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Transit union seeks a decent contract

NYC riders support workers over MTA bosses

By Milt Neidenberg
New York

Dec. 14—With the countdown to a possible transit strike in New York just two days away, thousands of members of Local 100 of the Transport Workers Union converged on 42nd Street across from Grand Central Station at rush hour on Dec. 13. Their chant of “Shut the city down!” was an angry rallying cry in response to the Metropolitan Transit Authority’s heavy pressure to force a weak contract on them.

With their sea of placards and banners, these workers sent a powerful message to the MTA, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Gov. George Pataki. They would not be intimidated in their fight for a decent contract. They found a sympathetic ear from workers and shoppers making their way through the congested streets to subways and buses.

The MTA, top Republican and Democratic city officials, and the major media are waging a frenzied anti-union campaign to get the workers to accept a two-tier wage contract that would create divisions within the union. However, a progressive group of City Council members from working-class neighborhoods held a press conference on Dec. 14 to say that any strike will be the responsibility of the MTA.

The MTA wants newly hired workers to pay 2 percent of their wages toward health benefits. This includes higher premiums, deductibles and co-payments. It demands the union extend the retirement age to 62 from 55. It has offered a paltry wage increase that is far below the cost of living in a city where rent, food, energy and other goods and services are rising at an alarming rate.

The arrogance of the MTA bosses extends to working conditions. They demand more productivity from workers who have to labor in an atmosphere fraught with dangers and unhealthy conditions, both in the subways and the streets above. They demand tighter restrictions on sick leave. They want a one-person train operation—conductors would be removed from trains. They have closed station booths and reassigned clerks to cleaning and other station chores.

There are presently 2,700 conductors and 3,300 station agents in the subway system; they make up almost 18 percent of the union.



Workers rally as MTA threatens huge fines.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Another sore point is the tens of thousands of disciplinary actions taken against the workers every year. New York 1 television news reported that a worker cleaning the platforms can be disciplined just for answering a rider’s questions about subway service.

The contract expires at midnight on Dec. 15. The transit workers at a mass rally on Dec. 10, in the most democratic fashion, voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike. The vote sent a powerful message to the MTA to start negotiating in good faith.

Instead, the MTA went to State Supreme Court and got a preliminary injunction that would impose huge fines on the union itself and also punish the 34,000 individual transit workers with the loss of two days’ pay for each day they’re on strike.

The bosses are relying on the Taylor Law, an anti-labor law in New York State passed nearly 40 years ago and signed by then-Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, a scion of the billionaire Rockefeller dynasty.

Another billionaire, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, has

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NEW ORLEANS PROTEST

Katrina survivors demand right to return

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Evacuees and their supporters lead off march through the streets of New Orleans Dec. 10.

WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU

Cause for hope in Mumia case



By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

As supporters of imprisoned African-American journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal gathered here on Dec. 9 to observe the 24th anniversary of his arrest, there was new cause for hope.

The U.S. Court of Appeals of the Third Circuit had just decided, on Dec. 7, to hold hearings on three claims by Abu-Jamal that his 1982 trial, overseen by "hanging" Judge Albert Sabo, and a subsequent hearing were tainted by constitutional violations.

If any one of the three claims is upheld by a three-judge panel, it could lead to a new trial for Abu-Jamal, who still sits on Pennsylvania's death row despite a 2001 ruling by Federal District Court Judge William Yohn overturning his death sentence.

At the annual commemoration, attorneys Leslie Jones and Michael Coard explained the significance of the court ruling, while reminding Abu-Jamal's supporters that the Third Circuit Court, of which Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito is a member, has never been a friend of workers and oppressed people.

The Third Circuit's rulings granted two "certificates of appealability" that allow Abu-Jamal to challenge alleged race and judicial bias in his 1995 Post-Conviction Relief Action proceedings. Like the trial, these proceedings were also overseen by Sabo, who went to extreme lengths to keep evidence of Abu-Jamal's innocence out of the court record.

