

WORKERS WORLD

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NOV. 4, 2010 Vol. 52, No. 43 50¢

Dock workers shut down Bay Area ports as Strike, rally demand justice for Oscar Grant

By Judy Greenspan
Oakland, Calif.

The stage and steps of Frank Ogawa Plaza in downtown Oakland shook and trembled with the strong unifying cry of “We are all Oscar Grant!” as over 1,000 people — Black, Brown, Native, Asian and white — came out despite rain to attend a rally that followed the dramatic shutdown of Bay Area ports by workers of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

The ILWU drill team opened the Oct. 23 program in full uniform, marching to the beat of “What time is it? Union time!” and “We are the union — the mighty, mighty union!”

Clarence Thomas, long-time ILWU Local 10 member and labor activist who co-chaired the rally with Jack Heyman, another ILWU dockworker, proudly announced, “All of the Bay Area ports are shut down today in honor of the fight for justice for Oscar Grant.”

This rally comes just two weeks before the sentencing of Johannes Mehserle, the Bay Area Rapid Transit cop who shot and killed 22-year-old Grant, an unarmed Black man, as he was tightly restrained face down on a BART platform on Jan. 1, 2009. The labor and community protest was held to send a message to the court demanding the harshest possible sentence for Mehserle.

Mehserle was charged with second-degree



WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN

Oakland, Oct. 23.

murder but was convicted of only involuntary manslaughter. Grant’s mother, Wanda Johnson, said immediately after the verdict, “My son was murdered. He was murdered and the law has not held the officer accountable.” (San Francisco Chronicle, July 9)

Many speakers noted the incredible role played by the ILWU in supporting today’s rally. The union has a long history of supporting anti-racist and progressive causes with work stoppages. The dock and warehouse workers union has also, since its 1934 general strike, developed a strong relationship with the Black community in West Oakland and other parts of the Bay Area.

Power of the working class

Richard Mead, president of ILWU Local 10, recalled that the shooting of two workers sparked the 1934 general strike led by the dock and maritime workers in San

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NO APOLOGY

Editorial 10

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Workers World Party Southern regional conference



Audience listens to plenary talks during Oct. 23 socialism conference in Durham, N.C. Read article on pages 6-7.

WW PHOTO: ABAYOMI AZIKIWE

Defending civil liberties, free speech

Labor movement opposes FBI raids

By Sue Davis

Among the 115 groups that have taken a stand against the Sept. 24 FBI raids targeting anti-war activists are a growing number of labor unions, federations and organizations. Pointing out that many of those subpoenaed were union activists, the resolutions connect the latest repression to the long history of anti-labor attacks that sought to squash union organizing in the U.S.

The San Francisco Central Labor Council delegates meeting voted unanimously Sept. 27 to condemn the raids. The resolution noted that Joe Iosbaker, a long-time Service Employees Local 73 chief steward at the University of Illinois-Chicago and a well-known leader in the Chicago labor movement, was one of the targets.

Two Teamster locals — 705 in Chicago and 807 in the New York City area — passed resolutions citing Iosbaker's solidarity during a Teamster strike at UIC as well as expressing solidarity with Teamster brother Mick Kelly in Minneapolis, who was also targeted.

At the Oct. 1 convention of American Federation of State, County, Municipal Employees Council 5, which represents 46,000 public employees in Minnesota, a resolution noted that four of the subpoenaed activists are members of Council 5. On Oct. 21, AFSCME Local 3800, which represents University of Minnesota clerical workers, followed suit with a resolution denouncing the attacks on Tracy Molm, Ahn Pham, Jess Sundin and Steff Yorek.

On Oct. 13, Local 1493 of the American Federation of Teachers, which represents the faculty at California's San Mateo Community College, passed a resolution denouncing the FBI visit to member Masao Suzuki. On Oct. 14, the Duluth Central Labor Body's resolution condemned the FBI and Department of Justice's "attempts to intimidate and disrupt grassroots social movements."

U.S. Labor Against the War, Black Workers for Jus-

tice, Labor for Palestine and the South Bay Labor Council in San Jose, Calif., also passed similar resolutions.

Many unionists participated in more than 60 protests around the country in the days immediately following the raids and during the grand jury hearings in early October where those subpoenaed refused to testify. For example, Larry Goldbetter, president of the National Writers Union, United Auto Workers Local 1981, read a statement at a New York City protest linking the raids to what may be in store for workers in a low-wage economy with permanently high unemployment.

Long history of gov't attacks on labor movement

Many of the resolutions drew a parallel between the current raids and the notorious Palmer Raids of the early 1920s, where outspoken immigrant and labor leaders were deported or expatriated; to the anti-communist McCarthy witch hunt in the 1950s, which drummed many dedicated leaders out of office as well as the union movement; and to the FBI's well-documented attacks from the 1950s through the 1970s on the Civil Rights and the Black liberation movements.

AFT Local 1493 noted the internment of Japanese Americans from 1942 to 1945 and the fact that Arab Americans and members of the Muslim faith have been framed up since Sept. 11, 2001, under the Patriot Act.

The statement by the Black Workers for Justice reads: "We know full well that these attacks, while starting against anti-war activists, are aimed at all activists that organize and mobilize against the many injustices caused by a system that places profits and domination over human needs."

An article by Joe Burns cited a number of times over the last century where the labor movement has led the struggle for the rights to free speech and protest needed to win workers' rights. (www.inthesetimes.com, Oct. 16)

Take the 1909 struggle of the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World). After the city of Spokane, Wash., outlawed street-corner rallies, the Wobblies called on its members and supporters to come to town. The law was rescinded when activists outnumbered jails cells.

Many valiant labor struggles affirmed the right to protest during the 1930s. For instance, the 1939 Supreme Court case *Hague v. CIO* established that parks and streets were public spaces where people could exercise their first amendment rights. The case started when the Congress of Industrial Organizations tried to organize unions in Jersey City, N.J., and the openly corrupt mayor, "Boss" Hague, arrested CIO leafleteers and closed down union meetings.

Government repression is only too familiar when workers strike. Just remember the heroic Transport Workers strike of 2005, when the courts and the city government, backed by the corporate-owned press, demonized the workers in Local 100 for exercising their right to withhold their labor when offered a bad contract.

The only way that workers and all oppressed people are going to survive — and eventually surmount — the "new normal" economy of low-wage capitalism and mass unemployment is by fighting back. Defending workers' rights to a job at a livable wage and to dissent against government repression is critical in the coming period.

For more information about the struggle to defend the anti-war activists and stop government repression, see www.StopFBI.net.

In NYC, Nov. 6

Stop FBI Repression

The Committee to Stop FBI Repression is convening a national meeting in New York City on Saturday, Nov. 6, 6:30 p.m., at St. Mark's Church, 131 E. 10th St. Invited are all those interested in building the movement against FBI raids and the grand jury attempt to criminalize anti-war and international solidarity activists.

According to the Committee: "Each of the 14 activists subpoenaed to appear [before a grand jury] signed a letter from the lawyers stating they would NOT testify. The Assistant U.S. Attorney, Brand Fox, told the lawyers he would withdraw the subpoenas, but he would say nothing more. So this is not over yet. The government is not likely to let go ... [and] has a number of options — more raids, arrests, new subpoenas, or offering immunity to some with the threat of jail if they do not speak. ... [T]he FBI continues to harass other anti-war activists at their homes and workplaces, trying to divide and intimidate. We need you to remain vigilant, to help us organize, and to work toward a defense that continues to put U.S. war and occupation on trial."

For updated information on the Nov. 6 meeting, go to www.StopFBI.net. □

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People Before Banks Coalition launched

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

A broad coalition of labor, religious and community organizations held a press conference Oct. 8 in Detroit to announce the formation of the People Before Banks Coalition. This new formation is pressing for a national two-year moratorium on foreclosures. It is also demanding justice for workers losing their jobs and livelihoods due to the practices of financial institutions.

The People Before Banks Coalition is comprised of the organizations that spearheaded a mass march on Chase Bank during the U.S. Social Forum held in Detroit in June. These forces have been leading a campaign for divestment from Chase.

The coalition's founding members and organizations include the United Auto Workers International union; the Rev. Ed Rowe of Central United Methodist Church in Detroit; the Rev. David Bullock, head of Detroit Rainbow PUSH; the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs; the Rev. Bill Wylie-Kellerman, a leader in the Interfaith Justice Commit-

tee of the USSF; Jobs With Justice; the Farm Labor Organizing Committee; and other organizations.

Anti-foreclosure attorney Vanessa Fluker spoke at the press conference on behalf of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition and warned that people should not be taken in by the banks' pronouncements about allegedly halting foreclosures.

Fluker emphasized that the federal government now backs up the vast majority of mortgages through Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, along with the Federal Housing Administration. "Bailouts of the banks occur with virtually every foreclosure," said Fluker. "President Obama has the power to declare a national two-year moratorium by executive order to really stop foreclosures, but he won't do it."

Rev. Bullock also joined the call for a two-year moratorium. "The struggle against the banks is not just a fight for homeowners — we are in solidarity with all workers and communities across the country."

Bullock discussed the coalition's support for farmworkers in North Carolina represented by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee. FLOC has called for a national boycott of Chase because of

the bank's backing of R.J. Reynolds Co., which has refused to negotiate with FLOC for justice for the farmworkers.

UAW president Bob King issued a statement on behalf of the union which read in part: "While the UAW is happy that Chase Bank has taken [a] first step in halting foreclosures in several states, we hope [it goes] further. We are asking that Chase Bank enact a two-year moratorium on home foreclosures. A moratorium would allow homeowners at risk of losing their homes to pay a reasonable rent in lieu of mortgage payments, giving the homeowner time to recover in this period of economic emergency."

"We urge JPMorgan Chase Bank to intervene in the horrendous situation for tobacco workers in North Carolina where migrant farm workers suffer low wages and unsafe working conditions."

King participated in a fact-finding tour of North Carolina tobacco fields in September and experienced firsthand the inhuman conditions under which the tobacco workers live and work.

U.S. Rep. John Conyers Jr. also spoke in support of a two-year foreclosure moratorium. He announced that he has

directed his staff to call Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who leaves office in January, in a last-ditch effort to get her to implement a moratorium. Conyers stated, "It's not rocket science. Even Republican governors in the 1930s did it."

Michigan Democratic gubernatorial candidate Virg Bernero also attended the press conference and announced his support for the moratorium. Workers World got him to nail down this pledge by asking Bernero if he would use his executive authority under MCL 10.31 to declare a state of economic emergency and implement a two-year moratorium by executive order. Bernero responded, "You got it."

The People Before Banks Coalition is beginning to plan for a national conference in Detroit to press the struggle forward. The Moratorium NOW! Coalition reports it is getting calls from around the country from grassroots organizations ready to take on the anti-foreclosure, anti-bank battle.

Responses are also coming in to the online petition for a two-year national moratorium on foreclosures and evictions, which can be signed at bailoutpeople.org/moratoriumpetition.shtml. □

Mortgage fraud, bank bailouts continue

By Jerry Goldberg

The lifting of the major banks' "foreclosure moratoriums" — which had been instituted to stem the outcry over massive fraud in the processing of foreclosure documents — demonstrates the necessity for the working class to launch a struggle to win a genuine two-year moratorium on foreclosures and evictions predicated on the premise that housing is a fundamental human right.

With the federal government having essentially nationalized the mortgage industry, the president has the authority to implement such a moratorium through executive action.

