

# WORKERS WORLD

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## European bailouts confirm Capitalist crisis is spreading

### Workers must unite to fight bankers' attacks

By Fred Goldstein

The big message that the working class should take away from the latest European bailout and the stock markets' ups and downs is that capitalism is failing as an economic system and the time for workers to open a struggle is now.

European capitalist governments and the International Monetary Fund just had to pledge to put up \$980 billion to keep the governments of Greece, Portugal and Spain financially afloat. Fears of imminent government default in Greece and threats of future default by Portugal and Spain prompted the emergency meeting of European finance ministers and strong intervention by Washington.

Sixteen countries use the euro, which is controlled by the European Central Bank, as a common currency. That bank agreed to make or guarantee \$575 billion in loans. The larger 27-nation European Union pledged an additional \$80 billion, and the IMF agreed to put up \$325 billion. This is supposed to cover government deficits of the three southern European countries and other endangered government debt for the next three years.

#### Gov't bailout is a bank bailout

The real aim is to make sure that these governments can pay their debts to the banks. So the government bailouts are also bank bailouts, aimed at preventing a global financial collapse of the type that almost took place when Lehman Brothers failed in the U.S. in September 2008.

European banks and insurers are holding \$193 billion in debt due from the Greek government. But they also have \$240 billion in government debt from Portugal and \$832 billion from Spain. Big European banks also have investments in Greek banks that are in danger.

Much of this debt was incurred during periods of economic expansion. Though the capitalist economic crisis has reduced the tax base of the governments, the banks still want their pound of flesh, even if it takes cutbacks in services, wages of government workers, pensions and benefits. Southern Europe is experiencing budget crises and cutbacks similar to those taking place in California, Michigan, Rhode Island, Illinois and many other states in the U.S.

The credit agencies have downgraded Greek government bonds to "junk bond" status, and the credit ratings of Portugal and Spain are falling. That means the bankers and other financial loan sharks of the capitalist world either will no longer lend money to these governments or will charge such high interest rates that the governments can no longer afford to borrow.

But the governments have to borrow in order to pay off debts to the banks that were incurred from previous borrowing. So they are caught in a debt trap that could lead to defaulting on their loans. That is why what is happening in Europe is, at bottom, a bank bailout.

#### High stakes for Wall St. and Washington

Wall Street and Washington also have a big stake in this affair. The administration put on a full-court press to put together the trillion-dollar bailout. President Barack Obama was on the phone with German Prime Minister Angela Merkel, pressuring her to give up opposition to the bailout. German capital will have to

be a major lender under the plan.

Obama was also on the phone with French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Vice President Joseph Biden met with Spanish Prime Minister José Zapatero. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner lobbied the finance ministers, while the Federal Reserve Board promised to supply dollars to various European central banks in currency swaps so they could make payments in dollars, if needed.

The urgency behind Washington's intervention flowed from the fact that U.S. banks have \$3.6 trillion in exposure to European banks, including \$1 trillion to France and Germany and \$200 billion to Spain, according to the Bank for International Settlements. A string of defaults set off by the default of Greece and other governments would jeopardize U.S. banks and bring a renewed financial crisis on Wall Street.

Furthermore, an economic collapse in Europe could hit U.S. corporations that export to those countries. More than a quarter of the profits of the Standard & Poor's 500 top corporations come from exports — much of them to Europe. So the Obama administration's pressure for this bailout was not to save Europe but to save Wall Street and the big U.S. industrialists.

At the end of this financial chain are the workers. The banks have been bleeding the governments of southern Europe. This means bleeding the workers who create the wealth and value that goes into government treasuries and ends up being paid out in interest. The capitalist gov-

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PHOTO: KKE

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# JOBS NOW!



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD



Youth and students led a march demanding a WPA-type jobs program on May 8 in Washington, DC. A strategy meeting was then held at a union hall ratifying a program of action. Read related articles on pages 6-7.

WW PHOTOS: LIZ GREEN

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# GURU: a giant of hip-hop music

By Larry Hales

Guru, a giant of hip-hop music, of Black culture and of entertainment in general died April 19 from multiple myeloma at the young age of 47, weeks after he went into cardiac arrest and lapsed into a coma. Guru (Gifted Unlimited Rhymes Universal), originally named Keith Elam, was one of the founding members of the pioneering group Gang Starr, along with D.J. Premier.

From the beginning Gang Starr had a different sound. Guru, who was born and raised in the Roxbury section of Boston, and D.J. Premier were both heavily influenced by jazz music. Premier's production uses samples from across the spectrum of Black music and he has been known to have an encyclopedic knowledge of hip-hop lyrics throughout the years.

Guru's affinity for jazz music was displayed very early on. The group's first album, "No More Mr. Nice Guy," was recorded during the period now known as the Golden Age of Hip-Hop, when the music was much more culturally relevant, socially responsible and commented on the reality of the daily conditions of oppressed Black people.

In the song, "Jazz Music," Guru precisely ties the development of jazz music to the historical oppression of Black people:

"The music started in the hearts and the drums from another land/  
 Played for everyone by sons of the motherland/  
 Sendin' out a message of peace to everybody/  
 And came across the ocean in chains and shame/  
 Easing the pain, and it was without name/  
 Until some men in New Orleans, on Rampart Street/  
 Put out the sounds and they gave it a beat."

During the Golden Age, before the commoditization of the culture by mainstream media, it was difficult to find hip-hop music that did not have a social message and even the most radical of groups, like Public Enemy, were widely known and their music widely circulated.

Just as the argument as to when hip-hop started will go on: did it start with Langston Hughes, who spoke his poetry to the accompaniment of Charles Mingus; with Muhammad Ali; with the Watts Prophets; Last Poets; or Gil Scott Heron; or does it precede all of them and go all the way back to African traditions? Just as few would argue that history was set



in motion when the first slaves were captured and put on vessels across the Atlantic and from this hip-hop came, the argument about when the fusion of jazz and hip-hop or jazz rap occurred will go on.

But, regardless of when and whom it started with, Gang Starr and Guru were the first to perfect it, even before Miles Davis cooperated with Easy Mo Bee to make the Doo Bop album, before the Digable Planets and before the Roots.

Guru recorded another tribute to jazz for the soundtrack to the Spike Lee movie, "Mo Betta Blues," titled, "Jazz Thing." The lyrics in "Jazz Thing" show a greater maturity, rhythmically and historically when the rapper intones:

"Its roots are in the sounds of the African/  
 Or should I say the mother ... bringin' us back again/  
 From the drummin' on the Congo, we came with a strong flow/  
 And continue to grow/  
 Feet move, to the beat of the t'ballo/  
 Now dig the story and follow/  
 For then it landed, on American soil/  
 Through the sweat, the blood, and the toil/  
 Hear, 'Praise the Lord,' shouted on chain gangs/  
 Pain they felt, but it helped them to maintain/  
 Scott Joplin's rags, Bessie Smith's blues, St. Louis blues, they were all the news/  
 Ringin' smooth ... in all the listeners' ears/  
 Fulfillin' the needs, and plantin' the seeds/  
 Of a jazz thing."

While socially conscious, Guru was not without his contradictions, especially when it comes to the women question. But this is pervasive in the U.S. and can be seen in the glut of sexist imagery on television, in print and in music and has to be fought

against in general. It is not based in hip-hop culture alone but in the overarching culture of the U.S., which is rooted in the particular development of U.S. capitalism.

Guru's social consciousness can be seen early on in his music, from the first Gang Starr album, in the song, "Positivity." One of this writer's favorite songs is from the third in the "Jazzmatazz" series, "Streetsoul," entitled, "Lift Your Fist." The chorus of the song, rapped by Black Thought of the Roots, goes:

"To all my people just lift your fist/  
 Seem like it ain't no peace, no justice/  
 How you want, the bullet or the micro chip/  
 Either way you go to lift your fist."

One of his last pieces of music was from his fourth "Jazzmatazz" collection, a series that was well-received critically. In this song, "Too Slick," Guru displays his usual braggadocio along with a critique for some who make music purely for the sake of fame and money:

"Watch me show splendor I'm no pretender/  
 Cause I can bring summer during cold December/  
 Golden embers of burnt emcees remains/  
 'Cause they traded their names for some sleazy fame/  
 As it all turns out they're forgotten about/  
 While I'm the one that the homies are talking about."

Earlier in the same verse Guru rhymes:  
 "Take you to new heights/  
 Let's go up a few flights/  
 You heard what was said/  
 I'm a shed some true light/  
 This is art no corporate crap."

Guru was not the greatest rap artist. His cadence wasn't the greatest, his imagery not the most creative, and his word play wasn't the densest. Yet, few can imagine a greater production rap team than Gang Starr and few can imagine any other voice displaying the confidence, braggadocio and social message that came from Guru.

Guru's voice alone, the clarity in his particular northeastern growl, was distinctive. He belongs in the canon of hip-hop performers and artists in general. And who can ever forget the line from the song, "Dwyck":

"Lemonade was a popular drink and it still is/  
 I get more props and stunts than Bruce Willis." □

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Workers World  
 55 West 17 Street  
 New York, N.Y. 10011  
 Phone: (212) 627-2994  
 Fax: (212) 675-7869  
 E-mail: ww@workers.org  
 Web: www.workers.org  
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Editor: Deirdre Griswold  
 Technical Editor: Lal Roohk  
 Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie Feinberg, Kris Hamel, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson  
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**National Office**  
 55 W. 17 St.  
 New York, NY 10011  
 212-627-2994  
 ww@workers.org  
**Atlanta**  
 P.O. Box 5565  
 Atlanta, GA 30307  
 404-627-0185  
 atlanta@workers.org  
**Baltimore**  
 c/o Solidarity Center  
 2011 N. Charles St., Bsm.  
 Baltimore, MD 21218  
 443-909-8964  
 baltimore@workers.org  
**Boston**  
 284 Amory St.  
 Boston, MA 02130  
 617-522-6626  
 Fax 617-983-3836  
 boston@workers.org

**Buffalo, N.Y.**  
 367 Delaware Ave.  
 Buffalo, NY 14202  
 716-883-2534  
 buffalo@workers.org  
**Chicago**  
 27 N. Wacker Dr. #138  
 Chicago, IL 60606  
 773-381-5839  
 chicago@workers.org  
**Cleveland**  
 P.O. Box 5963  
 Cleveland, OH 44101  
 216-531-4004  
 cleveland@workers.org  
**Denver**  
 denver@workers.org  
**Detroit**  
 5920 Second Ave.  
 Detroit, MI 48202  
 313-459-0777  
 detroit@workers.org

**Durham, N.C.**  
 durham@workers.org  
**Houston**  
 P.O. Box 3454  
 Houston  
 TX 77253-3454  
 713-503-2633  
 houston@workers.org  
**Los Angeles**  
 5274 W Pico Blvd  
 Suite # 207  
 Los Angeles, CA 90019  
 la@workers.org  
 323-306-6240  
**Milwaukee**  
 milwaukee@workers.org  
**Philadelphia**  
 P.O. Box 34249  
 Philadelphia  
 PA 19101  
 610-931-2615  
 phila@workers.org

**Pittsburgh**  
 pittsburgh@workers.org  
**Rochester, N.Y.**  
 585-436-6458  
 rochester@workers.org  
**San Diego, Calif.**  
 P.O. Box 33447  
 San Diego  
 CA 92163  
 619-692-0355  
**San Francisco**  
 2940 16th St., #207  
 San Francisco  
 CA 94103  
 415-738-4739  
 sf@workers.org  
**Tucson, Ariz.**  
 tucson@workers.org  
**Washington, D.C.**  
 P.O. Box 57300  
 Washington, DC 20037  
 dc@workers.org

# SWAT team raids Ohio home to enforce eviction

## Defenders released, stay strong, the struggle continues

By Bryan G. Pfeifer and Mike Shane

### Moratorium NOW!

Home defender Keith Sadler and six supporters are out of jail after their arrest during a home invasion and forced eviction by the Wood County SWAT team early May 7. While the paramilitary police stormed Sadler's home, about 30 supporters rallied outside in the pouring rain chanting, "Keith's house!" The SWAT home invasion and the arrests were recorded and photographed.