Jones noted that 29 of the 32 people of color on Pennsylvania's death row were put there by Sabo.

The ruling also allows Abu-Jamal to challenge the trial summation remarks of the state's lead prosecutor, Joseph McGill, who instructed the jury: "If you find the defendant guilty of course, there would be appeal after appeal and perhaps there could be a reversal of the case, or whatever, so that may not be final." This made it easier for the jury to convict.

McGill also used the fact that Abu-Jamal had been a member of the Black Panther Party when he was 16, claiming Abu-Jamal "had always wanted to kill a police officer."

According to Abu-Jamal's lead attorney, Robert R. Bryan, McGill's statements had the effect of qualitatively lowering the historic burden of proof regarding reasonable doubt and presumption of innocence. Similar remarks by Pennsylvania prosecutors have resulted in new trials in other cases. However, Jones cautioned that "the rules never seem to apply in Mumia's case."

The Third Circuit Court's decision was a surprise, however, because the appellate court was only required to consider an appeal from the defense on a single guilt-phase issue: that the prosecution had illegally removed qualified jurors from the case on the basis of race. While Judge Yohn rejected this claim in 2001, the appellate court had previously agreed to take up the issue.

Racism in jury selection was well documented in Abu-Jamal's case. The defense appeal was based on the charge that exclusion of 11 of 14 Black jurors constituted an unconstitutional violation of the Supreme Court ruling on this issue in the case of *Batson v. Kentucky*.

Prosecutor McGill has a record in murder trials of rejecting roughly three out of four potential Black jurors—even after they had already agreed they would vote for capital punishment. This was a rate of peremptory rejection of qualified jurors three times higher than for potential white jurors.

Under the provisions of the 1996 Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, the court had no obligation to consider defense challenges to the Federal District Court ruling, so the fact that the judges agreed to hear two other claims is a major victory for the defense.

However, attorney Jones pointed out that Abu-Jamal's previous defense team, led by Attorney Leonard Weinglass, submitted 29 claims when filing the Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus on Mumia's behalf. Jones noted, "The Third Circuit Court chooses to ignore the 26 other claims, as well as the affidavits of former Philadelphia Court stenographer Terri Mauer-Carter that she overheard Sabo in 1982 make the statement 'Yeah, and I'm going to help them fry the n****r' in reference to Abu-Jamal; nor the affidavit by Arnold Beverly, that he, not Abu-Jamal, murdered Officer Faulkner."

"They are just pulling out some pieces, but it's okay," Jones noted. "Mumia has so many issues in his case that have brought other people home; however, Mumia is still on death row."

Attorney Michael Coard, along with Pam Africa of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, cautioned that this is probably the most critical time ever in the case. "The courts will do what they are forced to do," said Africa. "These people will never tell you how powerful the movement is, yet it's the movement that has kept Mumia alive for the past 10 years."

The case is now on the fast track, with stringent deadlines set for filing a series of briefs and counter briefs, beginning as early as Jan. 17, 2006. Once completed, the court will issue a decision or set a date for a hearing and oral arguments. □

PHILADELPHIA: 'Troops out now!'

Over 1,000 protesters met George W. Bush as he arrived in downtown Philadelphia on Dec. 10 to address the World Affairs Council at a \$10,000-a-plate luncheon, held at the Park Hyatt hotel. At a rally outside, mothers of GIs killed in Iraq, soldiers who had served in Iraq and Vietnam, community and labor activists, and students and youth all spoke. Over 35 organizations endorsed the protest to demand "Troops out now." Many Center City workers stopped to join the protest.