Bank of America on Oct. 18 announced its intent to resume foreclosures in the 23 states which have judicial foreclosures. BOA had suspended foreclosures in those states on Oct. 1 due to revelations of fraud in the processing of foreclosure documents. BOA also announced it would resume foreclosures in a few weeks in the remaining 27 states. This move will likely encourage JP Morgan Chase and GMAC, who had similarly suspended foreclosures in the 23 judicial foreclosure states, to resume taking people's homes. (New York Times, Oct. 18)

Barbara J. Desoer, president of Bank of America Home Loans, stated, "We did a thorough review of the process and we found the facts underlying the decision to foreclose have been accurate. We paused

while we were doing that, and now we're moving forward."

While even bourgeois commentators treated this announcement with the cynicism and derision it deserved, Bank of America was emboldened to make this move with the backing of the federal government.

From the onset of the exposure of massive bank fraud, the Obama administration has opposed any calls for a national moratorium on foreclosures. When David Axlerod, President Barack Obama's chief advisor, appeared on CBS's "Face the Nation" Oct. 10, he came out against a national moratorium. He was followed by Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan, who published an article Oct. 17 in the Huffington Post that also rejected calls for a national moratorium, saying it would hurt the economy.

Billions for banks

Bank of America noted that the major holders of its mortgages, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, had been consulted during the review and had signed off on the decision to resume foreclosures. Of 14 million mortgages BOA services, one-half of them — worth \$2.1 trillion — are owned by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the giant mortgage holding companies controlled by the U.S. Treasury. (NYT, Oct. 18)

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were formerly government-sponsored enterprises,

private corporations chartered by the federal government to give them enhanced standing to buy or back up mortgage loans.

However, in July 2008 Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were taken over by the federal government due to massive losses they incurred as a result of the record rise in foreclosures caused by the fraudulent and predatory lending practices of the banks. The federal government placed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in trusteeship under the Federal Housing Finance Administration, guaranteeing up to \$200 billion in federal tax dollars to back up their loans. That figure was raised to \$400 billion, and is now uncapped.

According to a June 3, 2009, statement by FHFA Director James Lockhart, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac own or guarantee 56 percent of single-family mortgages worth \$5.4 trillion in the U.S. When combined with the Federal Housing Administration, the federal government backs or issues a whopping 75 percent of the country's mortgages. (Associated Press, Sept. 9, 2008)

What this means is that when a borrower goes into foreclosure, the bank which made the loan gets paid off at the loan's full value by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac. In addition, the government pays the bank to process the foreclosure. Then the government takes over the home, evicts the homeowner and any tenants, places the home on the market, and sells it at a fraction of the loan's value.

The difference in what the government paid the bank for the loan, and what the home sells for after foreclosure and eviction, is paid for by taxpayers. That arrangement amounts to a silent bailout of the banks.

For example, a home several doors from where this writer lives in Detroit sold for \$137,000 in 2001. The home was then foreclosed and the loan was taken over by Fannie Mae. The home is now being listed by Fannie Mae for \$31,000. The \$99,000 difference between the \$130,000 still owed on the home for which the bank received full value, and the \$31,000 for which Fannie Mae is selling the home, is paid for out of taxpayer funds.

This bailout to the banks, which occurs with virtually every foreclosure, has already amounted to \$145 billion.

While the FHFA estimated that the total cost of this bailout will be \$221 to \$363 billion, in 2009 the Congressional Budget Office estimated that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac would require \$389 billion in federal subsidies through 2019. (Bloomberg News, Oct. 21)

Barclays Capital Inc. analysts put the price tag as high as \$500 billion, and Sean Egan, president of Egan-Jones Ratings Co., estimated that the total taxpayer bailout to the banks through Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac will total \$1 trillion. (BN, June 13)

These figures do not include the addi-

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Protesters tell Bank of America:

STOP EVICTION OF MICHELLE HART

Anti-foreclosure activists gathered outside Bank of America in downtown Detroit Oct. 22 to demand the bank stop its eviction of Michelle Hart and her ill elderly mother from their home in Southfield, Mich. Hart was served with eviction papers the very same week BOA and other major banks announced a suspension of foreclosures in order to clean up their massive nationwide fraud. On Oct. 25 it was learned that the bank's lawyers have postponed Hart's eviction hearing from Oct. 27 until Dec. 1. Organizers with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs consider this delay a temporary victory in their months-long struggle to stop this illegal foreclosure. A potentially fraudulent affidavit relating to the bank's assignment of Hart's mortgage loan has been uncovered by her attorney.

— Report and photo by Kris Hamel



Cops kill another Black youth

By Larry Hales

Early in the morning of Sunday, Oct. 17, Pace University student Danroy (DJ) Henry Jr. and his friends Brandon Cox and Desmond Hinds were parked outside Finnegan's Grill, a bar in Thornwood, N.Y., in Westchester County.

According to reports, they were waiting for a fourth friend who was inside the bar. A cop tapped on the car, which was idling in the fire lane. Henry, the driver, drove forward and another cop appeared from behind a police vehicle with gun drawn, not giving Henry time to react.

The cop began firing and somewhere in the process was hit by the vehicle, while at least one other cop joined in the shooting. In all, as many as eight shots were fired, three striking Henry while Cox, who was in the passenger seat, took one bullet. This is the account given by Cox and other witnesses at the scene, which contradicts the official police report.

According to police, they were called to the scene because of a fight outside the bar, a fight that Henry and the others in the vehicle were not involved in, Henry drove from where he was parked, hitting one cop who was on the hood of the vehicle and another one with the mirror. In

response the cops began firing into the car, killing Henry and wounding Cox.

Witnesses say the vehicle went only 100 feet, was not traveling fast, and only accelerated after shots were fired.

Considering the witnesses' accounts, it seems that once again the cops are fabricating a story to justify the killing of another young Black male.

Similar to countless other instances of police brutality, a statement from a police official the next morning attempted to sully Henry by stating that the young man, a 20-year-old student and football player at Pace University, had a blood alcohol level of .13.

In the Easton, Mass., community where DJ was from, his father Danroy Henry Sr. stated in response to the report of his son's blood alcohol level, "If it's a part of the truth, so be it. But at the end of the day, the central question to us is, does that justify killing our son? ... We still fundamentally believe it isn't." (www.necn.com, Oct. 23)

He also said, "Rather than coming out and sharing with us information, an anonymous source leaks toxicology reports that we can't verify."

The lawyer for Henry's family said the release of alleged alcohol blood levels was

an attempt "to change the conversation away from what police did."

The toxicology report was released less than nine hours after the shooting.

Facts 'don't add up'

Others who were at the bar the morning of the shooting have since come forward. Many claim they were brutalized by the police when the crowd became agitated after witnessing the shooting and seeing Henry handcuffed and placed on the ground without receiving medical care.

Daniel Parker, a football teammate of Henry's, who spoke at a press conference of 70 fellow football players on Oct. 22, said he tried to help Henry after he was shot. Parker says he was beaten by police, who later charged him and several other teammates with obstruction.

Other people on the scene were charged with numerous misdemeanor counts, and one football teammate of Henry's was charged with a felony. Many claim to have been assaulted by police who cracked down after people at the scene became angry.

Parker says he told police: "Can I help him? I know CPR. I said, 'He's dying. Can I help him? Can I help him?' And I was cut off." (Boston Herald, Oct. 22)

Witnesses report that Henry was left unattended for 15 minutes or longer, and when paramedics arrived on the scene, they first attended to the police who were allegedly hit by Henry's vehicle. Henry lay dying while handcuffed.

A cell phone video of the aftermath of the shooting shows many of the bar pa-

trons distraught, with some yelling at the cops. It also shows a woman in a white dress administering CPR to Henry before paramedics take over.

Henry had never been in trouble; neither had Cox. Friends, coaches, teachers and family members have come to the defense of the two young men and have called into question police accounts of the event. All of them echo a similar refrain: Something about the killing of Henry doesn't add up.

This latest shooting brings to mind the killing of Sean Bell by New York police in 2006. It is no less a tragedy than Bell's killing or any other killings by cops of young Black men or any young person, but especially people of color.

Police brutality is rampant, and for every incident that goes reported there are many more that don't. Police brutality and killings are symptoms of a sick society, one built on the for-profit mode of production, where the state apparatus, of which the cops are part, protect private property relations. Such brutality and repression are also indicators of the pervasive racism and national oppression facing youth of color in the U.S.

The family is demanding an independent investigation. This demand should be supported. Henry did nothing wrong. He merely existed as a young Black male, daring to hang out with his friends. For that he is dead.

Demand justice for Danroy Henry and Brandon Cox! Jail Aaron Hess, Ronald Beckley and all killer cops! □

Rally to free Sekou Odinga & all political prisoners



Attorney Chokwe Lumumba, a Jackson, Miss., City Council member, and revolutionary rapper M-1 from Dead Prez were among those on the platform during a "Political Prisoners Unity Rally" held Oct. 17 in Brooklyn, N.Y. Special attention was given to freeing Sekou Odinga, an activist who was imprisoned for actions with the Black Liberation Army in the 1960s and 1970s.

Called by the Sekou Odinga Solidarity Committee and the Committee to Honor Black Heroes, the large gathering of supporters was inspired by speakers at this rally. Lumumba said of these prisoners, "They've given their all!" Pam Africa



Far left, Chokwe Lumumba

Left, M-1 of Dead Prez

of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal talked of buses being arranged for Mumia's Nov. 9 hearing in Philadelphia, and how Mumia — innocent and still threatened with execution — represents all political prisoners and the racist frame-ups they have suffered.

Other speakers included Charles Barron, Freedom Party candidate for New York governor, Fred Hampton Jr., Coltran Chimurenga of the December 12th Movement, and Dr. James McIntosh of Cemo-tap.

One conclusion and goal of those present was well expressed by revolutionary rap artist M-1 when he said "We have to dismantle the system!"

— Report and photos by Anne Pruden

Led by Dock Workers union

Oscar Grant rally for justice

Continued from page 1

Francisco. "Oscar Grant's death was also murder," Mead said. "[A general strike] — that's where we need to go now."

Thomas put Grant's killing in a larger perspective. "The war on the Black community, particularly on the youth of color, always intensifies during times of economic crisis. Oscar Grant could have been any one of our sons, nephews or grandsons.

"We stopped international commerce today. We shut down all of the ports. That's the power of the working class," Thomas announced.

Cristina Gutierrez, a Latina activist representing Barrio Unido, a San Francisco-based organization for general and unconditional amnesty for immigrants, delivered a moving statement on the strength of the unity of all people against oppression. "Yo soy Oscar Grant, I am Oscar Grant, I am Mumia, I am Lynne

Stewart, I am Black, I am Brown, I am Chinese, I am a worker," Gutierrez exclaimed.

"I am the one who came to this country to seek work. Unless we work hand in hand with our Black brothers and sisters, we cannot win," said Gutierrez.

BART workers from the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1555, led by past president Harold Brown, stood together on stage and delivered a moving statement in support of justice for Oscar Grant. Brown, a train operator on the BART line which passes through the Fruitvale station, the site of Grant's killing, noted, "There's not a day that goes by that I don't think of Oscar Grant. This should never have happened."

The impetus for the justice rally came from members of Oscar Grant's family, who went to the ILWU seeking their support. The highpoint of the event came when a large group of Grant's family and friends took the stage.

The atmosphere on the plaza became electrified when Grant's 6-year-old daughter Tatiana was introduced to the crowd. A moving letter to the sentencing judge demanding the maximum sentence for Grant's killer was read by Tatiana's aunt.

