

Libya defiant as NATO widens war

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

After nearly three months of U.S./NATO bombing operations over Libya, the North African state has remained defiant in the face of one of the most intense military operations in recent months by the imperialist countries of North America and Western Europe. Official NATO sources say that more than 10,000 sorties have been flown over the oil-rich nation resulting in large-scale destruction of the country's infrastructure and the reported deaths of 10,000 to 15,000 people.

On June 7, NATO escalated its attacks on the capital of Tripoli, striking government buildings and making additional attempts on the life of leader Muammar Gadhafi. These bombing operations were designed to further boost the morale of NATO forces before yet another so-called "Contact Group" meeting on Libya that took place in the United Arab Emirates on June 9.

In response to the stepped-up bombing by NATO, Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi issued a statement saying that "martyrdom is a million times better than surrender." Gadhafi continued by stressing, "We have one option and that is the protection of our country. We will remain in it till the end. Dead, alive, victorious, it doesn't matter." (Gadhafi audio released June 7)

At the meeting in Abu Dhabi, UAE, the imperialist states and their allies discussed continued provocations aimed at toppling Libya's government and installing a client regime. The rebel Western-backed Transitional National Council, claiming it was out of money, continued to request funding from Contact Group countries.

No explanation was made regarding the use of hundreds of millions of dollars that the U.S. and other governments supporting the attacks on Libya have already pledged to the rebels. Neither was there any mention of the status of more than \$50 billion in Libyan government assets that have been frozen in Western states.

Germany's conservative government, headed by Chancellor Angela Merkel, had earlier maintained that it would not enter the NATO operations targeting Libya for destruction and seizure. Yet in a meeting with President Barack Obama in Washington during early June, Merkel called for the removal of the Libyan government.

On June 13 the German government sent Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle to the rebel stronghold of Benghazi. Western media reports indicated that Westerwelle formally recognized the TNC as the supposed "legitimate government" in Libya despite the fact that the group has done nothing to demonstrate that it is representative of the people's will in this besieged state. (Reuters, June 13)

Through the CIA, the U.S. ruling class has support-

Editor's note: On June 14 Congress sent a letter to President Barack Obama that warned he would be in violation of the War Powers Act if he did not get Congressional approval for the war on Libya by June 19. A June 3 House vote on the Republican initiative challenging the president got support from both Democrats and Republicans, which reflected the growing mass displeasure with the U.S.-NATO attack on Libya.

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ed the TNC's leadership for decades. There have been neither elections nor any other way to gauge if these "rebels" have any popular support. Yet they have been propped up by the CIA, MI-6, British and Egyptian special forces, the Tunisian military and the NATO states carrying out the large-scale bombing operations over the country and a naval blockade in the Mediterranean.

In Westerwelle's June 13 statement, he said that Germany would support the rebels in creating a "democratic and constitutional" Libya. Yet whether this constituted firm recognition of the TNC remains

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Justice for Oscar Grant

More than 500 angry protesters marched several miles from the Fruitvale Bay Area Rapid Transit station to downtown Oakland, Calif., June 12 to protest the imminent release of Johannes Mehserle, the BART cop who shot and killed Oscar Grant, an unarmed Black man, on Jan. 1, 2009, while Grant was restrained and handcuffed on the platform. Family members and friends addressed the rally outside the BART station where Grant had been waiting with friends for a train. Mehserle was released June 13 after serving less than a year on manslaughter charges. Family members, including Grant's mother, Wanda Johnson, addressed the crowd before the march started. "There is not a day that goes by that I don't think about Oscar," she

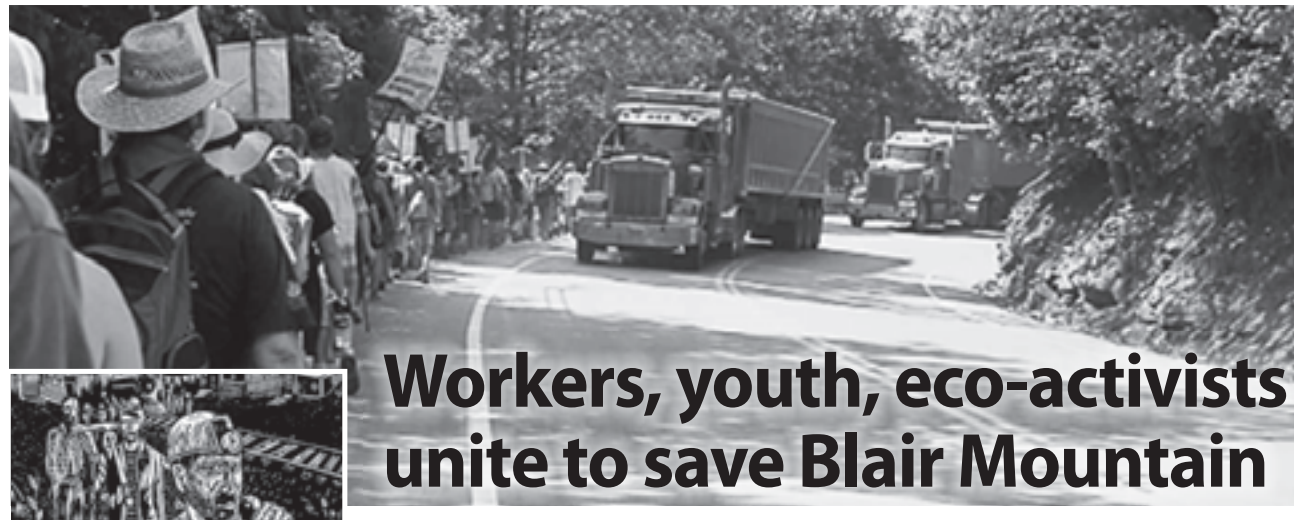


WW PHOTO: TERRI KAY

said. "Thank you for continuing to fight for justice for my son." More protests are planned and community organizations

will continue the fight for justice for Oscar Grant and all victims of police murder and brutality.

— **Judy Greenspan**



Workers, youth, eco-activists unite to save Blair Mountain

By **Jeremy B.**
Blair Mountain, W. Va.

On June 11 a multinational crowd of about 1,200 workers, students and

environmental activists held a rally and march in Logan County, W. Va., to commemorate the largest armed conflict in U.S. labor history, the 1921 Battle at Blair Mountain. The rally

and march wrapped up a week-long, 50-mile march. According to organizers, roughly 600 people marched throughout the week, while an addi-

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African-American farmers win compensation

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

African-American farmers have received a settlement notice in the legal process of resolving the so-called Pigford II discrimination case that found the U.S. Department of Agriculture guilty of institutional racism. Tens of thousands of African-American farmers were represented in a class action suit that charged discrimination by the federal agency between 1981 and 1996.

A previous settlement known as Pigford I left thousands of farmers uncompensated as a result of government bureaucracy and court guidelines that restricted participation. The Pigford II case was designed to correct the previous shortcomings in the initial settlement announced in 1999.

According to a press release issued June 6 by the Black Farmers Discrimination Litigation Fund, "African-American farmers around the country who tried to file a claim in the 1999 Pigford Settlement but were unable to receive a decision on the merits because their claims were late are now receiving information about their legal rights and options under the Settlement."

The settlement was approved by the U.S. Senate for \$2.2 billion in December. The process had been held up in Congress for more than a year.

The deadline for filing a claim for compensation may expire as early as Feb. 28, 2012. Attorneys for the plaintiffs said that if claimants do not file paperwork by this time, they could forfeit their claim and the right to sue at a later date. Plaintiffs must agree in the process to either accept the award or contest the amount and conditions.

African-American farmers have suffered from discrimination and racism since the conclusion of the Civil War, which ended slavery. This settlement can by no means repair the damage done over centuries of national oppression and exploitation. The plight of African-American farmers stems from the failure of the Civil War and Reconstruction to equitably distribute land and resources to the 4 million freed slaves.

Despite the refusal of the federal government to grant land and livestock to African-American farmers in the post-slavery South, Black people were able to acquire 15 million acres of land by 1910. A process of disenfranchisement and state-sanctioned racist terror, however, brought about the loss of more than 13 million acres within the last century.