Supporters, led by the Toledo Foreclosure Defense League, followed those arrested to the Woods County jail and continued to demonstrate. They were joined by the Cleveland chapter of the Bail Out the People Movement; Fight Imperialism, Stand Together members from Cleveland; and a rank-and-file United Auto Workers member. They demanded the immediate release of the "Stony Ridge Seven," that all seven be fed their vegan diet, that an immediate moratorium on foreclosures and evictions be declared throughout the U.S., and that the bankers and other Wall Street speculators who caused the foreclosure and eviction crisis be arrested, not the people.

The Seven were released on their own recognizance after being charged with "trespass" and "obstruction of justice."

A potluck and meeting in Bowling Green, Ohio, took place May 7. This had originally been planned as a potluck and speakout rally at Sadler's home. Ongoing plans to continue the struggle, discussed at the meeting, will be announced soon.

For now supporters are encouraged to pack the Perrysburg Municipal Court at 300 Walnut Street, Perrysburg, Ohio, on May 17 at 9:30 a.m. for a pre-trial hearing for the Stony Ridge Seven.

The "Stony Ridge Seven" had barricaded themselves in Sadler's home since Sunday, May 2 in protest of the bank's foreclosure of his home of 20 years.

A longtime UAW member in various manufacturing plants, Sadler was unable to work after a repetitive strain injury became acute in July 2008. After being out of work for some time due to his injury and two surgeries on his right hand, Sadler's income decreased, and thus it became a severe challenge for him to meet his mortgage payments.

The bank foreclosed on his home in 2009 and refused any loan modification. Despite delaying court proceedings through various means and attempting to procure legal aid assistance, Sadler's home was sold to the bank at a sheriff's sale in January 2010. Sadler was thereafter served with a notice of eviction for midnight, May 2.

Instead of submitting quietly, Sadler and other members of the Toledo Foreclosure Defense League barricaded themselves in the house until the SWAT team dragged them out. They believe that if the big banks can get a bailout, so can the people. They want an indefinite moratorium on all foreclosures, evictions and utility shutoffs — now!

During his home defense, Sadler and his supporters received a groundswell of support from individuals and organizations such as Take Back the Land, Moratorium NOW!, the Bail Out the People Movement, UAW and other union members and from the community.

Supporters held a protest at the State Bank and Trust on May 5. Michael Moore posted the UStream live feed and media

Below, community supports efforts to save home from foreclosure. Right, cops remove home defenders.



WWW.PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER

coverage on his website. Supporters from across the U.S. and beyond have been and are sending solidarity messages through Twitter. During the home defense, messages were posted on the UStream live feed and watched by people around the globe. This was critical in spreading the word of the home defense and for garnering support.

Though Sadler's home's electric power was cut May 5 — many suspect by police officials — supporters quickly helped restore power to his home. They also helped provide alternative sources of energy and continually dropped off food and other needed supplies.

Sadler told supporters during his home defense: "I basically did everything within the system to save my house and it all

came to nothing. We are taking a stand. We are drawing a line in the sand and saying, 'Enough is enough!' We're standing up and we hope others will too. We want an indefinite moratorium on all foreclosures. Having people's homes stolen right out from under them by the banks is not acceptable. We must fight back."

Sadler's spokesperson, Lance Crandall, asks that people continue to call the bank and the sheriff to demand that all charges be dropped. For more information about ongoing activities, call: 419-309-7040.

Local bank branch: 419-874-2090

Bank HQ: 419-783-8950

Wood County sheriff's office: 419-354-9001; sheriff's direct line: 419-354-9008; sheriff's personal e-mail: wasyl@wcnnet.org. □

## Homeless shelter declares

# 'We're not going anywhere'

By Dianne Mathiowetz  
Atlanta

Hundreds of homeless men receive shelter every night at the Task Force for the Homeless building on Peachtree and Pine streets in midtown Atlanta. Through the machinations and dirty dealings of a cabal of speculators, corporate heads and politicians, they are being threatened with eviction.

On May 4, Manny Fialkow, a Norcross developer who earlier created a charitable-sounding company, Ichthus Community Trust, to buy the shelter's outstanding \$900,000 worth of loans, abruptly ended negotiations with the Task Force and foreclosed on the property. That morning, he had insisted that an agreement to forestall foreclosure was on track and the papers were ready to be signed. The foreclosure was not included in the monthly auction that takes place on Fulton County Courthouse's steps. By late afternoon, news of the foreclosure was made public.

As of this writing, no official notice has yet been received by the Task Force director, Anita Beaty.

Beaty stated: "Until no one needs our services, we will stay here. This is home for thousands of people over the course of a year. It is where they get access to all kinds of necessary referrals and help." She explained the vital role the Task Force performs in preventing homeless people from living and dying on the streets, es-

pecially at this time of rising unemployment and foreclosure rates, cuts in social programs and the closing of other Atlanta shelters.

The foreclosure takes place following years of maneuvering by major business leaders to force the removal of the Task Force from a prime piece of real estate, near to high-priced condominiums and fancy office towers, on Atlanta's prestigious main thoroughfare. In collusion with city officials, public and private funding have either been diminished or terminated through a campaign of political and economic pressure, media demonization and racist imagery.

In television interviews, Fialkow claims that he has no interest in developing the property now and that his only concern is finding better housing for the shelter's clients, yet he stands to make millions of dollars in the building's resale or development. When word of the foreclosure got out, consultants and surveyors immediately demanded entrance to see the building.

The Task Force's claims of a concerted campaign of forced removal are backed up by voluminous e-mails and documents found through discovery in a federal civil rights lawsuit charging Central Atlanta Progress, the City of Atlanta and others with "tortious interference."

Their stated goal of eliminating the Peachtree-Pine shelter is part of an effort to remove poor, homeless African-American men, in particular, from the

downtown business and tourist areas, says Beaty.

A HUD complaint claiming violations of the fair housing law has also been recently filed. Both of these legal actions pose the opportunity for a groundbreaking examination of how unelected businessmen, bankers and developers determine public policy in their own financial interests, contrary to those of the general public.

Numerous corporate and civic leaders have already been deposed. An astounding revelation concerns the role of former City Council member, Debi Starnes, who designed draconian ordinances meant to rid downtown Atlanta of poor people during the 1996 Olympics. She became the "homeless czar" in the Shirley Franklin administration. While claiming to be a city employee, her salary was paid by the business community and funneled through the United Way to her. (Atlanta Progressive News)

Starnes oversaw the development of a multimillion dollar a year "one-stop" center, located in the former city jail building. It refuses assistance to homeless people regarded as "noncompliant." Her private consulting company does work for agencies competing for the same funds that constantly criticized the Task Force and falsely claimed it lost funding because it was mismanaged, and that it was only "warehousing" the homeless rather than helping them get back on their feet.

This claim flies in the face of the Task

Force's ongoing housing, job training, medical and legal assistance programs and its counseling services. Unlike the city-run Gateway Center, Peachtree-Pine has an art studio, gallery and photography classes. It relies on resident input and participation in all its programs. These are just some of the manifestations of the "community-building" philosophy that goes together with the practical work of providing emergency shelter, explains Beaty.

In explaining why the lawsuit and HUD complaint are important, Beaty said, "The evidence will show that racist, exclusionary and anti-poor measures define Atlanta's policies on affordable housing, public transportation, education, health care and recreation." The organization has been targeted, Beaty explains, because, "the Task Force has never shirked from 'speaking truth to power,' demanding justice, not charity, for poor people, for all people."

The men who are served by the Peachtree-Pine shelter say that they "are not going anywhere." They and the volunteers and community activists who support the Task Force's work, political mission and vision are resisting this latest attack.

Plans are being readied for support rallies, media events and community defense. For more information, see [www.homelesstaskforce.org](http://www.homelesstaskforce.org) or join the Facebook page. Donations are welcome to assist in this struggle. □

## A response to Henry Louis Gates Jr.

# The Atlantic slave trade & the rise of world capitalism

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

An essay by Harvard Prof. Henry Louis Gates Jr. in the April 23 New York Times took up the ongoing contentious debate around the demand for reparations for the centuries of unpaid labor extracted from Africans brought to the United States as enslaved workers. Gates claims that the demand for reparations is invalid since there were some Africans who collaborated with European slave traders in dislocating millions of people from the continent between the 16th and 19th centuries.

These are not new arguments in relationship to a broader question: the historical significance of slavery as an economic system in the development of Western Europe, North America, the Caribbean, Central America and South America. The denial and refusal to apportion adequate blame to the wealthy elites of monarchs, merchants, explorers and plantation owners — who not only orchestrated the Atlantic Slave Trade for centuries but benefited immensely from the profits gained as a result of the exploitation of African labor and resources — continues today through academics such as Gates who seek to negate the seriousness of the unresolved national question in the U.S.

A recent debate around the importance of slavery in American history was sparked by Virginia Gov. Robert McDonnell's proclamation declaring April "Confederate Heritage Month." McDonnell made no mention of slavery and its role in the state in his initial proclamation. The academic and popular history of slavery in the United States had been dominated for decades by white Southerners and those who sympathize with their basic assumptions.

Two major assumptions that guide pro-slavery and Confederate thinking are that

slavery was the natural order of relations between Africans and Europeans and that traditional African societies were just as culpable as the traffickers and plantation owners. These assumptions ignore the facts that many African societies fought for centuries against slavery and colonialism, and that European merchants, landowners and later industrial capitalists reaped enormous wealth from imported enslaved African labor and the theft of the continent's resources.

Africans resisted slavery on the continent. They fought slavery on the ships that transported them to Europe and the Western hemisphere. During the course of slavery on the plantations, small farms, towns and cities, there was flight and rebellion against this form of human bondage. The slave rebellions led by Gabriel, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, John Brown and Osborne Anderson are testament to the self-directed efforts to end this system of human bondage in North America.

### Who really benefited from the Atlantic slave trade?

Many historians of the 20th century such as W.E.B. DuBois, Eric Williams, Walter Rodney and Kwame Nkrumah have documented the impact of the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism on the growth of industrial capitalism in Western Europe and North America. Eric Williams in his work "Capitalism and Slavery" wrote: "Many of the 18th century banks established in Liverpool and Manchester, the slaving metropolis and the cotton capital respectively, were directly associated with the triangular trade. Here large sums were needed for the cotton factories and the canals which improved the means of communications between the two towns." ("Capitalism and Slavery," p.99, 1943)

Yet when arguments are made that Africans benefited from the continent's

enslavement any objective observer must ask for evidence. One leading Marxist historian on Africa, Walter Rodney, wrote in his book "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" that "Undoubtedly, with few exceptions such as Hawkins, European buyers purchased African captives on the coasts of Africa and the transaction between themselves and Africans was a form of trade." (Rodney, p. 95, 1972)

Rodney continued: "It is also true that very often a captive was sold and resold as he made his way from the interior to the port of embarkation — and that too was a form of trade. However, on the whole, the process by which captives were obtained on African soil was not trade at all. It was through warfare, trickery, banditry, and kidnapping. When one tries to measure the effect of European slave trading on the African continent, it is essential to realize that one is measuring the effect of social violence rather than trade in any normal sense of the word." (Rodney, p. 95)

Guinean President Ahmed Sekou Toure said in 1962: "The relation between the degree of destitution of peoples of Africa and the length and nature of the exploitation they had to endure is evident. Africa remains marked by the crimes of the slave-traders: up to now, her potentialities are restricted by under-population." (Rodney, p. 95)

### The legacy of enslavement today

Gates' essay raises several fundamental questions about not only who is to blame for the Atlantic Slave Trade and which national and class interests benefited economically from the system of exploitation but what impact this legacy has had on contemporary U.S. society. The European slave owners and capitalists gained tremendous wealth from the exploitation of African labor. With it the industrial capitalist system was built. In

addition, in modern society the legacy of racial dominance and national oppression is very much a cornerstone in the continuation of imperialism.

Even today African Americans still suffer the most severe impact of the U.S. economic crisis with significantly higher rates of unemployment, losses of homes, pensions, health services and a drastic decline in household wealth. In the criminal justice system, African Americans disproportionately constitute the largest percentage of people who are serving prison sentences resulting from social deprivation and the racist character of the legal system.

