops, and Defense Secretary Robert Gates has not ruled out an increase. Already the costs are high, with the U.S. spending \$100 million a day on military intervention and a meager \$7 million a day on civilian material aid.

This all takes place while 4,000 U.S. Marines are carrying out a major offensive in Helmand province. The Taliban and other Afghan resistance forces have avoided direct clashes with the heavily-armed Marines. But the battles ensure heavy civilian casualties and some casualties among the occupation troops. Fifteen British troops were killed in the first two weeks of July, and there have been two suspicious "civilian" helicopter crashes.

A pattern similar to the Iraqi one is developing regarding the escalation of the U.S.-led NATO occupation of Afghanistan. More troops mean more overall casualties and usually mean increased resistance, along with greatly increased suffering of the population. In Iraq, after more than six years with over 130,000 U.S. troops still there along with a like number of "civilian contractors"—that is, mercenaries carrying out tasks earlier assigned to the military—the U.S. occupation has been stalemated if not defeated.

## A 'Democratic war'

In the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the George W. Bush administration blamed Al-Qaeda for the casualties, and attacked Afghanistan allegedly to punish that group and its leaders. Because the ruling Taliban had sheltered Al-Qaeda, according to Bush's story, the

U.S. had to drive them from power.

Unable or unwilling to aggressively pursue Al-Qaeda's leaders, the Bush administration turned its attention to seizing Iraq and its fabulous oil wealth. Afghanistan remained occupied, but Iraq got the attention. Washington pushed other NATO countries to supply additional troops to Afghanistan as the price for sitting at the table of imperialist plunder—to be invited to the G8 meetings, for example.

Presidential candidate Barack Obama had promised to shift troops from Iraq to Afghanistan, ostensibly to finish the job of breaking up Al-Qaeda. He has kept the promise of escalating, and now many are calling Afghanistan "Obama's war." (Time, July 5) But lately little has been heard about crushing Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden has virtually disappeared from the news.

## Women in Afghanistan: setting the record straight

With the Democrats now directing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and expanding the Afghan war into Pakistan, they've begun to change the pretexts. By mid-July former Democratic national chairperson Howard Dean was telling Democracy Now!'s Amy Goodman that the U.S. had to stay in the war "for the sake of women in Afghanistan and all around the globe." Vice President Joe Biden has also pushed this position.

It's true that the Taliban's program for women is reactionary. So too, however, is the program supported by the U.S.-backed Afghan regime, which is made up of the same warlords who fought for

power with each other and the Taliban in the 1990s and which killed women who taught and studied during the period the progressive pro-socialist regime ruled in Kabul after the 1978 revolution.

Biden and Dean should be reminded that it was under Democratic President Jimmy Carter that the U.S. adopted the policy of supporting, with arms and money, warlords, Islamic fundamentalists and anyone who would fight against the pro-socialist government and later against Soviet troops. That progressive government—which Washington treated as an enemy—passed laws giving equal rights to women and providing education. There were few complaints by U.S. politicians and media when the U.S.-backed gangs murdered the teachers.

Imperialist strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski, an architect of the Democratic Party's foreign policy and the plan to turn the Afghan reactionaries against the USSR, admitted in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (France) in a Jan. 15-21, 1998, article that he began this plan six months before the Soviet Union sent in troops and that weakening the USSR was "well worth" building up the reactionary fundamentalist groups—like Al-Qaeda.

Many non-Pentagon reports from Kabul agree that plenty of the same old warlords Washington backed in the anti-Soviet crusade are back allied with the U.S.-backed regime in Afghanistan. Afghan women's groups complain about the regime at least as much as they do about the Taliban. (see rawa.org)

The lesson of it all is that the sooner the U.S. and NATO get out of Afghanistan, the better. □

## Korean workers show the way

# Auto plant occupation enters third month

By Martha Grevatt

SsangYong Motor is not exactly a household name, even among autoworkers here. Smaller than Hyundai, Kia and GM-Daewoo, this Korean auto firm only produces vehicles for the domestic market. Members of the United Auto Workers, however, need to pay close attention to a fierce battle taking place at a SsangYong plant in Pyeongtaek, South Korea.

In February SsangYong—in which the privately owned Shanghai Automobile Industry Corporation holds a 51 percent stake—declared bankruptcy. The courts approved a restructuring plan that put up the Pyeongtaek plant as collateral so SsangYong could obtain new financing and come out of bankruptcy quickly. The backing of the court was contingent, however, on SsangYong imposing layoffs and involuntary retirements on 1,700 out of 7,000 employees and immediately discharging 300 "casual" workers. This is on top of the 1,700 jobs cut since the SAIC takeover three years ago.

At first the situation bore a remarkable similarity to GM and Chrysler's restructuring-by-bankruptcy, but on May 27 the Korean Metal Workers Union took the struggle in a very different direction. The KMWU members did not choose the path of concessions and retreat. After a series of sporadic strikes beginning in April, the 1,700 workers who were going to be laid off occupied the plant, bringing vehicle production to a standstill.