The gradual industrialization of the South during the latter 20th century displaced many more African Americans from farms and other rural areas. The relatively small group of farmers remaining took collective action during the 1990s and revived the tradition of the Civil Rights Movement of a previous generation.

Other oppressed farmers to be compensated

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s sparked similar efforts among other oppressed groups, including Latinos/as, Asians, Native Americans, women, lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer communities, seniors, youth and people with disabilities. The current struggle of African-American farmers has brought attention to the situation involving Native, women and Chicano/a farmers.

Both Latino/a and women farmers are mandated to share a settlement based on discrimination complaints. In California some Mexican-American farmers were angered by the federal government's announcement of a settlement allocation of only \$1.3 million.

Both Latino/a and women farmers can reportedly receive up to \$50,000 if they can show evidence of systematic discrimination by the USDA. The disparity between settlements for African-American farmers and Latino/a and women farmers has generated controversy and anger.

Fred Pfaeffle, the USDA's deputy assistant secretary for civil rights, held a meeting June 8 with community leaders to discuss the program at Fresno's campus of California State University. According to Pfaeffle, "It was a little contentious. But I welcome the opportunity to hear criticism of the program firsthand." (Fresno Bee, June 11)

Fresno County farmer Joe Rascon said, "They are trying to wave a carrot in front of us, and some of us aren't having it. The USDA has already admitted wrongful acts, and now they are not being fair or consistent."

The USDA's Agriculture Census says there are 41,024 Black, 82,464 Latino/a and 1 million women farmers. Considering these numbers, the settlement for all affected groups seems inadequate.

In April a judge approved a settlement for Native-American farmers of \$680 million. Under the plan, if farmers qualify, they can receive up to \$250,000 in compensation. □

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Farmer confronts USDA official, 2002.



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GE workers rally against concessions

By Dante Strobino
Erie, Pa.

More than 3,500 workers from several General Electric factories, and more than 20 states, gathered at the Hammermill Center at Gannon University in Erie, Pa., on June 4. Cheers of solidarity and the spirit of fightback against GE's corporate greed filled the hall.

The rally was hosted by Erie-based United Electrical Workers Union Local 506, which represents more than 2,300 workers at GE's largest U.S. factory. There was an amazing show of unity among workers from the 11 unions that organize GE workers represented by the Coordinated Bargaining Committee.

Even the workers' T-shirts showed militancy; they were decorated with pictures of fierce bulldogs and fanged badgers. Members of the Communication Workers' division of electrical workers (IUE-CWA) from as far away as Louisville, Ky., wore T-shirts which proclaimed, "Hands off our healthcare."

"This is a three-generation attack; no one is spared," said Ric Casilli, business agent of IUE-CWA Local 201 at GE's plant in Lynn, Mass. His militant speech got the crowd roaring. "They are not leaving anyone out — no one will be spared — retirees, current workers and future employees," he said.

Casilli reminded the crowd that GE made record profits of \$14 billion last year and didn't pay any taxes.

"Many of you have been turning it loose in your shops," said UE Local 506 President Roger Zaczek. "I'm telling you that New York City is hearing you loud and clear." He was referring to recent workplace actions and rallies at GE facilities across the country.

Jim Clark, IUE-CWA national president and chairperson of the CBC, told the cheering crowd that their union had taken \$400 million from their strike fund to make available to union members if

they turn down GE's final contract offer in mid-June and go out on strike.

There was also a powerful showing of international solidarity at the rally. Andrew Dinkelaker, president of UE Eastern Region, said that the union had recently received letters from unions and labor federations in 12 countries representing 40 million workers, expressing solidarity with the CBC unions in their fight with GE.

Dinkelaker showed a video containing statements and letters from the Sindicato dos Metalurgicos de BH (CUT from Brazil); Communication, Energy and Paperworkers union of Canada; Canadian Autoworkers union; and Mexican unions, including Stumam, Sintrametlife, Stracc, Stimahca and Frente Autentico del Trabajo.

There were also solidarity messages from the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Union; International Metalworkers Federation; French Metallurgical workers; India's New Trade Union Initiative; Kilusang Mayo Uno in the Philippines; Zenroren, the National Confederation of Trade Unions in Japan; and the National Union of Metal Workers in South Africa.

Unions push back at contract talks

The CBC, which represents about 15,000 workers, is currently negotiating a national labor contract in New York City with GE, one of the world's largest corporations. This comes at a time when workers and oppressed people country-wide are under brutal attack by the corporate super-rich, who are on a rampage to undercut unions and workers' jobs, wages and benefits.

Despite its 2010 all-time-high profits, GE seeks to further exploit its workers and is ruthlessly attempting to force them to accept major concessions in wages, health care coverage, pension plans, the Special Early Retirement Option and



June 4 rally in Erie, Pa.

WWW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

more. The company is pushing two-tier contracts, which would give new hires lower wages and fewer benefits.

Yet GE workers are highly productive. Not surprisingly, no corporate official has told the truth: that the workers are actually responsible for making GE's record profits. Each GE worker made about \$42,000 in profits for the company in 2010.

So ruthless is GE that, during these negotiations, the company has "bragged about" the elimination of 50 percent of GE's union jobs in the U.S. between 2000 and 2011. Wayne Burnett, UE Local 506 business agent, emphasized that while GE wants wage concessions from the workers, he didn't hear any company representatives criticize the \$11 million bonus given to CEO Jeffrey Immelt. (www.ueunion.org, June 9)

Another issue that the union and workers have to contend with is GE's construction of a new locomotive-manufacturing

plant in anti-union, low-wage Fort Worth, Texas.

The contract negotiations are now into their third week. A tentative agreement is expected by June 19. Then unionized workers nationally will have to decide whether to accept or reject the contract.

UE and the other CBC unions are well aware of the ferocious attacks coming down on workers and unions today, and they are also well aware of the need to stand strong against concessions.

The Erie rally showed the spirit of unity and fightback by the unions representing GE workers. It cannot be stressed enough that the fightback of workers and community members against anti-union attacks in Wisconsin has spurred on the drive to struggle against attacks by corporations and their government representatives.

For updates on contract negotiations and the struggle, see the UE website at www.ueunion.org/unity2011.html. □

Why some food isn't fit to eat

By G. Dunkel

Everyone needs to eat. There is a tremendous variation in what people eat, from fast food to slow home cooking, with a multitude of regional, cultural, personal, financial and individual choices at work. We make choices not only about what foods we eat but also how they are prepared.

In North America and Western Europe, commercial establishments that prepare and sell food are inspected and regulated, mainly by local governments, to ensure that they are reasonably clean, that food is kept at the right temperature and to control vermin like mice and roaches.

The Food and Drug Administration in the United States and corresponding agencies in other countries have extensive programs to teach people who cook at home how to do it right — keep cold food cold, hot food hot, avoid contamination and so on. (FDA's Safe Eats program)

Food safety has become a pressing issue ever since a May outbreak of E. coli in Germany killed 31 people and sent 3,100 people, including 700 with acute kidney failure, to hospitals across Europe.

Before bean sprouts grown in northern Germany were identified as the problem, German officials blamed Spanish cucumbers, causing their growers to lose hundreds of millions of dollars in sales throughout Europe. This was a hard blow

to the Spanish economy, already reeling from 45 percent youth unemployment. Russia embargoed all fruits and vegetables from Europe, causing even more losses.

In the midst of the food safety scare in Europe, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported a salmonella outbreak in 15 states in the East and Midwest that sent at least 31 people to the hospital. Salmonella is the most common food-borne illness in the United States, according to the CDC. An outbreak in 2010 resulted in a recall of nearly half a billion eggs. In addition, salmonella infections caused nearly 2,300 hospitalizations and 29 deaths last year.