Racial profiling by law enforcement is a point of induction for African Americans and other people of color into the criminal justice system. African Americans are more likely to be stopped by the police and arrested on spurious charges. Many others are beaten and even killed during routine traffic stops by police and in encounters with law-enforcement agents.

Professor Gates was a victim of such practices himself in 2009 when he was arrested inside his own home in Cambridge, Mass., by local police although he had identified himself as the homeowner and a leading faculty member at prestigious Harvard University. Gates was fortunate in his encounter with Cambridge police. Many African Americans and other people of color in the U.S. are frequently severely beaten, tortured and even killed in similar uninvited interactions with law enforcement.

### Reparations, national liberation and socialism

Any honest assessment of the social impact of slavery in the U.S. would have to acknowledge that it was the European-American planters, slave traders and later capitalists who were the exclusive beneficiaries of the trade in human beings from Africa. In the 21st century, it is the African people on the continent and in Western Europe as well as the Americas who are still suffering from national oppression, neo-colonialism and imperialism.

Every effort on the part of any oppressed African nation-state to exert its independence and sovereignty has been challenged by the imperialist countries led principally by the U.S. capitalist class. Consequently, it is necessary to emphasize not only the role of world capitalism as the system that derived its strength and power from the slave trade and colonialism but that it is necessary to replace this system of exploitation with a society where the labor of the workers and farmers are not extracted for profit but for its equal distribution to all.

The demand for reparations places emphasis on how the most profitable banks and corporations gained their wealth through the exploitation of African labor. Institutions such as JPMorgan Chase & Co. Aetna Insurance Company and many other corporations have been forced to admit in recent years their role in the slave system in the United States and internationally.

Yet this admission is inadequate without efforts to correct the historical damage done to the people who have still not reclaimed their rightful place within modern society. Only with the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism and the seizure of the wealth stolen by the capitalists can true reparations be granted to the African people. □

## Lucasville uprising prisoner fights back

By **Sharon Danann**  
Youngstown, Ohio

On March 3 Lucasville uprising prisoner Greg Curry took a stand against relentless harassment by guards at Ohio State Penitentiary. The convictions of many Lucasville uprising prisoners are based on falsehoods. Nevertheless, guards in Ohio and nationwide are vindictive against these prisoners based on a guard's death during the uprising.

Curry explains, "If I am sentenced to LIFE and gotta get on my knees, then Life is already over. I get this, in fact having 'Life' gives me more room to express myself or 'LIVE.'"

Weeks before March 3, much of Curry's property had been confiscated without cause. When he went through channels to get it returned, he was informed that his possessions were missing from the property room vault, apparently destroyed.

During outside recreation, two guards decided to pat Curry down to deliver the message that if he told on one of them again, the consequences would be more severe. Upon his return to his cell, he found it torn apart, like "Hurricane Katrina."

At lunch, a violent struggle ensued. Curry received a severe beating, including head wounds requiring stitches, but he believes that his dreadlocks provided some



protection. His punishment: two weeks in "the hole" (isolation) and an increase of security level that placed him back in solitary confinement for at least five years.

Curry had been recommended for a reduction of security level to Level 3, which would have made him eligible for transfer to a medium security prison. OSP's warden, David Bobby, disregarded this recommendation, but Curry was optimistic about his appeal. Either the stepped-up campaign of harassment by certain guards was specifically aimed at undermining Curry's appeal, or it was a remarkable coincidence.

Curry asserts, "I believe I was right. So often all these 'tough' prisoners let the police do anything. I always say, 'Because y'all won't deal with it properly, it always falls on the next prisoner.' These were BAD

cops creating their own rules. Everyone feared them. I didn't and they knew it."

The immediate danger is further retaliation from the guards, which means the possibility of a danger to Curry's life.

The Lucasville Uprising Freedom Network is mobilizing a campaign of letters, phone calls, faxes and e-mails to Warden David Bobby, holding him responsible for the protection and security of Greg Curry. We are calling for the termination of guards who think they have permission to torment prisoners at will, destroying their property, violating their rights and raining down all manner of harassment on their heads.

Betty Springer, member of the Lucasville Uprising Freedom Network, has these words for the warden of OSP. "Warden Bobby, if you are allowing these vicious, inhumane activities to continue on your watch, you are personally responsible for the results. Toss out the rotten apples, Warden, or we will see that someone else does."

Contact Warden David Bobby by phone at 330-743-0700, by fax at 330-743-0841, by e-mail at david.bobby@odrc.state.oh.us or by mail at Ohio State Penitentiary, 878 Coitsville-Hubbard Road, Youngstown, OH 44505. Please refer to Greg Curry's prisoner #213-159. Free Greg Curry and all political prisoners! □

## On the Picket Line

by Sue Davis

### Nurses on the move in D.C.

Nurses United of the National Capital Area, which represents 1,600 registered nurses at Washington Hospital Center, plan to picket the hospital May 11 to protest its demands to reduce earnings and change staffing levels and work rules that would negatively impact both patients and nurses. The current contract at the District of Columbia's largest civilian hospital, which expired April 24, was extended through May 10. "Under the Washington Hospital Center's new management team, there seems to be a short sightedness and a disturbing tendency to focus on market trends instead of excellence in patient care," Dottie Hararas, president of the nurses' organization, told the May 6 Union City!, the online daily newsletter of the Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO. "But for nurses, the patient is always the center of everything we do." Will WHC management learn from the recent four-week strike by nurses at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia that successfully defeated similar demands? Stay tuned.

### FLOC demands rights for tobacco workers

The Farm Labor Organizing Committee held a protest both outside and inside the May 7 shareholders meeting of Reynolds American in Winston-Salem, N.C. FLOC is demanding the tobacco giant use its clout to make growers provide better wages and living conditions for the state's 30,000 mostly immigrant tobacco workers. Though Reynolds' spokespeople denied responsibility for the workers, FLOC leader Baldemar Velásquez described the confrontation as "a modest breakthrough" because Reynolds acknowledged that there was "a guest worker problem." He vowed that FLOC will persevere in the struggle for tobacco workers' rights. (Winston-Salem Journal, May 8)

### CIW continue fight for tomato workers

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers staged a 22-mile march in mid-April to get Florida-based supermarket chain Publix to take a stand against abusive work conditions in the state's tomato fields. The three-day march began in Tampa and ended at Publix corporate headquarters in Lakeland. CIW, whose ongoing campaign on behalf of tomato workers has persuaded McDonalds, Whole Foods and Subway to pay an extra penny a pound for tomatoes, is urging the public to boycott Publix until it stops buying produce from criminal growers. It took Publix more than a year to stop buying from two Florida tomato farms whose bosses were convicted of slavery charges in 2008. CIW's latest victory occurred April 1 when food service giant Aramark agreed to pay 1.5 cents more per pound of tomatoes and to abide by a supplier code of conduct. It's estimated the raise will boost workers' pay by 40 percent to 70 percent.

### Over two hundred groups support Employment Non-Discrimination Act

Pride at Work, the lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer affiliate of the AFL-CIO, announced on April 21 that the new transgender-inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act introduced by Rep. Barney Frank has been endorsed by 236 organizations and individuals. Unlike earlier bills, the new bill includes gender identity in its definition of those who cannot be discriminated against by civilian nonreligious employers with more than 15 employees. Beside LGBTQ endorsers, ENDA supporters include allies representing faith, labor and civil rights communities.

### Calif. teachers pass resolution to end Afghan war

The California Federation of Teachers passed a resolution on March 20 to end the Afghanistan war and use the money to support domestic programs. Sponsored by United Teachers Los Angeles, American Federation of Teachers Local 1021, the resolution demands that the military budget for that war be redirected "to meet urgent human needs domestically, such as education, healthcare, housing, jobs, and other social programs and public services." In addition, it calls for reparations to support infrastructure and social programs for the Afghan people. The resolution will be raised at the AFT convention in July. □

## In front of millions

# 'Los Suns' stand with immigrant community

By Monica Moorehead

As the Boycott Arizona movement continues to resonate throughout the U.S. in response to the racist, anti-immigrant Senate Bill 1070, sports world figures are taking a unique and progressive stand. On May 5 — recognized as Cinco de Mayo, a Mexican holiday — the National Basketball Association team the Phoenix Suns decided to show their opposition to the racist bill by wearing jerseys emblazoned with "Los Suns."

The players wore the jerseys during a semifinal Western Conference playoff game with the San Antonio Spurs in Phoenix. Some fans held up signs saying "Viva Los Suns" and "Los Fans."

This act gained national and international attention, with high-profile Suns' players like Amare Stoudemire and Steve Nash making public statements about why this act of solidarity was so important.

Stoudemire, who is African American, stated, "It's going to be great to wear Los Suns to let the Latin community know we're behind them 100 percent." (thenation.com/blog, May 5) During postgame comments following the Suns' victory over the Spurs, Nash, who is white and was raised in Canada, stated that it was important to take a stand against "racial profiling" and "racism." (NBA TV, May 5) Nash was the first NBA player to come out against the war on Iraq in 2003.

The Spurs head coach, Gregg Popovich and his team, publicly supported the Suns' actions.

On the same evening, African-American civil rights leader the Rev. Al Sharpton helped lead an immigrant rights march of thousands, which passed by the U.S. Airways Arena where the Suns were playing on its way to a closing rally at the

## 'Boycott Arizona!' responds to apartheid law

By Paul Teitelbaum  
Tucson, Ariz.

Ever since the signing of Arizona's racist SB 1070, protests and outrage against this apartheid-like law have continued nonstop. In addition to the protests and demonstrations demanding the repeal of SB 1070, the call for "Boycott Arizona!" has emerged and caught fire.

The boycott is a weapon that was effectively wielded against apartheid South Africa and was previously used against Arizona in the early 1990s when the state refused to enact the national Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. That boycott cost Arizona an estimated \$350 million in convention business along with the 1993 Super Bowl. The economic boycott resulted in the creation of a state MLK holiday.

Immediately after the signing of SB 1070, the American Immigration Lawyers Association decided to move its fall 2010 annual conference out of Arizona. San Francisco

state Capitol. Sharpton and Latino/a representatives were wearing Los Suns jerseys as they linked arms.

TNT, which was airing the Suns-Spurs game live, cut away from the game briefly to an aerial shot of the march, which was both a welcome surprise and unprecedented during a major U.S. sports event viewed by millions of people.

Prior to the May 5 game, three retired African-American basketball players expressed support for the Suns' actions and the march on TNT's "Inside the NBA" show. Kenny Smith stated, "I think it's great that the team understands, the management understands, and now the people of Phoenix are all rallying together at the same time."

Charles Barkley, a former Suns player, said, "The Hispanic community — they're like the fabric of the cloth. They're part of our community."

Chris Webber chimed in: "Public Enemy said it a long time ago — 'By the Time I Get to Arizona.' I'm not surprised. They didn't even want there to be a Martin Luther King Day when John McCain was in office. So if you follow history you know that this is part of Arizona politics." (Dave Zirin, "Edge of Sports")

### Protesting the Diamondbacks

What the Suns did on May 5 comes on the heels of a mushrooming protest movement against Major League Baseball's Arizona Diamondbacks team. The Diamondbacks have faced protests outside of stadiums during their road games in Chicago and Houston. Future protests are scheduled for Atlanta, Denver and other cities.

While team owner Ken Kendrick

Steve Nash,  
Amare Stoudemire, below



says that he personally "opposes the bill," progressive sports columnist Dave Zirin exposed in his May 10 "Edge of Sports" article that Kendrick is organizing a fundraising party in his private box at the Diamondbacks' stadium on May 20 for State Senator Jonathan Paton. Paton is a well-known supporter of SB 1070, who has said, "We need to secure the border, and we need to secure it now. That's why I voted for SB 1070, and that's why I urge the governor to sign it." (thenation.com/blog)

This anti-immigrant bill will have the heaviest impact on MLB, since nearly 30 percent of professional baseball players are from Latin America and the Caribbean. This means that if the bill goes into effect in August these players can be stopped at any time by the police, detained and fined if they don't have "proper" identification or papers.

