

'99% Spring' targets Wall Street South

By Dante Strobino
Charlotte, N.C.

More than 1,000 people defied police threats and arrests to protest the Bank of America shareholders' meeting here May 9. Their three main demands were to end home foreclosures, end the financing of dirty coal, and assert workers' rights against banks' control of politicians and the electoral system.

The action showed that a fighting movement is brewing across the United States. This movement is passionately fighting for people's needs to be placed before the needs of private profits of the banks and corporations.

Protesters in Charlotte included domestic workers from Atlanta, migrant workers from New Orleans, state workers from across North Carolina, and public housing residents from New York City to Durham, N.C. Students, workers, the structurally unemployed, immigrants and many others joined. Three issue-based feeder marches joining the protesters symbolized the three main demands of the protest.

This action was part of the "99% Spring" protests against shareholder meetings of such major corporations and banks as General Electric, Wells Fargo, Walmart, RJ Reynolds Tobacco and others all across the country. The recently formed North Carolina Coalition Against Corporate Power coordinated the Charlotte protest.

Charlotte's city government used the May 9 protest to trigger a new repressive ordinance that restricted people's ability to assemble and speak freely. The ordinance was passed in response to Occupy Charlotte and in preparation for the upcoming Democratic National Convention.

Raul Jimenez Arce, member of Raleigh-Durham Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST), told Workers World, "I joined the protest against Bank of America because I am tired of big corporations deciding our future, buying politicians and creating their own agenda at the expense of the working class."

Despite the new restrictions, protesters bravely marched into the streets without permits and occupied two different intersections for a few hours, shutting down traffic to stop business as usual. Since Bank of America and Wells Fargo own most uptown buildings, this was truly a bold step.

Demand end to foreclosures

By 9 a.m., the marchers had taken over the intersection at 5th and College streets in uptown Charlotte, directly in front of where the rich shareholders were meeting and where they had just passed a pay package of \$7 million for CEO Bryan "Big Banks" Moynihan.



Marchers descend on Bank of America headquarters in Charlotte, N.C., on May 9.

PHOTO: KEVIN SMITH

The occupiers assembled behind a 10-foot-tall ball and chain marked "debt." This symbolized all the debt that state and city governments, students, homeowners and others are strapped to because of the Bank of America's capitalist, predatory practices. Trapped also by long-term unemployment, many marchers will never be able to pay back their debt.

Bonita Johnson, a low-wage kitchen worker in a state mental health facility in Butner, N.C., and member of the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, Electrical Workers (UE) Local 150, told WW: "These big banks are making mega money and not paying any taxes. We, as state employees, are struggling, working two and three jobs and paying taxes even on the little that we do have. I knew I had to join this protest."

Sylvia Sanchez was the first speaker at the rally. A member of a community group, Action NC, Sanchez is a Latina mother of a disabled child. Bank of America is about to foreclose on her Charlotte house.

Marchers demanded that Sanchez's home be saved and that principal loan costs be written down on all "underwater" loans to help keep families in

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Political prisoner off death row

Our visit with Mumia Abu-Jamal

By **Monica Moorehead**
Frackville, Pa.

Larry Holmes and I have been visiting political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal for 16 years. We started visiting him when he was on death row at State Correctional Institution-Greene in Waynesburg, Pa., which is near the West Virginia border. Our trips there by car from New York City would take at least seven hours, and even longer by bus.

Our first visit with Mumia — in March 1996 — was also the last face-to-face independent video interview of him, thanks to the late Key Martin, a founding member of the Peoples Video Network, who persisted in forcing the prison to grant this three-hour interview.

All of our visits at SCI-Greene gave us a glimpse into Mumia's almost 30 years on death row — that is, the inhumane conditions that he and others were forced to endure, including spending 23 and a half hours a day in a tiny, poorly lit cell; being deprived of exercise, which caused the swelling of legs and ankles; and inadequate food and medical care.

Before every visit, Mumia was subjected to an invasive strip search. His wrists and ankles were shackled during visits. But when we met with him and discussed world events from a revolutionary perspective, these very oppressive conditions would seemingly melt away. Mumia had the ability to make each visit an illuminating political experience despite the repressive environment.

This past December, following the overturn of Mumia's death sentence, he was moved to SCI-Mahanoy, a general population prison in Frackville, not far from Harrisburg, Pa. Larry and I had the incredible opportunity to visit Mumia on May 6. We were ecstatic to be able to physically hug and shake hands with him for the first time in 16 years. He was in very good spirits, smiling and very animated.

The visiting room had the atmosphere of a large cafeteria, including a commissary to allow family members and friends to purchase food for their loved ones in prison. It was very heartening to see and hear children running and laughing throughout the room, and to see open affection being shown towards prisoners, all of whom were wearing jumpsuits with "DOC" — which stands for Department of Corrections — written on the back. When we asked Mumia what it was like to be off death row after 30 years, he replied, "It is still a major adjustment."

He told us how surprised he was that so many prisoners knew of his case, and the respect they had for him as a political prisoner. A Mumia activist told me how a relative of a white prisoner had reproduced Mumia's first book, "Live from Death Row," for him to read. Mumia's books are banned outright by the prison.

Mumia also told us how he has become a mentor for a number of prisoners, especially young ones. One prisoner in particular is only 20 years and was sentenced to a 40-year prison sentence for attempted murder, not murder! According to Mumia, the prison population is 60 percent Black, with a large number being Muslim.

'Profoundly encouraged' by OWS

For most of the three and a half hours we visited with Mumia, the main discussion focused on the Occupy Wall Street movement. Mumia acknowledged that Occupy Philadelphia forces helped play a decisive role in getting him off of death row by joining forces with veteran pro-Mumia activists like Pam Africa.



WW PHOTO: LARRY HOLMES

Monica Moorehead visiting Mumia on death row in 1996.

Mumia told us that when a number of Black activists expressed to him some misgivings about OWS, his response was to encourage them to recognize OWS as an evolving movement — a dynamic, evolving movement that activists must find ways of engaging, ideologically and strategically.

Mumia spoke about the economic basis for OWS, in that the predominantly white youth-led movement has been cut loose by capitalism, especially in this particular stage of deepening global economic crisis. These white youth are finding out that they have more in common with Black and Brown youth, who have historically known that the only future that capitalism offers is racial profiling and mass incarceration.

These white youth are becoming disillusioned with capitalism because, while they have been told they would have a better life than their parents, in reality they cannot find any good-paying jobs despite their college degrees. They are also finding out, as they face increasing repression, that the police as an armed force are neither their friends nor workers.

Mumia stated: "I am profoundly encouraged by the Occupy movement. It's good news for revolutionaries everywhere when those who once thought that they were privileged start to rebel against the system and join with those of us who have no illusions about or love for imperialism."

After we said our goodbyes to Mumia, Larry commented to me: "It was an incredible experience to be able see and touch Mumia without his ankle-to-wrist shackles and enclosed in a small booth behind a plexiglass window, which was the only way he could see visitors on death row. We must not be content or rest until Mumia is free."

Moorehead, a WW managing editor, and Larry Holmes, Workers World Party's First Secretary, are both Secretariat members of WWP. To view excerpts from the 1996 PVN interview, go to tinyurl.com/827fdvq; tinyurl.com/87e79be and tinyurl.com/76spkgw. □

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Attacks on teachers aim to weaken unions

By G. Dunkel
New York

A wave of teacher layoffs, the rise of charter schools, and a claim that teachers and their unions are opposed to evaluations have turned into a U.S.-wide assault on teacher unions.

The two major educational unions, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, are among the largest unions in the United States. Even in states like North Dakota, where unions represent only 3.2 percent of workers, or South Carolina and Georgia, where it is illegal for public employers to bargain with teacher unions, they still exist and function.

A staggering 300,000 teachers lost their jobs from August 2008 to August 2011, a 7.1 percent decline. According to the White House report "Teacher Jobs at Risk," another 280,000 educational workers face layoffs in 2012.

Rightists have targeted teacher unions for the educational system's deficiencies and failures, whatever the teacher's role. Staff shortages, overcrowded classrooms,

crumbling buildings, rooms too hot or too cold, rain entering classrooms through windows that don't close, etc., are all ignored. Plus teachers lose weeks of instruction time grading tests that are often incompetently produced.

Chicago and San Francisco teacher unions have announced they may strike next fall. In San Francisco, the district plans to cut wages and benefits by \$30 million in the next two years.

In Chicago, teachers are protesting changes in the school day, in how teacher pay is determined and how performance is evaluated. Chicago Teachers Union President Karen Lewis said, "I have never, in my 22 years of teaching and being in the classroom, seen this kind of hostility and this disrespect for teachers." (Huffington Post, May 13)

NYC unions fight school closings

New York City has about 1.1 million K-12 students in public schools. New York's United Federation of Teachers, the largest AFT local, has withheld its signature on an agreement with the Board of Education regarding a scheme for Annual

Professional Performance Reviews. In response, the administration of billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg has closed schools arbitrarily defined as "failing." After laying off half the staff, his administration will re-open them in the fall with different names.

Generally, the BOE sweeps out the older, more experienced teachers, who also earn the highest pay. Their replacements are younger, less experienced and — of course — paid less.

This is the turnaround model established by the federal government for schools it deems are "failing."

A teacher in a specialized New York City high school, whose classes have been videotaped and posted on a national website, told Workers World, "I feel attacked as a woman, teacher and union member by [Bloomberg's] administration."

Mayor Bloomberg has closed 117 schools since taking control of the school system in 2002, while opening 396 new schools that rarely serve the same high-needs students. Parents, students and teachers have often protested these closings; they say the real solution is more resources.

On April 26, the city's Panel for Educational Policy, appointed by Bloomberg, voted to shutter 24 additional "struggling" schools, using the federal turnaround model. Earlier that day, Michael Mulgrew, UFT president, led a protest of parents and teachers outside City Hall with signs that read "Support our kids" and "True reform requires investment."

On May 7, the UFT and the principals' union sued the city to prevent the closings. Ernest Logan, of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators, called them "sham closings" and "an attempt to go around collective bargaining." (Daily News, May 7) Bloomberg's attack on the union over the suit got wide media play. The UFT and the CSSA have sued the city twice before without much effect.

The UFT has made some efforts to build coalitions involving the parents and other unions. It has also organized teachers at non-union charter schools. But its main thrust has been to support the Democratic Party in elections.

More than this will be required to save the city's schools for students and teachers. □

Forces behind the privatization of education

By Betsey Piette

The basic formula behind the drive for for-profit education varies little from state to state: Close public schools, open privately managed schools, cut the budget. It is usually coupled with the negation of union contracts and lower wages and benefits for school workers. While charter schools are paid out of public tax funds, they are exempt from many state and local regulations, especially those protecting work conditions and employee rights.

According to a January report from the National Education Policy Center and Western Michigan University, 35 percent of all U.S. charter schools are operated by private education management organizations (EMOs), accounting for about 42 percent of all school enrollment. By 2010, there were around 5,000 charter schools in the U.S., with around 1.5 million students.

The name EMOs was coined by Wall Street after its name for Health Maintenance Organizations. HMOs were the health insurance industry's business model for increasing profits by denying services. The first EMO was legalized in Minnesota in 1991, but financial deregulation in the 1990s provided Wall Street with the incentive to get into the education business. Recently, the Obama administration has pumped hundreds of millions of dollars of federal "education" money to facilitate the privatization drive.