The workers raised three main de-



Striking workers occupy auto plant

mands: no layoffs, job security for all and no outsourcing. For the first few weeks they faced little in the way of a counter-attack. The rightist government of Lee Myong Bak was distracted by his own political crisis and mass anti-government demonstrations of up to a million people.

On June 16 the company held an anti-strike demonstration of about 1,500 scabs, all but a few hundred of whom were supervisors. Despite the workers' occupation, the scabs had been inside maintaining machinery but had been unable to restart production. Around 750 workers from nearby plants, including the Kia works, came out for a pro-strike counterdemonstration called by mass text messaging by KMWU.

Knowing that eventually the company and the state would try to evict them, the



Thousands of workers, members of the Korean Federation of Trade Unions, rally in Seoul July 4 in support of SsangYong workers

occupiers began stockpiling pipes, crow bars and Molotov cocktails. On June 26 the anticipated attack came as riot police, scabs and hired thugs entered the plant. In accordance with a prearranged plan, workers retreated to the paint shop. They knew the company would not risk the property damage that would ensue if the highly flammable chemicals were ignited in that area.

The next day the invaders retreated, the official reason being that enough violence had occurred.

In an effort to gain public sympathy, SsangYong management sent aerial photos to the news media taken July 1 as leaflets were distributed urging the strikers to evacuate. Photos showed no workers leaving, but did show piles of tires on the roof, apparently intended to be hurled to the ground and set ablaze if police stormed the plant. Alongside the tires were boxes of bolts allegedly to be fired by slingshot.

On July 11 the police surrounded the plant, with 100 cops at each of four gates.

Police took control of much of the plant as workers again regrouped in the paint shop.

On July 16 the KMWU held a solidarity rally of 3,000 outside the Pyeongtaek City Hall. When the protesters attempted to march on the plant, they were blocked by police. The cops arrested 82 marchers.

As of July 19 there were still 1,000 courageous workers inside the plant. Their families continue to keep them well fed. There is a high level of organization, with about 60 different squads that each elected a delegate to the coordinating body of the strike.

This occupation takes place in the context of a general upsurge in the class struggle in U.S.-occupied South Korea, but it is the first action of this kind in Korea in quite some time. It follows recent sit-downs in Chicago, Canada and Ireland.

The Korean autoworkers are fighting a hard fight and need the support of workers all over the world. Messages of solidarity can be emailed to the KMWU at [inter@metal.nodong.org](mailto:inter@metal.nodong.org). □

# Honduran resistance leaders vow to continue struggle against coup

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

July 20—The publicized side of Honduras events is the so-called “peace mediation” in Costa Rica, which is supposed to be seeking a violence-free resolution of the criminal and violent coup d’état that deposed constitutional President Mel Zelaya on June 28.

The other side—ignored in the worldwide corporate media—is the power of the growing and vibrant movement of the Honduran people, the workers and farmers, who are carrying out heroic resistance to the coup. Resistance leaders tell that side to Workers World.

It has been amazing to see the popular surge, coalescence and coordination during the first 23 days since the coup. Unions, youth and students, women, peasants, Indigenous, Afro descendants—all have joined in the Popular National Front of Resistance against the Coup D’État (FNPRG).

In a telephone conversation on July 19, Juan Barahona of the Honduran Unitarian Workers Federation told WW that FNPRG representatives from every region of the country had just met in Tegucigalpa and decided to continue with the resistance regardless of the outcome in Costa Rica. He stated that the mobilizations will continue July 20 at 8 a.m. before the National Congress.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is promoting the mediation in Costa Rica as a dilatory tactic. For the mediation, Clinton recruited Costa Rica’s President Oscar Arias, who won the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize for his mediation in Central America at that time. He proved to be a very effective broker for U.S. interests during the 1980s against the Nicaraguan Sandinista Revolution, and will now be used against another people of Central America, the Hondurans.

Coup leader Roberto Micheletti showed up at the first negotiation in Costa Rica with six instead of the agreed-upon four advisors. Two of them were from the United States, both linked to the Clintons: Bennett Ratcliff, from a San Diego law firm, and Lanny J. Davis “who has served as President Clinton’s personal lawyer and who campaigned for Mrs. Clinton for president.” (New York Times, July 13)

## Danger of renewed U.S. aggression against Latin America

Many analysts, especially in Latin America, consider the coup against the Honduran people—which could only be plotted and carried out with the support of powerful forces in the U.S.—to be just the beginning of a wider attempt to reverse the progressive wave in the continent. Several simultaneous developments point in that direction.

As Ecuador bids farewell to the U.S. air base in Manta and joins the Venezuela-initiated Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) as its eighth member nation, a suspicious and phony video surfaces in Colombia. The video implies that the Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) helped finance Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa’s presidential campaign. This is an obvious maneuver meant to later accuse the Ecuadoran government of “terrorism.”

Then there is the latest Government Accountability Office report.

As the investigative arm of the U.S. Congress, the GAO denounced the alleged growing penetration of drug trafficking in Venezuela, which it classifies as a “narco state,” and claims that Venezuela is one of the “major trans-shipment hubs for cocaine en route to countries such as Spain and the United States, with Honduras frequently being used as an air-bridge.” (vheadline.com, July 19)

In addition there is this new danger threatening the whole region: the U.S. announced the establishment of five more U.S. military bases in Colombia.