Other speakers at today's gathering included Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown, former leaders of the Black Panther Party, and representatives from several unions including the Service Employees and the Oakland Education Association/Oakland Teachers Association.

Throughout the afternoon, rally organizers reminded the crowd, "We cannot let this movement end today." Plans are underway to keep the momentum of this coalition going, including a mass meeting of the Justice for Oscar Grant Community Outreach Committee on Oct. 26 in Oakland. □

PIST demands end to long bus routes

By Sara Catalinotto
New York

Parents to Improve School Transportation held a rally at the New York City Department of Education on the morning of Oct. 19. They are outraged that time is being taken away from their children's education by unrealistic school bus routing, which is especially disruptive for students with special needs.

A letter signed by dozens of parents and supporters was taken to the Schools Chancellor. It denounced the fact that the Office of Pupil Transportation laid off several hundred qualified drivers and escorts at the start of this school year, and then reshuffled the children onto routes that



PIST members rally Oct. 19.

are causing lateness and stress every day for parents, caregivers and students alike.

At the rally participants gave interviews in English and Spanish to the press,

and chanted, "O.P.T. — Get our kids to school on time!" and "Bus drivers need jobs, kids need short routes!"

A vice president of the United Federation of Teachers and a state business agent of the Amalgamated Transportation Union, which represents school bus drivers, were present along with other advocates for mass transit and public education.

For more information visit www.pist-nyc.org.

The writer is a PIST parent.

PHOTO: JOHNNIE STEVENS

Fannie Lou Hamer remembered as Freedom Party continues legacy of struggle

By Dolores Cox
New York

The anniversary of the birth of a cherished freedom fighter occurred recently. On Oct. 6, 1917, Fannie Lou Townsend was born and grew up on a Mississippi plantation in a sharecropper family. She began picking cotton at the age of 6. She was the youngest of 20 children and the granddaughter of an enslaved African. After marrying, she became Fannie Lou Hamer.

Subsequent to attending a SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) meeting, Hamer registered to vote in 1962. Upon leaving the Indianola, Miss., courthouse that day, she and others were stopped on the road as they headed home to Ruleville. They were harassed and given a fine because their bus was “the wrong color.”

As a result of refusing to remove her name from the registrar’s list, the plantation owner evicted Hamer and her spouse from their home. A couple of days later, bullets were fired into the bedroom where she slept in a friend’s home. Violent acts were also committed against other Black residents in Ruleville that same night.

In June 1963 after returning to Mississippi from a voter registration workshop, Hamer and others were harassed at a roadside restaurant by the police chief and a state highway patrol officer. Then they were arrested. At the county jail, Hamer was kicked and nearly beaten to death with a blackjack. While she was in jail, civil rights organizer Medgar Evers was murdered.

Fannie Lou Hamer was an outspoken civil rights activist and voting rights advocate. She said her goal was “to register ev-

ery Negro in Mississippi.” She possessed a love for her people and a keen interest and understanding of the power of the political process. This led Hamer to co-found the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

She fought tirelessly for inclusion and parity of Blacks in the racist Democratic Party. In Detroit Rosa Parks later established the Michigan Freedom Democratic Party at the urging of Malcolm X that there be an independent Black political party.

In 1964 Hamer challenged the Democratic Party to seat her party, claiming that the Credentials Committee and regular Democrats were “illegally elected” based on discriminatory practices against Blacks statewide. At the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City she also challenged then-President Lyndon Johnson and Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

In her testimony there Hamer stated: “If the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated today, I question America. Is this the land of the free and home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings in America?”

Johnson ordered the nationally televised convention to be interrupted to keep Hamer’s views from spreading. However, major networks later ran her speech. The country heard her conviction, speaking truth to power passionately, powerfully and fearlessly. Her party was not seated then; but in 1968 Hamer became a delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

Outspoken against hunger and poverty, Hamer urged Blacks to unify and stressed connecting with all freedom movements. She asserted that nobody’s free until ev-



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Charles Barron speaking on Wall Street, October 2008. Fannie Lou Hamer of Ruleville, Miss., speaking in Washington, D.C., Sept. 17, 1965.



erybody’s free. She co-founded the National Women’s Political Caucus in 1971. Hamer died in 1977 of cancer and complications from damage to her kidneys and eyes resulting from her beatings in jail.

NY’s Freedom Party challenges power structure

On the New York State ballot this November is the newly created Freedom Party, inspired by the memory of Hamer’s Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. It is challenging the all-white Democratic Party slate in the upcoming election. It is an African-American- and Latino/a-led political party with candidates running for governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general. Its gubernatorial candidate, Charles Barron, a New York City Councilperson, refers to today’s Democrats as the “Republicrats.”

Racial and ethnic disparities in income, employment, education, housing, health care, police violence, incarceration and opportunities persist. Much more needs to be done to attain social, economic and political justice and correct glaring

inequalities. Freedom Party supporters emphasize that these crucial issues and conditions have not been addressed by the Democrats.

The Freedom Party’s goal is to change existing political power relationships and narrow existing gaps, fight for inclusion, protect the human rights of the working class, regardless of skin color, and represent “unashamedly” their interests. FP’s allegiance is to the people, not corporate U.S.

The party’s overall aim is to restart the Freedom Movement, which includes inspiring young people to fight for their communities’ political and economic futures. FP’s founders intend to provide the political vehicle to connect oppressed communities statewide.

The party seeks to speak with one voice in fighting racism, fascism and capitalism and demanding the right to self-determination and liberation of all people worldwide. Candidate Barron, for example, helped lead a 2009 convoy to Gaza in Palestine to deliver solidarity and needed aid to the victims of Israel’s genocidal bombings. □

Beyond the ballot box

Workers, oppressed peoples & the midterm elections

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Most political pundits and leading corporate-oriented publications are predicting significant gains by right-wing Republican candidates across the United States in the midterm elections taking place Nov. 2. This possible shift in power within ruling-class politics is attributed to two main factors: the so-called conservative backlash as represented by the Tea Party and the lack of enthusiasm among key constituents within the African-American and Latino/a communities, as well as among working women, who voted overwhelming for the Democratic Party in 2006 and 2008.

A report issued Oct. 14 by the Washington-based Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, which focuses on social research involving African Americans and other people of color, indicates that if the voters within these demographic groups come out in large numbers, the Democratic Party can maintain its majorities within both the House and the Senate.

Various media outlets have carried stories that reflect the widespread disenchantment with the Obama administration and the 111th Congress for their failure to enact policies that create jobs, keep working people in their homes, and provide universal health care and quality education to youth.

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies report begins by noting:

“There is widespread agreement that the Democrats — after major gains in 2006 and 2008 — are poised to lose a significant number of U.S. House and Senate seats in the 2010 election, largely because of high unemployment and a generally poor economy. It is also widely felt that the extent of those losses will have a major impact on the Obama administration’s ability to pursue its goals through 2012.”

In real terms the social conditions of African Americans have worsened over the last two years. U.S. Census data revealed that overall the poverty rate in the U.S. stands officially at 15 percent of the population, amounting to 44 million people. However, for African Americans the official poverty rate is 25.8 percent, which is approximately 10.5 million people out of a total of 42 million.

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies report points to the strategic geographic locations where African Americans reside that make their participation key to the fortunes of the Democratic Party. “The Black population is not a nationally distributed one; rather, it is concentrated in less than half of the states and in about one-quarter of the U.S. congressional districts in the country.”

As a result of the relatively concentrated distribution of African Americans in the U.S., “There have been several midterm elections in the past 45 years (since the Voting Rights Act was passed) when there were few competitive elections in the states and districts where African Americans lived.”

The study recounts numerous elections, such as in 1986, 1998 and 2008, when the African-American vote was the determining factor in changing the political makeup of the U.S. Congress and the White House.

The current uncertainty over the degree of voter turnout among African Americans and other key constituents that put Barack Obama in the White House with a sizable majority, is clearly a reflection of the inability of the Democratic Party to address the concrete conditions emanating from the national and class oppression that has shaped the political and economic system in the U.S.

Other oppressed groups and women have also been targeted in the attempt to maintain Democratic Party control over the Congress. Obama visited the state of Washington on Oct. 21 in a last-minute effort to energize women voters.

The economic crisis that erupted in 2007 has rendered 8.4 million more people without jobs, serving to reinforce existing inequalities based on race, gender and social class. This loss of jobs, coupled with multitrillion-dollar bank and corporate bailouts, along with the ever rising Pentagon budget, have robbed the majority of people in the U.S. of a stable life and secure future.

Among the youth, who have the highest unemployment rate in the country, particularly among the oppressed nations, a recent CBS Knowledge Networks poll indicated that although 84 percent of those who voted for Obama who are under 30

approved of his job performance, only 44 percent said they would go to the polls. At the same time a Rock the Vote poll taken in September showed that only 34 percent of youth wanted the Democrats to stay in power while 36 percent expressed that it did not matter whether the Democrats or Republicans took control. (Huffington Post, Oct. 22)

Need for a party of the working class, oppressed

What these findings reveal is that African Americans, Latino/as, women and other oppressed segments of the population need a political party that places them at the center of decision making and the administration of effective power. Instead, politicians from both ruling-class parties mainly show no interest in the working class and the oppressed communities until election time.

With the crisis in capitalism deepening, workers and the oppressed of all nationalities and genders will look for meaningful answers to the worsening conditions involving job losses, foreclosures and evictions, the lack of health care, school closings and political repression.

A genuine left coalition of the nationally oppressed and the working class which is independent of the ruling class parties in both theory and political activity must be formed. It is only with such an alliance of the people that a real struggle can be waged to reverse the capitalist crisis and build a socialist society. □

WWP national conference

Uniting to fight capitalism

By Kathy Durkin
New York

Activists from around the country will attend the Workers World Party national conference being held Nov. 12-14 in New York City. A major goal of this year's gathering is to prepare for 2011 as "a new year to fight back against capitalism, racism, war and repression," and to press forward in the struggle for world socialism.

This year's assembly will take place in the midst of the ongoing capitalist crisis, which has hit working and poor people hard with massive unemployment, foreclosures, and cuts in health care and education across the country. The "jobless recovery" is clearly a disaster for millions of people.

Conference participants will tackle key questions including: How can left forces best fight back against this crisis? What impact will the Nov. 2 midterm elections have on progressive movements and struggles? What conclusions can be drawn from these developments?

Of primary concern will be how the struggle can be intensified against this

heinous capitalist system — which is at the root of these crises — and how to raise high the banner of socialism. How can it be shown that a world without oppression, exploitation, poverty and war is possible, where the wealth of society is used for the benefit of humanity, not stolen by the corporate elite?

Workers World Party and Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) join together year-round with many progressive forces from coast to coast to organize on economic, anti-racist and anti-war issues; to oppose attacks on immigrants, political repression against activists and lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer bashing; to defend the rights of women, youth, the elderly and the disabled; and to expose corporate injury to the environment.

Those who are organizing on these issues and say it's time to fight back, unite and oppose this profit-hungry system and organize for a socialist future should plan to attend this conference.

WWP extends an invitation to all like-minded organizations and individuals to attend and join in the discussions and planning for how to organize in the coming year on the crucial issues of the day.

Vital to this gathering will be exchanges of ideas and strategies on how progressive forces can best move the struggle forward and build a united front to develop the anti-capitalist, pro-socialist struggle and place it as an urgent item on the progressive movement's agenda for the coming year.

The conference will feature plenaries, including performances by people's artists, "open mike" sessions and break-out groups. There will be opportunities for reports and discussion by activists from around the country, representing crucial struggles and movements of the workers and oppressed.