Every year about 1 in 6 people in the U.S. get sick from food poisoning and 3,000 die, the CDC claims. "The bottom line is that food-borne illness, particularly salmonella, is far too common," CDC Director Thomas R. Frieden told reporters June 7. "We need to do more." (Washington Post, June 8)

"From a consumer perspective, the protections are shoddy," said Caroline Smith DeWaal of the Center for Science in the Public Interest in Washington, D.C. "In some stores you may have a very strong system of protections, but in others there may be no protections." (Christian Science Monitor, June 10)

The food industry, which encompasses

a vast array of producers, distributors and sellers, brings in billions of dollars in profits a year. At every step along the long and winding path from farm to plate, contamination and adulteration from a multitude of sources — chemical as well as biological — are possible.

Better food safety requires the political will to hire more inspectors, impose and enforce stricter safety regulations. In an economic system that puts profits ahead of people, this political will is missing.

The regulations that exist and are en-

forced are designed to keep a major epidemic from spreading and keep consumers buying under the assurance that the government is protecting their health. The "information" the FDA spreads is useful for individuals who want to eat healthy but also spreads the notion that food poisoning is due to individual carelessness or misinformation.

A socialist system that put people first and guaranteed to the best of its ability that all food eaten was safe would also ensure that everyone had enough to eat. □



The Lavender and Red series of articles by Leslie Feinberg, author of *Stone Butch Blues*, is now available online.

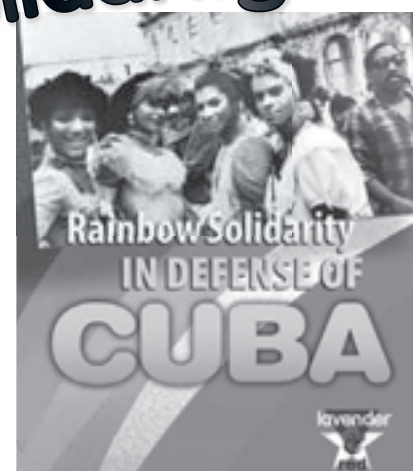
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Heavy rains add to political devastation in Haiti

By G. Dunkel

At least 23 people died in Port-au-Prince June 6 after a night of heavy rain. Six people were listed as missing. Some 500 dwellings — tents and tarps — were destroyed, according to Haïti-Liberté (June 8-14). The rains also brought an increase of cholera cases, with the number of deaths due to this disease climbing to more than 5,000.

Hundreds of thousands of people are still living in temporary camps — under torn tarps and ripped tents — 18 months after the earthquake destroyed their homes. Many of them were forced to relocate. The people forced out by the rain and mud slides didn't have many choices of where to go: back to their old neighborhoods to houses which haven't completely collapsed, to friends or family, or to other camps. They couldn't go to shelters because the government doesn't provide any.

Wilson Jeudi, the mayor of Delmas, a suburb of Port-au-Prince, along with the National Police, began evicting people from camps on public property in late May using bulldozers and front-loaders. Jeudi told the press, "Everybody was a victim of the earthquake; there is no question of paying people for emptying the public spaces they've occupied for months. We can't encourage foreign investors with such images." (Haïti-Progrès, May 25-31)

Such evictions have been occurring for months, though they have recently intensified.

The Haitian government is currently considering three plans for developing 50 acres of downtown Port-au-Prince that were completely destroyed by the earthquake. Most of the debris in this area hasn't been touched, only shoved off the roads to allow traffic. (Haiti Grassroots Watch, June 8)

The Haitian press is filled with stories about the maneuvering and finagling

between President Michel Martelly and parliament, whose majority are not members of his party, over which constitution plan is in force, and how or if it should be amended.

Martelly's selection for prime minister is also in dispute. Prime Minister Designate Daniel Gérard Rouzier went to the same high school as Martelly and comes from a wealthy Port-au-Prince family. He told CNN June 10 that he was so upset that bodies from the earthquake were being dumped in the open air in the valleys of Titanyen that he had a mass grave for 2,500 people dug on his property.

More than 315,000 people died in the earthquake.

These conflicts actually highlight that Haitian politicians don't have any real role in solving the country's immense social and economic problems. They can't come to a decision over how to develop 50 acres in downtown Port-au-Prince because the power to make decisions lies almost completely outside Haiti.

A good example of how decisions are actually made for Haiti comes from U.S. cables from 2009, released by WikiLeaks, detailing the struggle over the minimum wage.

Only about 20 percent of Haitians with steady jobs are covered by wage-and-hour laws, but Haiti's parliament had raised the minimum wage from \$1.75 for an eight-hour day to \$5 a day.

U.S. manufacturers with operations in Haiti like Levi Strauss, Hanes and Fruit of the Loom refused to pay the increase, offering a maximum of \$2.50 a day. The U.S. embassy chimed in that such a raise "did not take economic reality into account." The U.S. ambassador talked about "the political environment spiraling out of control."

A few months later the minimum wage for the textile industry was set at \$3.13 a day. □

Remembering a revolutionary



WW PHOTO: ELLEN CATALINOTTO

Admirers of Al Strasburger, including family, friends and Workers World Party members, June 12.

A memorial was held for Al Strasburger at his family home in Red Bank, N.J., on June 12. Strasburger was a long-time anti-imperialist, pro-socialist revolutionary who died after a prolonged illness on March 10 at age 79. As many as 50 activists from the New Jersey progressive movement attended the gathering, along with family members and close friends.

A Workers World Party delegation traveled from New York to the memorial and offered tributes to Strasburger's deep-seated dedication to the struggle. A number of activists spoke about Strasburger's consistency in distributing Workers World newspapers at anti-war picket lines he led outside Fort Monmouth.

Everyone admired the extraordinary number of posters and photos of numer-

ous mass and political campaigns for social justice that covered every wall inside and outside the home. Read the WW obituary at <http://tinyurl.com/42ruegy>. The memorial ended with everyone saying in unison, "Al Strasburger presente!"

— Monica Moorehead

NYC forum on 'Justice under the state?'

The New York branch of Workers World Party hosted a forum on "Can the workers and oppressed get justice under the state?" at the Solidarity Center June 11. Four members of WWP's National Committee — Gavielle Gemma, Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Hales and Monica Moorehead — gave Marxist, working-class talks on the origins of the repressive state under class society, on whose interests the state represents, and on present-day fightback struggles. Go to www.workers.org to hear podcasts of these talks. □



Boston Pride, June 11.

WW PHOTO: STEVE KIRSCHBAUM

Unity & solidarity

Boston LGBTQ Pride

Led by UNITE-HERE Local 26, labor and community activists took to the street in Boston's 2011 Lesbian/Gay/Bi/Trans/Queer Pride march on June 11. Tens of thousands defied a downpour and either marched or lined the parade route of the annual event which demanded "Equality: nothing more or less."

Members of the Boston School Bus Union, Steel Workers Local 8751; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Stonewall Warriors; Women's Fightback Network; and the International Action Center marched to say "Stonewall means fight back, smash LGBTQ oppression!" and "Union jobs and

health care for all!" The activists demanded an end to the pro-war, racist, sexist, anti-LGBTQ attacks of Sara Palin and Tea Party bigots and supported the boycott of Hyatt Hotels.

Hundreds of Workers World newspapers and flyers for a Stonewall Warriors/Workers World forum were snapped up by the crowd. The forum will take place on June 23 at the Action Center, 284 Amory St. in Jamaica Plain, Mass. Featuring long-time trans anti-war and anti-death penalty activist Imani Henry, the meeting will take up the impact of the economic crisis on the LGBTQ community and LGBTQ fightback.

— Frank Neisser

Unions help Alabama tornado survivors

By Deirdre Griswold

Some of the very first responders after the devastating tornadoes that hit Alabama at the end of April were union members. Within hours union locals had opened their halls to the communities, organized relief work and began collecting funds to provide food and water for those whose homes had been demolished by the monster storms.

Since then, the unions have provided ongoing assistance to survivors of the tornadoes, helping demolish hopelessly damaged homes and clear the debris.

Right after the tornadoes struck, the Steelworkers of Fairfield, Ala., went into action, collecting more than \$30,000 at factories to help survivors. They provided people power, ice and other supplies to the Pleasant Grove/Concord area. USW Local 2122 opened its union hall to the community.

Other locals also set up relief centers. Building trades volunteers performed relief work as well as cleanup. More than 150 union volunteers helped clean up the damage, bringing their own chain saws, back hoes, a boom truck "and their col-

lective generous spirit." (National Organized Labor Journal, May)

Electrical Workers (IBEW) collected, cooked and delivered food throughout the region.