Charter schools drain money away from local public school districts. Unlike public schools, EMOs can dismiss students who have "disciplinary problems" or even refuse to admit them.

Charter schools are not obliged to provide instruction in English as a second language. National studies have shown that EMOs are more likely to increase school segregation and isolate students by race and class than public schools.

A 2010 Western Michigan University-sponsored study found charter schools spent proportionately more on administrative costs than traditional public schools and less on instruction. It found that student support services averaged



Philadelphia students protest school closings and cuts in staff.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

With the drive to privatize public schools picking up steam over the last decade, education management corporations are raking in lucrative profits. Several of these companies are members of ALEC, whose Next Generation Charter Schools Act has been used as a model for charter school legislation in 42 states and the District of Columbia.

ALEC is the right-wing power behind Florida's racist "Stand Your Ground" law, which George Zimmerman will use in his defense for killing unarmed Black teenager Trayvon Martin on Feb. 26. It's also behind other reactionary legislation targeting undocumented workers and women and supporting the prison-industrial complex.

On the website alecexposed.org, the Center for Media and Democracy gives a summary of the provisions of the Next Generation Charter Schools Act. CMD describes this "model" legislation as an "attempt to have state taxpayers subsidize charter schools ... to compete with public schools, while exempting charter schools from complying with any of the legal requirements that govern public schools."

Under the model legislation, charter schools don't have to adhere to qualification standards when hiring teachers or principals, nor do they have to stick to prevailing wage and hourly requirements, giving them a competitive edge over public schools.

The act gives state governors "unilateral power to appoint separate, un-democratic charter school boards, whose members would not be compensated by the state," with "no rules against conflict of interest by whomever actually employs" them. The act also removes limits on the number of charter schools in a given state.

Top three for-profit EMOs

Among the for-profit education corporations with membership in ALEC is the leading online EMO, The Apollo Group, a Phoenix-based company known for its

chain of for-profit career colleges and other for-profit educational institutions. The corporation's FY2010 earnings were \$4.93 billion.

Apollo's Connections Academy and Connections Education had total revenues of \$2.1 billion in 2010. Connections Academy is also a member of ALEC. As of 2011, Mickey Revenaugh, the company's co-founder and a vice president, was co-chair of ALEC's Education Task Forces.

Apollo initially ran the online Insight School in Washington state. Most of Insight's teachers were non-union and part-time. Staff ratio was one teacher for every 53 online students. State records found many Insight students were struggling. In school year 2009-10, only 50 percent were passing their classes, 45 percent had dropped out, and only 7.2 percent were expected to graduate on time. (KING 5 News, Oct. 31)

In school year 2010-11, a new for-profit charter corporation, K12, took over the Insight schools. Also an ALEC member, K12 was established as a publicly traded entity in 2007, with \$90 million from Michael R. Milken, the junk-bond dealer and securities-fraud felon.

K12 now has 81,000 students in 27 states. While K12's schools are designated "nonprofit," states hire them as a for-profit management company. This arrangement allowed K12 to corner the Pennsylvania online charter market where it received 80 percent of the funding of traditional schools — \$8,000 per student — while providing no buildings, books or teachers. Its students are home-schooled.

According to a 2011 study by Western Michigan University, three-quarters of K12's students failed to achieve Annual Yearly Progress goals. In June 2011, Pennsylvania filed a complaint against K12 for its students' failures in reading and math proficiency. (Bloomberg Businessweek, June 2) K12 generated \$500 million in revenue in 2011.

One of the largest for-profit EMOs is National Heritage Academies, another ALEC supporter, which has led the way in profiting off public education. Based in Grand Rapids, Mich., the company operates 71 schools across the country,

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U.S. student debt at all-time high

Quebec students show how to fight

By Deirdre Griswold

Can students fight the rising costs of education? Young people in Quebec say yes.

Some 164 student associations there, representing 155,000 university students, have been on an open-ended general strike against tuition hikes. On March 22, more than 200,000 of them packed into the narrow canyons of downtown Montreal for the largest demonstration ever held there.

A Quebec government proposal on raising tuition has been rejected by 115 associations, representing 342,000 students. (bloquonslausanne.com) Tens of thousands of young people occupied banks in Montreal and Quebec City on April 11.

These pro-active students are saying that tuition should be free. Their demands sound revolutionary at a time when budgets for everything but repression are being slashed throughout the capitalist world.

The media in the United States have virtually ignored this uprising of youth in our neighbor to the north. What they are reporting is the meteoric rise here in tuition rates in recent years — and with it the accumulation of student debt.

A generation of debtors

Millions of young people dared to believe a higher education would lead to the kind of job that would let them repay their student loans. Those hopes have been dashed.

U.S. student debt now exceeds \$1 trillion, surpassing credit card debt. Some 27 percent of these loans are past due.

This surge in unpayable debt is the other shoe dropping in the prolonged capitalist economic crisis, which first became visible when the bottom fell out of the housing market. That, too, was a debt crisis. Ballooning mortgage rates caught up with homeowners just as better-paying jobs were disappearing. The result: millions of defaults on mortgage payments, followed by illegal mass robo-signing of foreclosure notices.

Student debt has been ballooning ever since the unemployment crisis hit.

On March 5, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York released a report saying student debt had reached \$867 billion by the end of the third quarter of 2011. At that time, 37 million people had outstanding student loans; 5.4 million of them had missed enough payments to be declared delinquent. (Bloomberg, March 5)

But two weeks later, officials of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, a federal agency, said at a banking confer-



Some 200,000 students in Montreal protested tuition increase on March 22.

ence held in Austin, Texas, that this was vastly understated — student debt had already surpassed the \$1 trillion mark. (Wall Street Journal, March 22) The average debt of a student leaving college had risen to more than \$25,000. Even with a college degree, many young workers in the present economy make less than that — if they are lucky enough to find a job.

Capitalist jobs crisis the culprit

Now the corporate media have got hold of the story and are reporting the great difficulties students and universities are having because of the debt problem. What they fail to mention, however, is what underlies this sorry state: the persistent crisis of capitalism, from Europe to the United States to everywhere else in the world where the profit motive is what drives the economy.

This is not just a cyclical crisis to be soon overcome. It reflects the fact that productivity has become so high in the developed capitalist countries, and the expanding world market has made it possible to outsource so many millions of labor-intensive jobs to low-wage countries, that the permanent army of unemployed here has soared.

This is falling like a ton of bricks on the younger generation. Raised to believe that most people in the U.S. could lead a “middle-class” existence, they have found that capitalism doesn’t work that way. Higher productivity doesn’t mean more leisure or easier jobs; it means eliminating jobs and cutting the wages of those still lucky enough to find work. For young people — and their parents — who went deeply into debt as a way out of the rat race, the awful truth is unavoidable.

Milking student debt

While the general public reads stories sympathizing with the plight of students and university officials, the financial pages and blogs tell another story. Their concern can be seen in headlines like

“Will Student Loans Hurt Your Stocks?” (fool.com, April 16) and “Student Loan Delinquency Reached \$85 Billion in Third Quarter.” (Bloomberg, March 5)

The federal government holds the lion’s share of outstanding student debt. Its stated purpose is to make higher education affordable for those who can’t pay high tuition without some help. Even the government’s main lending instrument, however, has been turning a profit for private investors. Traded on the Nasdaq stock exchange as SLM Corp., Sallie Mae’s first-quarter core earnings “came in at \$284 million or 55 cents per share” this year. (community.nasdaq.com, April 19)

Various private financial institutions have been issuing student loans at an even heftier price. With the rise in loan defaults, however, big private banks are now getting out of the business.

U.S. Bancorp pulled out of student loans in April. Until then it had claimed that it was “committed to giving students every opportunity to realize their potential. Education changes lives.” But once it was clear there might not be much profit in doing this, the bank’s commitment to education vanished.

JPMorgan Chase recently announced it would stop issuing new student loans in July. Other banks will surely follow and interest rates on new loans will only go up further.

At the same time that job opportunities are shrinking, tuition costs are rising, some exponentially. The budget crisis in California, for example, means that tuition in the state university system may soon be double what it was just five years ago — this in a state where a university education was once free.

Double whammy on July 1

The interest rate that students pay for subsidized loans from the federal government is scheduled to double — from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent — on July 1. The Obama administration’s budget request for fiscal year 2013 would keep the 3.4

percent rate, but the Federal Student Aid website is already warning prospective borrowers that they will be paying the higher rate as of July 1.

By contrast, if a student’s family has been able to scrape together some money and put it into a bank savings account toward their child’s education, these accounts now typically earn less than 1 percent interest.

The amount of federal aid available to students is based on their family income. That is also changing as of July 1. To receive the maximum aid available, families used to be eligible if they earned up to \$32,000 a year — not much by any account. But now even that amount will be lowered to \$23,000.

If the family earns more than that, they will have to pay out in advance a portion of the money for their child’s education. This effectively bars low-income families from being able to send their kids to any kind of college without a full scholarship. (studentaid.ed.gov)

Time to change the game rules

In the media, the student debt crisis is now eclipsing other areas of the economy as the “number one threat.” However, this is confusing cause with result. Student debt is not the cause of what could be another downturn in the economy. It is the result of the complete economic instability that characterizes this period: the endgame of the capitalist system.

Is there plenty of wealth in the United States? If you doubt it, just look into what waterfront mansions and private jets are selling for. Look into the billions — nay, trillions — of dollars in private and corporate hands that are not being invested in production because there aren’t enough buyers for all the current goods and services out there.

Yet, with all this wealth, the capitalist class won’t willingly give up a nickel an hour to a worker at Walmart or cover health insurance or pensions for millions of workers.

The Quebec students, and the people in this country who have flooded into Occupy Wall Street, have it right: Organized struggle is the only way to fight this system.

It’s the only way to force concessions out of the lords of capital. And it’s the only way to change the rules of the game so capitalism itself is made obsolete. Then — as youth and workers build a socialist society — education, along with jobs, medical care and all the necessities of life, will be guaranteed for everyone. □



Homecare workers, members of Service Employees 1199, and their supporters protested in Brooklyn, N.Y., on May 9 as part of continuing actions against the home-care agency bosses who arbitrarily cut the workers’ contractual benefits on Jan.

1. Among the benefits taken away were vacation days, sick time, shift differential pay and medical benefits. These low-paid, mostly women workers, chanted, “We’re health care workers fighting back!”

— Report & photo by Anne Pruden

Privatization of education

Continued from page 3

including 43 in Michigan. National Heritage Academies was established by J. C. Huizenga, son of the billionaire founder of Waste Management, Inc. and Blockbuster video.

National Heritage Academies is basically a Christian school system. It was successfully sued in 2000 by the American Civil Liberties Union for teaching creationism with public funds.

Promotion of charter schools has also proven to be lucrative for politicians. Pennsylvania’s Gov. Tom Corbett received \$334,000 in campaign contributions in 2010 from the founder and CEO of Chester Community Charter, the state’s largest EMO, which now enrolls more than half of the impoverished Chester Up-land school district’s K-8 students.

Contrary to the hype of “Waiting for Superman,” there is little proof that private charter schools are capable of providing any better education than seriously underfunded public schools. In fact, studies have shown that the opposite is true. In the film, it is even admitted that only 1 in 5 charter schools has achieved the “amazing results” promised.