To pre-register for the conference, and to get up-to-date logistics and schedule information, see www.workersworld.net. Political materials being prepared for conference discussion will also be posted there.

Donations — which are very much needed to help with conference expenses, such as hall rental, sound equipment, childcare, food, transportation and more — can be made at that website. To reach organizers by phone, call 212-627-2994. □

WWP Sou

By LeiLani Dowell and Abayomi Azikiwe
Durham, N.C.

A standing-room crowd of some 80 people participated in Workers World Party's Southern Regional Conference, held Oct. 23 in Durham, N.C. The conference was hosted by the Durham WWP branch which was formed a little more than a year ago. It is the first public conference on socialism in recent memory held in this region of North Carolina, an anti-union, right-to-work state.

From students to trade unionists and lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer activists, the multinational, multigenerational crowd came together to reflect on the history, present and future of the struggle for world socialism and its economic and political impact on the U.S. South. Activists traveled from Miami; Atlanta; Huntington, W. Virginia; Norfolk; Boston; Detroit and New York City to participate in the conference.

In the days before the conference, the cities of Raleigh, Chapel Hill, and Durham — known as the Triangle area — were covered with flyers announcing the conference. Organizers handed out flyers on several area campuses, engaging in conversations with students and inviting them to attend. Posters were put up throughout downtown areas, and leaflets were dropped off at businesses, parks and transportation centers around the event's location.

Atlanta WWP members set-up a peoples' history of struggle display with banners, pictures, posters and t-shirts which draped the walls of the third floor of the conference site, depicting the various struggles WWP has engaged in over the past 50-plus years. A banner proclaiming "Avenge Fred Hampton" was signed by Youth Against War and Fascism, the Party's youth wing founded in the early 1960s. Others demanded gay liberation, saluted South African women, and called for the freedom of political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Panther 21.

Elena Everett, representing the Durham branch of WWP, opened the conference. She welcomed the delegates and asked the audience to honor fallen freedom fighters by calling out their names. Later, closing the first plenary, Everett noted that the gap between the rich and poor is greater today than it was during the Great Depression. "Today we must pledge to win," she urged.

Teresa Gutierrez, a member of the WWP secretariat, discussed the immigrant rights movement and environmental degradation under capitalism. Gutierrez stated that the crisis in immigration policy reflects why socialism is needed worldwide.

Saladin Muhammad, a founding member of Black Workers for Justice and a member of the Black Workers League, stressed that the struggle for African-American self-determination is a vital aspect of the revolutionary struggle for workers power. He called for greater organization in the South, explaining that as a major region for the U.S. military complex, a major region for foreign direct investment, and a region with the lowest rate of unionization, the South is key to struggles for liberation.

Fred Goldstein, a member of the WWP secretariat and author of the book "Low Wage Capitalism," reflected on the staggering current unemployment figures — 15 months into the capitalist "recovery" — to argue that the entire social system is running aground. He said that the working class has a glorious history of struggle from which it has been cut off, and that this history can inspire and inform the intense struggles that are sure to come.

**Building class solidarity,
defending right to self-determination**

After lunch, four workshops were held on U.S. imperialism; capitalist terror on com-

A SERIOUS APPEAL

Everyone has to make decisions on which bills to pay and which to forego. This is not a bill. But it's a serious appeal for money.

Why is giving to Workers World newspaper important? Perhaps this 1931 poem by Bertolt Brecht says it best:

A Bed for the Night

*I hear that in New York
At the corner of 26th Street and Broadway
A man stands every evening during the winter months*

*And gets beds for the homeless there
By appealing to passers-by*

*It won't change the world
It won't improve relations among men
It will not shorten the age of exploitation
But a few men have a bed for the night
For a night the wind is kept from them*

The snow meant for them falls on the roadway.

Don't put down the book on reading this, man.

*A few people have a bed for the night
For a night the wind is kept from them
The snow meant for them falls on the roadway
But it won't change the world
It won't improve relations among men
It will not shorten the age of exploitation.*

Brecht wrote this in the depths of the Great Depression. In his native Germany, things were even worse. So why did he write about New York?

Because all over the world, progressives realized that what happened in the United States would either advance or hold back their own struggles for social change. This holds true even more so today. From Bolivia to Greece, from France to the Philippines, the people are hoping for a

renewal here of class struggle against the world-striding oligarchs on Wall Street and the warlords in Washington.

Brecht was reminding those whose hearts were touched by the misery of the unemployed that much more had to be done than just putting a coin or even a bill in a supplicant's cup.

Capitalism at that time was in crisis from Germany to the U.S. But it recovered, largely through the most destructive war in history, in which 70 million people died and the U.S., unleashing the destructive potential of the atom bomb, became the world's superpower.

Now we are in another great crisis and the same questions remain. Will the suffering caused by capitalism usher in a movement of the masses strong enough to challenge the hedge fund barons and the foreclosing bankers? Or will the rightwing and their corporate sponsors divide the workers with racism, homophobia, vilification of Muslims and attacks on immigrants?

Workers World is one of the very few remaining newspapers on the left in this country that every week puts out both a print and online edition.

It is the ONLY one that consistently gives a voice to activists in the Black, Latino/a, lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer and immigrant movements while also standing up against imperialist warmongering aimed at Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Venezuela, Cuba and Korea.

It is the ONLY one that fights for socialism at home while recognizing and supporting the gains that countries trying to build socialism have made despite Cold War threats, blockades and sanctions.

We're caught in the economic squeeze, too. We need to raise \$60,000 to keep publishing our paper. It's not for salaries. We have an all-volunteer staff. It's for rent and printers' bills and postage and all the other necessities.

Please, think seriously about what this newspaper means to you and help us make our goal.

Yes! I want to support the Workers World newspaper 2010 Fall Fund Drive!

Enclosed is my donation of \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 \$35 \$_____ other

Write all checks to Workers World.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Return to: Workers World, 55 W. 17th St., 5th floor, New York, NY 10011.

Southern conference calls for socialism, class unity

DURHAM, N.C.

munities of color inside the U.S.; the state and special oppressions and socialism. Participants in these workshops included Khalilah Sabra, Director, Muslim-American Society Freedom Foundation and advocate for Palestinian self-determination; Naeema Muhammad, North Carolina Environmental Justice Network activist and BWFJ founding member; Dianne Mathiowetz, Atlanta WWP member; Rebecca Fontaine, Raleigh FIST member and immigrant rights activist; Andre Powell, a LGBTQ activist and Baltimore WWP member; and Durham WWP members, Ben Carroll, Sue Kelly, Dante Strobino, and Scott Williams.

The final plenary was moderated by Monica Moorehead, WWP secretariat member and a managing editor of Workers World newspaper. Moorehead described the Leninist principle of the right of oppressed nations to self-determination as an essential aspect of the ideological view of a socialist party. She described WWP's support for the Freedom Party in New York — which draws on the experience of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in the South during the mid-1960s — as a reflection of this perspective.

Kosta Harlan of Freedom Road Socialist Organization talked on forging principled unity amongst socialist organizations. He cited the joint work of WWP and FRSO in organizing protests against the G-20 in Pittsburgh and the Republican National Convention in Minneapolis. Harlan, who was recently questioned by the FBI as part of a grand jury witch-hunt against anti-war activists, said that the raids and subpoenas were designed to silence the struggles in solidarity with the oppressed around the world. "The attacks are not just against 14 activists," Harlan stressed, "but the entire class. If the people of Iraq and Afghanistan have not been silenced, then we cannot be silenced."

Peter Gilbert of the Durham WWP branch stated the awakening of our class requires the building of a revolutionary party, especially at a time when the economic crisis is forcing many in the working class to reconsider their role in history. Gilbert discussed his own political evolution and the role of the Party in his development, and urged all present to join WWP. Gilbert stressed the need for a genuine Marxist party to consistently put its theory into practice and to always be in the struggle.

WWP secretariat member Larry Holmes provided a summation of the conference, emphasizing the need for supporting and being in every struggle of the workers in the U.S., and infusing the struggle with the necessity of putting socialism back on the agenda. "As it becomes clearer that the system has no future, we must have an answer," Holmes stated. He commended the Durham WWP branch for being firmly rooted in the working class.

At the end of the conference, participants joined in the singing of the Internationale. Mike Martinez and Myia Campbell, WWP members and workshop speakers, provided cultural performances during the plenary sessions.

Seasoned comrades and new activists alike left the confer-



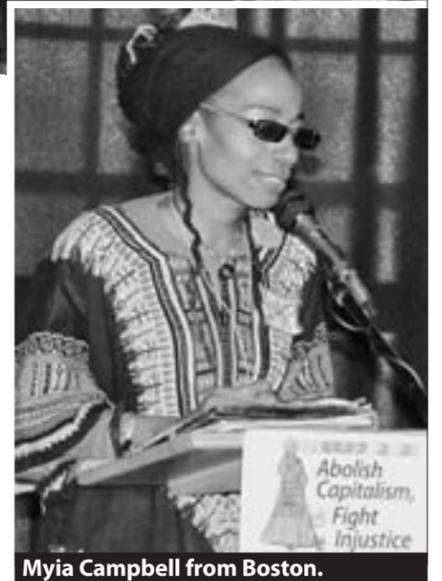
Elena Everett, at the podium, LeiLani Dowell, Teresa Gutierrez, Saladin Muhammad, Fred Goldstein.



Honoring 'Chairman Fred,' martyred Black Panther leader.



Mike Martinez from Miami.



Myia Campbell from Boston.

ence feeling inspired, motivated to fight and preparing for the upcoming WWP national conference in New York City Nov. 12-14.

LeiLani Dowell is a LGBTQ activist and a managing editor of Workers World. Abayomi Azikiwe is the Pan-African News Wire editor and a Detroit WWP member. Both writers were panelists in workshops.

WW PHOTOS: SUE KELLY AND ABAYOMI AZIKIWE



Khalilah Sabra speaks at the "Struggles against U.S. imperialism" workshop.



Larry Holmes, speaking, Monica Moorehead, Peter Gilbert, Kosta Harlan.

End the U.S. blockade of Cuba

By Cheryl LaBash

The U.N. General Assembly on Oct. 26 voted 187 to 2 against the 48-year economic blockade of Cuba. Only the U.S. and Israel voted for it. Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands abstained.

This international repudiation, the strongest yet, is the 19th consecutive resolution condemning the U.S.'s criminal and cruel strangulation policy. Yearly U.N. votes on the blockade began in 1992 with a 59 to 3 vote, with 71 abstentions. Last year's vote was 187 to 3.

In 1960, the U.S. State Department recommended that since, "the majority of Cubans support Castro ... [and] there is no effective political opposition ... the only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship. ...

"[E]very possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba. ... [S]uch a policy ... would call forth a line of action which, while as adroit and inconspicuous as possible, makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government." (University of Wisconsin Digital Collection; Foreign Relations of U.S., p. 885)

The Cuban Ministry of Foreign Rela-

tions' report for the 2010 U.N. debate details the hardship and cost of the U.S.'s attempted strangulation of Cuba's economy and its people, and the widespread opposition to the blockade inside the U.S.

The report outlines the blockade's effect on Cuba when the U.S. retaliates against other countries if they do business with Cuba. It says that Cuba was notified that as of March 31, 2012, it won't be able to use the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications system, which is universally used for international payments, because U.S. software will update that system. Cuba has been a member of SWIFT since 1990.

Cuban Five case exposes

U.S. double standard on 'terrorism'

By Cheryl LaBash

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the U.S. government has used the fear-mongering "terrorist" label against socialist and other independent countries.