Members of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union also cooked and provided food in Pratt City.

Locals of the American Federation of Teachers brought supplies, while members of the Communication Workers staffed phones and helped deliver food.

Terry Davis, the AFL-CIO community services liaison for Central Alabama, said, "I've been in the labor movement since 1998 and seeing more than 150 of my union brothers and sisters come together to help one another and their communities is the proudest moment of my union life."

As of May 21, reports Davis, the union halls were still open to share collected food and other items with the communities. On that Saturday, the unions organized another work day, and at least 150 people turned out in Pleasant Grove and Pratt City to do debris removal.

On June 9, a town hall meeting in Bessemer, Ala., at which federal officials fielded questions from the public "quickly became heated," reported the Birmingham News.

"One man said the Federal Emergency Management Agency had done nothing for him. Another man said he keeps getting different answers to questions as he shuttles between various federal relief agencies."

Just another reason why the workers need to run this country, not the bankers, bosses and their paid-for politicians. □

Health care workers unite to fight for quality patient care

By Beverly Hiestand, R.N.
Retired CWA 1168 member
Buffalo, N.Y.

“Patients are our purpose, the union is our voice” read some of the placards carried by 3,000 picketers on June 6 outside Buffalo General Hospital, a Kaleida Health facility. Kaleida is the largest health care provider and private sector employer in Western New York. It was formed by the merger of five large hospitals in 1998.

The connections between working conditions and patient care were made as the united mass of union members demanded that Kaleida negotiate a fair contract for workers with terms based on quality patient care.

Communications Workers Local 1168, Service Employees Local 1199 and the Operating Engineers have been jointly negotiating with Kaleida since March on a new master agreement for 7,700 workers. The current contract has been extended until June 17.

Pickers were joined by supporters from other CWA and SEIU health care locals, the United Auto Workers, Teamsters Local 264, Civil Service Employees Association, NYS Professional Employees Federation, Jobs with Justice, Coalition for Economic Justice, the WNY International Action Center and others.

A contingent of Buffalo workers represented by Professional Employees Local 212 came. They are part of 390 locked-out workers at insurer HealthNow New York and parent BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York. They came to return the support they have received from the Kaleida unions during many rallies and picket lines. HealthNow, the only unionized health insurer in Western New York, has long benefited from that status by attracting business from many other unionized employers, including Erie County, the City of Buffalo and public school districts. (Buffalo News, June 7)

The call for community support sent out by the Western New York Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, noted that Kaleida is proposing life-changing give-backs from its workers, which will greatly impact how they can care for their families and future workers for generations to come.

CWA 1198 President John Klein said that some of Kaleida’s proposals are similar to proposals that caused the unions to strike in the early 1980s. They include a two-year wage freeze, a large increase in the cost of health insurance, weakening of union representation and a decrease in sick time. (Buffalo News, June 7)

The company is proposing cutting allowed short-term sick leave to four days a year. Angered employees point out that they are routinely exposed to patient illness and assaults and that going to work sick exposes patients to employees’ illnesses.

A consistent complaint of workers is that while resources are poured into building construction and technology updates, their working conditions are made more difficult by cutbacks, increasing responsibilities and speed-up. Workers say this is unsafe and leads to errors, deaths and just plain lack of care.

Many of those on the picket line have worked in local hospitals and health care facilities for decades. They are the people closest to the patients and see the impact of major changes in health care delivery. They say that regardless of the formation of a huge consolidated health care system with modern buildings and technology,

the quality of health care delivered is constantly deteriorating.

Health care staff are told that competent care is critical to the health and survival of their patients. Although they are held accountable to very high standards, they have to fight over each contract to even keep their current wages and benefits.

The future of health care

The picket line extended down a side street near another huge new building — the new Global Heart and Vascular Institute, a \$291 million Kaleida construction project. This facility will provide clinical care, research and business with the State University of New York at Buffalo.

While this is promoted as bringing more jobs and businesses to Buffalo, the workers may well wonder what the working conditions will be like there and if this will really improve health care in the third poorest city in the U.S. Many people in Buffalo cannot afford to go anywhere for health care, and there is a huge lack of primary care in the city.

The Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century was appointed in 2006 by New York pro-business Gov. George Pataki and the legislature. The most common publicity at the time was that in order to provide vital service to communities there needs to be better planning, less duplication in services and an emphasis on primary care and prevention.

The commission ordered nine hospitals to close in the state and 48 others to affiliate, downsize or change services — a plan that would eliminate 4,200 hospital beds, or about 7 percent of the total statewide. Although there was extensive input from health care experts around the state about improving care, the most visible result is a huge inflow of money to tear down old facilities, build new ones and bring in new technology.

Gov. Pataki appointed Stephen Berger, chair of the private equity investment firm Odyssey Investment Partners LLC, to lead what became known as the Berger Commission. Berger stated: “Creating a more efficient system was in part meant to help institutions better access the debt market. We were concerned with creating an environment which over the next decade would improve the capital-raising capacity of health care institutions in this state. We believe that to do that you’ve got



WWW PHOTO: BEVERLY HIESTAND

Health care workers demand a contract, June 6.

to go through several steps of consolidation and rationalization to create stronger institutions with better cash flow.” (www.bondbuyer.com)

Nothing is said about money for more human resources. Health care workers maintain that good health care is determined not just by new buildings and technology. Nursing studies have shown that patient outcomes improve as staffing ratios increase.

While the Berger Commission talked about prioritizing primary preventive care and a focus on the increased needs for care of an aging population, Kaleida has closed down most of its primary care clinic sites and two nursing homes. It is building a new skilled nursing facility to consolidate services, but the overall bed count will decrease.

Positive effect: consolidation of workers into large unions

The establishment of a huge health care system has had another effect and that is the consolidation of many thousands of workers into large unions that are now working together. This could be seen in the multinational faces of thousands of picketers as they marched together for “our union.” Several decades ago in Buffalo, fewer workers were organized into smaller unions. These were divided into bargaining units that often put low-wage

workers and oppressed groupings in competition with higher-paid, mainly white health care workers.

Kaleida unions have worked together to organize the unorganized and to bargain one master contract for all the workers with a common expiration date. Now multinational, low-wage and higher-wage workers are building unity and solidarity, improving their working conditions and working together to bring better quality health care. The unions have worked on narrowing the gap between lower- and higher-paid workers. They were instrumental in getting Kaleida to bring in modern lifting devices to reduce employee injuries.

Kaleida unions have led a struggle that has prevented the closing of a family health clinic and a skilled nursing facility in the Spanish-speaking community. They have supported the community’s needs to maintain health care facilities near their families, reflective of their culture and with Spanish-speaking employees.

The war against the working class now being waged includes unprecedented attacks on health care workers. However, struggles in Buffalo and elsewhere show the potential to build strong union-community alliances that will be powerful antidotes to the poisonous greed of big business and reflect a future of health care based on need, not profits. □

Save Blair Mountain

Continued from page 1

tional 600 people showed up for Saturday events. A range of groups endorsed the march and rally, including Appalachia Rising, Sierra Club, Industrial Workers of the World, United Electrical Workers Local 170, and United Mine Workers Local 1440.

In late August 1921, miners were fed up with the miserable conditions in the mines, as well as with the violent harassment from the criminal coal companies and their hired goons, better known in miners’ terms as “gun thugs.” So they organized a march to liberate the coal fields throughout southern West Virginia. To repel the gun thugs, the miners marched with their own guns.

To identify themselves as pro-union, the marching miners wore red bandanas around their necks. When the miners reached Logan County, they were confronted by a vehemently anti-union and violently pro-company sheriff named Don Chafin. Chafin ordered his deputies to wear

white scarves to distinguish themselves as the armed enemy of the miners.

A gunfight broke out that lasted five days. During that time, Chafin hired private planes to drop homemade bombs on the miners. In the midst of the battle, the federal government intervened. Many, if not most, of the miners were World War I veterans and refused to shoot at U.S. troops the way they did the company thugs and even the sheriff’s deputies. As a result, the miners surrendered; ultimately their fight ended in defeat.