Stanford economist Margaret Raymond conducted a national study of charter schools in 2009 which evaluated student progress on math tests in half of the 5,000 charter schools in the U.S. The study found that 17 percent were superior to a matched traditional public school, while 37 percent were worse than a public school. The remaining 46 percent had academic gains no different than those in similar public schools. (Washington Post, Oct. 11) □

'Marxism sampler' commemorates birth of Karl Marx

Workers World Party marked the May 5 birth of Karl Marx with a forum in New York City applying the science of Marxism to the burning issues of today. Presenting this 'Marxism sampler' were five leaders of WWP, some of whom are also leaders in coalitions and mass movements. "How would Marx view the world capitalist crisis today?" and "Marxist theory and practice on victory through class struggle" were addressed. Speakers also demonstrated how Marxism contributes to understanding and pursuing gains in the fight for immigrant rights; for national liberation

and self determination; for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer rights; and against women's oppression.

The speakers were Teresa Gutierrez, a member of the WWP secretariat and organizer for the May 1 Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights; Larry Holmes, WWP's First Secretary and an organizer of Occupy 4 Jobs; Larry Hales, Workers World newspaper contributing editor and activist against racist state repression; LeiLani Dowell, Workers World newspaper managing editor and LGBTQ activist; and Julie Fry, vice president of UAW Local 2325,

WORKERS WORLD PARTY FORUM



Julie Fry, LeiLani Dowell, Larry Hales, Joyce Chediak, Larry Holmes & Teresa Gutierrez

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Association of Legal Aid Attorneys, an activist and people's lawyer. Joyce Chediak, a WW Education Committee member,

chaired the meeting. Go to www.youtube.com/WWPvideo to view the talks.

— Joyce Chediak

As world health report shows

U.S. premature birth rate among world's worst

By Ellen Catalinotto

Worldwide rates of premature births are increasing in both industrialized and poorer countries, with more than one out of 10 — or 15 million — babies born prematurely in 2010. More than 1 million of these infants will die in the first month of life, making prematurity the leading cause of newborn death.

Many survivors have lifelong learning disabilities, chronic lung disease, and loss of vision and hearing, according to "Born Too Soon," a report on prematurity published May 2 by the World Health Organization, in conjunction with experts in this field from 11 countries.

The United States ranks 130 out of 184 countries. The U.S. has one of the worst rates, with 12 premature babies per 100 births. Within the U.S., the African-American prematurity rate of 17.5 percent is higher than estimated preterm birth

rates in war- and famine-torn countries in Asia and Africa, and only slightly less than in Malawi, which has the highest rate in the world — 18.1 percent.

There is a wide and growing gap between rich and poor countries in survival of the most fragile babies. In low-income countries, where more than 90 percent of such births occur, infections, malaria, HIV and high rates of adolescent pregnancies are among the main known causes of preterm births. In more industrialized countries, including the U.S., medically unnecessary cesareans and inductions of labor before pregnancies reach full term contribute to premature births. However, in both rich and poor countries about half of preterm births have no identified cause. Indoor air pollution and second-hand smoke are the only environmental risks mentioned in the report.

Many premature births can be averted by universal access to free family planning

— especially for teens — prenatal care to screen for and treat infections and diseases, such as diabetes; nutritional support; and prevention of violence against women. These public health measures are under attack by the right-wing of the capitalist class, which promotes free markets, privatization and austerity, both in the U.S. and around the world.

Once preterm labor has begun, a corticosteroid injection to the mother costing \$1 will help the baby's lungs develop, greatly reducing breathing problems after birth. Antibiotics may delay labor and prevent infection when the membranes surrounding the fetus rupture before the baby is full term.

More than four out of five preterm births occur between 32 to 37 weeks of pregnancy. Supportive low-tech care for these babies can save most of their lives and reduce disability. These measures include skin-to-skin contact with the

mother for warmth, early and exclusive breastfeeding, and cleaning and care of the umbilical cord.

Those born very premature — from 28 to 32 weeks — or extremely premature, before 28 weeks, will need more intensive, expensive care to survive. Such babies often suffer physical and learning disabilities even when cared for in the most advanced newborn intensive care units.

The report recommends upgrading the skills of health providers to care for premature babies, providing essential medicines and equipment in poor countries, and further study into the causes and prevention of preterm labor. Countries squeezed by the global capitalist economic crisis and the for-profit health industry cannot be counted on to implement these recommendations.

Women around the world will have to struggle to make them a reality.

Catalinotto is a licensed midwife.

'Samurai Among Panthers'

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

"Samurai Among Panthers: Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life," by Diane C. Fujino. Critical American Studies, University of Minnesota Press, 2012

This account by Diane C. Fujino of the life of Richard Aoki, a Japanese-American who, along with his parents, spent time in an internment camp in the United States during World War II, covers an important period in history when the Civil Rights, left and Black Power movements had a tremendous impact in the U.S.

Born in 1938, Aoki was three-and-a-half years old when his family was relocated to the Tanforan Assembly Center in San Bruno, Calif. They were later transferred to the Topaz, Utah, concentration camp. The strain of the internment camps led to the separation of Aoki's parents, which had a tremendous impact on him as a youth.

Aoki grew up in the predominantly African-American community in West Oakland, Calif. His working-class mother raised her sons on less than two dollars an hour during the 1950s.

Aoki described himself at the time as politically anti-communist, but soon he would pick up a book by Eugene Debs, the socialist organizer and presidential candidate in the early 20th century. He found Debs inspiring and would go on to study the history of the labor movement. He landed a job in a factory during this

period and participated in a strike.

Regarding the Watts Rebellion in Los Angeles, Aoki recounted: "I remember when Watts busted loose in 1965. I was working in this one factory where 90 percent of the [300] people working the line were White southerners. Half of them didn't show up for work the day after the Watts riots."

Aoki states: "I asked the foreman, 'We got to get the show on the road. Where the hell is everybody?' He said, 'Man they're at home in Richmond or wherever in the tract homes, and they got their front doors barricaded and their guns out for that invasion coming in from Watts.' I said, 'There ain't going to be no invasion coming from Watts.'"

Aoki concluded that "on the one hand, these coworkers of mine were strong union people, you know proletarian-oriented, class-conscious workers. But when it came to race, half the workers, being White southerners, were freaked out over Watts. I was stunned."

The first contact Aoki made with the left was with the Socialist Workers Party and their youth wing, the Young Socialist Alliance. Fujino dates Aoki's involvement with the YSA to as early as 1961.

When he entered the University of California at Berkeley, Aoki became involved with the Vietnam Day Committee and the Tricontinental Movement. His emphasis was on the emergent Black revolutionary movement and Third World radicalism.

Aoki had known Huey P. Newton

through their mutual involvement in street activities. In September 1966, Aoki would attend a Black Nationalist conference in San Francisco which brought together a number of militant organizations.

The following month, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense was formed in Oakland with Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale as the co-founders. Aoki assisted in distributing the Panther 10-point program and soon he was appointed as a captain for the establishment of a branch in Berkeley, with him being the only member.

Black Panthers and Red Guards

He recounts how a group of Asian Americans went to Bobby Seale and David Hilliard requesting to join the Panthers. At the time, membership was restricted to African Americans. They soon came up with the idea of forming a Panther-like organization called the Red Guards in San Francisco. The organization was a close ally of the Panther Party.

Aoki was also a leading member of the Asian American Political Alliance, which had a revolutionary perspective. His activities with the Panthers, the Red Guard and the AAPA would soon cause him problems with the SWP/YSA.

After delivering a report on the Black Nationalist conference to the SWP, the party wanted to reassign him to work on issues unrelated to the national question. He rejected this suggestion and would later resign from the SWP after they expressed concerns that his activities with

the African-American and Asian revolutionary organizations might cause difficulty for the party.

Aoki said that his linking up with the Panthers was "the greatest political opportunity of my life." He attributed the decimation of the Panthers to the heavy repression by the FBI and police agencies, the forcing into exile and imprisonment of its key leadership, the assassinations of officials within the organization, and the turn toward reformism and electoral politics by 1973.

But Aoki notes: "Even with these problems, I stand behind my conviction that the formation of the BPP was one of the greatest things to happen to twentieth-century America as far as the struggle for freedom, justice, and equality is concerned. It may not have been the perfect organization, but I'm amazed at its importance not only in the world but in my personal life."

In 1969, his attention would focus on the Third World Liberation Front, which led the student strike at Berkeley. Out of this struggle, ethnic studies — encompassing Black, Latino/a and Asian curricula — were developed. This was part of the battle for ethnic studies across the U.S.

Aoki finished his graduate work and became a counselor and administrator within the California university system. During the 1990s, he advocated for the freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners and opposed the repeal of affirmative action programs in California. He died in 2009. □

BOOK REVIEW

OAKLAND

Police kill another Black youth

By Terri Kay
Oakland, Calif.

Alan Blueford, an 18-year-old Black youth, was shot and killed by the Oakland Police Department in East Oakland on May 6. He and two friends were waiting for some young women on a corner at 90th and Birch. OPD cops approached them with guns drawn for no justifiable reason. Their apparent “crime” was being Black young men on a corner.

Blueford ran for two blocks, after which he was shot three times by one of the cops. The cop originally claimed Blueford had shot him in the stomach, but the latest OPD report said that the cop actually shot himself in the foot. In other words, all shots fired were from the officer’s own gun. The shooting officer has yet to be identified.

Blueford, who was preparing to graduate from Skyline High School, was left lying in the street for more than four hours. The injured cop, on the other hand, was rushed to the hospital for his self-inflicted wound. The other two Black youth were held for questioning for six hours and then released.

It wasn’t until Blueford’s friends were released and able to call that Blueford’s parents learned their son had

been killed. Blueford’s father, Adam Blueford, had been on the phone with him shortly before the incident. The family rushed to the police station only to have to wait another two hours before their son’s identity and status were confirmed.

The media are trying to blame the victim after the fact, simply because he was on juvenile felony probation. The cops had actually been called to respond to another incident, but stopped to hassle the three young Black men instead.

Community rallies against OPD

Blueford’s family and friends organized a vigil for the slain youth on May 11 in front of the OPD headquarters in downtown Oakland. More than 100 people gathered to show their sympathy for the family and their anger at yet another outrageous murder by the OPD.



Protesters rally outside Oakland police station.

WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

Both of his parents, his cousin and other friends spoke in Blueford’s memory and talked about their determination to get justice for their loved one. Other speakers included Cephus Johnson, Oscar Grant’s “Uncle Bobby,” and M.C. Hammer, a close friend of the Bluefords. Diop Olugbala, from the International Peoples Democratic Uhuru Movement, also spoke. The day before Blueford’s killing, that group had held a march and trial for Black justice and reparations in the East Oakland neighborhood where Blueford was killed.

The vigil was followed by a march and rally on May 12, starting at the street corner where Blueford was killed and ending with

a rally at the Eastmont Mall Police substation. Several hundred people from the Black community, Occupy Oakland and other activists marched and rallied in protest, demanding justice for Blueford. Chants included, “No justice, no peace, no racist police!” “OPD you can’t hide, we charge you with genocide!” and “Jail the killer cops now!”