—Betsey Piette



WW PHOTO: BERTA JOUBERT-CECI



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Fri., Dec. 16

Eyewitness report from the Dec. 10 Right to Return march in New Orleans. Hear Gloria Verdieu, Jefferson Azevedo and John Parker report from their trip to the strategy conference for Katrina survivors and their supporters, and the march in New Orleans. 7:30 pm, 5274 W Pico Blvd #203. (Between Fairfax and LaBrea) 323-936-7266

NEW YORK

Fri., Dec. 16

Workers World Party forum: Eyewitness Reports & Video Justice After Katrina: 'The People Must Decide.' Also, Marsha Goldberg on: "Class solidarity & the transit workers' fight for a decent contract." 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info phone (212) 627-2994.

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Stanley Tookie Williams

Racist governor kills, but can't break, an honest man



Stanley Tookie Williams

By Deirdre Griswold

Stanley Tookie Williams had great courage and integrity. He refused to betray himself, his people and all those who believed in him—and for that the state of California put him to death by lethal injection in the early hours of Dec. 13.

Williams could have been pardoned by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger—who broke into politics after a film career in which he played the epitome of a killing machine, the “Terminator.” All Williams had to do was “confess” to murders that he had always denied committing.

In his statement denying clemency, the governor said: “Without an apology and atonement for these senseless and brutal killings there can be no redemption. In this case, the one thing that would be the clearest indication of complete remorse and full redemption is the one thing Williams will not do.”

Williams would not lie—even to save his life. He would not grovel and debase himself. He would not abandon the dignity that he had painfully acquired during over 20 years on death row.

He died at peace with himself because he refused to capitulate. And his supporters shocked the officials at San Quentin when, for the first time since executions resumed there in the 1970s, those who had witnessed the execution broke the deafen-

ing silence by putting their fists in the air and shouting out that the state had killed an innocent man.

Outside the prison, over a thousand anti-death penalty protesters who had kept up a vigil during the night mourned his death and vowed to keep up the fight. The Campaign to End the Death Penalty and other organizations called demonstrations in dozens of cities across the country.

There are thousands of people on death rows in the United States, and, as Williams himself has said, none of them are millionaires. The U.S. has executed more than 1,000 people since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976. Many have been posthumously proven innocent. The “criminal justice” system is distorted at every step of the way by class and racial oppression.

What made Williams stand out was his deep transformation from a young African American gang leader, a co-founder of the Crips, to an eloquent prison author who reached out to young people and compellingly urged them to turn away from violence against each other and do something positive for themselves and their communities.

Williams had no problem talking and writing about the terrible role of gang warfare, or his own lost early years. But he always maintained that he had not com-

mitted the murders for which he was sent to death row. His whole mature life was more than mere “atonement” for his past—he became a very conscious, organized influence on young people to never become what he had once been.

His inspiring turnaround led to the film “Redemption” with actor Jamie Foxx, one of the many people who tried to keep the state from executing him.

But none of this was enough for the governor. This darling of the ultra-rich, who has alienated the public workers of California with his anti-labor budget cutting, betrayed the political character of his decision when he said, in his denial-of-clemency statement:

“The dedication of Williams’ book ‘Life in Prison’ casts significant doubt on his personal redemption. This book was published in 1998, several years after Williams’ claimed redemptive experience. Specifically, the book is dedicated to ‘Nelson Mandela, Angela Davis, Malcolm X, Assata Shakur, Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt, Ramona Africa, John Africa, Leonard Peltier, Dhoruba Al-Mujahid, George Jackson, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and the countless other men, women, and youths who have to endure the hellish oppression of living behind bars.’ The mix of individuals on this list is curious. Most have violent pasts and some have been convicted of committing heinous murders, including

the killing of law enforcement.

“But the inclusion of George Jackson on this list defies reason and is a significant indicator that Williams is not reformed and that he still sees violence and lawlessness as a legitimate means to address societal problems.”

For hundreds of years, from the kidnapping of millions of African people to the enslavement of those who survived the “Middle Passage” to the lynching of their descendants and the murders of civil rights activists, Black people in this country have suffered incredible “violence and lawlessness” at the hands of those who would exploit them. So have Native people, who were nearly exterminated by the capitalist settler state.