Regardless of how the Battle of Blair Mountain ended, it is an important part of workers’ history that the U.S. bourgeoisie has always tried to hide. It is an uprising hardly ever mentioned in history books or textbooks.

Today, much of the land where the battle took place is privately owned by two, predominantly non-union coal companies, Arch Coal and Alpha Natural Resources. The latter recently bought Massey

Energy, the murderous outfit responsible for the Upper Big Branch disaster in 2010. The two coal companies want to turn Blair Mountain into a mountain-top removal site. MTR is a procedure used to extract coal that is just as ecologically devastating as hydraulic fracturing. “Fracking” is currently being conducted by Big Oil in New York, Pennsylvania and now northern West Virginia.

The week-long march and rally united labor and eco-activists around one goal: to preserve Blair Mountain as a historical landmark, not to be blown to bits by MTR.

Ray Greenwood, UE Local 170, Department of Health and Human Resources chapter president, stated, “Ninety years after the Battle of Blair Mountain, we need to honor the sacrifices of the miners who fought for their rights then as we fight for our rights today, especially for the right to collectively bargain. We need to carry on their militant tradition if we want our class to win.” □

A failed war

Forty years. That's how long the "war on drugs," first declared on June 17, 1971, by President Richard M. Nixon, has lasted.

Forty million arrests. That's how many times U.S. police agencies have hauled people into court because of alleged drug-related crimes over these 40 years.

This war has cost \$1 trillion — that's \$1,000,000,000,000 — according to a 2010 Associated Press study based on information obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, archival records, federal budgets and dozens of interviews with leaders and analysts. ("After 40 years, \$1 trillion, US War on Drugs has failed to meet any of its goals," AP, May 13, 2010)

Only a tiny amount of this money was spent on rehabilitation. Almost \$700 billion of it went directly to enforcement of drug laws — expanding the repressive state apparatus of cops, courts, prosecuting attorneys and prisons.

Now comes the "Report of the Global Commission on Drug Policy," released this month. The commission is headed by former economic and political leaders from around the world, ranging from right-wing to centrist, including former Federal Reserve chief Paul Volcker and former Secretary of State George P. Shultz from the United States. They were obviously chosen to defuse right-wing criticism of its findings.

The very first sentence of the report reads, "The global war on drugs has failed, with devastating consequences for individuals and societies around the world."

It goes on to admit what critics of this drug war have been saying all along: The criminalization of drug use only forces it underground where those addicted are afraid to get treatment, while control over this lucrative illegal market spawns violence.

The commission recommends that the government "End the criminalization, marginalization and stigmatization of people who use drugs but who do no harm to others."

It makes many other recommendations based on the successes of countries that have decriminalized and thereby reduced drug use. By contrast, where drug use is illegal, as in the U.S., it has only increased.

Institutional racism taken to the extreme

It took an African-American columnist for the New York Times, Charles M. Blow, to point out the most shocking figures of all regarding the impact of the "war on drugs" on U.S. society. On June 10 he cited this information from the ACLU: "The racial disparities are staggering: despite the fact that whites engage in drug offenses at a higher rate than African Americans, African Americans are incarcerated for drug offenses at a rate that is 10 times greater than that of whites."

Thus, if the same standards were applied to Black people as to whites, at least 90 percent of the African Americans jailed on drug charges would have to be freed.

The men and women in prison, however, whether Black or white, are mostly workers with few resources. Contrast this to the fact that some of the largest banks in the U.S. have made huge profits laundering drug money. This came out several times in recent years when big banks had to pay piddling fines for accepting large cash deposits in violation of the law.

For example, former federal agent Robert Mazur wrote, "In recent years, Union Bank of California, American Express Bank International, BankAtlantic and Wachovia have all been caught moving huge sums of drug money, but no one went to jail. The banks just admitted to criminal conduct and paid the government a cut of their profits." ("Follow the Dirty Money," New York Times, Sept. 12, 2010)

The victims of Washington's drug policies are not confined to the United States. Whether it's Afghanistan or Colombia or Bolivia, the U.S. government has used the excuse of suppressing illegal drugs to expand its military role in many oppressed countries where there has been growing resistance to imperialism.

Often, as with opium poppies in Afghanistan or coca leaves in Colombia and Bolivia, the U.S. has eradicated crops that have for centuries been grown for their medicinal and other properties. To ban these crops because highly concentrated narcotics can be distilled from them is like banning sugarcane or corn production because they can be used to make alcohol.

Economics behind the politics

Why has a high-level commission finally agreed with what critics of U.S. drug policy have been saying for years?

The answer is not that these commissioners became enlightened on the subject. It is that the U.S. is in a budget crisis and can't afford to spend another trillion dollars on this phony war.

On May 23 the U.S. Supreme Court ordered California to release 30,000 prisoners because of unhealthy and overcrowded conditions. The state now incarcerates more than 140,000 prisoners in a system built to house 80,000. This court decision came after the state announced that it would slash many social programs and lay off teachers, home health aides and other providers of essential services.

People were asking: How can the state afford more prisons when it's cutting schools and health providers?

Many of the prisoners who will have to be released were jailed because of California's "three strikes" law, which mandates a sentence of 25 years to life for three-time repeat offenders, even when no violence is involved. How many of these "offenses" were violations of the cruel and useless drug laws?

The fact is that none of these people should have been sent to jail in the first place. But now they will be returned to the outside world at a time when everyone knows that jobs are hard to find, but getting hired is especially hard for someone with a prison record.

The laws criminalizing drug use should be overturned, as the commission report says, and the money that was spent on keeping people behind bars should instead be used to help treat and end addiction.

But that's still not enough. Many, many people have lost a good part of their lives because of these brutal drug laws. A huge percentage of them are African Americans. They should receive reparations because of false imprisonment.

And all workers, but especially those stigmatized by these unjust laws, need the guarantee of a job. As this crisis of capitalism deepens, the fight for jobs for all needs to be at the top of everyone's agenda. □

The banks and the attack on the UAW

By Martha Grevatt
 Detroit

Following are excerpts from a talk given at a conference on "How the banks destroyed Detroit and how to fight back" held at United Auto Workers Local 22 hall in Detroit on June 11.

PART 1

The economic crisis facing Detroit is inseparable from the precipitous decline of employment in the auto industry. The crisis is tied to the weakening of the United Auto Workers, which was the primary force in winning a decent standard of living for workers. This standard of living was the reason Detroit once had the highest rate of homeownership in the U.S.

At one time General Motors alone had 500,000 UAW members in its U.S. factories and warehouses. The Ford Rouge complex had 120,000 workers. Now the combined Detroit Three — they aren't even called the Big Three anymore — employ roughly 100,000 hourly workers in the U.S. That's a huge drop. Hundreds of thousands of workers have lost jobs. People lost their jobs and then their homes. Or they couldn't get a job to begin with — the jobs aren't there anymore.

Now the three companies say they are going to hire 36,000 workers — which doesn't begin to make up for the economic security, purchasing power, and tax base they've destroyed — but at second-tier pay, \$14 an hour. This is \$5 an hour less than the average hourly wage in manufacturing!

Longtime employees at Chrysler have not had a raise in base wages since 2006; at Ford and GM the last raise was in 2005. The 2007 contract had the biggest concessions in UAW history. After the 2009 bankruptcy of GM and Chrysler, the three got a bigger bite. And roughly two dozen plants have been closed in the past four years. They were, we were told, used as collateral to secure the partial repayment of GM and Chrysler debt. So when we talk about capitalism and what it has done to Detroit and other cities, we can't let the auto bosses off the hook.

But what's that got to do with the banks? A lot. In fact it's impossible to separate banking from industry, and has been for over a century. Mergers are financed by bankers. In 1892 John Pierpont Morgan engineered the fusion of two electric companies to form General Electric. In 1901 he forged the U.S. Steel corporation by consolidating several companies. Earlier, Morgan's buying up and consolidating of

railroads was known as Morganization.