The MLB Players Association is putting pressure on Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig to have the 2011 All-Star game moved from Phoenix to another locale if the bill is not repealed.

Arizona Governor Jan Brewer, who speaks on behalf of big business interests, wrote a defensive, racist column for the world's largest sports enterprise, ESPN, on May 5 trying to explain why an economic boycott was "misguided" and why a "secure" border was needed.

In the entertainment world, on ABC's popular talk show "The View" on May 6, co-host Whoopi Goldberg wore the "Los Suns" jersey. Gael Garcia Bernal, a Mexican actor who played Che Guevara in "The Motorcycle Diaries," said that the Arizona bill is "illegal" and will promote "racial and cultural discrimination." (Prensa Latina, May 4) □

and other cities in California passed resolutions calling for a boycott of Arizona. Arizona's major league baseball team, the Diamondbacks, whose owners contributed heavily to the coffers of Arizona politicians who pushed through the bill, is being boycotted and faces demonstrators in any city where they play.

Award-winning author Tayari Jones wrote eloquently about why she decided to boycott Arizona and declined to appear at the Pima Summer Writers Conference in Tucson: "That people should be legally required to show proof of citizenship is similar to the antebellum mandate that Black people produce 'free papers' proving themselves not to be slaves. It recalls the pass system under South Africa's Apartheid. Sadly, visiting Arizona for a conference or a vacation without fear has become an ostentatious display of privilege." (tayarijones.com/blog/)

Hip-hop artists, poets, other entertainers and artists have endorsed the Boycott Arizona campaign. The

Internet is ablaze with videos, online petitions and Facebook groups that support the boycott. Artists Against Arizona's SB 1070 is one Facebook group calling on the artist community to boycott Arizona. Artists can join the campaign by finding the group's Facebook page or by sending an e-mail to artistsagainstarizona@yahoo.com.

This racist, vicious, anti-immigrant law was passed in Arizona just as the state prepares to unleash a harsh and austere budget that attacks public education, health care, and all social services. This attempt to divide people and blame immigrants for all of society's ills will not succeed. The Boycott Arizona Campaign is a weapon we can use to cripple the economy of Arizona's racist ruling class. This can be a progressive weapon to weaken the Arizona bosses' economy, just as these bosses are attempting to break down the workers, stealing jobs, education and access to social services. Boycott Arizona! □

# Voices from the bus sound off on joblessness

By Sean Schafron  
Baltimore

On a breezy May 8 morning, a school bus filled with activists left the Bail Out the People Movement office in Baltimore and headed for the Protest For a Jobs Program in Washington, D.C.

The passengers included young adults and seniors, and were employed, unemployed and retired, male and female, and Black and white. While not all wished to be interviewed by Workers World, the one thing everyone had in common was the knowledge that something is terribly, fundamentally wrong with the appalling state of affairs in this country and the realization that something must be done.

Organizer Cheryl LaBash of Detroit BOPM said: "Fight For Jobs is a crucial, important struggle that intersects every problem that working people are facing. For example, if you don't have a job you can't pay your utility bills, so your utilities are shut off, and then you're either evicted or the bank forecloses on your home. The problem we're confronting is that while there is apparently some kind of recovery going on, it doesn't include jobs for the unemployed."

Boston organizer Frank Neisser, laid off from his job as a computer programmer and unable to find employment since, noted: "There needs to be worldwide worker solidarity. There is really no solution to unemployment in the system, so jobless workers need to take advantage of the time forced upon them to mobilize and fight back."

Unemployed Boston BOPM activist Allan Brown, 30, said, "With 30 million jobless people, we really need to get the



Malik Nance, Frank Neisser and Shyrese Brown.

WW PHOTO: SEAN SCHAFRON

message out that there must be a jobs program right now, before this situation gets much worse."

But it was Baltimore area residents who were, obviously, most in touch with the local crisis.

Shyrese Brown is a 21-year-old Black worker who has been unemployed for nine months. "I fill out applications and they never call, while I do call them. It's very important to do this protest and to make it clear that we all need jobs, the youth too. The President and Congress must give us opportunities, because we have nothing to do and nowhere to turn."

An older African-American resident, Helen Bell, while grappling with the intense problem of having to find a new place to live, was on the bus selflessly determined to demand the government provide full employment "rather than spend billions fighting wars that are unnecessary and cruel. The people in charge must hear

us today and pay attention to our needs."

Malik Nance, 21 and unemployed for three years, pointed out the devastating effects the crisis has had on Baltimore's Black community. He added, "It's not true that the government doesn't have the money available for a jobs program like the WPA. Rather than build prisons, it's time they stop taking us for granted and stop sending money everywhere it's not needed. There's plenty of money out there. They're living in luxury while poor people are living on the streets."

"We're all here to make our voices heard. The government needs to look into our hearts and respond to our call for a jobs program. That's why I came and what we all hope to see accomplished today," said Nance.

After the D.C. activities ended and the bus returned to Baltimore, everyone believed that they did, indeed, participate in an action that made a difference. □



## High school students

By Dianne Mathiowetz

Hundreds of high school students and community members, many of them gay and lesbian youth and all of them opponents of lesbian/gay/bi/trans oppression, counter-demonstrated against seven members of the notoriously anti-LGBT and anti-Semitic Westboro Baptist Church on May 6 in Atlanta. Two of the seven were minor children, and the protesters said it was painful to see the right wingers use the children to carry their reactionary signs.

The students took over the street intersection near Grady High School, opposing the Westboro group's messages of hate, oppression and bigotry. For two days, May 5 and 6, the right-wing group had aroused resistance at other Atlanta high schools, Jew-



## In Vietnam and USA

# Fight continues to combat Agent Orange

By Sue Davis

The U.S. war against the Vietnamese people continues, though it officially ended 35 years ago. The poisonous legacy of the war — the contamination of the land with chemicals like dioxin in Agent Orange — continues to maim millions of Vietnamese, now into the third generation.

But the effects of the 82 million liters of dioxin-containing Agent Orange that the U.S. sprayed in Vietnam are not limited to that population. U.S. GIs were also poisoned and are now dealing with myriad disabilities, as are their offspring.

The Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign, which sponsored the Fifth Agent Orange Justice Tour from April 14 to May 16, is continuing its international fight to rectify this situation, said coordinator Merle Ratner at a May 8 meeting in New York City. Though its legal suit charging chemical companies like Monsanto and Dow with war crimes was denied in federal court in 2009, the campaign has a new strategy.

Susan Schnall, a leading anti-Vietnam War activist with Veterans for Peace who has seen the horrific effects of Agent Orange first-hand, announced that Rep. John Conyers of Michigan is writing a bill to expand disability benefits to U.S. veterans and their children, clean up hot spots

like Danang in Vietnam and provide public health benefits to disabled Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans.

Nguyen Thi Hien, a dynamic leader of the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin and president of the Danang chapter of VAVA, spoke movingly about the 4.8 million people who are exposed daily to the poison. A U.N. study estimates dioxin contaminates 15 percent of the countryside.

Hien noted that 61 chapters of VAVA deal with 3 million people living with

devastating physical and mental disabilities traced to the toxic chemicals. She explained that though the U.S. government has donated \$3 million to help the disabled, that money, distributed by nongovernmental organizations, never reached those in desperate need.

Pham The Minh is one of them. He traced the abnormalities in his heart and lungs, as well as the deformity in his legs, to his parents who fought in a heavily sprayed province. Minh's father died of cancer in 2005, and his younger sister just

gave birth to a third-generation son with severe physical problems.

"Many babies with no limbs or eyes die very young," he said, while others are forced to live with severe mental and physical conditions. Noting that many disabled now receive small allowances from private charities, Minh stressed, "We need the U.S. to cooperate with our government to improve the living conditions of the victims."

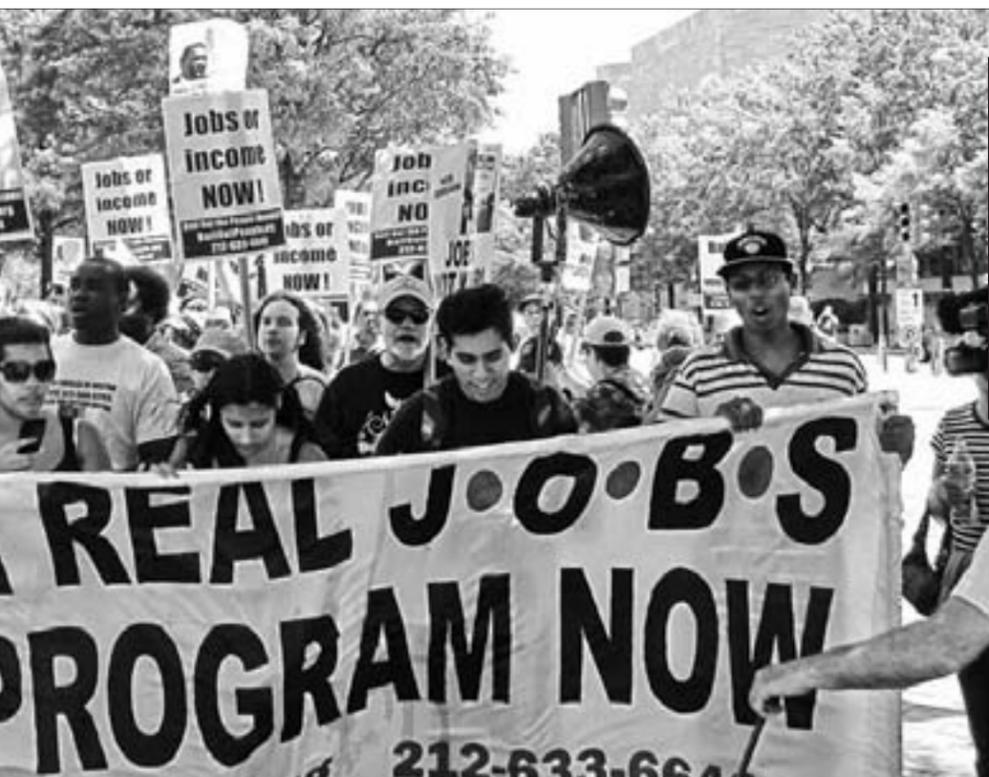
"There are consequences to wars," summed up Ratner. "We must make the U.S. pay for the war in Vietnam." □

## Workers reject furlough in NYS

Several hundred angry New York state workers gathered in downtown Buffalo May 10 to protest threatened furloughs, chanting "Cut back Wall Street, Not Main Street!" Facing a 20 percent pay cut to pay for a crisis they didn't create, workers from three of the public worker unions, Civil Service Employees Association, Public Employees Federation and United University Professions, cheered at honks of solidarity from passing fire trucks and city transit trains. Supporters in the crowd included representatives from the United Auto Workers, Working Families Party and the International Action Center.

— Report and photo by Ellie Dorritie





WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

## Students 'swarm' bigots



PHOTO: PROJECT Q ATLANTA

ish institutions and public venues. But this time the rainbow of youths at this midtown school responded in a highly organized fashion, declaring that their message of acceptance and love would triumph.

At one point, the crowd swarmed across the street. The Westboro reactionaries hastily left their corner and headed for their vehicle. The protesters stayed right behind them. Despite police efforts to get the students to disperse, the young people kept up their demonstration on a nearby busy street for several hours as motorists in passing cars honked and waved in support. □

By LeiLani Dowell  
Washington, D.C.

In a powerful, energetic and inspiring day of action, activists, unemployed people, students and youth, and community organizers from across the East Coast and Midwest converged on the Department of Labor on May 8 to honor the 75th anniversary of the Works Projects Administration — by demanding a concrete jobs program, now. They then held a meeting to strategize around their demands and plan future events.

Proposed actions resulting from the meeting include the creation of People's Assemblies to be held in various cities to help link struggles and movements together; national days of outrage and local speak-outs against unemployment; community-labor action committees inside local unions to support the fight for jobs; and connecting with student and youth calls for an Oct. 7 day of action in support of public education.