The family is planning to confront the Oakland City Council at its next meeting on May 15 at Oakland City Hall. They will demand a full report be released, including the name of the cop who killed Alan Blueford; they also plan to demand a full investigation into the killing. They are calling on the community to be there in support and to occupy the City Council. □

DEMAND JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS

Carlos Montes’ trial sparks protests

By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

Movement activists are poised to protest the frame-up of veteran Chicano organizer Carlos Montes in Los Angeles. Montes’ trial is set for May 15.

Montes was a founder of the Brown Berets, a founder of Latinos Against the War, and a founder and leading activist in the Southern California Immigration Coalition. He was featured in the HBO movie “Walkout” about the East Los Angeles high school walkouts that won important victories for Chicano/a students in 1968.

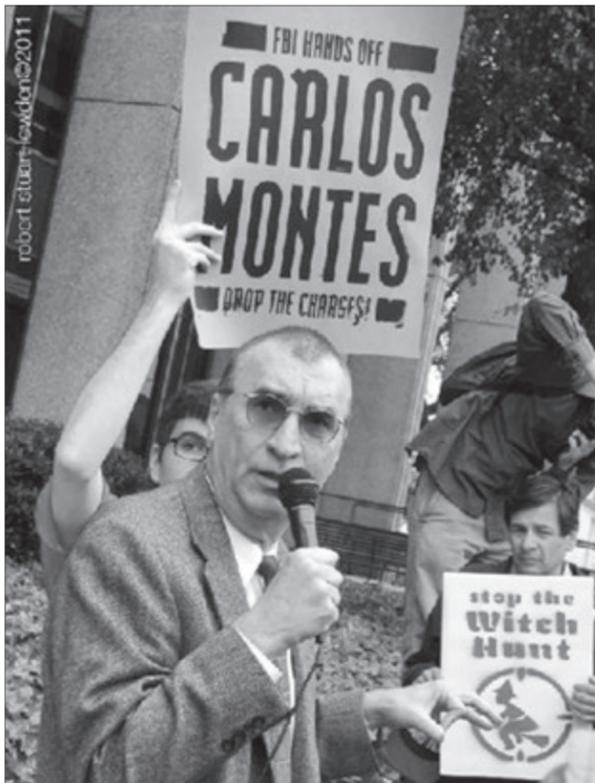
His activism has made him a popular and respected figure in the Los Angeles movement. His case has drawn union support as well. Hundreds of supporters have turned out thus far at court appearances.

Despite local and national support for Montes during a series of pre-trial court appearances, Superior Court Judge George Lomeli repeatedly passed on the opportunity to throw out the FBI’s phony case.

The charges against Montes stem from a 1969 arrest when police attacked a demonstration demanding Chicano studies at East L.A. College. Montes was a leading organizer of the demonstration. A cop claimed he was hit by an empty soda can; then cops charged Montes with throwing the can.

Prosecutors are sticking with their claim that the 1969 arrest was a felony, even though the defense produced a document from 1969 that calls it a misdemeanor — a vital legal difference.

Montes is a legal gun owner. His application to purchase a firearm in 2009 was approved by the U.S. Justice Dept — as



Carlos Montes

PHOTO: ROBERT STUART LOWDEN

all gun permits must be. Yet the charges against him now center around questions answered on that permit application.

Two of the original six charges have been dismissed because of the statute of limitations. If the prosecution succeeds in getting the 1969 arrest characterized as a felony, such charges as perjury, felony possession of a firearm and felony possession of ammunition could stick, and Montes could face two to three years in prison for each of four charges.

Behind phony charges

There is a crystal-clear connection between the phony charges against Montes and an earlier FBI campaign targeting organizers in another region of the country. Montes’ name was listed on a search

warrant that FBI agents produced when they raided the Minneapolis office of the Anti-War Committee in September 2010.

Twenty-three activists were subpoenaed over the next several months. All those activists have bravely and defiantly refused thus far to answer questions in front of a grand jury. In fact they formed the Committee to Stop FBI Repression in order to combat the attack on the movement. Refusing to testify before a grand jury can result in jail sentences.

In May 2011, an FBI SWAT team, along with Los Angeles County Sheriffs, smashed down the door to Montes’ home at dawn and arrested him. Their conduct belied their claim that the case is over gun possession.

During more than 40 years of activism, Montes had accumulated writings and other papers, as well as photos of many demonstrations. With Montes handcuffed, the agents spent hours going through a 40-year accumulation of papers, writings and photos, questioning him about the Freedom Road Socialist Organization and taking his computer and cell phone. Clearly this was a political raid by a repressive arm of the capitalist state.

District Attorney Steve Coolie’s office has been flooded with phone calls demanding that the charges against Montes be dropped. An online petition sent out by the International Action Center (iactcenter.org) has gathered thousands of signatures.

The trial is set for 8 a.m. starting May 15 at the Criminal Courts Building, 13th floor, Department 100 at 210 West Temple Ave. in Los Angeles. More information about support for Montes and how you can help is at stopfbi.net. □



NORTH CAROLINA VICTORY

Anti-gay amendment

By Andy Koch
Durham, N.C.

Progressive-minded people across the United States watched with dismay on May 8 as North Carolina became the 30th state to pass a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman. However, the feeling here in North Carolina is not one of defeat, but of power and hope. The struggle against the amendment was one of the broadest and most dynamic the state has seen in years, involving hundreds of community and faith-based groups and more than 16,000 volunteers.

“Our win is humongous,” said Kai Lumumba Barrow, Southerners On New Ground organizer, in a video the group released on May 9, “because our dialogue is not just about gay marriage. It’s moving toward a dialogue about what does it mean for poor people, people of color, queer people coming together to fight for each other’s liberation. This amendment made that possible.”

North Carolina already had a statute on the books prohibiting gay marriage. So why pass this new constitutional amendment?

For one thing, the wording of the amend-

ANOTHER RACIST OUTCOME

The conviction of Marissa Alexander

By Monica Moorehead

All around the U.S. and the world, people are reacting with justifiable outrage and shock at the harsh prison sentence leveled against Marissa Alexander, an African-American mother of three, in Jacksonville, Fla. Alexander was sentenced to 20 years in prison on May 11 for using the “Stand Your Ground” law to protect herself from her abusive ex-spouse. This state law supposedly upholds the right to self-defense for anyone who feels threatened with bodily harm.

The SYG law was used by vigilante George Zimmerman, who claimed he felt threatened by an unarmed 17-year-old Black youth, Trayvon Martin, whom he fatally shot on Feb. 26 in Sanford, Fla. The police initially refused to arrest Zimmerman for this killing because he invoked the law.

In response to mass protests throughout the U.S. and even worldwide demanding Zimmerman’s arrest, an appointed special prosecutor, Angela Corey, was forced to announce on April 11 that Zimmerman had been charged with the second-degree murder of Martin.

On April 20, after spending just nine days in jail, Zimmerman was released on \$15,000

bail indefinitely until he goes to trial. No date has been set for his trial, and his whereabouts are unknown. Martin’s parents, Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin, are demanding that the Department of Justice bring federal charges against Zimmerman for violating their son’s civil rights.

In an ironic act that can only be characterized as a gross injustice, Corey pushed for prosecuting Alexander. In August 2010, following a physical attack by her spouse after the birth of her third child, Alexander used a registered handgun to shoot a single bullet into the wall of their home to force him to back off. Her spouse had a history of repeatedly abusing her, including during her last pregnancy.

Alexander was immediately jailed following her arrest and never received bail even though she had no prior criminal record and no one was hurt when she fired the gun.

She was convicted on three counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. It took the jury just 12 minutes to convict her.

The prosecutor’s office offered Alexander a plea bargain which would have reduced her sentence to three years if she accepted. She refused the offer, hoping that a jury would acquit her. Corey stated that the SYG law did not

apply to Alexander because she fired the gun out of “anger,” not “fear.”

It didn’t seem to matter to the prosecutor that Alexander had medical records to prove that she had cuts and bruises on her body from the abuse. In fact, Alexander had been the one accused of spousal abuse, not the estranged spouse who had a documented history of abuse against other women.

Greg Newburn, Florida project director for Families Against Mandatory Minimums, said in response to the Alexander case: “Florida’s mandatory, 10-20-life gun law forced the Court to impose an arbitrary, unjust and completely inappropriate sentence. As long as Florida keeps its inflexible gun sentencing laws, we will continue to see cases like Ms. Alexander’s.” (Huffington Post, May 12) Newburn’s group is organizing to repeal these repressive laws.

When the sentence against Alexander was read by the judge, members of Dream Defenders, a youth-led civil rights group, stood in the courtroom chanting, “No justice, no peace!” and sang, “We who believe in freedom will not rest until it’s won.” (fightbacknews.org, May 14) The police physically removed them from the courtroom. The Defenders also organized a 40-mile walk in April from



Marissa Alexander

Daytona Beach, Fla., to Sanford, Fla., to demand justice for Martin.

Alexander and her family announced plans to appeal the sentence. A petition in support of freeing Alexander can be found at tinyurl.com/7s5b717.

It is important for activists to link the struggles for justice for Alexander and Martin. Both are victims of a racist judicial system under the guise of the SYG law, which was backed by the reactionary National Rifle Association. The interpretation of this law is being used to persecute the most oppressed in Florida, especially African Americans and women of color.

Justice for Alexander means the immediate overturning of her conviction and her release from prison to be with her children. Justice for Martin means revoking Zimmerman’s bail, finding him guilty and having him spend the rest of his life in prison. This kind of real justice will only happen when a sustained mass movement fights for it, using occupations and other tactics in the struggle against racist injustice. □

OF RACISM, BIGOTRY & REPRESSION

JUNE 4 SENTENCING

Campaign to free CeCe McDonald continues

By Kris Hamel

The second-degree murder trial of Chrishaun “CeCe” McDonald in Minneapolis started April 30 and ended May 2. McDonald’s situation highlights the anti-transgender bigotry and racism rampant in society, as well as the inability of the “justice” system to mete out justice for the oppressed.

McDonald, a young African-American trans woman, survived a racist, anti-trans attack in July 2011. As she and her friends, all of them youths, African-American and queer or allied, walked to a grocery store late one night, they were brutally set upon by a group of racist whites outside a bar. McDonald was hit in the face with a glass and her cheek severely punctured. She was jailed and was the only person charged after a melee that left one of her attackers, a racist complete with a swastika tattooed on his body, dead.

Originally charged with second-degree felony murder and facing a possible sentence of decades in prison, McDonald agreed to the prosecution’s offer of pleading guilty to a reduced charge of second-degree manslaughter, with a prison term of 41 months.

Katie Burgess, of the Trans Youth Support Network, stated in a press release: “The executed sentence will be reduced by one-third, for ‘good time’ and credit for the time McDonald has served pending this resolution.

“The plea agreement comes nearly a year after McDonald was arrested, interrogated, denied adequate medical care for a laceration she suffered during the attack and held in solitary confinement for a month for being a transgender person. During the pre-trial proceedings, supporters raised worldwide support for the

charges against McDonald to be dropped. [In April], supporters delivered to Hennepin County Attorney Michael Freeman a petition for dropping the charges with over 15,000 signatures and dozens of letters of support for McDonald from organizations and prominent individuals from around the globe.” (supportcece.wordpress.com, May 2)

Criminalized for fighting back, surviving

Transgender people of color face violence, murder and injustice daily throughout the United States. For surviving her attack, McDonald is criminalized. Others are not so “lucky.”