The great historical figures to whom Williams had the audacity to dedicate his book have been selfless fighters in the struggle for freedom, equality and self-determination. They exemplify the very best traditions of all progressive movements.

Schwarzenegger’s statement betrays the utterly reactionary character of this execution, and shows how frightened the plutocrats at the top are that their crimes against the people, here and around the world, are already igniting another great mass struggle for justice. Stanley Tookie Williams will be remembered and honored long after the “Governator” is gone. □

Cops defend Nazis as hundreds protest

By Alex Gould
Toledo, Ohio

Chanting “No Nazis, no KKK, no police intimidation,” about 200 anti-fascist demonstrators made themselves heard here on Dec. 10 as the city rolled out the red carpet for the second “National Socialist Movement” (NSM) Nazi rally in Toledo this year.

Toledo residents were joined by groups from other towns in Ohio, from Detroit and other points in Michigan, and from Chicago. The Nazis were far outnumbered when they finally peeked out from behind four massive rows of riot cops and began spewing their message of terrorism and genocide at the multinational and very unwelcoming audience below them at City Hall plaza.

The city authorities allowed the Nazis to use a sound system but forbade anti-Nazi protesters from carrying picket signs or megaphones.

What the Nazis lacked in numerical strength, however, was made up for by political support from the city of Toledo, county sheriffs, state highway patrol, and cops and SWAT teams from as far away as Michigan, who came to harass the anti-Nazi protesters.

The newspaper Toledo Blade estimated that 700 police officers were at the Nazi rally and counter-demonstration.

On Oct. 15, the NSM, an avowed terrorist organization whose stated purpose is the mass murder of most of the world’s population, had accused the African-American residents of Toledo of “Black crime” and attempted to march through their neighborhoods. At that point, the people of Toledo rose up in a heroic rebellion against racism that threw the fascists out. Over 100 anti-Nazi protesters were arrested; some are still facing charges. The

cops used tear gas on the hundreds of mostly Black youth who had gathered in the streets to defend their city against both the Nazi provocation and the racist cops who were escorting the Nazis.

Parroting the Nazi line, the police and city authorities decried the “violence” of the protesters as they gassed the people and pursued them with helicopters, horses and phalanxes of riot cops.

Knowing that they could not guarantee the Nazis safety in the neighborhoods, the city of Toledo obtained a court order from Judge Thomas Osowik, which awarded the Nazis center stage in downtown Toledo for their rally on Dec. 10. While the Nazis protested this limitation in court, the weight of the court injunction was not aimed at them but at the protesters, who were confined to a small protest pen. They had to enter through a metal-detector and were subjected to a pat-down search while the cops took individual photographs of each protester. They were not allowed to carry bags or backpacks into the designated protest area.

Even before the rally began, the police had set up an assembly-line arrest-and-book operation in the police station next to the rally site, and the arrests started. Five youths in a car from Chicago on their way to the protest were pulled over and searched by cops. The passengers and driver were thrown to the ground, cuffed and charged with “contempt of court” for violating the anti-free-speech injunction by “congregating” in another part of the city.

Judge Francis X. Gorman told the Toledo Blade, “We had this whole thing planned out really well,” referring to the mass arrests of the protesters. Some 29 people were arrested—more than a tenth of the protesters.

The cops repeatedly rode their horses



Police arrested one-tenth of the demonstrators.

into the dense crowd of protesters, stomping on at least one protester’s foot, and dragged people out of the crowd by their necks and into the waiting jail cells.

Elizabeth O’Brien of Lansing, Mich., says she was stunned repeatedly with a Taser electric-shock gun by the police and has 35 welts on her left thigh. Ileana Cortez of Detroit was charged with assaulting a police horse, although no injuries to police animals were reported. No Nazis were arrested, although three local racists who infiltrated the protest were.