According to a press release from the day's organizers, the Bail Out the People Movement: "Seventy-five years ago ... on May 6, 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the executive order establishing the Work Projects Administration, the biggest public jobs program in the history of the country. Between 1935 and 1941, more than 8 million WPA workers did every job imaginable — from building bridges, schools and hospitals, to teaching school and helping to make

# DC jobs protest says: Build People's Assemblies

migrant worker camps livable."

Protesters at the Department of Labor told about the many effects of unemployment on their lives and the lives of their families and friends. They urged that, with a national unemployment rate between 18 percent and 20 percent, it was high time the federal government begin undertaking a jobs program of similar size and scope to the WPA. They also denounced the heavily armed police blocking the entrance to the Department of Labor — which is, in theory, supposed to be concerned with the plight of workers.

Larry Holmes of BOPM in New York opened the protest by stating that, as opposed to the phony "war on terror" championed by the government and media, "real terror is when you don't have a job, when you don't have health care."

Sharon Black, a BOPM leader who traveled to Washington, D.C., with a busload of people from Baltimore, stated that those present were picking up the struggle that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders had advanced before King was assassinated — the right to a job for all.

Larry Hales, a leader of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together youth group, spoke on the importance of the participation of youth, including high school and college students, in the fight for jobs and education, not jails.

Three New York City high school students were among many youth who shared their experiences. Debanjan from the borough of Queens said it was "disturbing that it's impossible for me to get a job so I can go to college — but they always have jails available." Roseena, who lives in the Bronx, described being in a lottery for summer jobs after the New York state and city government cut funding to the Summer Youth Employment Program. Primavera, also from the Bronx, said youth are beginning to say, "Hell no! It's my right to work!" Other youth from Baltimore, Philadelphia, Providence, R.I., and New York spoke at the rally.

Other cities represented included Boston; Cleveland; Jersey City and Newark, N.J.; Norfolk and Richmond, Va.; Pittsburgh; and Rochester, N.Y.

After the rally, the group marched through the streets of Washington to the offices of the Communication Workers union, where they held a strategy summit to build the movement for a jobs program.

Meeting chair Abayomi Azikiwe, a leader of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs in Michigan, described the abysmal situation in Detroit, which has an unofficial unemployment rate of 44.5 percent and a youth unemployment rate of 80 to 90 percent. Vidya Sankar of the North Carolina chapter of FIST discussed the formation of a People's Empowerment Movement in response to massive layoffs and furloughs in Raleigh, N.C.

In addition to the push for People's Assemblies, a lively discussion ensued, with various points contributing toward the formation of a political program. In addition to a massive, federally funded jobs program, some of the overarching themes included full legalization for all immigrants, an end to the school-to-prison pipeline, self-determination for all oppressed peoples, defense of public education, and an end to all U.S. wars.

Folks from Baltimore and Washington, D.C., described their struggles to avoid being evicted from their homes. Youth raised the idea of forming collectives to create their own jobs. Many expressed the need to fight now to preserve the future for the youth. Activists explained how the capitalist system works to ensure a reserve army of labor, the unemployed, to keep wages low and sow divisions among workers. Workers discussed challenging the Tea Party's racist, reactionary program with a real people's program.

To get involved with the growing movement against unemployment and for a jobs program, visit [www.bailoutpeople.org](http://www.bailoutpeople.org). □

# Rally demands jobs, defends immigrants

By Judy Greenspan  
San Francisco

More than 100 people gathered outside the San Francisco Federal Building to demand a "real jobs program" for the millions of unemployed in this country. Organized by the San Francisco Bail Out the People Movement, this May 8 protest commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Works Projects Administration, the depression-era jobs program that put millions of unemployed back to work. The protest also demanded that the government do whatever it takes to create jobs needed by the more than 30 million unemployed.

John Parker, a leader of BOPM, Los Angeles, set the tone of the protest when he said, "It's the banks that are stealing our jobs, not the immigrant community." Parker pointed out that "instead of profiling immigrant workers, the government should be profiling big business" and added that the workers and jobless need to be "in solidarity with each other."

Richmond Mayor Gayle McLaughlin

said that Richmond is "a human rights city. We are a diverse community, and we just passed a measure denouncing the anti-immigrant Arizona law." The demonstration echoed national sentiment opposing Arizona's SB 1070.

Many speakers hailed the importance of the WPA and noted that without massive protests by millions of unemployed workers during the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt would never have signed the federal jobs program into law. Aileen Hernandez, a retired organizer with the Ladies Garment Workers union, noted that it took a long time for the Roosevelt administration to "put out a jobs program. The people had to come together on the bottom to push."

Hernandez, now a civil rights and women's rights activist, drew attention to the millions of dollars being spent on wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: "It takes \$1 million to keep a soldier in those wars. Imagine what that money could do here."

Willie Ratcliff, publisher of the San Francisco Bay View newspaper and head of Liberty Builders, an organization

of Black contractors, echoed these sentiments. "We have to support immigrant families in Arizona, because we have been there too." Ratcliff also spoke about the local struggle unfolding in the Bay View neighborhood involving the building of the new community library. "African Americans have been locked out for years from construction jobs," Ratcliff noted. "We're going to win the right to build the new Bay View Library."

Pablo Rodriguez, a local college professor and political director of the American Federation of Teachers Local 2121, brought attention to the "extermination of union jobs and unionization." Rodriguez noted that the rich are richer than ever before and over 1,000 teachers in San Francisco have just been laid off. "This is the richest country on the planet and teachers



Aileen Hernandez and John Parker.

WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

are still being laid off," Rodriguez stated. He called for massive resistance against the layoffs and cuts in education.

The local BOPM coalition, which includes many labor, community, religious and civil rights groups in the Bay Area, has scheduled a film showing about the WPA on Saturday, May 22 at 1 p.m. in the SF Gray Panthers Office, 1182 Market St. For more information call 415-738-4739. □

## BP disaster

# Oil industry 'fix' fails, spill spreads

By Gene Clancy

Seven British Petroleum executives gathered on the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20 to "celebrate the project's safety record." Considering the dismal past safety performance of BP, the rig's owner, this would seem to have been a hollow exercise. Several miles below them, natural forces were preparing to spoil their party in a deadly way.

A University of California Berkeley professor, Robert Bea, who worked for Shell Oil in the 1960s during the last big northern Gulf of Mexico oil well blowout, has revealed details of what happened in the disaster. Far below, workers were converting the drilling rig from an exploration well to a production well.

In an attempt to set a concrete seal around the wellhead, the workers applied heat and reduced pressure on the drilling pipe. This process allowed a giant methane gas bubble to form. Deep beneath the seafloor, methane gas is in a slushy, crystalline form. But as the bubble rose up the drill column to the shallows, the greatly decreased pressure allowed the bubble to grow and intensify. A giant cloud of gas enveloped the platform. Engines on the drilling platform raced and exploded, cre-

ating giant fireballs which capsized and destroyed the rig.

The seven executives were rescued, but 11 workers lost their lives. Since then, an estimated 3 million gallons of crude oil has gushed into the Gulf of Mexico. Oil industry officials stated that they knew about the methane crystals and have often encountered them in underwater drilling operations.

### A long shot fails

On May 8, BP chief operations officer Doug Suttles announced that a desperate operation designed to stem the flow of oil had suffered a "setback."

Workers had lowered a huge concrete and steel "containment box" over the wellhead, which is a mile below the surface. However, a buildup of the same methane crystals that were involved in the initial disaster coated the sides of the containment box and clogged the opening out of which the oil was to have been funneled. Workers had to lift the containment box and set it to one side, while the company decides what to do next.

"I wouldn't say it's failed yet," Suttles said. "What I would say is what we attempted to do last night didn't work."

Meanwhile the huge, gooey, toxic mass of oil released by the disaster has con-

tinued to spread. Floating tar balls have washed up on some of the Louisiana barrier islands, just three miles from the coastline. An oily sheen already covers many beaches and saltwater marshes. Experts expect that this spill will become the worst in U.S. history.

### Halliburton ... again!

One of the largest energy services companies in the world, Halliburton, has been found to have had a part in the current catastrophe. The giant company, once led by former Vice President Dick Cheney, became infamous as one of most egregious Iraq War contractors, which ripped off millions of dollars in no-bid contracts and put thousands of their workers at risk of their lives. It had largely faded from public view since President Obama entered office — until now.

As the provider of crucial cementing services on the oil rig that exploded and set off the massive spill in the Gulf, Halliburton finds itself under scrutiny once again. The company says it had four workers on the doomed oil platform at the time of the explosion.

The Wall Street Journal last week highlighted the possible role of cementing in the April 20 accident:

"In the case of the Deepwater Horizon,

workers had finished pumping cement to fill the space between the pipe and the sides of the hole and had begun temporarily plugging the well with cement; it isn't known whether they had completed the plugging process before the blast.

Regulators have previously identified problems in the cementing process as a leading cause of well blowouts, in which oil and natural gas surge out of a well with explosive force. When cement develops cracks or doesn't set properly, oil and gas can escape, ultimately flowing out of control."

A 2007 Minerals Management Services study found that "cementing problems were associated with 18 of 39 [oil rig] blowouts between 1992 and 2006."

It seems that as with the current economic depression, it is the working class which is forced to pay the price for environmental disasters, as with capitalist crises. It is remarkable that two giant energy industries, coal mining and oil drilling, have managed to not only befoul the environment, but also to kill and maim workers, most recently with deadly methane gas explosions at the Upper Big Branch Mine disaster, which occurred on April 5 at Massey Energy's coal mine in Raleigh County, West Virginia, and the April 20 Horizon Deepwater disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. □

## Reviewing Water Wars

# Cochabamba conference targets corporations

By Jen Waller

I had the opportunity to attend the April 20-22 World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where people from all over the world initiated a discussion about finding real solutions to the climate crisis. During this conference, I attended an April 21 workshop called "Taking action against corporations that damage the climate," which brought up the Water Wars against Bechtel Corporation.

Evo Morales, the Indigenous president of Bolivia, had called for the conference. It was appropriately held on the ten-year anniversary of the Water Wars against Bechtel, which also took place in Cochabamba. President Morales was a key actor in the Water Wars. At that time he was a leader of the cocaleros, the coca growers in the Chapare region of the department of Cochabamba.

The cocaleros were known for fighting against U.S. repression and resisting the so-called war on drugs, and they joined the water uprising because they were fighting foreign control in general.

The Water Wars against Bechtel came at a time when foreign companies were privatizing many Bolivian resources: Before the water they privatized gas, oil, electricity, and more. When Bechtel came to Bolivia under an assumed name and tried to privatize the water with the backing of the World Bank, the people had had enough. From factory workers to farmers to environmentalists, the people of Cochabamba rose up to drive out the gigantic Bechtel Corporation.

All over the world, water scarcity is swiftly becoming a crisis situation. The world's fresh water supply is dwindling, as demand for it increases, tripling between 1950 and 1990. This situation creates an incredibly lucrative industry for corporations looking to invest in water.

The World Bank, which already has



PHOTO: THOMAS KRUSE

From a pamphlet on the events of 2000: 'A Bolivian woman holds back the advance of government forces with a single slingshot during the Water War on the streets of downtown Cochabamba.'

control of the economies of many indebted nations in the global South, has also taken the opportunity to get into the water business. But water is just one example of dwindling natural resources, and corporate interests are scrambling to gain ownership of all the remaining supplies. Faced with such a challenge, we can be encouraged by what the people of Cochabamba did in 2000 as an incredibly important and powerful example of taking on corporate control of resources.

### Water Wars' veterans take the lead

The facilitator of the April 21 panel was Jim Shultz of the Democracy Center in Cochabamba, which played an instrumental support role in the Water Wars. The panelists included Bolivian Water War activist Marcela Olivera, an organizer from Amazon Watch in Ecuador and an activist from Camp for Climate Action in Britain.

The panel's goal was to take advantage

of the collective wisdom in the room and share different strategies and tactics for taking on corporations. The audience was made up of people from all over the world. At the end of the presentations, each person in the audience was asked to write on a piece of paper one idea they had for taking on corporations.