This myth is exposed inside U.S. borders as the Cuban Five heroes have been unjustly imprisoned for protecting their Cuban homeland from terror attacks launched from Florida. The struggle to tell their story grows stronger.

On the 12th anniversary of their ar-

rest, more than 20 prominent people requested that President Barack Obama "review the case of Gerardo Hernández, René González, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, and Antonio Guerrero, internationally known as the 'Cuban Five,' and grant them immediate freedom."

Artists including Danny Glover, Ed Asner, Susan Sarandon, Martin Sheen and Oliver Stone, note the U.S. government's "double standard." While the Cuban Five remain in federal prisons, real terrorists Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch — who masterminded the 1976 mid-air bombing of a Cuban airliner, killing 73 people — enjoy safe haven in the U.S.

The letter calls for granting U.S. visas to Adriana Pérez and Olga Salanueva so they can visit their jailed spouses, Gerardo Hernández, and René González. (www.antiterroristas.cu, Sept. 13)

On Sept. 27, Danny Glover personally appealed to President Obama urging immediate visas for Pérez and Salanueva. He wrote, "We must not just speak and write of our values of fairness and human rights but also exercise them. In contrast to our country's unsympathetic stance, in the last ten months, Iran has issued humanitarian visas to American mothers allowing them to see their incarcerated children." (http://yhoo.it/cszjHE)

Amnesty International issued a report Oct. 14 on the Cuban Five which calls for U.S. executive review of this case "through the clemency process or other appropriate means." The report objects to the U.S. government's denial of visas to Pérez and Salanueva to see their imprisoned spouses.

The AI report says that Pérez has not seen Hernández since his 1998 arrest; he has been sentenced to two life terms plus 15 years. And it explains that Salanueva, who legally resided in the U.S. before and during the two-and-a-half years of pre-trial proceedings, alleges that René González "was offered a plea bargain in which she would have been allowed to remain in the U.S. if he pleaded guilty." He refused and she was deported in 2000 and has been denied re-entry ever since. (www.antiterroristas.cu, Oct. 14)

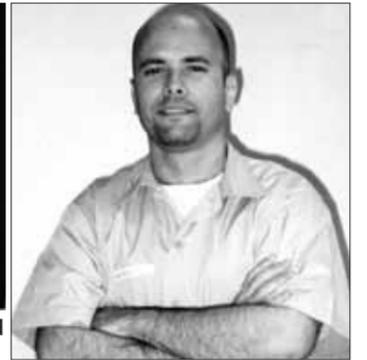
Although in 2009 the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the Cuban Five's appeal, a new round of appellate hearings will challenge their convictions based on new evidence of U.S. government misconduct. Inflammatory media reports about the Five's Miami trial have been linked to prominent journalists who were also paid

balk on normalizing relations with Cuba. However, pressure from Spain, Italy and France reportedly moved the EU to open talks, although much show was given to exiled Cuban "dissidents," even awarding one an EU prize.

The proposed EU talks — "the soft-cop strategy" — and the U.S. blockade are both aimed at overturning Cuba's sovereignty, independence from the U.S., and socialist system. However, the Cuban people's willingness to contribute and sacrifice for every Cuban's right to free, quality education and health care and to develop their fullest potential, cannot be so easily defeated. History shows that. □



Actor Danny Glover visited Gerardo Hernández at the Victorville prison in California on Aug. 8 shortly after Hernández was released from solitary confinement.



MICHIGAN

Protesters speak out for Palestine

By Megan Spencer
East Lansing, Mich.

A group of Michigan State University students, Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice activists, and Workers World Party members gathered the evening of Oct. 19 for a demonstration at MSU in solidarity with Palestine in response to the "Soldiers Speak Out" campus tour of Israeli soldiers.

The Israeli Defense Forces members' tour of college campuses is sponsored by StandWithUs, a self-described "education" group that disseminates Israeli and Zionist propaganda to "ensure that Israel's side of the story is told." The tour appears to be in response to the growing success of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign aimed at apartheid Israel.

Demonstrators held posters and banners, passed out leaflets and chanted on the sidewalk outside the MSU building where the event occurred. They chanted, "Resistance is justified when people are occupied!" and "1, 2, 3, 4, Occupation no more! 5, 6, 7, 8, Israel is a fascist state!"

The two Israeli soldiers who spoke at the event came outside to take pictures of the demonstrators. As the Zionist meeting began, demonstrators moved closer to the building so that the soldiers and the event's few attendees could hear the chants. Several people in the room opened the curtains to stare at the demonstrators.

The following day another meeting was held at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Numerous protesters attended the event and took off their jackets to reveal red shirts with the names of Palestinian children who were killed during the December 2008 massacre in Gaza. Some student protesters wore tape covering their mouths. After several minutes, the protesters, who made up about 90 per-

cent of the audience, simultaneously got up from their seats and left the room. (AnnArbor.com, Oct 23)

According to the website for Soldiers Speak Out, the touring Israeli soldiers speak about their experiences in the IDF during Operation Cast Lead in Gaza and the 2006 war on Lebanon.

Operation Cast Lead, which took place from late December 2008 to mid-January 2009, left 1,400 Palestinians dead, many of them civilians, including 400 children. The assault destroyed the city of Gaza, flattening homes, schools and hospitals. Much of the destruction was a result of direct attacks on civilian objects, in addition to indiscriminate attacks that did not distinguish between civilian and military targets, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. (Amnesty International, 2009)

In addition, the assault left Gaza's agricultural system in ruins, resulting in acute food shortages for Gaza's population of 1.4 million people, who were already suffering severely as a result of Israel's blockade of Gaza.

In the 2006 war in Lebanon, approximately 1,300 Lebanese people were killed, many of them civilians and children. Lebanon's infrastructure was severely damaged, and nearly 1 million people were displaced from their homes. (BBC News, 2006) In addition, the IDF's use of cluster bombs resulted in the deaths of more than 250 people in Lebanon after the ceasefire was signed. (Al Jazeera, September 2009)

The murderous atrocities and terrorism committed by the Israeli military in both of these instances are inexcusable. It is critical to address, confront and protest attempts to rationalize or legitimize violence and occupation via Zionist propaganda and to continue our solidarity with the Palestinian people living under Israeli occupation. □

by the U.S. government to write and air anti-Cuba propaganda.

Two more issues challenge Hernández's outrageous sentence. His was the first case in U.S. history where a U.S. resident was charged with so-called conspiracy with another country's air force pilots who were dutifully defending their country's airspace. The U.S. government has not affirmed or denied satellite images of the incident, which could be critical evidence for the Five. Unprecedented international law issues were not properly dealt with in the original trial. (www.antiterroristas.cu, Sept. 15)

The National Committee to Free the Cuban Five is raising funds to place an ad in the Washington Post. The International Committee for the Freedom of the Five will debut the political cartoons penned by Gerardo Hernández at the VII U.S./Cuba/Venezuela/Latin America Labor Conference in Tijuana, Mexico. For information, see www.theCuban5.org, www.freethethefive.org, or www.antiterroristas.cu. To order the new video by Bernie Dwyer, Radio Havana reporter and filmmaker, which tells of U.S. involvement in the so-called Cuban "dissident movement," go to www.Leftbooks.com. □

Mortgage

Continued from page 3

tional hundreds of millions of dollars in federal subsidies on FHA-backed loans.

Still-soaring foreclosures, no relief for homeowners

The Obama administration has announced modest loan modification programs to help homeowners, such as the Home Affordable Modification Program, in exchange for this continued massive bailout.

HAMP and other programs are supposed to be mandatory for the banks. But the banks do not comply to help homeowners in any significant way. The government relies on the banks themselves to carry out these modifications, and the

Imperialist intervention creates misery

Haiti faces cholera outbreak

By G. Dunkel

For the first time in 100 years, cholera is raging in Haiti. The Haitian minister of health reported on Oct. 24 that 250 people have died from it, mainly in and around Saint-Marc, a small city about 50 miles northwest of Port-au-Prince.

Saint-Nicolas, the hospital serving Saint-Marc and the surrounding areas, is overflowing with patients. The French television network TV5 showed every bed filled, every possible floor space also filled, and patients lying on mats in the courtyard; patients who didn't have cholera were being rejected.

While Saint-Marc has a hospital and doctors, how and if cholera has spread in the small communities around it is not known. Most of the areas of confirmed cholera death are centered around Saint-Marc, stretching up to Gonaïves and Cap-Haïtien, two of the largest cities in Haiti.

According to the Havana Times (Oct. 24), hundreds of Cuban doctors were in Haiti long before, during and after the January 2010 earthquake that caused so much devastation. Haiti is located across the Windward Passage from Cuba. This cholera outbreak, which has so quickly

killed more than 250 people, will put local and foreign medical workers to the test.

The cholera raging in Haiti is virulent — 50 percent of people untreated will die in less than a day after they start showing signs of the disease. It is generally spread in water contaminated with feces or food prepared with such water. Washing hands and drinking clean water are two ways of avoiding it.

Following these “simple” rules will save lives, but they are not so simple for the hundreds of thousands of Haitians made homeless by the Jan. 12 earthquake. Various estimates of the number of homeless people range from 850,000 to 2 million.

Cholera spreading to the capital is the greatest fear of public health officials in Haiti.

If a homeless person or family has a tent, they are lucky — the United Nations emergency program just calls for a tarp and two sticks. Almost none of the more than 1,000 homeless camps have running water. Some get water every other day, others once a week. In others the individual families have to get their own. Even washing hands is not simple for a family that has to choose between soap and food.

Many of the camps are filled with standing water and mud after rains. Some camps have latrines; others don't. For some of the camps with latrines, they are emptied regularly; some camps don't get this service.

Why are conditions so bad?

After the earthquake, billions of dollars were raised by aid organizations like Oxfam, UNESCO and the Red Cross to help Haiti. Most of this money is still sitting dormant in bank accounts; what has been spent is the interest. Most of what foreign governments have pledged hasn't been disbursed.

Only about 2 percent of the rubble in Port-au-Prince has been removed, according to U.N. estimates. But clearing a significant amount of the rubble is what must be done before rebuilding can take place.

The United States still hasn't turned over any of the funds it pledged back in January — unless one counts the cost of the 22,000 troops it sent to occupy Haiti for the fifth time. Former President Bill Clinton is co-chair of the Interim Haiti Reconstruction Commission, along with Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive.

How the IHRC operates can be seen in how it “allocated” \$94 million in August to get schools ready to open. Just \$26 million was funded. No wonder fewer kids are in school than ever before and Haiti's Ministry of Education says it has not seen any of the money. (Haiti-Liberté, Oct. 13-16)

Living conditions in Port-au-Prince are horrible. Despite this, the protests that have occurred have been generally small, probably due in great measure to the daily struggle for sustenance and survival. A few hundred protesters shadowed Clinton when he was in Port-au-Prince for an IHRC meeting.

When about 100 protesters gathered in front of the U.N. base at the airport on Oct. 15 to protest against granting an extension to the U.N. occupation force MINUSTAH, the occupying troops fired in the air to break up the crowd.

When some students and professors held a demonstration in front of the Ministry of Education on Oct. 7 to demand back pay and the provision of other facilities for the homeless now sheltered in schools, cops used tear gas to break up the crowd and then fired live ammunition, killing math teacher Jean Philibert Louis. □

Leaked documents expose U.S. atrocities in Iraq

By Gene Clancy

A prisoner was kneeling on the ground, blindfolded and handcuffed, when an Iraqi soldier kicked him in the neck. A U.S. marine sergeant was watching and reported the incident, which was duly recorded and deemed “valid.” The outcome: “No investigation required.”