City officials showed they would use any means necessary to give fascists an unobstructed platform from which to spout their genocidal, racist garbage.

This time, the protesters were not numerous or organized enough to decisively defeat the Nazis and their cop friends, but, despite overwhelming police oppression, they made it clear that Nazis were not welcome in Toledo.

The police carried out a premeditated plan to violently suppress opposition to the fascist recruitment rally, proving that the state is not a neutral arbiter of free speech but a patron and defender of ultra-right terrorists. Only the working class can

defeat the Nazis and the racist system that supports them.

As political prisoners from the Toledo protest waited in the county jail—which charges its mostly indigent and Black inmates \$100 per night for reeking cells, putrid food and drinking fountains built into toilets—the capitalist media was already spreading lies and justifications for the police attacks. On Dec. 13 the Toledo Blade editorialized that the massive police violence was “almost a non-event” and lied that “nobody was injured.”

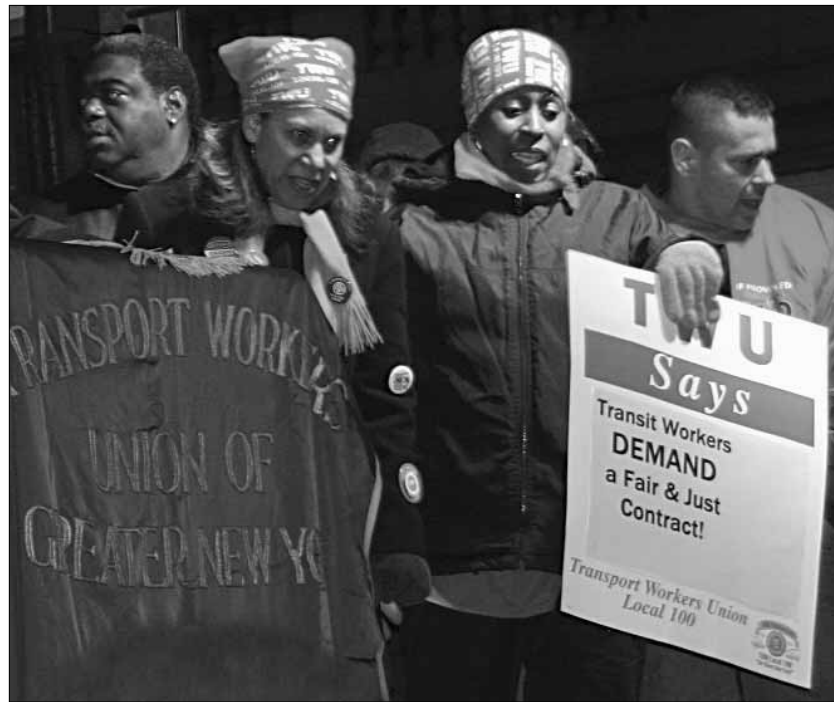
What they can’t hide is the overwhelming poverty in a city where the workers have made millions of dollars for Daimler-Chrysler’s Jeep division and other corporate monopolies. They can’t hide the fact that Black motorists are twice as likely as whites to be stopped by police and issued tickets in Toledo, according to USA Today. They can’t hide the monstrous racist injustices of the “war on terror” or the genocidal neglect and abandonment of the people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. It’s time to bring this racist system down.

Alex Gould was one of those the police dragged from the protest and arrested.



Workers rally as MTA threatens huge fines.

WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL



Transit union seeks a decent contract

Continued from page 1

also filed a lawsuit that asks the court to fine the TWU \$1 million and each striker \$25,000 on the first day of a strike—and double the fines every day the strike goes on.

Showing contempt for the right of the transit workers to exercise their right to withhold their labor and express their free assembly and free speech rights, these capitalist politicians have torn up the U.S. Constitution.

The high-paid MTA executives provoked this crisis. Crying poverty, they cov-

ered up a billion-dollar surplus until they were exposed for cooking the books. They had already divided up this surplus in their own interests, applying most of the funds to replacing workers with technology.