Then we passed them to the person to our left and a few of them were read aloud. Some of the things we came up with were:

- ☑ Interview disgruntled employees of the corporation who may be willing to disclose insider information that can be used against the corporation.
- ☑ Stop drinking Coca-Cola.
- ☑ Become educated and smarter consumers and develop an independent press to help.
- ☑ Create discontent among the masses about the heads of the corporation so that they don't want to show their faces in public.
- ☑ Create community versions and control of the services the corporations provide so that the people are no longer dependant on corporations, and they become obsolete.

What happened in that room is a miniature version of what is happening in people's social movements around the world. Using the Water Wars and other

similar struggles as our guide, the people must channel our energy into chasing off the corporations that privatize our local resources and sell them back to us at exorbitant prices — all the while destroying our habitats and throwing off the equilibrium our Mother Earth requires to sustain human life.

Discussions among the world's big powers at the White House and the United Nations — and likewise the conference in Copenhagen last December — have evaded the true structural causes of the crisis we face. They fail to address the exploitation of Mother Earth at the hands of corporations and the idea that the natural resources we all require for survival can be privatized, bought and sold.

On the Cochabamba conference's final day, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez said, "If the hegemony of capitalism continues on this planet, human life will one day come to an end. For those of you who believe that's an exaggeration, one must remember this: The planet lived for millions of years without the human species."

The workshop showed one way to start working to overthrow this hegemony, by coming together as one and brainstorming ideas of ways to channel our anger into action. Now write down your idea and pass it to the person on your left. □

## MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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**Black & Brown Unity: A Pillar of Struggle for Human Rights and Global Justice!** Saladin Muhammad

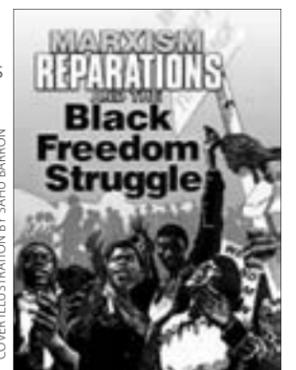
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## PUERTO RICO

# Student strike stops brutal cuts at UPR

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Under a constant rain, more than 5,000 students from the 11 campuses of the University of Puerto Rico marched to the offices of the president on May 7 to show their unity and demand that management sit down and negotiate. Since April 23 the students have held stoppages, temporary strikes or indefinite strikes, depending on the individual campuses. Students at the main campus in Rio Piedras, home to more than 19,000 students, have led the struggle. They declared an indefinite strike after the administration refused to negotiate.

The students demand that UPR rescind "Certification Number 98." C98 increases general tuition; suspends tuition exemptions now granted to honor students, the children of UPR employees and students on UPR sports teams, among others; and institutes other antipeople measures that would effectively result in the privatization of this public university.

Since April 23 many students have been camping inside, occupying the Rio Piedras campus and successfully stopping all classes and activities in spite of a police presence. The cops include riot police, summoned by the administration, which is in partnership with the neoliberal, pro-U.S. government of Governor Luis Fortuño.

The Fortuño administration has imposed austerity measures on the island, including layoffs of thousands of public service workers, as its way of dealing



Left, on May 5 students demonstrate at the office of a university trustee. Above, Students block the main entrance of the Rio Piedras campus.



with the severe economic crisis affecting Puerto Rico following the economic crisis in the U.S. Puerto Rico is a U.S. colony whose economy is completely attached to that of the empire.

### Unity and solidarity in action

University employees, both teaching and nonteaching, have joined the strike and demonstrate together with students at the gates of the Rio Piedras campus. All over the island, many sectors of the working class have joined in active solidarity. Artists, public and private student bodies, parents, political and pro-independence organizations and parties, religious and other organizations have joined. People bring food to the students who are camping inside the Rio Piedras grounds. On Mother's Day, mothers of the students proudly spent the day with them.

From day one, the students have reached out to the people. Their main message is that their actions are not only on behalf of the current student body, but a defense of the Puerto Rican people's right to higher education. They especially defend the children of the poor, who make up 75 percent of UPR students. This appeal has truly resonated, and small children are frequently seen in demonstrations wearing signs reading, "Class of 2025."

### Strikers force the UPR administration back to the table

After the march on May 7, the Students Negotiating Committee and the UPR, represented by the president of the Board of Administrators and the UPR president, reached a tentative agreement. This initial document represents a partial victory for the students. On May 8 the board ini-

tiated discussion of the agreement. Students will meet in assembly during the coming week.

Some of the points in the agreement are: C98 will be rewritten to continue the exemptions on tuitions. The university commits to not privatizing any of the campuses, nor will it sell any of the facilities such as stadiums, theaters, gymnasiums, and laboratories, and it will only increase tuition after exhausting all other possibilities of increasing revenues.

On May 11 representatives of the 11 campuses will meet to deliberate about the agreement. In the meantime, the strike continues. Even though the agreement is a step in the right direction, the students still view it as incomplete. They want assurance that students involved in more direct actions are not penalized.

Email: [bjceci@workers.org](mailto:bjceci@workers.org)

## At nuclear arms talks at U.N.

# U.S. threatens first strike on Iran

By Sara Flounders

A month-long meeting, involving 189 countries, is underway at the United Nations. It's the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review.

This review of a nuclear disarmament treaty that went into effect 40 years ago occurs every 5 years. Its stated purpose was disarmament by the countries holding nuclear weapons, stopping the spread or proliferation of nuclear weapons to other countries, and the right of all countries to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Almost the only U.S. media attention of this international gathering has been the ridicule, threats and demonization heaped on Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the only head of state to take the disarmament conference seriously enough to attend it and offer concrete suggestions on how to meet the goals of nuclear disarmament.

Rather than hear a call for NPT to oversee disarmament of all nuclear-armed states within a specific timeframe and a Middle East Nuclear Free Zone, the nuclear powers of U.S., Britain and France orchestrated a public walk-out during the Iranian president's U.N. talk. They used their enormous political and economic strength to pressure 30 other countries to participate in the walk-out.

More ominous than the symbolism of a U.S.-led walk-out on disarmament proposals were the actions in Washington in the month leading up to the NPT.

President Barack Obama, while announcing the results of the Nuclear Posture Review of the Pentagon's weapons on April 5, explicitly asserted the right to make a nuclear first-strike against Iran and North Korea if the U.S. deemed them

to be in violation of nonproliferation rules.

The corporate-owned media actually described this as a disarmament proposal!

Just after this announcement, President Obama flew to Prague and with great flourish signed, with Russian President Medvedev, a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty to reduce the number of active nuclear weapons to 1,550.

But the New York Times gave the real reason for the disarmament proposals in the Nuclear Posture Review and the START Treaty with Russia. "At the heart of President Obama's new nuclear strategy lies a central gamble: that an aging, oversized, increasingly outmoded nuclear arsenal can be turned to the new purpose of adding leverage" against Iran and North Korea. "We think we now have credibility Bush never did to tighten the noose," said one of Obama's aides. (April 6)

What could be a more cynical maneuver than signing a treaty on disarmament to give more weight to a first-strike nuclear threat against Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea?

Hopes were dashed for those who took President Obama at his word a year ago in Prague in the midst of his first European trip as president when he outlined a goal of "a world without nuclear weapons." There was hope for at least a blanket statement that the U.S. would never be the first to use nuclear weapons.

It is essential to understand that nuclear weapons taken from active status do not have to be destroyed. The number of operationally inactive stockpiled nuclear warheads will remain in the high thousands as "responsive reserve warheads," part of the "Stockpile Management Program."

There is another impediment to any form of real U.S. disarmament. Regard-

less of the risk to humanity or the cost to U.S. workers, the sheer multibillion-dollar size of and super profits to major corporate military contractors and thousands of subcontractors in the U.S. capitalist economy all mean that there is a sector of the ruling class demanding that these weapons systems continue to be built. This was once justified using Cold War anti-communist rhetoric and now using "anti-terrorist" rhetoric.

### U.S. deflects attention from its arsenal

The problem Washington faced, at a world conference to discuss disarmament, was how to deflect attention from the U.S.'s own role and any demands for clear disarmament.

The solution was Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's demand to discuss the totally unsubstantiated charges that Iran is a global nuclear threat because the country could develop the capacity at some point years in the future to build a nuclear weapon.

The U.S. holds the majority of nuclear weapons — an enormous arsenal of 5,113 warheads by Washington's own admission. Iran is still at the technical level of attempting to develop lowly enriched nuclear energy for fuel, lighting and medicine. Iran has enriched uranium to less than 5 percent, consistent with fuel for a small civilian nuclear power plant. Nuclear weapons use uranium that is highly enriched to more than 90 percent. Such enrichment requires technology that Iran does not possess.

Although the International Atomic Energy Agency, the watch-dog agency set up by the U.N., has consistently reported no evidence of links to a nuclear weapons program in Iran, the U.S. threats, sanctions and efforts at a still-more-stringent

fourth round of sanctions have continued.

While Washington demands endless inspections of Iranian sites, it refuses to give any information on the deployment of its 12 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines that are on "hair-trigger" nuclear-launch readiness. These giant death machines are each armed with 24 Trident-II missiles with a range of more than 4,000 nautical miles. Each of the 24 missiles on board a sub has 4 MIRV nuclear warheads. This is total of 1,152 nuclear warheads hidden underwater in the oceans of the world, including in the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf and off the coast of Korea.

The U.S. has never demanded or even proposed inspection of the 400 nuclear weapons held by Israel with U.S. technical support and decades of diplomatic and political cover.

Washington continues to raise the fear that Iran or North Korea will spread nuclear weapons to other countries. The NPT prohibits nuclear weapons states from transferring nuclear weapons — including the direct or indirect control of such weapons — to nonnuclear weapons states. But this is exactly what the U.S. itself does.

Hundreds of B61 thermonuclear bombs and Tomahawk cruise missiles, among other U.S. nuclear weapons, are presently "hosted" in the nonnuclear NATO countries of Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. U.S. nuclear weapons were held for decades in South Korea, Japan, the Philippines and Guam.

Far from submitting to intrusive inspections as it demands of Iran and North Korea, the U.S. will neither confirm nor deny the presence or absence of nuclear weaponry on board its nuclear-powered aircraft supercarriers. □

# Stop terror: Get U.S. out of Asia

**W**e never trust what the state authorities say regarding someone held completely in their power. Nor do we trust what the corporate media spreads about the prisoner, his or her history or alleged motives. Even less would we trust what they say about someone charged with “terrorism.”

We do know, however, that the story spread against the person accused of trying to explode a car in New York City’s Times Square on May 1 has a political context. We knew immediately that the U.S. government and corporate media would spin the story to justify U.S. war policy toward Pakistan, Afghanistan and the entire West and Central Asian region, and that the police authorities at home would use it to try to diminish Constitutional guarantees for freedom.

In the days since the incident, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on CBS threatened the elected government of Pakistan — which is a U.S. ally and a virtual client state of U.S. imperialism — with “severe consequences” if the incident was traced to Pakistan. Though U.S. spokespeople have tried to soften this, such a threat is not easily forgotten.

In reality this threat is part of the U.S. pressure on the Pakistan regime to wage a more aggressive war against “insurgents” in the border zones — meaning the use of more military force against their own people. When the Pakistan army goes in, it may kill some fighters but it unquestionably kills many civilians, provoking what can turn into a horrible civil war in this vast country.

The Pentagon in the meantime has stepped up its high-tech war on the people of Pakistan from the safety of high-tech bases in the United States. Remotely piloted planes fire rockets on houses in Pakistan. They hit extended families at wedding parties. They hit farmers. The Pentagon claims they hit “Pakistani Taliban.” On one day — May 11 — they fired 18 rockets from four of these drones into a border village.

## Anti-Muslim repression here

We also know that the local and federal government, with the help of the corporate media, will attempt to use this incident to further increase repression in the U.S. They will use it to justify their attacks on the Pakistani immigrant community — at a time when at least two Pakistani political prisoners, Dr. Aafia Siddiqui and Fahad Hashmi, languish in

New York prisons. They will attempt to legitimize the increasing militarization of the country — cops with submachine guns on the subway platforms; increased screenings at the airports.