Honduras can be a turning point. At the Costa Rica talks, Arias presented seven points to the two sides. The first was the return of Zelaya to the presidency. The remaining six points were concessions to the coup leaders: the constitution of a “government of reconciliation” that would include Micheletti’s allies; a general amnesty; that Zelaya withdraw his call for a Constitutional Assembly; to hold the general elections earlier; the transfer of the armed forces from the Executive’s control to that of the Electoral Tribunal; and the establishment of a commission to watch over the implementation of these accords.

Nevertheless, Zelaya publicly accepted the proposal. Micheletti rejected it.

From Washington’s viewpoint, the longer it takes for Zelaya to return home, the easier it will be for the de-facto government of Roberto Micheletti to hold onto its illegal administration. Washington counts on the eventual fatigue of the resistance movement after weeks of mobilizations.

## Voice of the Honduran Resistance: Berta Cáceres

But imperialist arrogance typically underestimates the power of the peoples. Honduras, which for decades has been a U.S. military outpost in Central America, its oligarchy very closely linked to the imperialists, had little opportunity before now to display its peoples’ movement.

This time is different. WW spoke at length with Berta Cáceres from the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) on July 20. Her organization was founded in 1993 to struggle for the rights of Black people and of the Indigenous, particularly of the Lenca nation in the southwest of the country.

**WW:** How did the COPINH join the current struggle?

**BC:** The COPINH for a long time has demanded full and informed participation and consultation regarding Indigenous and Black peoples. We have a clear anti-imperialist and anti-neoliberal political position and have struggled for the construction of a space for direct participatory democracy.



Supporters of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya protest coup.

It is within this sense that we support the initiatives of President Zelaya. Even months before the coup, we denounced the threat that the sectors of power represented and the possibility of a coup against President Zelaya.

We also know that what has happened goes beyond special interests and has national and even international interest. And this coup is a bad precedent for our continent’s history and its processes of freedom and emancipation. This could also be the initiation of an onslaught of 21st century-style repressive coups by the continent’s right-wing oligarchy against all the processes that are liberating our peoples and seeking to build a more just and humane world.

COPINH, as a combat organization of struggle, has joined fully the resistance. [For that] our Indigenous radio has been shut down, we have been persecuted, watched over, our communications intercepted. We have seen how pure fascism has come out, but also a combination of destructive capitalism that is racist and patriarchal with a clear, aggressive character. That is why as a people we are more than ready to participate along with the rest of the diverse Honduran people in this heroic struggle.

**WW:** What is the role of women?

**BC:** It has been fundamental, decisive. From taking bridges to mass marches, I would say that the majority were women of all ages. We are also in the leadership of the FNPRG, making decisions, participating, because we believe that we are protagonists, decisive actors in the history of our country. We are contributing our creativity, with a great deal of inventiveness in each activity.

**WW:** What do you think of President Arias’ negotiations?

**BC:** For us, that is already a failure. We think the last 72-hour time limit [proposed by Arias for the continuation of talks] is a desperate way of finding a solution. ... We have said that we accept point number one, which is the reinstatement of Zelaya to the presidency but reject the other six points because they do not coincide with the FNPRG’s position and that of the Honduran people.

The rest of the points will imply impunity for the coup plotters who have murdered and repressed the people, and have turned the clock back 30 years on our accomplishments. We have demanded an investigation of the armed forces, their function and their role in the coup.

We also demand that there be a point included about human rights, because there have been extensive violations. ... Then, in that sense, we call on the OAS and the U.N. to act on their resolutions and sanctions of Honduras and for all the governments to increase the economic sanctions against the de-facto government.

**WW:** What are the plans for this July 20-26?

**BC:** There are many activities. The Workers Federations are holding an assembly right now to call actions and strikes in governmental and private institutions, including taking over roads, days of art and culture of resistance against the coup, departmental, regional and community actions that will increase on Thursday and Friday [July 24] when we wait for the return of compañero President Zelaya.

**WW:** I heard today that after



WW PHOTO: BRENDA SANDBURG

Jorge Arturo Reina, the Honduran ambassador to the U.N., speaks July 15 at New York meeting in solidarity with Honduras.

being closed since the beginning of the strike, 50 percent of the schools will open.

**BC:** Yes. That has been an agreement among the six teachers’ federations, which are very strong at the national level. They did it in order to have days of awareness for the parents and families, since there exists a huge campaign of disinformation and manipulation by the de-facto government against the organized teachers. In this way, the teachers will regroup and will join all the actions of Thursday and Friday.

There is no other way to inform the people since there is a curfew, a state of siege, violation of freedom of expression, and we cannot use the media to tell the people the truth. There is only one national TV channel and a local radio station. What the people are using is clandestine alternative media.

**WW:** It has been three weeks of constant mobilizations. How has the movement survived?

**BC:** There have been *relevos* (pauses), concentrations in some regions, and increasing the mobilizations when it is more crucial. The youth’s creativity has appeared, very powerfully, more than with speeches, through theater and music. There have been different actions in each region.