This is only one incident covered in the almost 400,000 leaked secret war documents published by WikiLeaks on Oct. 22. Here, U.S. Army soldiers report on the U.S.-led war and occupation in Iraq. (www.wikileaks.org)

The scope and scale of the atrocities revealed in the reports are stunning. They reveal the plight of hundreds of entirely helpless victims — bound, gagged, blindfolded and isolated. Men in uniforms using wire cables, metal rods, rubber hoses, wooden stakes, TV antennae, plastic water pipes, engine fan belts or chains are whipping them.

At the torturers' whims, the logs reveal, the victim can be hung by his wrists or ankles; knotted up in stress positions; sexually molested or raped; tormented with hot peppers, cigarettes, acid, pliers or boiling water — and always with little

fear of retribution since, in most cases the perpetrators have the tacit, if not active approval, of the U.S. high command.

Most of the victims are young men, but logs also record serious sexual and other assaults on women; on young people, including a boy of 16 who was hung from the ceiling and beaten; and on the elderly and vulnerable, including a disabled man whose injured leg was deliberately attacked.

The logs identify perpetrators from many geographical areas and sectors of the war effort. The atrocities are not limited to Iraqi puppet troops. The documents reveal many previously unreported killings of civilians by private contractors such as Blackwater, as well as massacres of civilians by uniformed U.S. troops. One Apache helicopter crew, which had been exposed in a leaked video showing them massacring civilians on the ground, was revealed to have earlier killed insurgents who were surrendering. U.S. military authorities had given clearance for the murders.

The logs reveal numerous claims of U.S. troop assaults on detainees, particularly by marines. A woman reports being pulled by her hair and kicked in the face; she displays injuries that confirm her story. A former detainee claims a U.S. soldier

kicked his legs and punched his chest and arms; the man has multiple contusions and abrasions all over his body.

On several occasions, U.S. soldiers reported on their colleagues. One describes a fellow soldier choking a detainee before pointing an unloaded shotgun at his belly and pulling the trigger.

License to torture and kill

Many of the corporate media have attempted to shift the blame for the systematic torture and civilian killings to the Iraqi security forces, and away from the U.S.-led war coalition forces.

How could they miss all the references to Frago 242 which appear in hundreds of the documents? A frago is a “fragmentary order” which summarizes a complex requirement. Issued in June 2004, one year after the invasion of Iraq, Frago 242 orders coalition troops not to investigate any breach of the laws of armed conflict, such as the abuse of detainees, unless it directly involves coalition members. Where the alleged abuse is committed by Iraqi on Iraqi, “only an initial report will be made ... No further investigation will be required unless directed by HQ.” (Wikileaks.org, Oct. 22)

This document clarifies that U.S. forces are being directed to ignore the torture of civilians by the Iraqis. However, U.S. involvement doesn't stop there.

James Steele is a U.S. counterinsurgency “expert” with a record going back to the war in El Salvador. Peter Maas wrote in the New York Times, that General David Petraeus, the commander in chief of U.S. forces in Iraq, refers to Steele as “the man” with an “entre to everything” going on in Iraq. (Guardian, Oct. 23)

Steele had a working relationship with the Iraqi elite Interior Ministry Commandos, nicknamed the “Wolf Brigade” because of its fearsome reputation. The WikiLeaks documents report that prisoners in U.S. custody were often threatened with being sent to the Wolf Brigade if they didn't cooperate.

In 2007, Peter Maas accompanied James Steele to witness an “interview” conducted by the Wolf Brigade where torture was openly being carried out on civilians. “There was blood running down the side of the desk ... I could hear horrible screams ...”

U.S. imperialism has many heinous war crimes to answer for, including those being carried out in its war and occupation of Iraq. □

fraud, bank bailouts continue

federal government and most courts have refused to enforce any sanctions for refusal to perform them.

With the banks knowing they will be getting paid full value on the loans after foreclosure, the banks have little incentive to modify loans and have sabotaged HAMP and led to the program's virtual collapse. As of August less than one-sixth of the 3 million homeowners who were supposed to be helped have received loan modifications, and the number of borrowers being offered trial modifications has drastically declined. (NYT, Aug. 20)

It was recently exposed that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are using the same law firms that prepared the fraudulent documents for the major banks in their

processing of foreclosures and evictions. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are sanctioning loan servicers if they do not toss people out of their homes within a short period of time. (NYT, Aug. 22)

Obama: Issue moratorium now!

Today the foreclosure crisis continues to intensify. An estimated 2.8 million foreclosures are projected across the U.S. during 2010, with foreclosures totaling 9 million for the years 2009 to 2012. The total lost home-equity wealth due to foreclosures is expected to be \$1.9 trillion for the years 2009 to 2012. (Center for Responsible Lending, Aug. 20)

Foreclosures and evictions are a direct product of persistent high unemploy-

ment. Of the 1 million homeowners who received foreclosure counseling through the National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling Program, 58 percent listed unemployment as the main reason for default. (HousingWire, June 1)

With the federal government controlling or backing the vast majority of mortgage loans, President Obama has the clear authority to implement a two-year moratorium on foreclosures and foreclosure-related evictions through an executive order.

A moratorium would let homeowners and tenants remain in their homes, stabilize communities and allow time to develop a long-term solution to this crisis. Then home loans could be restored to their proper value and housing for all guaranteed.

We must fight each foreclosure and eviction and begin implementing such a moratorium through direct action. During the Depression of the 1930s, move-ins reversed many evictions and led to foreclosure moratoriums being enacted in 25 states, which were upheld as constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court.

What is needed is for the working class to launch a mass struggle to win this demand. It's time to fight to reverse the government policies which place the well-being of the financial institutions ahead of the welfare of the people.

Goldberg is an anti-foreclosure attorney and a leader in the Detroit-based Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs.

Anita Hill stands strong, again

Nearly 20 years ago, a courageous Anita Hill testified during the Senate Judiciary Committee's confirmation hearing about persistent sexual harassment by U.S. Supreme Court justice nominee Clarence Thomas, when she was his aide at the Department of Education and then at the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the early 1980s.

In 1991, Hill faced an all-white, all-male panel of senators during those hearings. Notably hostile were right-wing Republicans Orrin Hatch, Arlen Specter and Alan Simpson. They stopped at nothing to try to smear, attack and humiliate her. They couldn't. This African-American woman was unflappable. She stood firm and testified bravely, showing great integrity, becoming a hero to millions of women throughout the country.

Democratic senators offered her no support. Their leader and chair of the Judiciary Committee, then Sen. Joe Biden, even kept out the testimony of other women who would have validated Hill's claims.

But Hill did something important which would help all women workers. She brought an insidious inequity to public view.

By strongly testifying as she did, Hill beamed a spotlight on the pervasive culture of sexual harassment that was an integral part of political life in Washington, D.C. It was considered "business as usual" there and in offices and factories across the country. Women usually suf-

fered silently. Hill, however, broke the secrecy of sexual harassment wide open.

She inspired and emboldened women workers nationally to fight back against their employers, to file federal complaints and demand legal protections from sexual harassment on the job. Some progress was made and some gains won, although the fight is far from over.

Now a professor of social policy, law and women's studies at Brandeis University, Hill has once again been a target of attempted intimidation. Virginia Thomas, the spouse of now-Justice Thomas, left Hill a voicemail message on Oct. 9 asking that she "apologize" for her testimony 19 years ago in the Senate hearings.

Virginia Thomas is a founder and leader of Liberty Central, a Tea-Party-affiliated lobbying group which organizes among conservatives to promote a far-right political agenda. Clarence Thomas, along with several other justices, helps foster a conservative agenda on the Supreme Court, which impacts on fundamental issues including civil liberties, workers' and women's rights.

Hill resolutely asserted that she would not issue an apology, and said, "I testified truthfully about my experience and I stand by that testimony."

Today, nearly 20 years after her brave stance, Anita Hill has once again shown her mettle. She remains a hero to millions of women, especially the many who have faced sexist and racist inequities and abuse in the workplace. □

Even CIA statistics show: U.S. workers far behind other countries

By Caleb T. Maupin

The Central Intelligence Agency, a ruthless enforcer of Wall Street's drive for profits, publishes "The World Factbook." It gives updated statistics for every country, some of which measure quality of life and societal health, such as life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy, unemployment and industrial production. In this last of a series, some surprising facts are revealed, all using the CIA's own statistics.

Proponents of U.S. capitalism call it the richest country in the world and use this to drum up patriotism and chauvinism. While it is true that there is more wealth in the U.S., it is mostly in the hands of a few and does not bring prosperity to the majority.

Even compared to most other imperialist countries, which also got rich from exploiting the labor and resources of much of the rest of the world, the U.S. is far behind in terms of life expectancy, literacy and infant mortality.

In France, Britain, Germany and other countries in the West, vast working class movements, often led by socialists and communists, won the use of some of the wealth for the people's benefit. This was even truer when competition with the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the USSR forced the rulers in the West to make concessions to the workers.

In Western Europe, mass movements after World War II won the implementa-

tion of national health care systems, free education from pre-school to college, long paid vacations, early retirement, and higher rates of union representation and workplace benefits. These came under attack once the USSR was dismantled. Yet even during the present economic crisis, when European governments are slashing social services and workers' benefits, they are still at a much higher level than in the U.S.

The U.S. leads the way in promoting private health care, is trying to privatize public schools, and has a low minimum wage. As a result, the average person is less healthy and educated — and the statistics show it.

Canada, France, Sweden, Italy, Spain, Norway, Britain, Ireland and Germany have a higher life expectancy than the United States. This country is not "number one," as many are led to believe, but is 49th in the world.

Even in relatively poor Greece, whose workers have been holding multiple general strikes to defend the reforms they had won, the average life expectancy is two years higher than in the United States. In Canada, people live 81.29 years on average compared to 78.24 years in the U.S.

According to the CIA Factbook, infant mortality in the U.S. averages 6.22 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births. (All figures given here are estimates for 2010.) All the West European countries with nationalized health care or single-payer insurance have fewer than five deaths per 1,000

Refuting the lie Capitalism didn't save Chilean miners

By David Sole

What prompted the Wall Street Journal, a pre-eminent publication of the highest summits of the big business and banking ruling class in the United States, to run the Oct. 14 article, "Capitalism Saved the Miners"? In the very first sentence Daniel Henninger cheered. He wrote, "The rescue of the Chilean miners is a smashing victory for free-market capitalism."

Two questions need to be examined. First is whether this is true. Second is why did the WSJ feature this gushing tripe 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the East European socialist regimes?

Henninger bases his analysis on the creation of a high-tech drill bit made by Center Rock Inc., a small company in Berlin, Pa. Of course other specialized equipment from around the world was used to rescue the miners, too.

It has been known for centuries that capitalism has the capacity to advance the productive forces of economies. However, along with capitalism's driving forward the productive forces, economists, philosophers and social scientists have also pointed out the system's negative impacts.

It should be remembered that these very miners were victims of an avoidable mining disaster — in an industry where 35 Chilean miners die each year. The Chilean government hadn't enforced safety regulations over the privately-owned San Esteban Company. Its owners couldn't and didn't pay for the rescue. In fact, the company is bankrupt and says it can't pay the miners for their time underground. The rescue was paid for by the right-wing Chilean government, which was looking to gain popularity in the upcoming elections.