During the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression — in the days following a massive, national upsurge of workers on May Day — they will attempt to divide with their continuing racist, anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant campaign.

Whatever the truth behind the Times Square incident, it is U.S. imperialist aggression in that region that has created a political context for such an act. Any attack aimed at civilians is grotesque, but this one would be minuscule compared to the deaths, injuries, destruction and utter chaos that U.S. imperialism has brought to Iraq and Afghanistan and has begun to inflict on the 170 million Pakistanis.

Over the last 20 years U.S. sanctions, war and occupation have killed 2 million Iraqis, made 5 million refugees and divided Iraq in three parts in order to rule it. Its 30 years of subversion, invasion and outright occupation have prevented progressive development in Afghanistan. Now it is sending more troops. Only the Pentagon’s iron control of the media prevents more frequent revelations of U.S. atrocities against civilians, committed both by troops flying U.S. and NATO flags and by the U.S. mercenaries “contracted” as substitute hired killers.

There is a courageous civilian opposition in Pakistan to the attacks by the army and the drones. It has demonstrated that it can mobilize hundreds of thousands and has mass support. Of course, U.S. policy is aimed at stopping this movement.

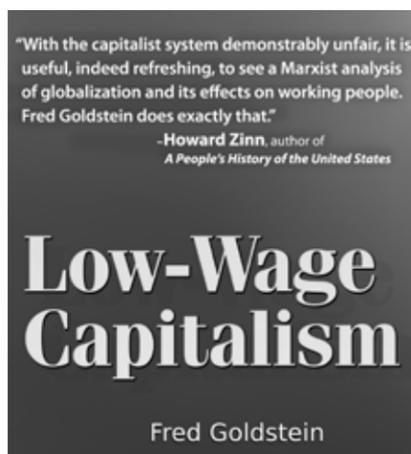
Those in the U.S. who want an end to the violence should remember how this was achieved during an earlier war — the war on Vietnam. A massive opposition here to that war helped end it and stay the hands of the war profiteers.

More than ever, we need a mass movement of people in the United States demanding the troops be pulled out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and demanding no attacks on Pakistan. We want the hundreds of billions of dollars wasted on war to be spent on jobs, homes and health care here.

Let’s build solidarity, not hatred, between the working class of the U.S. and the farmers, workers and progressive people of Pakistan, as well as with the Pakistani community here. □

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

**Clarence Thomas**, ILWU Local 10 and Co-chair, Million Worker March Movement



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# Imperialist hostility continues after Sudan’s vote

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

National election results in Sudan returned President Omar Hassan al-Bashir to power in Africa’s largest geographic nation-state. The ruling National Congress Party won an overwhelming majority, with Bashir gaining 68 percent of the vote and the first vice-president and president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, taking 93 percent in the southern region.

These were the first multi-party elections held in Sudan since 1986, when the results failed to resolve Sudan’s internal political crisis and prompted a military coup that brought Bashir to power in 1989.

Since the early 1990s, relations between the Sudanese government and Western imperialist countries have deteriorated. In 2008, the International Criminal Court in The Hague issued indictments against Bashir and other leading government members, accusing them of war crimes in their efforts to battle the rebel movements in Sudan’s western Darfur region.

Western imperialist states and their observers claimed that widespread irregularities occurred in the elections and that the overall outcome left much to be desired. The European Union declared that despite the internationally supervised elections, the political officials should still be arrested and brought to trial in the Netherlands.

Some opposition parties echoed the West’s complaints and even said the outcome of the vote was illegitimate. Nonetheless, the African Union, which represents 53 member states, hailed the elections. The AU has opposed the ICC indictments, maintaining that the court is jeopardizing the peace process and the country’s overall political stability.

AU Commissioner Jean Ping said that he commended “the people of the Sudan and Sudanese political parties for peacefully conducting the just-concluded multi-party general elections. These elections constitute a fundamental milestone towards realizing democratic transformation ... as espoused by the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.” (April 17) The CPA was the result of negotiations after a ceasefire between the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement and the central government at the conclusion of a 20-year civil war from 1983-2003. Both parties to the CPA accepted the election results.

Bashir said that the country would go ahead with a referendum on the future of the southern region in 2011. (Al-Rayaam, April 25)

The Sudan Tribune noted, “Observers say that the agreement between the two respective ruling parties in the North and South, committing themselves to acceptance of the results before they are officially released, signifies a giant step towards maintaining the status quo.” (April 21)

## Attacks against Sudan continue

The United States observers, including the Carter Center, expressed their reservations about the election process and its outcome.

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter said in a statement, “It is obvious that the elections will fall short of international standards that are expected of advanced democracies.” Carter expressed a lack of faith in the ability of the Sudanese people to conduct their own internal affairs by emphasizing the role of international observers. According to Carter, Western monitors were essential to ensure a qualified outcome. (Final Call, April 25)

At the same time Carter acknowledged “the generally peaceful nature of the voting process,” and noted that the more than 60 percent turnout far exceeded the normal participation of most U.S. national elections.

Other Western-based institutions and regional organizations reiterated calls for the overturning of the Sudanese government. Human Rights Watch said that Bashir should not be immune from ICC arrest and prosecution.

The European Union declared that it welcomed “the largely peaceful conduct of the recent election” but “expressed concerns about the deficiencies in relation to international standards.” The organization of 27 member states called on Sudan “to cooperate fully with the ICC in accordance with its obligation under international law.” (Sudan Tribune, April 26)

Sudan has refused to accept the legitimacy of the ICC and maintains that the indictments against Bashir are designed to undermine the country’s sovereignty. Sudan is one of the emerging oil-producing states in Africa; the government cites this as a major factor in Western efforts to replace the leadership.

In the United States, anti-Sudan forces have criticized the Obama administration for not having a clear foreign policy toward the Bashir government. Last year President Barack Obama appointed a special envoy to Sudan, Scott Gration, who has attempted to open up dialogue between Khartoum and Washington.

Congressional Rep. Frank Wolf recently stated in a letter to Obama that Gration has not enacted the right policy toward Sudan. Others, such as New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof, have called for the bombing of the Sudan Air Force. (The East African, May 10)

A statement by the so-called Save Darfur Coalition, which campaigns for U.S. military intervention in Sudan, said that “President Obama must lead world leaders to not recognize President Omar al-Bashir as a legitimately elected leader and to press for meaningful steps towards political freedom in Sudan in the run-up to next year’s referendum to determine independence for South Sudan.” (Inter Press Service, April 20)

In response to the Sudan elections, the Obama administration said: “The United States notes the initial assessment of independent electoral observers that Sudan’s elections did not meet international standards. Political rights and freedoms were circumscribed throughout the electoral process, there were reports of intimidation and threats of violence in South Sudan, ongoing conflict in Darfur did not permit an environment conducive to acceptable elections, and inadequacies in technical preparations for the vote resulted in serious irregularities.” (IPS, April 20)

The White House indicated that Washington “remains committed to working with the international community to support the implementation of outstanding elements of the CPA and ensure that the referendum happens on time and that its results are respected.” □

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## With strikes and demonstrations

# Greek workers reject capitalist austerity

By Deirdre Griswold

A combative and confident workers' movement in Greece is throwing a monkey wrench into the plans of Europe's politicians, who are trying to revive the capitalist system by further grinding down workers' wages and benefits.

Greek workers have been demonstrating in the tens of thousands, calling on their class sisters and brothers throughout Europe to rise up against the austerity plans that politicians of various stripes, from Britain's Labour Party to Germany's conservative coalition, have been carrying out in cahoots with the owners of the multinational corporations and banks.

In Greece the social democratic government has also given in to the demands of big capital, cutting wages and gutting pensions and social services, but the workers' organizations are refusing to accept this poisonous prescription.

All over the capitalist world, governments are in crisis as a result of the contraction of the financial markets. The Greek government is no exception. Like all the others, it came to rely greatly on credit during the period of unbridled expansion and speculation — and low taxes on the rich — that turned millionaires into multibillionaires. When the bubbles burst, the financiers demanded bailouts, threatening social disaster unless the people's hard-earned money was turned over to them.

The Greek government handed over a \$36 billion bailout to the banks, which only propelled the country into a new crisis as the government started running out of funds. Meanwhile, the imperialist bankers of the European Union demanded Greece accept a draconian austerity plan in order to qualify for new loans at exorbitant interest rates.

In the United States, where the capitalist crisis hit first, the response of the unions to this same process has been muted, even as millions of workers lost their jobs and then were hit by huge budget cutbacks by

the states and municipalities.

In Greece, however, the workers' organizations are led increasingly by communists, who are refusing to bow down before capital's demands. They don't buy the argument that the workers must sacrifice in order to keep the system stable. The system is already completely unstable for the workers. Capital is now demanding draconian cuts that, if allowed to happen, would not just reduce workers' income further, but would plunge them into a crisis of hunger and homelessness.

So, beginning May 5, a general strike by both private and public sector unions — the sixth general strike this year — paralyzed Greece for 48 hours. The day before, the workers came out in yet another militant demonstration and, at the Acropolis high above Athens, several hundred young people from the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) unfurled two huge banners down the rock walls below the Parthenon calling for "Peoples of Europe, Rise up" in Greek and English.

### Communist May Day statement

The KKE has a long history of resistance. It struggled against a fascist regime and German occupation during World War II, participated in a civil war against the pro-imperialist regime backed by the U.S. and Britain from 1946 to 1949, and resisted a military dictatorship from 1967 to 1974. The Central Committee of the KKE put out a statement for May Day that explained, in the language of Marxism and class struggle, what the workers must do to "defend the conquests that the previous generations have shed their blood for."

"It's time to rise up with class unity and people's mobilization against the war on our rights. To struggle for our rights and for our children's future. Our class has the power and the capability to lead the formation of a great antimonopoly, anti-



CREDIT: KKE

Message from the Parthenon. Europe's most class-conscious workers support the Greek people's struggle.

imperialist, democratic front that will overthrow the power of the monopolies and will struggle for people's power. People should have no trust in the parties of the plutocracy or in the EU."

The statement says that the brutal antiworker policies of the government "will persist and will escalate as long as the workers and the people do not show their real strength. The subversion of social security rights, the dramatic rise in retirement age limits, the drastic cuts in pensions and benefits, the abolition of restrictions on mass dismissals, the elimination of Collective Labor Agreements, even the abolition of the basic salary and the generalization of the temporary and flexible employment are measures predetermined years ago.

"Their goal is for the labor force to become even cheaper, the young people to be deprived of fundamental rights as regards labor, education and health care services. The same measures are promoted in all EU countries as required by the interests of the capitalists. They want the workers to pay for the capitalist crisis and the impasse of their aged, outmoded

capitalist system."

Capitalism "cannot become human" or avoid crises, says the KKE. "The more powerful the monopolies get, the more the workers and the people will suffer, the greater parasitism, corruption and barbarity will become. ...

"The working class is the most powerful social force. It produces the wealth; it creates and makes the factories, the enterprises and the infrastructure work." But for Greece to develop in favor of the people, the capitalist monopolies must "become popular-social property and be subjected to central planning and to social and workers' control."

This kind of talk may have provoked just a sneer from the political servants of big capital when the markets were wallowing in easy money. But not any more.

The New York Times reported on May 4 about the banners hung on the Acropolis with these words: "Investors took fright across Europe and on Wall Street, sending the euro to a fresh one-year low."

The class struggle is back — and it's not just coming from one side.

Email: [dgriswold@workers.org](mailto:dgriswold@workers.org)

## Capitalist crisis is spreading

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ernments are conduits to transfer wealth from the workers to the bankers.

Now that the governments are in a position of unsustainable debt, the bankers want the governments of Greece, Portugal and Spain to cut back even further on the working class as a price for the bailout.

While the banks in Europe and the U.S. rake in hundreds of billions in profit, in Greece unemployment is officially around 10 percent. It is the same in Portugal and around 20 percent in Spain. This is official unemployment, meaning that, as in the U.S., the figure is far below real unemployment. This is a crisis for the working class — and the bosses want to make it worse.

That is what is driving the heroic and intransigent resistance of the Greek working class, which has taken to the streets to stop the attacks on their pensions, retirement age, wages and general living conditions.