There have been very important actions outside of Tegucigalpa. For example, in Colon there have been constant road closures that have prevented the transport of Standard Oil’s production and African Palm oil products, which is owned by Miguel Facusé, one of the coup plotter’s financiers in Honduras and one of the richest men in Central America.

**WW:** What do you think will happen with the ALBA?

**BC:** The ALBA is for us an alternative popular project constructed not only by Mel Zelaya but by the Honduran people. It benefits the poorest sectors in the country, for example, the Indigenous and the Black people. That is why we struggled before and demanded that Honduras join the ALBA. The whole movement has participated in the construction of Honduras ALBA, and we are determined to defend it and will not allow our victories to be reversed.

**WW:** How can we help from the United States?

**BC:** The petition that the IAC’s Ramsey Clark wrote is good. It should continue because the U.S. ambassador knew and approved the coup. The involvement of the Pentagon and the hawks from the USA, of the far right and the Cuban counterrevolutionaries is a fact. Even Micheletti’s USA’s advisors are still here.

Continued on page 10

## No jobs on the moon

It has been there in the sky since long before our species walked the earth. As our ability to wonder and imagine grew, so did our curiosity about this great luminous ball that waxed and waned above us. No matter what continent we lived on, we worshiped it, wrote poetry to it, made love under its soft beams.

Not strange, then, that when the U.S. scientific-military establishment, through NASA, put a person on the moon, it was a very big deal. It generated such excitement and optimism; somehow this technological breakthrough would usher in a better, more enlightened period in human history.

Well, that was four decades ago, when the United States military was involved in another horrible war that brought nothing but suffering and misery to the peoples of Southeast Asia and the U.S. In fact, the Apollo moonwalk may have prolonged that catastrophe, because it bolstered the sagging prestige of the U.S. at a time when rejection of imperialist war and plunder was growing around the world.

Today the efforts of the corporate media to revive the flag-waving euphoria of 1969 are falling flat. This is 2009, the scientific-technological revolution has transformed the world on a huge scale, and workers are worse off than ever. Yes, we see the wondrous new devices everywhere, but they don't bring us much joy.

Official unemployment in the U.S. has hit double digits as jobs evaporate. Truck drivers hate the GPS spy in the sky that knows if they take an unauthorized break. Villagers in Pakistan and Afghanistan hate the pilotless drones that bring death-dealing missile strikes. All workers feel insecure when their bosses roam the world in search of ever-cheaper labor.

Case in point: A few years ago, Ireland was the country of choice for many transnational electronics corporations. It had a labor shortage and workers immigrated from all over Europe. Now Irish workers are in a deep crisis as their jobs have been shifted further east. It was easy for the companies to pick up and leave;

the plants and equipment were totally modular and could be moved in a week. Of course, they planned it that way.

At the time of the Apollo landing in 1969, Workers World wrote an article pointing out that in Harlem, where 50,000 people were attending a cultural festival, there were boos when the announcement was made. Our article said that "contempt and hostility for the celebrations of imperialist overlords who planted their hated flag of slavery on the moon was undoubtedly the reaction of the millions of oppressed people in Asia, Africa and Latin America who live under the heel of Washington and who defiantly refuse to applaud a victory for their oppressor."

The Black struggle by then had swept away segregation laws but poverty, super-exploitation and daily abuse remained. A healthy skepticism about what the government was doing was high in the Black community.

Now that much of the world has been plunged into a new economic crisis, brought on by capitalism's incurable disease of accumulating incredible wealth in the hands of a few while pauperizing the workers, the ground is being prepared for a broader struggle of the working class as a whole against the exploiters.

To quote again from our 1969 article: "At this moment, the greatest burden on humanity is not ignorance of outer space but how to overthrow the parasitic imperialist bourgeoisie right here on earth. This decadent class utilizes all knowledge for its predatory ends of intensifying the exploitation of the toiling classes and of improving the means to keep the workers and the oppressed from breaking their chains. Technology in the hands of the capitalist class is distorted until it is almost unrecognizable as a means of serving human ends. All leaps forward in science and technology by the imperialists must necessarily increase the burden on humanity, not lighten it." □

## Honduran resistance leaders

Continued from page 9

And Otto Reich was present at the air force base under a security operation the evening before the coup. This is a very delicate matter that shows the involvement of these sectors, contrary to what President Obama has said. And we have seen how these *golpistas* (coup plotters) have shown their racism against President Obama.

It is crucial to continue demanding that the U.S. withdraws its ambassador

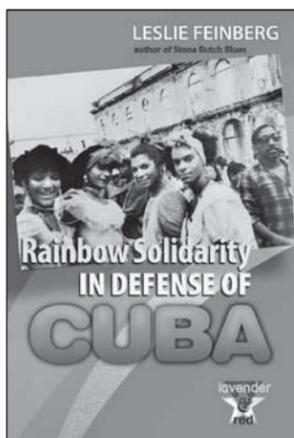
and cuts all aid. There is still U.S. support through the financing of AID and other projects; that is why the de-facto government is not worried. Therefore it is essential to continue demonstrating against U.S. embassies and force the USA to participate fully in the sanctions—to do what that government is obliged through the OAS and U.N. resolutions. [Activists] should also demand that the Canadian government cease to support the de-facto government. □

## Rainbow Solidarity In Defense of CUBA

This new book is a compilation of 25 articles about how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love from the colonial and imperial eras. The articles are part of the Lavender & Red series from Workers World weekly newspaper.