Chile's current conditions can't be discussed without going back to 1973. In that year U.S. corporations deeply invested in Chilean mining and other enterprises, along with their agent, the Central Intelligence Agency, organized the Chilean military to overthrow and murder the

live births. In France, where the workers take to the streets in militant demonstrations and sometimes lock up their bosses in defense of their jobs, there are 3.33 infant deaths per 1,000 live births — about half the infant death rate here.

The CIA has to admit that socialist Cuba, with 5.82 deaths per 1,000 live births, also has a lower infant mortality rate than the U.S., even though it started its socialist construction with an economy distorted by centuries of colonial and imperialist oppression.

It is clear that the "free market" policies of U.S. capitalists have been a disaster for the working class. If U.S. workers want a longer life expectancy and a lower infant mortality rate, both of which are signs of basic societal health, it is clear that they need to fight for their interests as a class. The capitalist propaganda that says demanding government action is "disrespectful" or "un-American" has clearly harmed the health of the people in this country.

In the current economic crisis, the U.S. capitalist government is seeking to cut back the minimal social programs that do exist. Only mass movements of the people can force concessions from the bosses and the government so life can get better, not worse, for working people.

As U.S. communists who organized workers during the Great Depression proclaimed, the workers need to understand that their choice is simple: "Fight or starve!" □

democratically elected Chilean Socialist, President Salvador Allende. What followed the coup were the roundup, torture and murder of tens of thousands of workers, union leaders, progressives and socialists. That was another gift from capitalism.

Henninger ignores NASA's contribution in the design of the miners' rescue cage. This came not from free market capitalists but from government engineers and scientists. In fact, much of modern technology is the result of government-funded research, not the workings of the "free market."

Many contributions to science and technology have come from socialist countries. The Soviet Union put the first space capsule into orbit. Today socialist Cuba is making great contributions and innovations to biotechnology and vaccine production.

U.S. government failed New Orleans

If the capitalist system is so wonderful and could marshal such resources and technology to help the Chilean miners who were buried 2,000 feet underground and hundreds of miles into a desert, why couldn't the capitalist government do anything to save thousands of people stranded only a few feet above floodwaters in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina? No digging was necessary. No special diets or clothes were necessary.

All that was called for was helicopters, boats, food and water. Yet days and days passed with no help given by either the capitalist government or the "free market." That too was capitalism at work.

For that matter, why don't mine owners in the U.S. implement protective measures to safeguard miners' lives and well-being? Twenty-nine miners died in April from an explosion at the Upper Big Branch Mine-South in Montcoal, W.Va. Massey Energy Co., the mine owner, had been cited for more than 1,000 safety violations. But the U.S. government did not enforce the regulations.

The mining corporations are very adept at using technology to enforce speed-ups in the mines, but somehow they find themselves unable to use it to prevent accidents and protect the workers. Clearly, bosses' profits come before workers' safety. That's how capitalism works.

Why did the WSJ run this article then? Did the WSJ editors see the need to boost capitalism to the masses of people? Battered as tens of millions are by the vast foreclosure frauds, layoffs and outsourcing of jobs, the WSJ might be grabbing at anything to put a shine on their tarnished system.

However, the majority of people don't read the WSJ. It is written for and read by the business community and its hangers-on. Despite their wars, occupations and interventions; despite their unmatched military machine; despite their huge profits — the ruling capitalist class is demoralized and worried.

The capitalists are in the midst of the worst economic depression since the 1930s. They are unable to stabilize their puppet governments in Iraq and Afghanistan. They see socialist movements growing throughout Latin America. Worst of all, they see the growing anger and hostility of the vast U.S. working class.

Henninger's silly promotion of capitalism cannot mask the capitalists' growing dread. The ruling class is well-educated, and knows that oppression breeds resistance. While that resistance isn't yet visible in mass organized movements and struggles in the U.S., the rulers are well aware of the workers' uprisings that recently swept Greece and are now disrupting France. □

Movement against pension reform

French workers, youth take to streets

By G. Dunkel

Oct. 25 — Since the beginning of September the unions in France have called six different days of mass mobilizations. When they took place on workdays, the large demonstrations were complemented by general strikes. Protests were held in almost every region of France, from big cities like Paris, Bordeaux, Marseilles and Lyons to smaller cities like Lille and Grenoble and rural villages like Dignes-les-Bains.

This was a protest over government policy. President Nicolas Sarkozy, in order to protect shareholders' dividends and the bailouts of French banks, wants to make the workers pay by forcing them to work longer and pay more for their pensions.

The workers disagreed with this policy. They built a mass coalition that was willing to go into the streets.

But it wasn't just over pensions. The sanitation workers and the dockworkers in Marseilles have been on strike for weeks over their pay, working conditions and job security. Workers at all 12 of France's oil refineries also walked out over local conditions later in September.

Another major issue in building this protest movement, according to a joint statement on Oct. 21 from all the major unions in France, was ensuring "the future of youth," which has not been ad-

ressed by the government "since the financial crisis of 2008."

Tens of thousands of university and high school students have shut down their campuses during these protests. They have taken to the streets with slogans warning Sarkozy of their anger and demanding jobs for youth so their elders can enjoy a well-deserved retirement.

Jean-Louis Borloo, minister for ecology and sustainable planning and development, who has been one of the government's spokespeople on the retirement issue, admitted that the government hadn't done enough for the youth when he spoke on France's TV2 on Oct. 23. In fact, youth groups like that of the French Communist Party say the government has treated youth as an enemy.

Borloo was in a tough spot. He had to defend government policies on pensions and jobs for the youth, policies that are opposed by a majority of the French people. According to the unions' polls, about three out of four people in France support their challenge to the government's pension plan. While government polls of course give the unions less support, they have to concede that a majority are on the workers' side.

Some of the unions in this coalition, particularly the CFE-CGC, which represents supervisors and managers, seem to

be looking to an electoral struggle as the way to overturn the government's retirement bill.

But the base of the union movement, and especially the workers in the refineries and the dockers in Marseilles, want to fight on. The Grandpuits refinery captures the spirit of these workers.

Grandpuits supplies fuel for the Paris airports and the Paris region. It is owned by Total; its workers have been on strike for several weeks. The Sarkozy government called out the riot police on Friday, Oct. 22, to reopen the refinery. The government "requisitioned" the workers "in the interests of national defense." If the workers didn't go back to work, they faced five years in jail.

The workers formed a picket line in front of Grandpuits, using burning tires as a barricade. Riot cops in full gear with shields came in, pushed the workers away, injuring three in the process, and put out the fires. But as soon as the police had opened the site, strikers blockaded access roads, halting all traffic.

Charles Foulard, a General Confederation of Labor (CGT) delegate at Grandpuits who addresses his fellow workers as "comrades," said these kinds of police attacks occurred under Pétain, the French fascist who became a Nazi puppet. "This is a violation of our constitutional right to



Marseilles high school students, Oct. 16.

strike," he told Radio Monte Carlo.

Another "requisitioned" union leader, who gave his name as Yannick, explained, "Even if the riot cops push me into the refinery, there won't be a lot of product leaving it. The right to strike is fundamental. I prefer to risk five years in jail than to enter a dictatorship."

Later that same day, the unions went to court and got the "requisition" annulled. But the next day it was reimposed. The unions said they would go to court again after the weekend, but they didn't take down their picket line and the cops didn't make any moves.

The struggles at Grandpuits were extensively covered on French television.

The refinery workers have the right to retire at age 55 with a partial pension and at 57 with a full pension. While they are not directly affected by Sarkozy's effort to raise the general retirement age to 62, they took on the struggle out of a sense of solidarity.

If the union leaders listen to their base, it is very likely that the struggle will continue even if the retirement bill, which has been passed by the Senate, gets a majority in the National Assembly and goes into effect. □

No U.N. troops to Somalia

U.S.-backed regime faces resistance

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A military and political crisis for the U.S.-backed Transitional Federal Government in Somalia has prompted calls for additional troop deployments under the ostensible command of the United Nations Security Council. Both the U.S. and the secretary general for the U.N. have publicly acknowledged that nearly 8,000 Ugandan and Burundian troops propping up the TFG have not been able to effectively challenge the growing influence of Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen (popularly known as Al-Shabaab) and Hizbul Islam, the leading resistance groups inside the Horn of Africa nation.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Johnnie Carson recently called for a more aggressive approach to combating the resistance forces in Somalia. During a speech at the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, Carson said that so far the present approach has been too slow and unorganized.

Over the last two years the U.S. has spent more than \$200 million to bankroll the TFG and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). "We want to encourage the TFG to be more than just a government in name only," said Carson. (Stars and Stripes, Oct. 19)

The U.S. is now committed to initiating what it describes as a dual-track approach that includes both engaging neighboring states as well as bolstering the military presence in Somalia to 20,000 troops that will carry out the aims and objectives of the imperialist states. This approach will also include cooperation with the break-away territories of Somaliland and Puntland, which are not recognized by either the U.N. or the African Union.

Carson told the audience at the Center for Strategic and International Studies that "under that new strategy, we will pursue more partnerships with the re-

gional governments of Somaliland and Puntland as well as local and regional administrative units throughout South Central Somalia who are opposed to the al-Shabaab but who are not allied to the TFG." (voanews.com, Oct. 21)

In a disingenuous approach to undermine the existing AU policy of ostensibly promoting national unity in Somalia, Carson noted, "By doing this, we are not in any way attempting to go around what is in fact the principle of the AU, which is to only recognize a single Somali state. We will not as parts of this strategy recognize Somaliland and Puntland."

But some scholars with the Center for Strategic and International Studies have stated that the new U.S. policy is futile and will not bring stability to Somalia. Richard Downie, an African policy analyst, said that he was "not sure if investing more in the north helps secure the south ... or furthers the goal of a united Somalia.

"That goal is so far off right now as to be unobtainable, so the new focus I think is more on the short to medium term. It doesn't make sense to have all the policy eggs in one basket," said Downie. (Stars and Stripes, Oct. 19)

Although the U.S. administration would never say it, Downie appears to recognize that the TFG is not the entity that can bring stability to Somalia. However, Downie notes that such a statement exposes the ineffectiveness of the U.S. approach in the region. According to him "It reflects the fact that the TFG is probably a doomed project."

U.S. policy breeds resistance

In addition to the call for a new approach by the U.S., AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Ramtane Lamamra also urged the U.N. to impose a naval blockade and no-fly zone against Somalia. This is the rationale for the deployment of at least 20,000 troops that would add to the existing AMISOM forces and

the flotillas of warships already stationed off the coast of the Horn of Africa. (AHN, Oct. 21)

A recently released study issued by Chatham House in Britain illustrates that the policies enacted by the U.S. and other imperialist states concerning the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula are creating greater opposition to Western influence in the region. The report makes a strong case against further militarization and external political intervention.

The report states: "Donors have little to show for their state-building efforts because their policy template does not fit with local realities, in which power is only partially structured through government ministries, if at all. In Somalia, for example, real power remains diffused among a host of local actors, with overlapping boundaries among clans, business peo-

ple, Islamists of different hues and a sizable overseas Diaspora.

"Attempts to achieve stabilization by building a state-level security apparatus are demonstrably failing in Somalia and are unlikely to fare better in Yemen, because they are often perceived by the local population as a form of aggression. The critical ingredients missing from external efforts to build state security are political legitimacy and systems of accountability." (chathamhouse.org.uk)

Consequently, the U.S. and other imperialist states and their allies in the region must withdraw their forces from Somalia in order for peace and stability to be achieved. Anti-war and peace activists in the West must oppose military intervention in the Horn of Africa and uphold the right of self-determination and sovereignty for the peoples of the region. □

PORTUGAL

Meeting builds anti-NATO protest

Special to Workers World
Oporto, Portugal

A forum at the Literary Club here on Oct. 23 heard two speakers discuss the dangers facing the world's people coming from the U.S. and NATO's war machines.