In fact, the Greek bailout was meant to stop the "contagion" of financial default and economic meltdown. But it was also meant to guard against the contagion of class struggle, which could easily grow among the militant working classes of southern Europe.

The Greek working class fought against Nazi occupation and British-backed counterrevolution after World War II. When Portugal's African and Asian colonies were fighting for and winning their

freedom, the working class in Portugal itself had a revolutionary uprising that came to the edge of a proletarian revolution in 1974. Workers in the Spanish state fought the fascist Franco regime and carried out heroic underground organizing for decades.

These three countries constitute the poorest, most class-conscious, militant parts of Europe. A spreading struggle in the south could easily expand to the north, where the workers have been under constant pressure from the German, French and British ruling classes.

### Capitalism depends on life support from state

What this latest crisis shows is the complete dependence of the capitalist class in Europe, the U.S. and Japan upon the state as the fundamental prop to keep the system going. The capitalist states have to go to their mints and print money to loan banks and weakened governments just to temporarily stave off catastrophic crises that bring devastation to the workers and the oppressed.

But going to the printing press does not create any value. Only workers create value. The European Union, the European Central Bank, the U.S. Federal Reserve System and the Treasury Department can print money to loan out to save the banks on a temporary basis. But capitalist over-

production, slow growth and economic stagnation are choking the system and creating long-term mass unemployment. Furthermore, the system is always standing on the brink of collapse, as the recent crisis in Europe shows.

### Debunking the 'jobs recovery'

The government and the big business media in the U.S. were hyping the great "jobs growth" numbers just as the European crisis came to a head. That sobered everyone up about the "recovery" of the system.

There were great cheers for the supposed creation of 290,000 U.S. jobs in the month of April. A more sober assessment of these numbers brings little solace to the workers. Of the 290,000 jobs, 62,000 were short-term census work. According to the government, 150,000 new workers enter the workforce every month. So of the 290,000 new jobs created, that leaves just 80,000 jobs for the unemployed.

This doesn't even put a dent in the number of workers who are unemployed, underemployed or have become discouraged from looking for work and dropped out of the workforce. This figure, called total unemployment or U6 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, stands at 30 million. In fact, the regular unemployment rate went up from 9.7 percent to 9.9 percent last month, and, more importantly, total

unemployment went up from 16.9 percent to 17.1 percent.

There may be a recovery of capitalist profits and business, but it is not bringing the millions of workers back to work. Furthermore, the prospect of a massive rebound of capitalist production and employment is off the historic agenda.

Instead the system is lurching from crisis to crisis. The only way out for the workers is to follow the lead of the Greek working class and refuse to allow the bosses and the bankers to put their crisis on our backs.

The workers should refuse to be enslaved to the capitalist "jobs market," where they have to sell their labor to some boss every day or face rejection and unemployment. A job should be a right, a political right. If the capitalists cannot give the workers jobs, then the government should guarantee a job or income to everyone who needs it — a job with dignity and living wages.

If capitalism cannot do that, then it is time to get rid of the system.

Goldstein is author of the book "Low-Wage Capitalism," a Marxist analysis of globalization and its effects on the U.S. working class. He has also written numerous articles and spoken on the present economic crisis. For further information visit [www.lowwagecapitalism.com](http://www.lowwagecapitalism.com).

# M★NDO OBRERO

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

## Rechazo en masa a la ley de Arizona y al ICE

Por Fred Goldstein

Hace cuatro años, en el Primero de Mayo, millones de inmigrantes y sus partidarios/as obligaron al gobierno capitalista a rechazar el vicioso proyecto de ley anti-inmigrante de Sensenbrenner.

Este Primero de Mayo más de 1 millón de inmigrantes y simpatizantes se manifestaron en más de 100 ciudades enviando un poderoso mensaje a las fuerzas racistas anti-inmigrantes en Arizona para que deroguen la ley estilo apartheid que legaliza los perfiles raciales.

Unidas a las protestas contra la ley de Arizona estaban las exigencias para que se terminen las redadas, las deportaciones y la separación de las familias por la Agencia de Inmigración y Aduanas (ICE por las siglas en inglés). Las manifestaciones pedían la legalización, el fin de la criminalización de todos/as los inmigrantes indocumentados/as y justicia e igualdad para todos/as.

La presencia masiva de inmigrantes militantes empujó las protestas anteriores de las bandas racistas del Partido del Té, que han sido pintadas por los grandes medios de comunicación capitalista como una fuerza todopoderosa desde que organizaron “rebeliones” durante las audiencias públicas sobre el proyecto de ley de salud.

La manifestación del Primero de Mayo fue un reflejo más del verdadero potencial de la relación entre los/as trabajadores/as y las masas oprimidas por un lado, y la ultra-derecha por el otro — una vez que el pueblo se moviliza. Las rabiosas fuerzas anti-inmigrante que acudían a los mítines de Sarah Palin en la gira del Partido del Té no estaban a la vista el Primero de Mayo — y por buena razón. El Primero de Mayo fue realmente un gran paso hacia adelante en el camino a la lucha contra la derecha.

### Arizona, parte de una tendencia

El propósito de la ley de Arizona es estimular el racismo, usar a los/as inmigrantes como chivos expiatorios, para dividir la clase obrera y hacerle más fácil a los empresarios el superar la crisis económica de desempleo sin que haya una rebelión de los/as trabajadores/as. Pero la ley, aunque extrema, no es un hecho aislado.

Las redadas del ICE y la colaboración entre el gobierno federal y cerca de 70 departamentos de la policía de todo el país continúan. La retórica de Washington, en particular respecto al proyecto de ley que está siendo elaborado por el Senador Charles Schumer de Nueva York, trata de “seguridad fronteriza”, de un “camino” draconiano a la ciudadanía pagando multas, de demostrar competencia en inglés, de ir “al final de la línea”, de “programas de trabajadores huéspedes, etc. Estas medidas punitivas llamadas “reformas migratorias” estigmatizarán oficialmente a los/as trabajadores/as indocumentados/as.



Primero de Mayo: un reflejo del verdadero potencial de la relación entre los/as trabajadores/as y las masas oprimidas por un lado, y la ultra-derecha por el otro.

Además, la propuesta de una tarjeta de identidad biométrica es una amenaza potencial para todos/as los/as trabajadores/as. Ahora mismo hay una investigación de los antecedentes de todos los trabajadores portuarios en el país por el Departamento de Seguridad de la Patria. Muchos/as han perdido sus puestos de trabajo después de descubrirse infracciones menores.

La tarjeta de identidad biométrica daría a todos los jefes un arma en contra de todos/as los/as trabajadores/as. La amenaza es especialmente grave para trabajadores/as negros/as y latinos/as. Estos/as tienen una incidencia desproporcionadamente alta de encarcelamiento a causa de una elevada tasa de desempleo y porque son blanco de discriminación racial en primer lugar. Es bastante comprensible que, entre las muchas consignas gritadas en las manifestaciones, se oye a menudo, “¡Obama, escucha, estamos en la lucha!”

La administración Obama ha estado distante y pasiva frente a este desafío manifiestamente inconstitucional a los derechos de los latinos/as y a la jurisdicción de la propia administración. Legisladores derechistas en Texas, Utah, Colorado y otros lugares están amenazando con seguir el ejemplo de la ley de Arizona.

Hasta ahora Washington ha dejado en manos de las fuerzas locales el resistir por vías legales esta medida de corte fascista, que da a la policía el derecho a pedir los papeles de quien se tenga la “sospecha razonable” de ser indocumentado/a. El alcalde de Phoenix, un policía del condado de Pima, la American Civil Liberties Union y otras organizaciones de servicios legales están trabajando para desafiar esa ley.

Mientras tanto, el ICE y los policías del condado de Maricopa bajo el mando del alguacil Joe Arpaio de mentalidad fascista, siguen llevando a cabo redadas y revisiones arbitrarias, a pesar de un fallo de la Agencia de Seguridad Nacional que le quitó a Arpaio el derecho a ejecutar la

política migratoria.

Esta vacilación de Washington no sólo envalentona al sector anti-inmigrante y derechista en su represión, sino que fortalece las mismas fuerzas racistas que quieren tumbar a la administración de Obama. Mientras que los fascistas “Minutemen” y otros tipos ultra derechistas siempre han estado incitando a un ataque contra los/as trabajadores/as indocumentados/as, la clase dominante en general y el gobierno capitalista tomaron una posición más moderada durante el auge económico.

### Capitalistas necesitan de trabajadores/as indocumentados/as

Los empresarios no se quejaron cuando los/as trabajadores/as indocumentados/as cruzaron la frontera para cultivar sus alimentos, construir casas y edificios de oficinas para la expansión inmobiliaria, convertirse en techadores, yeseros, pintores, y jardineros, trabajar en los mataderos, limpiar las casas, cuidar los niños, etc.

Las empresas de construcción, los desarrolladores de bienes raíces, la industria hotelera, los empacadores de carne y otros capitalistas ganaron miles de millones en ganancias explotando a trabajadores/as indocumentados/as que tenían poca representación, y quedaban completamente vulnerables.

Pero una vez estalló la burbuja inmobiliaria y la crisis económica se extendiera, los empresarios ya no pudieron obtener un beneficio fácil de los millones de trabajadores/as indocumentados/as, así que la clase dominante los utilizó como chivos expiatorios. Al aumentar el desempleo en los EEUU de un 4 al 10 por ciento, la actitud de la clase dominante y el gobierno se hizo más dura.

Esto fue parte de una política del gobierno cuidadosamente calculada. Durante el período de expansión económica

los capitalistas necesitaban la mano de obra barata de cerca de 400.000 trabajadores/as inmigrantes. Pero la ley solamente permitía entrar a este país legalmente a 5.000 trabajadores/as por año. Éste era un seguro de que hubiera una reserva enorme de trabajadores/as indocumentados/as para competir por los empleos de bajo sueldo. También se aseguraba que durante una depresión hubiera una población no documentada para ser el chivo expiatorio por la crisis de desempleo.

### TLCAN, industria agrícola e inmigración

Esto es precisamente lo que pasó en Arizona. Oficialmente la tasa de desempleo ha subido de más de 4 por ciento al 9,6 por ciento en los dos años de la crisis. Antes había 150.000 desempleados/as en Arizona y esta cifra ya ha subido a más de 300.000.

Y ésta es una cifra modesta debido a que decenas de miles de trabajadores/as indocumentados/as ya no están contados/as como parte de la fuerza laboral. Si ellos/as solicitan beneficios por desempleo, los/as trabajadores/as del estado están obligados/as a dar sus nombres al ICE.

Es difícil comprender el porqué la gente deja a sus familias y corre el riesgo de penuria y muerte al cruzar el desierto para entrar en los Estados Unidos, a menos que se sepa que el TLCAN, el tratado que pasó en 1994, abrió México a la industria agrícola estadounidense y en efecto destruyó una gran parte de la agricultura doméstica de México resultando en la pérdida de tierras y empleos para millones de personas. La invasión de corporaciones estadounidenses forzó a millones de inmigrantes a venir a los Estados Unidos para alimentarse ellos/as y sus familias. Era un plan corporativo construido deliberadamente para que ganaran las corporaciones y perdieran los/as trabajadores/as.

Éste es el trasfondo de la campaña de intimidación y división emprendida contra los/as trabajadores/as indocumentados/as. La única solución puede venir de la clase trabajadora y envuelve la solidaridad, tanto dentro de los Estados Unidos como entre los/as trabajadores/as estadounidenses y los/as trabajadores/as mexicanos/as. Los/as trabajadores/as y campesinos/as en México estarán forzados/as a venir aquí para sobrevivir siempre que esté el imperialismo corporativo estadounidense en México y en otros países oprimidos.

Es demasiado pronto para saber qué van a lograr últimamente las magníficas movilizaciones del Primero de Mayo 2010. Pero ya ha hecho vacilar a la clase dominante y sus planes de convertir a los/as inmigrantes en chivos expiatorios por la crisis económica. Esto abre paso para que crezca la solidaridad entre todos/as los/as trabajadores/as y para levantar la consigna de que no hay fronteras en la lucha obrera. □