The never-before-compiled information offers a factual vista on the trajectory of progress of the Cuban Revolution. It's a must-read to understand the revolutionary process required to uproot prejudice.

Order from [www.Leftbooks.com](http://www.Leftbooks.com)



## Parole hearing July 28 Urgent—Support Leonard Peltier!

By Deirdre Griswold

Leonard Peltier, like Mumia Abu-Jamal, has become known around the world as a symbol of U.S. government injustice toward the peoples it has abused and betrayed over centuries.

Peltier has a full parole hearing coming up on July 28—the first one since 1993. It is important that all those fighting racism and injustice let the government know that they support Peltier's release from prison.

Peltier was a leader of the American Indian Movement in 1976 when he was arrested and charged with the deaths of two FBI agents during a shootout at the Pine Ridge Reservation of the Oglala-Lakota Nation. He has now been imprisoned for more than 33 years—one of the world's longest-held political prisoners—and his health is frail.

According to Amnesty International, the Parole Commission, after an interim hearing that refused to reconsider its 1994 decision to deny Peltier parole, acknowledged that "the prosecution has conceded the lack of any direct evidence that [Peltier] personally participated in the executions of the two FBI agents. ..."

However, the position of the Parole Commission has been that Peltier must accept "criminal responsibility" for the

killings in order to get parole. It's a "Catch 22" situation for Peltier, who has always maintained his innocence.

Two other AIM members, Dino Butler and Robert Robideau, who admitted they were present during the shootout, were tried and acquitted of the murders of the FBI agents on the grounds of self-defense after they provided ample testimony to the atmosphere of terror that existed on the reservation.

It was after their acquittals, said Amnesty in an appeal to President Bill Clinton in 1999 for a pardon, that "the government intensified its pursuit of Leonard Peltier."

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

There are only a few days left to act. Letters supporting Peltier's parole effort should be addressed to the U.S. Parole Commission, 5550 Friendship Blvd., Suite 420, Chevy Chase, MD 20815-7286. Your letter must reference Peltier's prison number, 20815-7286.

Free Leonard Peltier! □

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

## Michael—The Meal

Taken from a July 2 audio column at [www.prisonradio.org](http://www.prisonradio.org). Go to [www.millions4mumia.org](http://www.millions4mumia.org) to read updates on Mumia's case.

Michael Jackson was many things in his 50 years of life: child star, wunderkind, stirring tenor, dancer extraordinaire, entertainer, even oddity.

But he was more. In death as in life, he has become a meal for the media. And the media is ever hungry, and never full.

I confess to sheer fascination, and thus, perhaps I am feeding the very beast that I declaim, for fascination is but fuel for the flame.

Michael Jackson's entire life has been a source of fascination and has sparked the sales of newspapers, magazines and assorted media outlets.



CNN, the nation's premier cable news network, saw an increase of over 900 percent—900 percent!—in viewership since Michael's passing. Don't you think the ever-growing profit motive has had something to do with this?

For a brief, naive moment, I thought that the mad frenzy of the media for Jackson would dissipate with his passing. I could not be more wrong.

We will hear, read and see much more of Michael before this latest mania passes over.

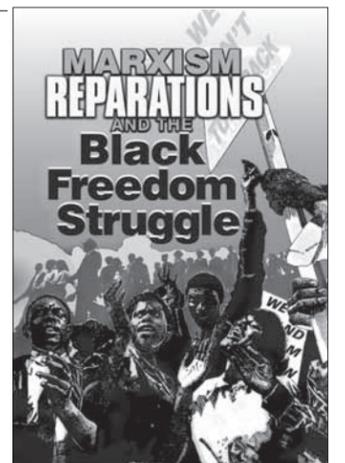
Driven by the lust for profits, the story will go on and on until nothing is left to eat.

Order Mumia's latest book, "Jailhouse Lawyers," at [www.Leftbooks.com](http://www.Leftbooks.com).

## MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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

- Racism, national oppression and self-determination
- Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery
- Black youth: repression & resistance
- Black & Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice!
- Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion
- Racism and poverty in the Delta
- The struggle for Socialism is key
- Domestic Workers United demand passage of a bill of rights
- Black Reconstruction: The unfinished revolution



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## Gathering in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt

# Non-Aligned Movement calls for 'new economic order'

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

The 15th Non-Aligned Movement summit was held July 15-16 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, with the theme of "International Solidarity for Peace and Development." The NAM, founded in 1961, has a membership of 118 nations throughout the developing world.

The meeting emphasized the role of the Western industrialized states in creating the economic crisis that has rendered tens of millions of people unemployed and impoverished throughout the world.

Cuban President Raul Castro, outgoing chair of the NAM, delivered the keynote address to nearly 60 heads of state and 8,000 delegates from various countries throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Other leaders, such as President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, also spoke to the NAM summit and stressed the necessity that the organization provide an effective alternative to the international financial institutions as well as the United Nations.