On April 16, Paige Clay was found dead in Chicago’s West Garfield Park from a single gunshot to her forehead. Clay, 23, was a trans woman of color. No one has been arrested for her murder. Brandy Martell was shot and killed on April 29 in Oakland, Calif., as she sat in her car, talking with three trans friends. The killer fired even as she tried to drive away. Martell, 37, was a trans woman of color and a peer advocate for transgender people in need of psychological and medical assistance. No arrests have been made. (xojane.com, May 9)

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs issued a report in 2011 on “hate” violence motivated by gender identity and expression, sexuality and HIV status. A whopping 70 percent of anti-lesbian/gay/bi/trans murders in 2010 were of people of color. Forty-four percent of these victims were transgender women. (colorlines.com, July 18)

McDonald, like other trans women, will most likely face threats of sexual and other violence when she is incarcerated in an all-male facility.

The struggle for justice for McDonald continues. Stated Burgess: “We know that



WW PHOTO: LESLIE FEINBERG

CeCe McDonald touches hands with Leslie Feinberg, WW managing editor, author and LGBTQ leader, through the plexiglass barricade during a recent visit.

this system is not designed to deliver justice to young trans women of color. We are going to continue to support CeCe as she goes through this process and continue to stand for justice for all trans people and people of color so that this is the last time a young trans woman of color has to go through this.”

Supporters in Minneapolis and surrounding areas are urged to attend her sentencing on June 4 at 1:30 p.m., in the courtroom of Hennepin County Judge Daniel Moreno. A petition urging Minnesota’s governor to pardon McDonald can be signed at change.org/petitions/gov-mark-dayton-pardon-cece-mcdonald. Visit supportcece.wordpress.com for more information on how to support justice for McDonald and other trans people and people of color. □

OF RACISM,



DRY IN MIDST OF DEFEAT

ent spurs solidarity

ment not only bans same-sex marriage, but would wipe out legal protections for women and children in physically abusive unmarried partnerships, as well as numerous other rights that such couples currently hold.

The amendment’s right-wing authors in the state Legislature would tell you that a constitutional amendment ensures that the conservative definition of marriage is protected from being altered in the future. Such reactionary beliefs were a motivator for legislators and supporters of the amendment.

Building solidarity is key

But in order to understand these kinds of oppressive attacks as a social phenomenon, we have to look at the class forces at work. The capitalist ruling class is in some serious hot water right now. Their system is in crisis. They’ve had to pull out every trick in their book to keep profits up — like starting new wars and the huge bank bailouts — yet they are still struggling. Importantly, the people of the U.S. are fighting back against their rulers on a scale not seen in decades. This is what scares the capitalist ruling class most of all.

So what does the ruling class do? Every-

Continued on page 10

Protesters tell Spanish gov't: 'No bread, no peace!'

By John Catalinotto

One year after the “indignant ones” began their struggle to undermine the Spanish state, mass marches protested the attack of the 1% on the people and tried to take back the public space they had been forced to cede. Police again arrested dozens to deny public assemblies to workers, unemployed youths and seniors, all deprived of their futures.

The movement’s persistence indicates a “re-politicization” of youth. The corporate media’s current charges that this movement has been taken over by extreme leftists are undoubtedly exaggerated. Still, these charges reflect the Spanish ruling class’s fears of a new upsurge of struggle that will break the confines of establishment institutions like parliament and business unionism.

Organizers said hundreds of thousands filled streets and squares in nearly 100 cities and towns on May 12. Solidarity “12M15M” protests took place in another 200 cities in Europe, and in Africa, South and Central America, and even in the U.S. and Canada.

The largest assemblies were in Madrid’s Puerta del Sol central square and Barcelona’s Plaza Catalunya. In Madrid, after

activists held all-night discussions, police forced the remaining thousands out early in the morning, arresting 12. In all participating cities, police refused demonstrators their right to a public, democratic meeting space.

Slogans popularized by the crowds reflected the drastic economic downturn for workers in Spain, especially for youth. Some of the ones seen in photos or chanted on videos were, “No layoffs, no evictions!” and “No bread, no peace!”

Despite differences in class-struggle history between Spain and the U.S., there are enough similarities in the current developments that each working class can learn from the other’s experiences.

Struggle opened May 15, 2011

The Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings 17 months ago inspired the Indignant movement of youth already suffering from the capitalist economic crisis. Surprising nearly everyone, the indignant ones seized Puerta del Sol in Madrid and Plaza Catalunya in Barcelona on May 15, 2011, holding on to them for weeks.

Thousands then filled not only these plazas, but also many more public spaces in dozens of cities throughout the country. Initially, the corporate media were



Madrid's Puerta del Sol, May 12.

PHOTO: FOTOGRACTION

friendly to the protests. As it became apparent that the open assemblies were turning into centers that could generate real struggle, the media began demonizing the protesters and the police attacked.

The process was similar to that of the Occupy movement in the United States.

At the same time that workers’ conditions plunged in the U.S. starting in 2008, they dropped off a cliff in Spain. Current official unemployment is 23 percent overall there, 50 percent for young people. Meanwhile, the regime has promoted laws stripping workers of protections against layoffs and cutting pensions, health care and education.

There are 175 home evictions daily. This reflects the housing bubble’s deflation in 2008 after a decade of credit-driven expansion.

Both the previous “Socialist” (PSOE) government and the current center-right (PP) regime have promoted austerity and

submission to the European bankers’ demands.

Federal leaders in the two major trade union confederations (CCOO and UGT) had made compromises with the PSOE regime that conceded many rights. Thus, these unions — at least on a federal level — have lost credibility as fighting forces. Young people look to the smaller, more grass-roots unions like the Cobas or the CGT.

In regions with a strong consciousness of national oppression — such as the Basque Country in the northeast and Galicia in the northwest — the local unions have maintained their struggle reputation with strong general strikes.

On May 15, the movement plans to once again attempt to take back public space. They need this for democratic discussion on what to do next to confront what more and more people are beginning to realize is an unresolvable capitalist crisis. □

Outside BOA in Detroit

Protest calls for moratorium on debt service

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

Banks are responsible for the destruction of many cities, and Detroit is a prime example, according to demonstrators who gathered outside the downtown Bank of America on May 9 in solidarity with the protest that took place in Charlotte, N.C., that same day. In all, more than 200 such demonstrations took place across the United States.

This embattled city was recently forced into a “Financial Stability Agreement,” which mandates payment of over \$16 billion to financial institutions. Bank of America is the second-largest holder of municipal debt in the U.S.

In Detroit, which has perhaps been the hardest hit municipality in the current economic crisis, the electorate has been

disenfranchised and the public school system is under the control of an emergency manager. Efforts aimed at forcing the state to nullify Public Act 4, the so-called “dictator law,” have been thwarted by two Republican members of the State Board of Canvassers who said that the petitions with 226,000 signatures had the wrong-sized font so they were therefore invalid.

The demonstration at BOA, called by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & Utility Shutoffs, demanded that city politicians refuse to pay debt service to the banks and instead keep public monies to fund municipal jobs, public transportation and human services. Gathering outside the bank at rush hour, protesters chanted, “Money for the city, not for banks!”

This demonstration — which was endorsed by the Occupy Detroit Eviction

Defense Committee, the Southeast Michigan Jobs With Justice Coalition, United Auto Workers Local 600 and the Committee for Justice for Aiyana Jones — was the first of its kind in the city that specifically focused on the need to stop the banks from draining the municipal treasury. The Financial Stability Agreement is mandating large-scale employee and service cuts that include up to 3,500 layoffs and closing the departments of health and human services.

Don't pay the banks!

After picketing at Bank of America, the demonstrators marched through the financial district to City Hall, where a rally was held. Speakers included anti-foreclosure attorney Vanessa Fluker, Wayne County Commissioner Martha G. Scott, Moratorium NOW! organizer Jerry Goldberg, UAW

Local 600 Vice President A. J. Freer, and City Councilperson JoAnn Watson.

A statement read by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition at the demonstration pointed out: “The Mayor and the City Council (5-4 vote) caved in to Gov. Rick Snyder and Wall Street by handing the City over to a Financial Advisory Board. The purpose of the FAB is to guarantee the looting of Detroit by the banks by insuring the ‘payment in full of the scheduled debt service requirements on all bonds, notes and municipal securities’ (Public Act 4).”

The statement stressed that the “Snyder financial review team reported the City of Detroit paid \$597 million to the banks in 2010 for debt service. The same banks that destroyed the neighborhoods of Detroit by their racist, predatory, sub-prime, criminal mortgages will be assured of getting paid from the City’s treasury.” □

'99% Spring' hits Wall St. South

Continued from page 1

their homes. Some demanded the federal government put a moratorium on foreclosures altogether, so families can stay in their homes while payment terms are negotiated.

“Let Johnny in, let Johnny in!” chanted the marchers in support of Johnny Rosa, an African-American man whose home BOA was foreclosing on. Rosa was simply asking for a voice at the table to be heard by the bank’s top executives. Cops swarmed Rosa, threw him to the ground and quickly arrested him, but not without the crowd standing up for him.

Four other courageous protesters were also arrested throughout the course of the day, most in planned civil disobedience.

Many other movement leaders spoke, including members of All of Us NC, a lesbian, gay, bi, transgender, queer organization that led a grassroots fight against a state

constitutional amendment that banned all civil unions and rights of domestic partners. This reactionary amendment passed during the May 8 primary ballot.

Protesters take the streets

Protesters then began marching up Trade Street and south on Tryon Street, completely blocking one direction of traffic as they marched toward the Bank of America stadium, where President Barack Obama will give his acceptance speech during the September Democratic National Convention. Environmental activists, who draped a huge banner over its facade days before the protest, now call this arena “Bank of Coal stadium.”

Yen Acala, member of Occupy Charlotte and leader in the Coalition to March on Wall Street South, underlined the significance of the May 9 event, saying it will help spark people’s enthusiasm to dem-



WWW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

Protesters to BOA: 'No business as usual!'

onstrate an even bigger challenge to the big banks, corporations and both corporate parties during the DNC.

All regions of the country will have their own face, their own struggles. That such a struggle movement is now brewing in the U.S. South has epic potential,

especially since this region is home to well over 60 percent of all foreign direct economic investment — the construction of industrial productive factories — and a vast unorganized, non-union, low-wage work force who offer a vast potential for organization.

The time is ripe for a mass, militant march on Wall Street South — Charlotte — that can truly unite all sectors of the working class from across the region. This will be the next giant step forward for full democratic rights and ownership over all the factories, the schools, the banks and all institutions that make society run. It can truly challenge the ownership and property rights of the 1% and begin to leverage power and democratic control of these institutions in the hands of the 99%.

Organizers call on people from all over the U.S. to join them in the streets of Charlotte from Sept. 2-6 during the Democratic National Convention. You won't want to miss it!

For more information, visit wallst-south.org.

Bangladeshi protest vs. U.S.-India state visitors



May 4 march in Dhaka.

PHOTO: SOCIALIST PARTY OF BANGLADESH

Excerpted from a Socialist Party of Bangladesh release.

Bangladeshi workers protested the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee to Bangladesh on May 4.

The Socialist Party of Bangladesh, which is the main revolutionary workers' party in the country, organized the protest in Dhaka, the capital. Among the main speakers was SPB General Secretary Comrade Khalequzzaman.