John Catalinotto, representing the U.S. anti-war

movement, spoke on the U.S. use of NATO in a strategy of reoccupying and controlling areas of the world that had been liberated during the period of existence of the Soviet Union. Catalinotto is a managing editor of Workers World newspaper.

Frederico Carvalho, a Portuguese environmentalist and expert who studies the impact of weapons, discussed the dangers



From left, Frederico Carvalho, John Catalinotto.

WWW PHOTO: ELLEN CATALINOTTO

posed by nuclear weapons and the new U.S. weapons systems such as the drones, where there is a great distance between the operator of the weapon and its targets.

Speakers and the organizers discussed the upcoming NATO summit in Lisbon Nov. 19-21 and the Portuguese anti-war movement's plans to hold a mass protest on Nov. 20. □

EDITORIAL

La única salida

Las dos guerras de agresión que fueron iniciadas por la administración de Bush, continuadas por los Demócratas con el apoyo de la mayor parte de la clase dominante estadounidense — se han tornado en una pérdida neta para todos/as menos para el complejo militar-industrial, la industria petrolera, y algunos altos oficiales del ejército.

El New York Times del 17 de octubre tuvo dos artículos significantes que reflejaron este dilema.

En Afganistán, según el Times, la OTAN estaba facilitando discusiones entre el Talibán y el gobierno títere mientras que bombardeaban y lanzaban proyectiles de mortero a combatientes del Talibán para apresurarles a negociar. La conclusión del Times fue que al “final”, “tantas cosas pudieran salir mal” para el imperialismo. Una era que el apoyo para Estados Unidos en Pakistán ha disminuido cada vez que algún avión teledirigido mata a personas civiles o soldados pakistaníes.

En Irak, donde el Pentágono ha pintado como una victoria a causa del incremento súbito de tropas (“surge”), el Times encontró que la victoria se está yendo a la deriva. Los “Consejos del Despertar”, compuestos de Suníes que abandonaron la resistencia en 2007 por pago y porque no querían luchar contra Estados Unidos, al-Qaida y el régimen de Bagdad a la misma vez, están regresando a las filas de la resistencia iraquí. Aunque no está claro cómo va a avanzar la lucha, está claro que esto se traduce en problemas para Washington.

En otras noticias, el Ejército estadounidense fue pescado mintiendo sobre su cuota de reclutamiento. Los generales simplemente habían disminuido sus metas. El Ejército todavía no puede agrupar bastantes fuerzas para no tener que mandar a las mismas tropas tres, cuatro y cinco veces a las zonas de combate.

Las ocupaciones se están convirtiendo en una situación imposible. Esto es una mala noticia para el imperialismo estadounidense. Pero no son malas noticias para el pueblo afgano, el iraquí, o para la clase trabajadora estadounidense.

Lo contrario es cierto. Si las guerras y ocupaciones anduvieran bien para el Pentágono y el Departamento de Estado, seguro que los elementos estadounidenses más militaristas estarían apresurando la próxima guerra y la próxima conquista. Estarían llamando a una agresión flagrante contra Irán, o aún contra China. La juventud de la clase trabajadora estadounidense, y especialmente las grandes poblaciones en esos países, estarían en peligro de ser nuevas víctimas del impulso de los imperialistas para extender sus mercados.

Después de décadas de guerra y sufrimiento en Afganistán e Irak, con la población agotada, es difícil predecir cuáles fuerzas sociales estarán encargadas del liderazgo si los imperialistas fueran forzados a salir. Pero lo importante es que serían afganis e iraquís soberanos. No serían amos imperialistas. Cada nación tiene el derecho a la autodeterminación, a resistir los mandatos de invasores o de los monigotes escogidos por los imperialistas.

Estados Unidos debe salirse y debe hacerlo ahora mismo. Puede ser una pérdida para los banqueros estadounidenses, los traficantes de armas y los generales, pero sería un paso hacia adelante para esas regiones del mundo. Y sería un paso hacia adelante para la clase trabajadora aquí en los Estados Unidos, la cuál es explotada y mantenida paralizada políticamente por la misma clase dominante imperialista. □

Estados imperialistas se reúnen en Malí para planificar el saqueo de África

Por Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Representantes de Estados Unidos, Gran Bretaña, Canadá, Francia, Alemania, Italia, Japón y Rusia se reunieron en Bamako, capital de Malí en el oeste africano el 13 y 14 de octubre para discutir la coordinación de las operaciones militares y de inteligencia en el norte y en el oeste de África.

Este Grupo de 8 países dijo que la conferencia se llevó a cabo para hacerle frente a la creciente influencia de los grupos armados de oposición en Magreb y Sahel, grupos que afirman que son afiliados de al-Qaida.

Los verdaderos intereses de EEUU y del G-8 que están detrás de la participación en Magreb y Sahel sin embargo, son el deseo de mantener el control sobre los minerales estratégicos y los recursos de la zona y para bloquear una mayor participación de la República Popular China.

El pueblo en América del Norte y Europa Occidental debe tener en cuenta que el énfasis de los medios corporativos y del gobierno de “luchar contra el terrorismo” en la región está diseñado para incrementar la opinión pública en apoyo al aumento de la intervención militar y al espionaje en el continente africano.

Hablando diplomáticamente, un alto oficial del ejército de Malí, el coronel Yamoussa Camara, dijo a Prensa Asociada el 18 de octubre, que existe una oposición significativa a la intervención directa del imperialismo en la región, incluso la que se hace bajo el pretexto de “combatir el terrorismo”. Señaló Camara que “Teniendo en cuenta nuestro pasado, no somos muy receptivos a las fuerzas extranjeras involucrándose directamente en operaciones militares aquí, no importa cuáles sean sus motivos”.

Tal vez el coronel maliense estaba pensando en la similitud entre la reunión de Bamako y la reunión de Berlín de 1884, donde 14 países imperialistas europeos — EEUU, siendo una potencia más débil entonces fue invitado pero no participó — se reunieron en las oficinas del canciller alemán Otto von Bismarck y se repartieron África, tomando las diversas partes como sus propias colonias para saquearlas. La mayoría de los grandes países europeos estuvieron presentes en ambas reuniones.

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nes de Berlín y Bamako, esta vez con los EEUU jugando el papel principal y Japón y Canadá como invitados.

Intereses de EEUU en Magreb y Sahel

Cada vez hay más intereses económicos y militares por parte del imperialismo de EEUU en las regiones del norte y el oeste de África. Una mayor dependencia del petróleo y del gas de África, así como el aumento en la competencia con la República Popular China ha intensificado el impulso de Washington para tener una mayor influencia en las regiones donde Francia hasta ahora, ha sido la potencia colonial dominante.

El Profesor de Relaciones Internacionales Yahia H. Zoubir, escribiendo para la revista del establecimiento británico Asuntos Internacionales (Vol. 85, 2009, 977-995), tomó nota de dos intereses principales que guían la política de EEUU en la región: “El primero está vinculado a las necesidades energéticas de Estados Unidos, y se centran en el petróleo y el gas en Argelia, Chad y Libia, y tal vez en Malí y Mauritania; también favorecen el desarrollo de una entidad regional más fuerte, lo que proporcionaría un mercado potencialmente importante para las empresas estadounidenses, especialmente ya que la competencia ha aumentado con los avances recientes de China en África”.

Zoubir pone de manifiesto que EEUU “ha logrado lenta pero seguramente la creación de una red de seguridad que reúne a los estados del Magreb y del Sahel”. Zoubir primero escribe que “Al-Qaida en el Magreb Islámico lleva a cabo ataques mortales en Argelia y recurre a los secuestros de extranjeros”, pero luego señala que “este punto ha sido exagerado; y según algunos, en realidad ha sido fabricado”.

Zoubir dice claramente que “la amenaza real en la región se deriva de la pobreza, el mal gobierno, la falta de democracia, la corrupción y la mala gestión económica”. Él señala que los países de la región “se encuentran entre los más pobres del mundo, y son estos mismos países los que se están reuniendo en las nuevas medidas de seguridad liderada por Estados Unidos”.

Algunos Estados africanos boicotean la reunión

Hubo numerosos países africanos de la región que estuvieron representados en la reunión de Bamako, entre ellos Burkina Faso, Níger, Nigeria, Marruecos, Senegal y por supuesto el país anfitrión, Malí. Argelia boicoteó la reunión, en desacuerdo sobre la estrategia en discusión por el grupo.

Esta reunión fue convocada bajo el liderazgo del gobierno canadiense, que tiene importantes intereses mineros en la región y ejerce también la presidencia actual del G8. El embajador de Canadá en Malí, Virginie Saint-Louis, señaló que los estados occidentales deben ser sensibles acerca de su participación en la

región. (Associated Press, 18 de octubre)

Haciendo caso omiso de tal sensibilidad, en septiembre fuerzas militares francesas enviaron decenas de tropas y aviones en una operación supuestamente destinada a la búsqueda de los contratistas que fueron secuestrados mientras trabajaban en el norte de Níger, en un puesto de minería de uranio. Los contratistas trabajaban para la empresa nuclear francesa Areva, que tiene enormes intereses en el Níger.

Antes de la intervención en Níger, unidades militares francesas en junio llevaron a cabo una redada de Al Qaeda con tropas mauritanas en el Magreb Islámico (AQMI) en el interior de Malí. Aunque los franceses dijeron que la redada se llevó a cabo para liberar a uno de sus ciudadanos que estaba secuestrado, la persona a la que fueron a rescatar fue muerta en la operación.

El Coronel Camara de Malí dijo que los estados occidentales deberían concentrar la mayor parte de su atención en el suministro de equipo militar y entrenamiento contra el terrorismo a los Estados africanos en la región. Este sentimiento se reflejó también en las observaciones formuladas por el Coronel Iro Oumarou de Níger, quien dijo: “Lo que nos gustaría de los países occidentales en general, es capacitación, equipo especializado y sobre todo, apoyo en la recopilación de inteligencia”. (Associated Press, 18 de octubre)

La reunión en Malí se dio a raíz de una reunión similar el 26 de septiembre en Tamanrasset, Argelia, un antiguo puesto militar francés en la época colonial. En la reunión se acordó establecer un centro de recopilación de información secreta y de coordinación que incluiría a representantes de Argelia, Malí, Mauritania y Níger.

Como resultado de la reunión en Tamanrasset, un órgano de coordinación se estableció en Argel, que incluye a los altos oficiales de inteligencia de los cuatro estados: el mayor general Attafi de Argelia, el coronel Mamy Coulibaly de Malí, Mohamed Ould Meguett de Mauritania y el comisionado Mamane Chekaraou de Níger. Llamaron a la estructura de coordinación el Centro de Inteligencia Sahel-Sahara.

Hay planes ahora para que el Centro funcione a fin de coordinar sus actividades con el Centro Africano de Estudios e Investigaciones sobre el Terrorismo (ACSRT), que es parte del Consejo de Paz y Seguridad de la Unión Africana ubicado en El-Harach, un suburbio en las afueras de la capital argelina de Argel.

A pesar de estos esfuerzos para coordinar las actividades entre los países del Magreb y los países del G8, todavía hay gran desconfianza y división entre los diversos estados de la región.

Hay una profunda desconfianza entre Argelia y Marruecos sobre la cuestión aún no resuelta de la independencia para el Sahara Occidental, antigua colonia española ahora bajo el control de Rabat. □