In 1904, William Durant, owner of a successful carriage company, founded Buick. By 1909 he had acquired Cadillac, Oldsmobile, and Oakland and combined them with Buick to form General Motors. But a year later, having over-borrowed, he ran into difficulties and a group of bankers took control of GM. He managed to buy back a controlling stake six years later, but by 1920 a recession hit and Durant was its casualty. Pierre Dupont partnered with JP Morgan to take control. This was the start of a long relationship. In 1937, the year of the sit-down strike, the UAW called GM a "Morgan-Dupont dictatorship."

By that time the Morgan dynasty had split into two branches: Morgan Guaranty Trust and Morgan Stanley. Both maintained close financial ties with GM. In 1953 Morgan Stanley underwrote GM's \$300 million bond issue. In 2002 the company led a \$3.3 billion sale of GM debt.

Even Henry Ford, who was quite vocal in his loathing of Wall Street, borrowed millions from New York banks in 1919 in order to buy back the shares of minority Ford stockholders and regain total control. Since the 1930s Ford has had a tight relationship with Goldman Sachs, which underwrote the 1956 IPO when Ford reluctantly became a publicly traded company. In 2007, when Wall Street hedge fund Cerberus borrowed \$10 million to acquire and restructure Chrysler, the lead lender was JPMorgan Chase, joined by Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs and Citigroup.

The banks want to keep down labor costs and maximize profits for the companies they finance — companies in which they themselves are large shareholders. The billions and trillions of dollars they collect in fees and interest have to come from somewhere — the company bosses have to get it from the hides of the workers. How many untold billions in profits have autoworkers produced for the likes of Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan Chase over the past century?

A year ago, White House Auto Task Force Chair and Wall Street billionaire Steven Rattner was gloating over the fact that GM could now make a nice profit, even after paying out billions in interest, and even with vehicle sales at recessionary levels. That, and not preventing massive jobs loss, was the reason for the government bailout.

Martha Grevatt has been a UAW Chrysler worker for 23 years. Email: mgrevatt@workers.org □

MUNDO OBRERO

Reunión de sindicalistas automotrices solidaridad con trabajadores en

Continúa de página 8

Tratado de Libre Comercio Colombia-EE.UU. Cuando el acuerdo fue negociado entre el Presidente de EE.UU George Bush y el Presidente de Colombia Álvaro Uribe, el Congreso Colombiano ratificó el acuerdo. Según Cajamarca, 44 por ciento de esos miembros del congreso tenían alianzas con los paramilitares. "Tenemos escuadrones de muerte creando leyes que Obama dice que tenemos que firmar", dijo Cajamarca. "Un ganador del Premio Nobel de Paz quiere ratificar tratados firmados por terroristas".

El auspiciador de la reunión, Sindicalistas automotrices (del UAW) Amigos del

SOA Watch (UAWFSOAW), trajo a Cajamarca a Detroit por varias razones. Una fue para desarrollar un boicot contra la Coca-Cola, lo cual es apoyado oficialmente por el UAW. Ocho trabajadores de Coca-Cola han sido asesinados con el propósito de intimidar a los partidarios de Sinaltrainal. Trabajadores/as de la Coca-Cola en otros países también han corrido la misma suerte.

Durante la discusión, una trabajadora de la Ford describió cómo, después de que Cajamarca habló en la reunión de su sindicato temprano ese día, los/as miembros/as votaron abrumadoramente para prohibir los productos de la Coca-Cola en

Are NATO forces preparing a ground attack?

Libya: Behind the phony ICC 'rape' charges

The following statement by Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center, was posted at www.iacenter.org on June 10.

Without presenting a shred of reliable evidence, NATO and International Criminal Court conspirators are charging the Libyan government with conspiracy to rape — not only rape as the “collateral damage” of war, but rape as a political weapon.

This charge of an orchestrated future campaign of rape was made at a major press conference called by the lead prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on June 8. The even wilder, unsubstantiated ICC charge that Libya plans to mass distribute Viagra to its troops confirms this as the most tawdry and threadbare form of war propaganda.

It is important to understand that NATO countries, with the full complicity of the corporate media and the ICC, are spreading this Big Lie in order to win support for and close down all opposition to a ground assault of Libya — something that would otherwise be unpopular in both Europe and the United States.

This wild charge adds to the evidence of a massive escalation in bombing of urban targets in Libya, the use of British and French helicopters that give close

support to ground troops, and positioning in the Mediterranean Sea near Libya of U.S. warships that can quickly land troops. The NATO alliance is desperate to put Libya beyond all discussion or defense and raise the NATO war to the level of a “Holy Crusade” to defend women.

Lies used to justify imperialist wars

The charge of rape as a political weapon was spread — without evidence — against Serb forces to justify U.S. plans for the first NATO bombing campaign in the history of the military alliance in 1994 in Bosnia and was used again in 1999 in Serbia in the first NATO occupation. The rape charge was used to soften up the U.S. and European population for the criminal war against Yugoslavia. Now a similar plan is in the works for Libya.

All too often wildly fabricated lies are spread to justify imperialist wars. In 1991 the first war against Iraq was justified by outrageous charges that the Iraqi army had grabbed Kuwaiti babies from incubators and smashed the babies to the floor. This was presented as reliable “testimony” to the U.S. Congress and in the U.N. Months later it was confirmed as a total fabrication. But the lie had served its purpose. In 2001 the corporate media and U.S. politicians claimed that they

had to bomb and then massively occupy Afghanistan to win rights for women that the Taliban had taken away. The situation for women in Afghanistan and for the entire population has deteriorated further under U.S./NATO occupation.

Despite video and photo evidence that the entire world has seen through WikiLeaks, the International Criminal Court has never considered for a moment filing criminal charges against U.S., British, French or German troops.

The pictures, videos and reports in major newspapers of sexual torture and humiliation at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq by U.S. soldiers and the testimony by the U.S. soldiers involved in rapes, tortures, mutilations and executions in Iraq and Afghanistan confirm the brutal reality of U.S. wars. These wars have never been to “save” women.

As an African country, Libya can hardly expect a fair hearing or any form of justice from the ICC. The International Criminal Court, created in 2002 with high hopes of international justice, has been used against seven countries — all in Africa. Meanwhile, the ICC has never examined U.S. drone attacks on defenseless civilians in at least eight African, Arab and South Asian countries. Nor has it even touched U.S. invasions and occu-

pations. Israeli bombing of the Palestinian people is “off limits.”

This is an essential time to remind all people concerned about the rights of women that U.S. intervention or any imperialist intervention has never protected women. Even women serving within the U.S. military machine are not “safe.” According to a study published by the Journal of Military Medicine, 71 percent of women soldiers have been sexually assaulted or raped while serving in the U.S. military. Women who have been assaulted consistently report poor medical treatment, lack of counseling, incomplete criminal investigations and threats of punishment for reporting the assaults.

In 2009 the Pentagon admitted that approximately 80 percent of rapes are never reported — making it the most underdocumented crime in the military. In addition, U.S. military bases are all too often surrounded by an entire sex industry of abused women forced by hunger, dislocation and lost families to work in bars and clubs.

Rape in every society has always been about imposing power and domination.

The “political rape” charge in this case makes no sense and has no basis beyond the U.S.-NATO desire to justify expanding the war against Libya.

Stop U.S.-NATO intervention in Libya.

Libya defiant as NATO widens war

Continued from page 1
to be confirmed.

Westerwelle reiterated the call by Merkel for the Libyan government to be removed, stating, “The people of Libya want a peaceful and free future without Gadhafi. That is also our goal. Germany is a friend and partner of the democratic forces in the country.”

Reuters also reported that the German International Development Minister Dirk Niebel said the European government would contribute another 7 million euros (\$10 million) for what he described as “emergency and interim aid to assist in stabilization efforts.”

State Department seeks to pressure African Union

While the Western states, including Germany, claim their aims in Libya are to protect civilians and stabilize the country based upon the supposed mandate of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973, the African Union has maintained its call for an immediate ceasefire. The A.U. insists that U.S./NATO bombing be halted and demands respect from all parties for the territorial sovereignty of Libya, the

protection of African migrant workers along with Libyan civilians, and the beginning of negotiations between the rebel TNC and the government in Tripoli.

Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré, a member of the A.U. negotiating team on Libya, emphasized that the majority of governments on the continent wanted the bombing to stop. In a press conference in the capital of Bamako, Touré stressed, “Like the African Union, we wish for the bombardments to stop and the opening of political talks to find a way out of the crisis.” (www.afriquejet.com, June 12)

Nonetheless, in a June tour of Zambia, Ethiopia and Tanzania, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton continued to call for the toppling of the Libyan government and demanded that the A.U. reverse its policy on the North African state and support NATO’s plans to seize Libya.

Reuters also reported on June 13 that a senior U.S. government official traveling with Clinton said, “We know that there is hesitation on the part of a number of African states, in large measure because of the enormous influence that Gadhafi has wielded across Africa for such a long time, and they have shown some reluctance. African countries are very deeply divided and conflicted over Libya.”

Only three African countries have openly supported U.S./NATO calls for Gadhafi to step down: Gambia, Mauritania and Senegal in West Africa, all largely dependent upon U.S. and French economic assistance. The official position of the African Union has remained firm, and popular opposition throughout the continent has intensified against the U.S./NATO war against Libya.

In addition to pressure by the U.S. State Department on the African countries to support the imperialist agenda in Libya, Clinton also continued hostile rhetoric against Sudan, Africa’s largest geographic nation-state. Clinton represented the U.S. position of further balkanization of Sudan, which is poised to be split from the South region in July. She called for the withdrawal of Khartoum’s military forces

from the disputed border area of Abyei.

The same Reuters article reported that at a press conference in the Tanzanian capital of Dar Es Salaam, Clinton said, “The United States strongly believes that a strong peacekeeping presence should be a central part of the security arrangements in Abyei. The government of Sudan should urgently facilitate a viable security arrangement, starting with the withdrawal of Sudanese armed forces.”

The first stop on Clinton’s trip was in the Southern African nation of Zambia where at a conference of African governments the Secretary of State attacked China’s growing economic partnerships with various states on the continent. She then encouraged greater trade with the U.S. and promoted the so-called Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, a Clinton-era administration measure that seeks to further the penetration of highly exploitative light industrial production on the continent.

Libyans refute claim of rebel advances

At the same time, the rebel TNC claimed it had broken out of the western port city of Misrata where these counter-revolutionaries have attempted to establish a beachhead in this region. The TNC also stated that it had taken parts of the coastal oil-producing area of Zawiyah, also in western Libya.

Libyan government spokespeople in Tripoli immediately dismissed these claims. Moussa Ibrahim, a representative of the Libyan government, said that state military forces had driven off the rebels from Zawiyah. (Tripoli Post, June 13)

Ibrahim said, “The wishful reporting of some journalists that rebels are gaining more power and more control of some areas is not correct.” Of the fighting taking place in these areas, Ibrahim noted, “It is pockets of resistance.”

Ibrahim also said, “The rebels [in Zawiyah] are no more than a hundred. The army has killed some of them, captured others and is negotiating the surrender of others.” He also emphasized that Tripoli rejects any notion that Gadhafi will re-

sign. Ibrahim said, “No one has the right to demand that the leader stand down. No one can come here with a plan that includes his departure and this idea is immoral, illegal and makes no sense.”

Meanwhile, Gadhafi was shown on Libyan TV on June 12 playing a game of chess with visiting International Chess Federation President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, who is in Libya in his official capacity as leader of the world agency. Gadhafi met with Ilyumzhinov for two hours and stated after the discussions and games, “I am neither premier nor president nor king. I do not hold any post in Libya and therefore I have no position which I should give up.”

These developments are taking place amid pronouncements by outgoing U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates that other NATO-member states must contribute more to the alliance and that the continuing war against Libya was a good indication of NATO’s lack of effectiveness.

Inside the United States, opposition to the war against Libya is escalating with more questions being raised by even some of the more reactionary representatives within both the U.S. Senate and the House. The House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair, Republican Ileana Ros-Lehtinen — known for her vicious hostility toward revolutionary Cuba — spoke out against ongoing U.S. involvement in Libya and demanded answers from the State Department on the aims of the mission and its legality within the context of constitutional law.

A recent CBS News poll indicated that 60 percent of people in the U.S. opposed the bombing of Libya. The same survey revealed that only 30 percent supported the mission, and among this group it would not be surprising that these views are based on lack of information.

The Obama administration and the corporate media have consistently refused to hold discussions and debates on U.S. policy toward Libya that are open to the public. The anti-war movement must continue to stress the imperialist aims of the war and demand the immediate withdrawal of all imperialist forces from the airspace of Libya as well as its waterways. □

forja Latinoamérica

su sindicato y trabajar para eliminar la presencia de productos de la Coca-Cola en su lugar de trabajo.

UAWFSOAW también espera ampliar el apoyo sindical para la lucha por “detener la matanza de nuestros hermanos y hermanas” y llevar un autobús lleno de activistas sindicales de Detroit a la manifestación anual en los portones de la SOA en noviembre.

Miguel Foster, Director de Derechos Humanos y Civiles del UAW, Al Cholger Director Sub-Regional de los Trabajadores Siderúrgicos, y Frank Hammer, ex Representante Internacional jubilado del UAW también hablaron en la reunión.

La lucha continúa

Zelaya regresa a Honduras

Por Heather Cottin

Más de un millón de hondureños/as le dieron la bienvenida a “Mel” Zelaya quien regresó a su tierra de donde fue secuestrado durante un golpe de estado sancionado por Estados Unidos el 28 de junio del 2009. Llegó al aeropuerto Toncontin de Tegucigalpa el 28 de mayo.

El regreso de Manuel Zelaya Rosales, el presidente de Honduras democráticamente electo, fue facilitado por el Acuerdo de Cartagena que garantiza su seguridad y legítima el Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (FNRP).

Zelaya ha vuelto a una Honduras muy diferente. El movimiento de resistencia no existía hace dos años. Ahora es una fuerza organizada en cada departamento y en cada ciudad. Honduras sigue siendo el país más pobre de Centroamérica y su población sigue estando compuesta predominantemente por el campesinado. Sin embargo, allí se ha desarrollado uno de los movimientos de resistencia más sofisticados y audaces en las Américas. Fue este movimiento el que trajo a casa a Zelaya.

Cientos de miles de partidarios/as de Zelaya se reunieron para escucharlo el 28 de mayo en la Plaza Isis Obed Murillo, como la ha nombrado la Resistencia. Zelaya habló en el lugar donde los soldados asesinaron al joven de 19 años de edad, Isis Obed Murillo, en las primeras semanas del golpe de estado fascista. Murillo es considerado el primer mártir del movimiento de resistencia.

“Debemos rendir homenaje a aquellos que hemos perdido en esta lucha, a los que ofrecieron sus vidas”, dijo Zelaya. (Noticias del Real News Network, 3 de junio)

Desde el golpe de estado hace casi dos años, y durante el régimen del presidente Porfirio Lobo Sosa, más de 200 hondureños/as han sido asesinados/as. Más de 4.000 casos de violaciones a los derechos humanos se han documentado entre junio del 2009 hasta finales del 2010, según la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos. (Inter Press Service, 30 de mayo)

Lobo llegó al poder mediante una elección ilegal y fraudulenta, celebrada bajo los auspicios del gobierno de Roberto Micheletti y respaldada por EE.UU. Micheletti había sido nombrado presidente de facto después de que los golpistas secuestraron a Zelaya y lo enviaron al exilio. La Organización de Estados Americanos expulsó a Honduras seis días después del golpe de Estado.

¿Cómo y por qué regresó Zelaya?

El plan para repatriar a Zelaya fue en parte un intento de menoscabar la Resistencia hondureña. Estados Unidos trataba de reintegrar a Honduras en la OEA. Los esfuerzos diplomáticos entre el presidente de Colombia Juan Manuel Santos, el presidente de Venezuela Hugo Chávez y Lobo resultaron en el Acuerdo de Cartagena, el cual despejó el camino para el regreso de Zelaya.