Mugabe, whose southern African nation has been subjected to intense sanctions and vilification by the imperialist states over the last decade, has recently overseen the implementation of an inclusive coalition government encompassing the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front and the two main opposition parties of the Movement for Democratic Change. Yet the country is still subjected to sanctions by the U.S., Britain and the European Union.

In his address, Mugabe said: "The Movement cannot afford a business-as-usual approach. ... Our clear and present challenge is ... delivering a just, peaceful and equitable world order. The Non-Aligned Movement faces renewed attempts by some Western countries to interfere in the internal affairs of NAM member countries. This 'big brother is watching' state of affairs is a grave danger to international peace and security.

"The severity of the machinations by the Western world has often manifested itself in a number of ways, including the use of surreptitious and illegal attempts



Cuban President Raul Castro

by some Western countries to abuse the U.N. Security Council to unjustly punish developing countries through the imposition of illegal and unilateral sanctions." (Zimbabwe Herald, July 16)

Zimbabwe "was a target of these abhorrent machinations," continued Mugabe. "We need to recognize that as long as the U.N. retains its present form, it will continue to be abused by the mighty, haughty and militarily powerful [who] victimize the smaller and weaker nations. The international financial system ... is similarly in dire need of reform."

Mugabe also noted that although the present global economic meltdown started in the Western imperialist states, the impact of the crisis is having a devastating impact on the developing countries where there is less demand for their products, the closure of plants and businesses, and deepening poverty.

The Zimbabwe leader expressed his support for the G192 summit held by the General Assembly in June at the U.N. headquarters in New York. He endorsed the recommendations of the G192 to place the International Monetary Fund and World Bank under the control of the General Assembly.

Mugabe also called for greater South-South collaboration, although he did not

rule out cooperation between all states. He emphasized that although the Southern African Development Community, the African Union and the NAM have provided tremendous support to Zimbabwe, the existing sanctions imposed by the imperialist states continue to hamper the country's progress.

"They [the West] are still bent on their goal of effecting regime change in my country. We count on your continued solidarity and support in our endeavor to improve the quality of life of our people," Mugabe said.

### 'New world economic order' needed

In his keynote address, Cuban President Raul Castro renewed the call for a new economic division of labor and financial power. "We demand the establishment of a new international financial and economic structure that relies on the participation of all countries," said Castro. (Granma International, July 16)

"There must be a new framework that doesn't depend solely on the economic stability and the political decision of only one country," stated Castro in apparent reference to the United States. "This crisis ... emanated from the advanced industrial economies, but the developing economies, the members of our movement, have been the hardest hit."

Castro reported on the work of the NAM over the last three years since Cuba began serving as chair. "The common challenges for the non-aligned countries are serious and numerous. Never before has the world been so unequal and its inequities so profound. But, along with the challenges, our Movement's capacity for resistance and its strength have also grown.

"We have faced threats and aggression, condemned unjust treaties in international trade and finance, and demanded our full participation in the highest authorities of world governance," continued the Cuban leader. "A decisive part of Cuba's presidency coincided with one of the most aggressive and hegemonic governments, one of the greatest violators of international law, that has ever existed in the United States."

### International solidarity

Castro stated that the NAM has continued to express solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian and Arab peoples:

"We have not hesitated to condemn the aggression and crimes of Israel, the occupying power. We will not rest until we see the implementation of the demands of the Palestinian and Arab brothers and sisters.

"There is no path other than dialogue and negotiation for achieving a just and lasting peace in the entire Middle East region, which inevitably involves the founding of an independent Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital."

Castro also condemned the June 28 military coup in Honduras and demanded that President Jose Manuel Zelaya be restored to office. The coup has been denounced by governments and mass organizations throughout Latin America and the world.

The outgoing NAM chair stressed that despite the economic blockade against Cuba, the country has continued to engage in international solidarity efforts, especially in providing medical care. "Even in these difficult circumstances, our people have modestly demonstrated how much can be done, when political will exists, in terms of international solidarity and cooperation, particularly in the area of health.

"Almost 15,000 Cuban medical collaborators are working in 98 countries to save lives and prevent disease. More than 32,000 young people from 118 states, principally in the Third World, are studying free of charge at our educational centers, 78 percent of them in the specialties of medicine."

### From Bandung to Sharm El-Sheikh

The Non-Aligned Movement originated in the Bandung Conference held in Indonesia in April 1955, with 29 countries from Asia and Africa attending. Socialist states such as China and Vietnam have been involved with the movement since its inception, even though the Bandung Conference and NAM have been described as an effort to chart a course independent of both the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War period.

In 1961, the formal organization of the Non-Aligned Movement took place with its founding summit in Yugoslavia. Some of the leading figures in the formation of the NAM were Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt and Josep Broz Tito of Yugoslavia.

At the 1979 NAM Summit in Havana, Cuba, a declaration stated that the purpose of the organization was to "ensure the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries" in their "struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics."

NAM represents two-thirds of the United Nations' membership and approximately 55 percent of the world's population. The chair of the organization has now been handed over to Egypt.