In his speech Khalequzzaman stated that the U.S. is the leader of the pro-war imperialist powers. "We saw the brutality of their policy in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine. We have witnessed their policy very recently in the Arab zone. Presently South and Southeast Asia [have] become a playground for imperialist maneuvers, intrigues and conspiracies."

Khalequzzaman saw the visit from Clinton and Mukherjee as a threat to Bangladeshi sovereignty whose purpose is to

ensure U.S. dominance over the region, including Nepal, all of South Asia and Vietnam, with India as Washington's local crony.

The "USA and India both have expanded their markets in our country to export their capital to exploit our cheap labor," Khalequzzaman said. "Our garments sector is one of the stunning examples of USA's exploitation here. ... Now they plan to loot our natural resources [of] oil, gas, coal etc., especially the huge gas reserve in our deep sea area."

The SPB leader criticized Bangladesh's government and opposition pro-capitalist parties for their "immoral, corrupted and destructive politics" and for "compromising with the imperialist forces."

"Taking advantage of this situation, US-India imperialist force is trying to interfere in our internal affairs." He called on "left-progressive-democratic minds to unite" to form a left alternative "to resist this imperialist aggression and the native exploiters." □

Result of U.S.-NATO war on Libya: Corruption, torture, chaos

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

The regime that NATO and the Pentagon brought to Libya denies human rights, breeds corruption and is leading the country toward increasing chaos day by day.

Some 200 disgruntled soldiers who were part of the army that the Pentagon and NATO backed in the military mission against the Libyan government during 2011 tried to assassinate interim Prime Minister Abdurrahim al-Keib on May 8.

These rebel soldiers were reportedly angry over the cancellation of monthly payments to ground troops who were militia members in the campaign that overthrew and assassinated Col. Moammar Gadhafi.

The compensation program for the rebels, which distributed \$1.4 billion, has been riddled with fraud. Payments were suspended in April. There were reports that people already dead were on lists of militia members and that some who never joined the anti-Gadhafi efforts also received funds. Others who had never been injured were nevertheless sent abroad "for medical treatment."

NATO's war against Libya included an arms embargo against the Gadhafi government, a naval blockade, sanctions, seizure of Libya's foreign assets, and bombing and reconnaissance missions involving 26,000 sorties and 10,000 air strikes.

Corruption has been endemic to the so-called National Transitional Council since the inception of last year's war and after being placed in power in Tripoli in late August. Since the brutal murder of Gadhafi on Oct. 20, billions of dollars have gone missing from the national treasury.

With the exposure of widespread corruption in Libya, the interim finance minister Hassan Ziglam announced on May 11 that he would soon resign. The reason for his departure is the "wastage of public funds." (Reuters, May 11)

Interim Prime Minister Abdurrahim al-Keib, the assassin's target, called those responsible for the shooting, which left at least one person dead, "outlaws." The various militia groups scattered throughout the capital of Tripoli and other parts of the country have never been brought together into a national army.

Other allegations of corruption over the last several months have included irregularities with the Libyan Investment Authority and an unaccounted-for \$2.5 billion in oil revenues. The foreign assets the imperialist states froze early in the war on Libya remain a source of dispute.

Human rights ignored

The pretext for the imperialist war on Libya during 2011 was that the pro-Gadhafi government was violating the human rights of its citizens. U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973 backed the war, although no concrete evidence of such rights' violations was ever uncovered. Meanwhile, the pro-Gadhafi government faced an armed rebellion the imperialists financed and coordinated.

Reports indicate that the current NTC Libyan regime is detaining at least 7,000 people inside the country. Many have suffered torture and/or extrajudicial killings. According to Ian Martin, who heads the U.N. mission to Libya, "Cases of mistreatment and torture of detainees continue."

(Agence France Presse, May 11)

The detainees are accused of fighting in the Libyan military against the 2011 uprising or against air or sea attacks. The NTC regime passed a law that ordered militias to round up for prosecution anyone who supported the former political system that ruled the country for 42 years and that also eliminated all these people from upcoming elections.

Threats against supporters of the former Gadhafi government also extend outside Libya. The previous oil minister and Prime Minister Dr. Shokri Ghanem was found dead, floating in the Danube River in Vienna in late April.

The son of Moammar Gadhafi, Seif al-Islam, is still being held in a secret prison in Zintan and is not being allowed to have legal representation of his choice. An International Criminal Court representative visited him recently for an interview and witnessed that two of his fingers had been severed and a tooth was missing.

ICC prosecutors are allowing the detention of Seif al-Islam inside Libya, although the NTC government claims that it is not in control of the facility where he is being held. Any trial held under such conditions will be a farce.

Sham elections due

There is no way that the elections scheduled for June 19 can be considered free and fair. The former officials of the Gadhafi government and their supporters have been criminalized and many of them remain outside the country.

Meanwhile, the secessionist elements in the eastern part of the country where the

anti-Gadhafi rebellion began in February 2011, the so-called Barqa Council, have rejected the election process and are calling for a boycott. The leadership within the region, which calls itself the Council of Cyrenaica, is pushing for autonomous status outside the authority of the NTC in Tripoli.

At the same time, in the southern region of Libya, reports of ongoing conflict continue. Fighting over the last several months between what is described as the Toubou people and Arab tribesmen has killed many.

On May 14, the Agence France Presse reported, "A candidate in the upcoming poll for a constituent assembly was murdered in Libya's southern desert on Sunday shortly after submitting his registration."

Fruits of imperialist war in Africa

All wars in the past 15 years that the U.S. and other imperialist countries have initiated under the pretext of humanitarian concerns have resulted in worsening conditions for the masses in the respective countries.

In the U.S. itself, the economic crisis is causing the destruction of the cities and the rise in racist violence. Runaway military spending has not created any job growth for tens of millions of unemployed workers.

In Canada, which ostensibly led the NATO operations in Libya, a scandal is emerging over the cover-up of the cost of the war. Press reports say that the actual total cost of the Libya bombing campaign for Canada, which was quoted as \$50 million last October, was actually \$347 million, seven times higher than what has been previously stated. (CBC News, May 11) □

AFRICA & IMPERIALISM

Articles by Abayomi Azikiwe from the pages of Workers World

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The president and same-sex marriage

President Barack Obama's recent statement in support of same-sex marriages reflects the hard work of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer organizations, activists and allies to demand the right of equality for LGBTQ people. The fact that Obama made this statement in an election year — in which he is obviously concerned with receiving as many votes as possible — speaks as a testament to the changing consciousness in U.S. society around LGBTQ rights and ending anti-LGBTQ bigotry. That consciousness has only come through decades of struggle by LGBTQ people and allies.

It is also significant that the first president to come out in support of same-sex marriage is also the country's first African-American president. Capitalism always attempts to divide workers and tell them that they do not share the same interests. In this instance, the Black community is consistently baited in the corporate media as being anti-LGBTQ — despite the fact that many people in the LGBTQ community are African American, and that many of their family members and friends are also African American. The media even go so far as to demonize African countries as being anti-LGBTQ — as if the U.S. has some moral high ground from which to speak in terms of LGBTQ rights.

Workers World reporter Frank Neisser wrote in 2004: "The right to marry is a basic question of equality. There are more than 1,000 benefits on the state and federal level associated with marriage that are currently denied to same-sex partners, including numerous tax, insurance, hospital visitation and bereavement rights. Civil unions only provide a small number of these and ... create an inferior second-class status." (Feb. 19, 2004) Even in states where same-sex

marriage has been legalized, federal benefits of marriage are still denied to married same-sex couples.

However, while it is notable that Obama took this bold step in openly supporting same-sex marriage, his statement made clear that he and Washington would not be doing much to secure that right for LGBTQ people. After stating that it was his personal belief that same-sex couples should be allowed to marry, Obama quickly added, "And I continue to believe that this is an issue that is going to be worked out at the local level, because historically this has not been a federal issue." (ABC News, May 9)

Obama made his remarks, in an interview with ABC news reporter Robin Roberts, just one day after North Carolina passed a state constitutional amendment defining marriage as solely between a man and a woman.

African-American Rep. James Clyburn of South Carolina called Obama's upholding of states' rights a mistake: "If we consider this to be a civil right, and I do, I don't think civil rights ought to be left up to a state-by-state approach. I think we should have a national policy on this." (MSNBC, May 14)

It was a national approach that overturned the laws against marriage between whites and people of color in 1967. In *Loving v. Virginia*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Virginia's anti-miscegenation laws were unconstitutional, laying the basis for the nullification of all race-based marriage legislation in the U.S. Like Obama's statement, the Supreme Court's 1967 ruling was a manifestation of years of struggle by grassroots activists and communities.

As always, it will be the continued struggles of LGBTQ people and their allies that will win their true and full liberation. □

The Lavender & Red series of articles by Leslie Feinberg, author of *Stone Butch Blues*, is now available online. workers.org/lavender-red/



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Rainbow Solidarity In Defense of CUBA

This groundbreaking book documents revolutionary Cuba's inspiring trajectory of progress towards liberation of sexualities, genders and sexes. Book available at Amazon.com



Anti-gay amendment spurs solidarity

Continued from page 7

thing they can to put the working class and oppressed people on the defensive. They take back welfare protections that people won through mass struggle. They slash state budgets for public services and education. They smash unions and collective bargaining rights.

Intensifying the oppression of lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer people by putting discrimination into the state constitution is also part of their strategy. Capitalists across the country and in North Carolina hope the people will be too busy defending themselves against new attacks on their human rights to

wage an offensive struggle against the ruling class. They hope that the working class and oppressed people will be further divided by LGBTQ oppression.

And this division is a very real danger — the U.S. South has had a historically weak labor movement due to the divisive effects of white supremacy. The only way that this division can be overcome is through unconditional solidarity among the working class and all oppressed people. The progressive people of North Carolina don't feel defeated at the passage of this anti-LGBTQ amendment because the struggle against it has been a shining example of this kind of solidarity. □

A Black Panther's view in 1970:

Huey P. Newton on gay, women's liberation

The following speech was given by the late Huey P. Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party, on Aug. 15, 1970, on gay and women's rights. Shelley Ettinger, a member of Workers World Party and a lesbian activist, wrote on her blog, "Read Red," about Newton's speech: "I think it's important to remember this speech because the Black liberation movement and even the Black community as a whole are so often slandered as though they're somehow more sexist and/or homophobic than other movements or other sectors of society, and here we have a great revolutionary leader speaking out just one year after the Stonewall Rebellion, far earlier than almost anyone else." In light of President Barack Obama's recent announcement in support of same-sex marriage, WW is reprinting in its entirety Newton's historic speech that urged revolutionary class solidarity with these oppressed groupings.

During the past few years strong movements have developed among women and among homosexuals seeking their liberation. There has been some uncertainty about how to relate to these movements.

Whatever your personal opinions and your insecurities about homosexuality and the various liberation movements among homosexuals and women (and I speak of the homosexuals and women as oppressed groups), we should try to unite with them in a revolutionary fashion.

I say "whatever your insecurities are" because as we very well know, sometimes our first instinct is to want to hit a homosexual in the mouth, and want a woman to be quiet. We want to hit a homosexual in the mouth because we are afraid that we might be homosexual; and we want to hit the women or shut her up because we are afraid that she might castrate us, or take the nuts that we might not have to start with.