El 1 de junio, cuatro días después de que regresara Zelaya, Honduras fue readmitida a la OEA, a pesar de que las fuerzas que diseñaron el golpe de estado nunca fueron juzgadas o responsabilizadas por sus actos — normalmente un requisito para la readmisión de un gobierno a la OEA. (IPS, 3 de junio) Ecuador señaló la impunidad de los golpistas cuando se opuso a la reintegración de Honduras en la OEA, siendo

este el único país en hacerlo.

El Acuerdo de Cartagena, dijo Zelaya, “abre las puertas del ALBA [Alianza Bolivariana para nuestra América] para Honduras”, en referencia a su intento de unirse al ALBA que fue opuesto por Lobo y Micheletti.

Sin embargo, Zelaya dio legitimidad al gobierno de Lobo cuando dijo: “Si el gobierno reconoce los derechos del pueblo, el presidente Lobo reconocerá los derechos democráticos que han sido violados, y entonces la comunidad internacional tiene la obligación de reconocer los derechos del Presidente [Lobo] y su gobierno”. (Infolatam / Efe Tegucigalpa, 28 de mayo)

De hecho, conforme al acuerdo de Cartagena, los asesinos, torturadores y violadores de los regímenes de Micheletti y de Lobo gozarán de inmunidad legal. Como dijo Lobo el 1 de junio, después de que Honduras fuera readmitida a la OEA, “Hemos creado una Secretaría de derechos humanos y justicia, y en este gobierno no vamos a perseguir a nadie. Vamos a pasar la página y mirar hacia el futuro”. (Global Issues, 3 de junio)

Los gobiernos de Lobo y de Estados Unidos pretenden apartar a la Resistencia de la lucha revolucionaria, pero esto será difícil.

Bertha Oliva del Comité de Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos en Honduras celebra el regreso de Zelaya, pero dijo “No vemos indicios de cómo y cuándo los responsables de los crímenes contra la humanidad cometidos durante y después del golpe de estado serán castigados”. (IPS, 30 de mayo) Comentó además el 3 de junio, “hay una sensación de que la OEA permitió el regreso de Honduras sin tener en cuenta el estado de los derechos

humanos, y esperamos que esto no estimule la impunidad que rodea los delitos contra los derechos humanos”. (IPS)

Más de 20 organizaciones de derechos humanos firmaron una declaración oponiéndose a la readmisión de Honduras a la OEA. Los firmantes incluyen grupos que representan a juristas, mujeres, miembros/as de las comunidades indígenas y afrodescendientes, y de la comunidad LGBT. (www.cejil.org)

El 27 de mayo el Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras (COPINH), la principal coalición de indígenas del país, prometió “profundizar todos nuestros esfuerzos para denunciar la dictadura criminal encabezada por Porfirio Lobo Sosa. No olvidaremos. No perdonaremos, y no nos reconciliaremos”. (Europa Press, 19 de mayo; Honduras Culture and Politics, 24 y 27 de mayo)

COPINH denunció la represión del régimen de Lobo — los asesinatos de activistas y periodistas, las masacres de campesinos/as, las desapariciones, los desalojos brutales, la militarización de las comunidades indígenas y los proyectos de privatización “para el beneficio de la oligarquía y del capital transnacional.” (Vos el Soberano, 2 de junio)

El retorno de Zelaya es una gran victoria para el pueblo hondureño. Sin embargo, la resistencia no se detendrá. El FNRP está organizando una Constituyente Nacional, un plan para reestructurar la sociedad hondureña y así poder redistribuir sus recursos nacionales. El pueblo necesita agua potable, empleos, educación, viviendas decentes, salud y justicia y no aceptará nada menos. Está organizado por todas partes y no van a desaparecer. □

Reunión de sindicalistas automotrices forja solidaridad con trabajadores en Latinoamérica

Por Martha Grevatt
Detroit

Una importante reunión tuvo lugar el 4 de junio en la Casa de la Solidaridad, la sede del sindicato automotriz, United Auto Workers. Por primera vez, cerca de 60 personas, entre el personal, oficiales y miembros/as de base del UAW, aprendieron y discutieron sobre la grave situación que enfrentan los/as trabajadores/as en Honduras y Colombia.

Gail Presbey, directora del Archivo Carney de Solidaridad Latinoamericana y profesora de la Universidad de Detroit Mercy, reportó sobre su reciente viaje a Honduras en una delegación patrocinada por el Observatorio de la Escuela de las Américas (SOAW por sus siglas en inglés). Abrió su presentación con dos fotos: una del derrocado presidente Manuel Zelaya y otra del presidente Porfirio Lobo Sosa estrechando la mano de la secretaria de estado de Estados Unidos, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Presbey explicó que Washington se oponía a Zelaya porque él había triplicado el salario mínimo y favorecía a los/as campesinos/as frente a los ricos terratenientes, mientras que Lobo está rechaza-

do por la mayoría de los/as hondureños/as. Con Zelaya fuera, el Pentágono quiere aumentar de uno a tres el número de bases militares estadounidenses en Honduras.

Bajo el gobierno de Zelaya, Honduras también decidió no enviar más miembros de sus fuerzas armadas para entrenamiento a la Escuela de las Américas (SOA) en Fort Benning, Georgia. En Honduras, en Colombia y en gran parte de América Latina, los paramilitares, la policía y el ejército que aterrorizan a los/as trabajadores/as han recibido capacitación de “contrainsurgencia” en la SOA. Por 20 años el Observatorio de la SOA ha protestado cada año frente a los portones de la escuela, exigiendo el cierre de esta escuela de entrenamiento terrorista.

El centro de la charla de Presbey fue la resistencia heroica de los/as maestros/as de Honduras que han estado manifestándose masivamente en contra de la privatización de la educación pública. Muchos/as maestros/as han sido asesinados/as a balazos. Una maestra murió después de que una granada de gas lacrimógeno la golpeará y mientras yacía en el suelo sofocándose a causa del gas, un carro deliberadamente la atropelló.

Una huelga actual contra la privatización en Honduras cuenta con la participación de un 98 por ciento, y algunos/as maestros/as están en una huelga de hambre. El gobierno ha suspendido a 300 maestros/as y ha amenazado suspender a otros/as cinco mil. Cuando los/as estudiantes universitarios/as se manifestaron en solidaridad con los/as maestros/as, fueron atacados/as con gas lacrimógeno y forzados/as a replegarse al supuesto santuario que es su recinto universitario; allí fueron golpeados/as por la policía.

Una persona entre la audiencia señaló que la compañía contratada para desarrollar el plan de privatización en Honduras está trabajando para dismantelar las escuelas públicas en Detroit — después de haber logrado ese mismo objetivo en Nueva Orleans luego de la devastación del huracán Katrina.

En la reunión también figuró Gerardo Cajamarca quien es el representante en los EE.UU. de Sinaltrainal, el sindicato de trabajadores/as de bebidas y alimentos en Colombia. Cajamarca escapó del terror de los escuadrones de muerte en su país en 2004 y con la asistencia del sindicato de trabajadores siderúrgicos, ganó asilo político en los EE.UU.

Habla sindicalista colombiano

Cajamarca describió el terrible sufrimiento de la clase trabajadora colombiana. En un país de 44 millones de personas, 2,5 millones de niños/as están trabajando, muchos/as de ellos/as para compañías transnacionales estadounidenses. Cinco millones de personas han sido desplazadas de su tierra. Corporaciones como la Coca-Cola, Chiquita y Occidental Petroleum emplean a paramilitares derechistas para aterrorizar a los/as trabajadores/as que están tratando de sindicalizarse. Chiquita reconoció públicamente que había regalado \$2 millones a los paramilitares, además de 5.000 balas. Más de 3.000 activistas sindicales han sido asesinados/as en los últimos 25 años, con 51 asesinatos solamente en el pasado año.

Cajamarca acusó al gobierno colombiano, el cual ha permitido que los escuadrones de muerte funcionen con impunidad, de “genocidio” y “terrorismo sistemático” contra los sindicatos y también contra las comunidades afro-colombianas e indígenas, las cuales han sido forzadas a abandonar sus tierras tradicionales.

Cajamarca habló detalladamente sobre la necesidad de derrotar el propuesto

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