This year's summit produced declarations related to the need for global food security, climate change, solidarity with the Palestinian people, and a resolution honoring the 91st birthday of former African National Congress leader and South African president Nelson Mandela. □

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—Abayomi Azikiwe

## Low-Wage Capitalism

### Low-Wage Capitalism

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## El movimiento antiguerra discute sobre Irán, el Medio Oriente y las guerras de Estados Unidos

Por John Catalinotto

El conflicto en Irán que comenzó con las elecciones presidenciales en junio ha tenido un impacto sobre el movimiento progresista y antiimperialista mundialmente, incluyendo en los Estados Unidos. La falta de un claro entendimiento sobre los eventos ha creado algunas confusiones en las filas antiguerra. Esto es especialmente peligroso luego de que el Vicepresidente Joe Biden el 5 de julio implícitamente diera permiso a un ataque israelita contra Irán. El movimiento antiguerra debe estar alerta para protestar contra cualquier movida en esa dirección.

Cuando gran cantidad de personas tomó las calles en Terán el 15 de junio para protestar la elección del Presidente Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, parecía que era un auténtico movimiento popular, aún cuando la base más fuerte estaba en las partes más opulentas de la ciudad.

Aparentemente los/as jóvenes y las mujeres jugaron un papel muy importante en las protestas. Algunas de las demandas eran por los derechos de las mujeres y otros derechos democráticos que estaban limitados por el liderazgo religioso político de la revolución de Irán. Fue muy fácil para los/as progresistas seculares del occidente identificarse con las protestas.

Pero algunas interrogantes aún quedan.

Si las protestas eran progresistas, ¿por qué todos los políticos imperialistas en Europa y Estados Unidos y sus noticieros capitalistas tomaron el lado de la oposición? Esto es muy extraño ya que los participantes más importantes de la oposición, el candidato Mir Hossein Mousavi y el ex Presidente Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, estaban identificándose con el régimen pasado. En ese tiempo, fuentes de Estados Unidos hasta culpaban a Mousavi por ser responsable de haber supervisado la explosión en el Líbano en 1983 que mató a más de 200 marinos estadounidenses, ya que él era el Primer Ministro en ese entonces.

Rafsanjani, quien es una de las personas más ricas de Irán, está asociado con el aumento de la privatización de la industria y la banca y con abrir relaciones más amigables con el imperialismo estadounidense. Esto necesariamente incluiría el recorte del apoyo para los movimientos de liberación Hamas y Hizbolá y posiblemente para Siria, y el aumento de la cooperación con Estados Unidos en Irak

y Afganistán. ¿Cómo la privatización y la cooperación con Estados Unidos podrían aumentar los derechos democráticos dentro de Irán?

Un análisis serio de estas interrogantes debe incluir un examen de las metas del imperialismo estadounidense con respecto a todo el Medio Oriente y al Asia Central. La administración de George W. Bush utilizó el ataque del 9/11 como pretexto para justificar la agresión militar en toda la región, aunque la meta real era la de conquistar sus mundialmente importantes recursos de energía. Un vistazo a las noticias en la segunda semana de julio muestra que esta estrategia básica todavía permanece.

### Las tropas de EEUU aún están en Irak

Algunos titulares engañosos dieron la falsa impresión de que las tropas de EEUU se retiraron de Irak el 30 de junio. Sin embargo, 134.000 tropas aún permanecen en el país. Se retiraron de 142 puestos que se encontraban dentro de ciudades iraquíes, entregando esos puestos a las tropas iraquíes, pero siguen en 320 otros puestos por todo Irak.

En algunos casos, en lugar de moverse, las fuerzas de EEUU e Irak simplemente redefinieron los límites de la ciudad, dejando a las tropas donde se encontraban. Tal fue el caso de la Base Falcón de Operaciones de Avanzada del Ejército de los EEUU, que se encuentra dentro de Bagdad. Ahora, con el establecimiento de un nuevo límite, las 3.000 tropas de los EEUU están “fuera” de los límites de la ciudad.

Las tropas de los EEUU y mercenarios bien pagados están expandiendo y mejorando sus bases en las zonas rurales e incluso construyendo otras nuevas. Aunque la administración de Obama mantenga firme el itinerario anunciado, al menos 50.000 tropas estadounidenses se van a quedar en Irak hasta por lo menos a finales del 2011. Un proyecto de ley sobre gastos de guerra que el Congreso controlado por el Partido Demócrata acaba de aprobar, vierte otros \$100 miles de millones a las ocupaciones de Irak y Afganistán. (Información de la página web del experto sobre Irak, Dahr Jamail—dahrjamailliraq.com)

### Washington intensifica la guerra en Afganistán y Pakistán

Mientras tanto en Afganistán, el nivel de las tropas de los EEUU ya ha creci-

do a 57.000 y están esperando llegar a 68.000 durante el año. Según el Servicio Noticiero McClatchy, el general Stanley McChrystal, el comandante principal de los EEUU en Afganistán, dijo el 13 de julio que “cuando rinda su evaluación a la administración de Obama el próximo mes sobre lo que se necesita para derrotar a los talibanes, no va a ser disuadido por las declaraciones de la administración de que no puede disponer de más tropas estadounidenses”.