We must gain security in ourselves and therefore have respect and feelings for all oppressed people. We must not use the racist attitude that the white racists use against our people because they are Black and poor. Many times the poorest white person is the most racist because he is afraid that he might lose something, or discover something that he does not have. So you're some kind of a threat to him. This kind of psychology is in operation when we view oppressed people and we are angry with them because of their particular kind of behavior, or their particular kind of deviation from the established norm.

Remember, we have not established a revolutionary value system; we are only in the process of establishing it. I do not remember our ever constituting any value that said that a revolutionary must say offensive things towards homosexuals, or that a revolutionary should make sure that women do not speak out about their own particular kind of oppression. As a matter of fact, it is just the opposite: we say that we recognize the women's right to be free. We have not said much about the homosexual at all, but we must relate to the homosexual movement because it is a real thing. And I know through reading, and through my life experience and observations that homosexuals are not given freedom and liberty by anyone in the society. They might be the most oppressed people in the society.

And what made them homosexual? Perhaps it's a phenomenon that I don't understand entirely. Some people say that it is the

decadence of capitalism. I don't know if that is the case; I rather doubt it. But whatever the case is, we know that homosexuality is a fact that exists, and we must understand it in its purest form: that is, a person should have the freedom to use his body in whatever way he wants.

That is not endorsing things in homosexuality that we wouldn't view as revolutionary. But there is nothing to say that a homosexual cannot also be a revolutionary. And maybe I'm now injecting some of my prejudice by saying that "even a homosexual can be a revolutionary." Quite the contrary, maybe a homosexual could be the most revolutionary.

When we have revolutionary conferences, rallies, and demonstrations, there should be full participation of the gay liberation movement and the women's liberation movement. Some groups might be more revolutionary than others. We should not use the actions of a few to say that they are all reactionary or counter-revolutionary, because they are not.

We should deal with the factions just as we deal with any other group or party that claims to be revolutionary. We should try to judge, somehow, whether they are operating in a sincere revolutionary fashion and from a really oppressed situation. (And we will grant that if they are women they are probably oppressed.) If they do things that are unrevolutionary or counter-revolutionary, then criticize that action.

If we feel that the group in spirit means to be revolutionary in practice, but they make mistakes in interpretation of the revolutionary philosophy, or they do not understand the dialectics of the social forces in operation, we should criticize that and not criticize them because they are women trying to be free. And the same is true for homosexuals. We should never say a whole movement is dishonest when in fact they are trying to be honest. They are just making honest mistakes. Friends are allowed to make mistakes because his whole existence is a mistake, and we suffer from it. But the women's liberation front and gay liberation front are our friends, they are our potential allies, and we need as many allies as possible.

We should be willing to discuss the insecurities that many people have about homosexuality. When I say "insecurities," I mean the fear that they are some kind of threat to our manhood. I can understand this fear. Because of the long conditioning process which builds insecurity in the American male, homosexuality might produce certain hang-ups in us. I have hang-ups myself about male homosexuality. But on the other hand, I have no hang-up about female homosexuality. And that is a phenomenon in itself. I think it is probably because male homosexuality is a threat to me and female homosexuality is not.

We should be careful about using those terms that might turn our friends off. The terms "faggot" and "punk" should be deleted from our vocabulary, and especially we should not attach names normally designed for homosexuals to men who are enemies of the people, such as [Richard] Nixon or [John] Mitchell. Homosexuals are not enemies of the people.

We should try to form a working coalition with the gay liberation and women's liberation groups. We must always handle social forces in the most appropriate manner. □



How to deal with impending crisis

Global economic slowdown & leadership struggle in China

By Fred Goldstein

The Chinese economy is slowing down as part of the global economic slowdown now engulfing the capitalist world. China is also suffering from internal capitalist contradictions of its own.

The leadership of the Communist Party of China is now confronted with a decision about how to deal with this slowdown. And this decision comes at the very moment that the “reform and open up” faction has just carried out a political purge of the forces in the CPC headed by Bo Xilai. Bo’s grouping had wanted to strengthen the state-owned, planning side of the economy as opposed to those who wanted to deepen reliance on the capitalist market.

The issues in the purge of Bo were stated bluntly by Premier Wen Jiabao. In a March 14 news conference, Wen blamed Bo for the “incident” in which Wang Lijun, former police chief of Chongqing, went to the U.S. Consulate in Chengdu where he is said to have made charges against Bo Xilai and showed documents to U.S. officials.

Wen made clear that he linked what he called “the Wang Lijun incident” to a broader agenda. Answering a question about Chongqing and Wang’s flight to the consulate, Wen said, “We’ve taken the major decision of conducting reform and opening up in China, a decision that’s crucial for China’s future and destiny.” (Washington Post, April 26)

But Wen and the “reform and open up” current of which he is the leader are now faced with a stark contradiction. Can a deeper reliance on the capitalist market and the further intervention of imperialist corporations reverse the current slowdown in China? Or will the leadership reverse its current course and strengthen planned state intervention by the state banks and the state-owned enterprises to counteract the effects of capitalism in China?

Global capitalist economic slowdown spreading

Right now the economy of India is slowing down, as is the Brazilian economy. This is the result of the slow growth of the U.S. and Japanese economies and the outright downturn in Europe. Given its partial integration with world capitalism, China cannot but be seriously affected by this development.

This sharply poses the question of what measures to take to protect the Chinese economy and the Chinese workers and peasants from the downturn. Will the leadership rely on the capitalist market, or will it pull back and strengthen

state intervention and planning, plus give aid to the masses who will be affected by this slowdown, as the CPC did during the 2008-2009 crisis?

Of course, that crisis was far more acute and severe. Some 20 million manufacturing workers in the eastern provinces of Guangdong, Zhejiang and other export-oriented areas lost their jobs. The measures taken to counteract this crisis, brought on by world capitalism, were massive and effective in creating an equal number of jobs and raising the income of the population during the crisis. (See Part 2 of this series, “Capitalist crisis versus planning,” March 27.)

The New York Times of May 13 described the present slowdown: “China’s General Administration of Customs announced on Thursday that growth in imports had come to a virtual halt in April compared with a year earlier. The development was unexpected in an economy that depends heavily on imported raw materials as well as on imported computer chips, sophisticated factory tools and other high-end imports for its industrialization.

“China’s exports also grew half as fast as expected in April.

“Figures released on Friday by the National Bureau of Statistics in Beijing showed that industrial production, fixed-asset investment and retail sales in April all increased somewhat more slowly than expected. Separate figures from the central bank also showed weak growth in bank lending.

“China’s central bank has been working behind the scenes to make it easier for banks to lend, but so far that appears to be having little impact. New loans fell to 681 billion yuan in April, down from 1,010 billion yuan in March and their lowest level so far this year.”

He Weisheng, a China strategist at Citibank, said this reflected weak demand for loans rather than insufficient capital at banks. “The banks have the money to lend; the problem is that firms don’t see profitable opportunities to invest, so they don’t want to borrow.” (Wall Street Journal, May 11)

The People’s Bank of China — the central bank — is reacting to the crisis with bourgeois monetary methods similar to those of the Federal Reserve Board in the U.S. It is allowing the banks to have more money to loan to private capitalists. But they see no profit in any further investment and thus don’t want to borrow.

‘Reformers’ in charge after defeating Bo

Among the chief economic officials in China are Premier Wen Jiabao and Zhou Xiaochuan, head of the People’s Bank of

China. Zhou is firmly in the camp of the “reform and open up” grouping. He told U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner during recent negotiations in Beijing that China should surrender to long-standing U.S. pressure to raise the value of its currency so that U.S. capitalist exporters could more easily penetrate the Chinese market and Chinese goods would be more expensive to sell abroad.

The May 3 New York Times quoted Zhou as saying: “The two sides have some views in common. They both think that exchange rates should be determined by a market system.”

The article continued, “The official also praised recent Chinese policy changes to allow more foreign investment and liberalize markets, an outgrowth of closer talks.”

Another key figure in making policy is Li Keqiang, who is scheduled to replace Wen Jiabao as premier.

The German newspaper Deutsche Welt explained in its online edition: “Chinese Vice Premier Li Keqiang commissioned the study ‘China 2030’ during a visit by [World Bank head] Robert Zoellick in 2010. Li oversees economic policies and appears to be the most promising candidate to run for office of prime minister in 2013. The main focus of the World Bank study is the state-owned enterprises, which have control over the energy sector, raw materials, telecommunications and the infrastructure. They dominate the public sector.

“The World Bank suggests implementing oversight of the state-owned companies by independent, outside managers will help. The managers will ensure the companies are run in accordance with the rules of the market economy and thus become more politically independent. Redundant units should be sold off, which will greatly benefit private competition. In addition, Zoellick suggests China reduce restrictions and obstacles for private companies.” (“The World Bank warns China of an upcoming crisis,” www.dw.de, Feb. 29)

The fact that the highest “reform” officials in charge of the Chinese economy have temporarily won out in the struggle against the left forces within the party establishment — who want to limit the market, emphasize state investment and prioritize the fight against growing inequality — is a dangerous conjuncture of circumstances. This is the very moment

when such an anti-capitalist approach is urgently needed.

Socialist state intervention the answer

With the Chinese economy in an across-the-board slowdown in investment, retail sales, exports, imports, electrical energy output, construction and bank lending, and having to cope with a housing bubble, manipulating the capitalist market is a negative prescription for the economy and potentially spells hardship for the workers and peasants. Compared to the progressive, interventionist manner in which the Chinese government reacted to the 2008-2009 crisis — with massive planning, vigorous intervention by the state-owned enterprises and raising the income of the lowest-income people — using bourgeois monetary methods to combat the slowdown would be a drastic step backwards.

Stimulating the economy with cheap credit for the capitalists or trying to promote recovery through tax breaks would only make a bad situation worse. Planned, socially useful investment that deals with the economic downturn by ensuring the well-being of the masses and helping national development is the best antidote to the downturn at the moment.

If anything, the developing downturn only vindicates the left forces, represented by Bo, who want to limit the market, emphasize state intervention and fight growing economic inequality.

Of course, what is needed in the long run is a full-scale return to the socialist road and the complete abandonment of the capitalist road disguised under the false label of “market socialism.” The capitalist market and socialist society are totally at odds and cannot coexist indefinitely.

Hopefully, the left can take advantage of the present slowdown to regroup and point to the repetitive crises that are endemic to capitalism, both international and domestic. What is needed is to go on the political offensive against the right, begin to chart a course away from dependence on the capitalist market and reinstate socialist norms, including the empowerment of the workers and peasants.

To be continued.

Goldstein is the author of “Low-Wage Capitalism” and “Capitalism at a Dead End.” More information on both books is available at www.lowwagecapitalism.com. The author can be reached at fgoldstein@workers.org.

MUNDO OBRERO

Lucha en China 5ta parte

Continua de página 12

Así que Wenzhou sufría una crisis capitalista. Hay cerca de 400.000 empresas allí. Quizás un tercio de ellas está en crisis.

Esta crisis en el lugar del nacimiento del capitalismo chino bajo el régimen post-Mao de “socialismo de mercado” es también una crisis para la clase trabajadora de Wenzhou. Ni una palabra sobre su crisis ha sido emitida por el Consejo de Estado. Se trata solamente de los flujos de capital.