Gran Bretaña, también ha aumentado su presencia en Afganistán, resultando en la muerte de 15 soldados británicos en las dos semanas que terminaron el 13 de julio. La ocupación afgana está nominalmente bajo el mando de la OTAN. Los líderes europeos han hecho caso omiso del sentimiento popular contra la guerra que se opone al envío de tropas a Afganistán, basándose en la esperanza de una reactivación de la popularidad de EEUU en Europa causada por el Presidente Obama luego de que Bush bajara esa popularidad al nivel más bajo en la historia. El apoyo a la guerra está disminuyendo rápidamente al aumentar las bajas, tanto en Gran Bretaña, como en el resto de Europa y Canadá. Hasta el New York Times ha tenido que admitir que el aumento de efectivos y la actividad militar en Afganistán, con el consiguiente aumento de víctimas civiles, está ayudando al reclutamiento por parte de los talibanes y otras fuerzas de la resistencia. (3 de julio)

Junto al de Afganistán, está el aumento de la intervención estadounidense en Pakistán. Aviones piloteados y teledirigidos son enviados para bombardear y atacar con cohetes objetivos de presuntos “insurgentes”, mientras que el Pentágono impulsa al régimen paquistaní a enviar su ejército a las zonas fronterizas. Ambas actividades han incrementado la muerte de civiles y creado millones de refugiados/as en Pakistán. También ha aumentado el reclutamiento por las fuerzas de oposición, algunas aliadas a la resistencia afgana.

### La política estadounidense en Palestina

La política de Washington hacia Palestina ha sido la continuación de su apoyo al estado israelí, a pesar de la negación de Israel de impedir nuevas colonias en la ocupada Ribera Occidental y de su brutal bloqueo de la Franja de Gaza. Está basada en los intereses estratégicos

estadounidenses en la región, los cuales dependen del estado israelí como un arma contra cualquier movimiento de liberación o gobierno soberano en la región.

Los medios de difusión basados en los Estados Unidos atacaron las elecciones iraníes llamándolas fraudulentas. Pero recordemos que en cuanto a Palestina, Washington e Israel se negaron a reconocer las elecciones que sabían eran honestas

en las que Hamas surgió como partido predominante en 2006. Desde entonces la alianza Estados Unidos-Israel ha usado la fuerza militar y ha negado la asistencia para tratar de sacar a Hamas del gobierno.

Washington no ha cambiado su política básica de ocupación y control desde la sustitución del régimen neo-conservador encabezado por Bush. Por eso es consistente con sus crímenes pasados que los medios masivos corporativos y todos los políticos imperialistas—en América del Norte y en Europa por lo menos—se hayan centrado en el gobierno iraní a causa de las elecciones y hayan elogiado las manifestaciones de la oposición.

Sean cuales sean los motivos de los/as manifestantes en Terán, el motivo de los imperialistas es eliminar la soberanía de Irán y hacer retroceder la revolución de 1979.

### Grupo financiado por la NED organiza manifestación contra Irán

Un grupo en los Estados Unidos que se llama Unidos por Irán (United 4 Iran) ha convocado manifestaciones para el 25 de julio para protestar en contra del gobierno de Irán. Dice que las acciones son a favor de los/as jóvenes y mujeres que han participado en las manifestaciones de oposición. El grupo antiimperialista Alto a la Guerra contra Irán (Stop War on Iran) ha respondido y publicado una declaración en la cual revela las conexiones de Unidos por Irán con grupos de financiamiento que están asociados estrechamente con la política del exterior de los Estados Unidos—como la Fundación Nacional para la Democracia (National Endowment for Democracy)—y exhorta a no apoyar estas manifestaciones.

“La nueva amenaza pública contra Irán del Vice Presidente estadounidense Joe Biden subraya los peligros de una nueva guerra en el Oriente Medio y la necesidad urgente de claridad política dentro del movimiento contra la guerra en cuanto a Irán,” comienza la declaración de Alto a la Guerra contra Irán.

“Con sus comentarios del 5 de julio en This Week (ABC), Biden abrió la puerta a un ataque militar cuando dijo que Estados Unidos no impediría un ataque israelí contra las facilidades nucleares de Irán, al llamar tal ataque ‘el derecho soberano’ de Israel”.

Alto a la Guerra contra Irán comenta que algunas organizaciones del movimiento contra la guerra han auspiciado la acción de Unidos por Irán, incluyendo Unidos/as para la Paz y Justicia (United for Peace and Justice), y “les exhorta a ellos y a otras fuerzas honestas del movimiento contra la guerra a que reconsideren su respaldo a estas acciones contra Irán”.

Alto a la Guerra contra Irán exhorta a todos/as a que “salgan CONTRA las guerras estadounidenses actuales y las amenazas de una nueva guerra la semana siguiente en un Día Nacional de Acciones Coordinadas en el sábado, 1º de agosto”. Para leer el texto entero de la declaración y/o para participar, vea stopwaroniran.org.

Correo electrónico: jcat@workers.org

## LIBERTAD PARA LOS CINCO CUBANOS



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez y Fernando González Llort. Libertad para los cinco compatriotas cubanos que defendieron a su país del terrorismo y que ahora están presos en EE.UU. por evitar muertes en la isla.