Es en esta perspectiva en la que se de-

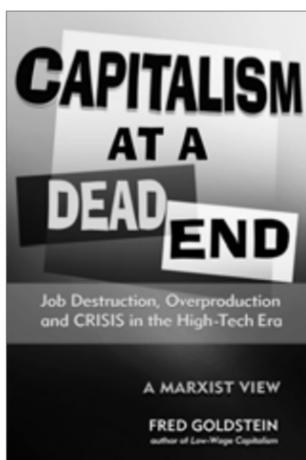
bería considerar la lucha contra Bo. Él levantó la consigna del “PIB Rojo”, que significa que el desarrollo tiene que ser logrado teniendo en cuenta a los/as trabajadores/as y campesinos/as. Esta consigna está muy lejos de ser una demanda para el total restablecimiento del socialismo. Pero desde el punto de vista de clase, dada la lucha en China, la orientación de Bo es un reflejo de las necesidades de las masas en contraposición a Wen, cuya perspectiva es un copia del programa avanzado por el Banco Mundial y el capital mundial. □

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El programa piloto de Wenzhou Después de la expulsión de Bo, el capital da otro paso

Por Fred Goldstein

La campaña en China para desprestigiar a Bo Xilai ha alcanzado un nuevo crescendo. Todos los periódicos y estaciones de radio y televisión en el país han publicado declaraciones oficiales y editoriales atacando a Bo y repitiendo la acusación de que está bajo investigación por indeterminadas “violaciones disciplinarias graves”.

Las facciones en el liderazgo del Partido Comunista Chino que están a cargo de esta campaña tienen miedo de atacar a Bo por sus políticas progresistas dado que cuando era Secretario del Partido en la megaciudad de Chongqing trató de reducir la desigualdad, construyó viviendas a bajo costo para los/as trabajadores/as, permitió a los/as campesinos/as mudarse a las ciudades y promovió “valores socialistas” y el canto de “canciones rojas” de la época de la Revolución Cultural.

Irónicamente, el caso de Bo se ha convertido en motivo de una campaña nacional contra la corrupción, implicando que la corrupción y Bo están vinculados de alguna manera.

De hecho, Bo inició una campaña de gran alcance en Chongqing contra funcionarios gubernamentales y empresarios corruptos, funcionarios del Partido y el submundo criminal. Antes de la expulsión de Bo, su campaña logró mucho apoyo a lo largo de China, la cual está plagada de funcionarios corruptos.

Numerosos funcionarios cercanos a Bo también están bajo investigación mientras la campaña de difamación e intimidación alcanza alturas cada vez mayores. Esto sólo puede significar miedo al apoyo a Bo y la decisión de terminarlo.

Wen: Romper el “monopolio” de los bancos estatales

Mientras tanto, otra secuencia de eventos se ha desarrollado, culminando en la aprobación del llamado “Programa piloto Wenzhou”. Esto expone las cuestiones políticas subyacentes en la lucha faccionaria.

El 15 de marzo, el primer Ministro Wen Jiabao atacó públicamente a Bo diciendo: “las reformas han llegado a una etapa crítica. Sin el éxito de las reformas políticas, las reformas económicas no pueden llevarse a cabo. El resultado de lo que hemos logrado se puede perder. Una tragedia histórica como la Revolución Cultural puede ocurrir de nuevo. Cada miembro del partido y cada cuadro debe tener un sentido de urgencia”. Al día siguiente se anunció que se había destituido a Bo de todos sus cargos.

Wen ha sido líder de la derecha en el liderazgo del Partido Comunista Chino. Impulsó reformas políticas de estilo burgués y la profundización y ampliación del papel del mercado capitalista en China.

El 28 de marzo Wen presidió una reunión ejecutiva del Consejo de Estado que aprobó avanzar la legalización de préstamos de capital privado a las empresas en la ciudad de Wenzhou, una práctica que había sido ilegal. (xinhuanet.com, 5 de abril) Hasta ese momento, el derecho a extender préstamos comerciales en Wenzhou sólo lo tenían los bancos estatales.

Wenzhou es una ciudad costera industrial y comercial de 3 millones, con un área metropolitana de 9 millones. Ha sido centro clave del desarrollo del capitalismo en China desde el comienzo de la introducción del llamado “socialismo de mercado” a finales de la década de 1970 bajo Deng Xiaoping.

Según el Jakarta Globe (en línea) del 4 de abril, Wen declaró por Radio Nacional de China que el país tiene la necesidad de romper el “monopolio” de los bancos estatales.

“En lo que respecta al costo de financiamiento, permítanme decir sinceramente que nuestros bancos están haciendo una ganancia muy fácilmente. ¿Por qué? Es porque algunos bancos grandes están en una posición de

monopolio. Sólo cuando nos acercamos a estos bancos podemos exitosamente conseguir préstamos, si vamos a otros lugares es muy difícil.

“Lo que podemos hacer ahora para facilitar el flujo de capital privado en el sistema financiero, fundamentalmente hablando, es romper este monopolio”.

El periódico indonesio comentó que “China ha visto una explosión de préstamos ilícitos alimentada por las restricciones de crédito, provocando preocupación entre los líderes sobre un aumento de deudas incobrables y morosidad en el sector privado.

“Los dueños de negocios independientes han tenido que tomar préstamos a tasas de interés muy elevadas de prestamistas informales después de ser rechazados por los principales bancos, que favorecen otras empresas controladas por el estado”.

Capital financiero privado chino obtiene gran impulso

El programa piloto de Wenzhou es un avance más para los capitalistas privados. Permite que capitales privados fluyan a la ciudad. Este capital financiero privado puede concentrarse y crecer. Mejorará considerablemente la acumulación de capital por parte de la burguesía.

El financiamiento privado también debilita el control de los bancos del estado sobre las decisiones de inversión y la asignación de los recursos nacionales. Los bancos del estado funcionan sobre una base comercial, pero en última instancia están bajo la supervisión y la dirección del Partido Comunista, el gobierno y el aparato de planificación del estado. En esta capacidad pueden prestar conforme a las prioridades y las políticas del desarrollo nacional, incluso cuando los préstamos entren en conflicto con los márgenes de ganancias y el mercado capitalista.

Los planes para el programa piloto de Wenzhou han languidecido en el Consejo de Estado por un largo tiempo. Los capitalistas de Wenzhou sufrieron con la crisis capitalista mundial del 2007-2008 y han estado presionando para obtener financiamiento y poder recuperarse y crecer. Según Beijing Review, “la idea de cambiar el entorno financiero de Wenzhou surgió por primera vez a finales de 2011, y la tan esperada decisión llegó cuando las actividades ilegales de financiamiento privado en Wenzhou suscitaban disputas financieras y crimen mientras amenazaban la estabilidad financiera y económica de Wenzhou. (bjreview.com, 16 de abril)

El debate sobre el experimento de Wenzhou se remonta más allá de a finales de 2011. Obviamente ha sido el tema de la lucha interna. De hecho, en un momento dado el permiso fue concedido para ampliar las cuotas de inversión extranjera de Wenzhou, pero luego fue cancelado. Pero el punto importante es que fue sólo después de que Bo fuera expulsado y Wen y su facción hubieran tomado la iniciativa, que finalmente fue aprobado este desencadenamiento de capital financiero privado en Wenzhou.

La revista Beijing Review continuó: “Según el programa, a los prestamistas informales se les exhortará a registrarse como instituciones privadas de crédito para operar libremente con la bendición del estado.

“La participación del capital privado, en la forma de establecer o tomar acciones de los bancos rurales y empresas de crédito, es alentado y apoyado en el proceso de reforma. Empresas elegibles de micro finanzas podrían transformarse en bancos rurales. Fondos privados también serían orientados hacia la creación de capitales y actividades riesgosas, así como otros tipos de organismos de inversión.

“El programa señala la dirección en la que el capital privado debe ser canalizado. El requisito de registro para el capital privado convertirá a los préstamos privados ilegales en préstamos formales”, dijo Zhang Yili, vice decano de la Escuela de Negocios de la Universidad de Wenzhou.

“La industria privada de préstamos en China se estima que ha crecido 4 billones de yuanes (634 mil millones de dólares) el año pasado, según un informe de investigación por CITIC Securities basada en Beijing.

“En Wenzhou, el tamaño de esta industria era de unos 180 millones de yuanes (28,57 miles de millones de dólares), con casi el 90 por ciento de los/as residentes de la ciudad involucrados/as en negocios usureros, de acuerdo con el Banco de Wenzhou, el mayor banco comercial local”.

Básicamente, esto significa que los préstamos usureros están siendo legalizados, dejando que casi 30 mil millones de dólares en capital financiero operen a rienda suelta en Wenzhou.

Banco Mundial y Wenzhou

La cita del artículo de la revista Beijing Review refiriéndose a la creación de capital de riesgo y empresas de capital riesgoso es importante tenerla en cuenta. En el documento de 450 páginas del Banco Mundial titulado “China 2030”, copatrocinado por el Centro de Investigación del Desarrollo, un órgano del Consejo de Estado, hay una fuerte recomendación para que se transformen a los bancos del estado, y parte de esa recomendación incluye configurar exactamente el mismo modelo de capital financiero privado tal y como se recomienda en el programa de Wenzhou.

El documento dice: “una ventaja clave de los mercados de capital respecto a los bancos surge del hecho de que varios inversores potenciales valoran oportunidades de negocios, lo que puede ayudar a evaluar la viabilidad de las nuevas tecnologías. El capital de riesgo y las industrias privadas de capital riesgoso tendrán que desempeñar un mayor papel en el financiamiento de las industrias tecnológicamente avanzadas.

Los inversores institucionales también desempeñarán un papel cada vez más importante en el desarrollo del mercado de capitales de China” (“China 2030” por el Banco Mundial y el Centro de Investigaciones de Desarrollo del Consejo de Estado, República Popular de China, pág. 128)

Desde el derrocamiento de Bo, Wen y el Consejo de Estado se han apresurado para establecer las instituciones recomendadas por el Banco Mundial que habla por el capital financiero mundial.

Además de establecer el financiamiento privado para competir con los bancos estatales, el “experimento” va a elevar el límite de inversión extranjera de 50 millones a 200 millones de dólares y ampliar el alcance más allá del control del estado. “La nueva política estipula que la inversión máxima directa por año no exceda los 200 millones de dólares por persona y 1.000 millones de dólares por varias personas en el mismo proyecto. Los inversores pueden formar empresas no financieras en el extranjero ya sea estableciéndolas, fusionándose o compartiendo acciones; pueden también obtener la propiedad y la administración de empresas no financieras preexistentes en el extranjero a través de las formas mencionadas”. (U.S.-China Policy Foundation, 6 de abril, uscpf.org)

La Beijing Review citó a las autoridades que aprobaron los cambios: “La reforma quitará la economía real de Wenzhou de la difícil situación en que se encuentra ahora y recuperará la reputación de las empresas privadas de Wenzhou”, dijo Zheng Chen'ai, Director de la Asociación de Moda de Wenzhou.

“El gobierno tiene como objetivo probar las aguas a través de Wenzhou y luego acumular experiencias para aplicar la reforma en todo el país”, dijo Guo Tianyong, Director del Centro de Investigaciones de la Industria Bancaria de China en la Universidad Central de Finanzas y Economía”.