The MTA claims the pension fund is under-funded, a typical corporate maneuver, and has promised to put back the money.

The transit workers, who created the wealth of the MTA and should be the trustee of those funds, want a major part of this surplus. They may have to strike or

plan other actions to get it. TWU president Roger Toussaint told the crowd at the rally, which stretched over several blocks, "They're not going to force a lousy contract down our throats."

To end his speech, Toussaint tore a copy of the Bloomberg lawsuit into little pieces, to thunderous cheers from the members. Other speakers included the Rev. Al Sharpton, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and a number of leaders from other labor unions.

Chris Silvera, president of Teamsters Local 808, representing Metro North and

Long Island Rail Road, let the transit workers know that the MTA's plans to get Bronx and Queens straphangers into Manhattan that way will not happen. "We will take care of scabs the Teamster way," he said.

The negotiations will go down to the wire. If there is a strike, the responsibility for it lies with the MTA, Governor Pataki and Mayor Bloomberg.

The money is there and the demands of the transit workers are just. The labor movement and the straphangers have a stake in the outcome of this struggle. □

Delphi workers launch fightback

By Martha Grevatt
Dayton, Ohio

Some 1,000 workers from the auto parts company Delphi and their supporters packed Courthouse Square here on Dec. 10, sending the message that "labor rights are human rights" to Delphi CEO Steve Miller and his buddies at federal bankruptcy court.

Unions in over 100 cities across the country had chosen International Human Rights Day to hold rallies on this theme.

Larry Cohen, president of the International Union of Electrical Workers-Communication Workers of America (IUE-CWA), announced the M@D campaign. M@D, which stands for Mobilize @ Delphi, has been launched by the Delphi Union Coalition: the Autoworkers (UAW), Steelworkers (USWA), IUE-CWA, and three other unions that represent Delphi workers in the U.S.

"To show how 'M@D' we are, we're wearing red every Thursday," said Cohen. "We need to have actions every week."

Delphi CEO Miller's outrageous attack on organized labor has left the unions no other choice but to fight. Delphi declared bankruptcy after the UAW rejected a package of "proposals" that included reducing wages from \$27 an hour to \$9.50, gutting the pension plan, eliminating Supplementary Unemployment Benefits (SUB) and the job bank, dropping dental and vision coverage, cutting back vacations and holidays, imposing an attendance policy that would bypass grievance procedures to fire workers permanently, wiping out seniority rights, outsourcing most skilled trades work, and allowing the company to close plants and lay off workers at its sole discretion.

The only aspect of the current contract that Delphi would keep is the "no strike" clause.

The UAW has also rejected a second offer from Delphi that would "only" reduce hourly wages to \$12 an hour.



WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

One sign at the Dayton rally read: 'IUE-CWA has not forgotten how to fight!'

Both the IUE-CWA and the UAW represent Delphi workers in the Dayton area and around Ohio, and both were well represented at the rally. A large and visible contingent also came from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. AFSCME and other non-Delphi unions know that if the bosses break the UAW, no union's wages and benefits are safe.

Besides Cohen, speakers included Director Lloyd Mahaffey of UAW Region 2B, which covers all of Ohio; UAW Local 696 President Joe Buckley; USWA Ohio Regional Director Dave McCall; Ohio AFL-CIO President Bill Burga; Congress member Tim Ryan, and Montgomery County Commissioner Debbie Lieberman. The crowd waved signs and roared approval whenever the speakers talked fightback.

The program had its drawbacks. Out of perhaps a dozen speakers, not one was a person of color and only two were women. Interspersed with militant agitation

against Delphi were reactionary appeals to national chauvinism and bashing China for "stealing jobs," when it is U.S. corporations who opt to move production overseas and demand low wages.

Rank and file is fighting

Independent of the official UAW leadership, rank-and-file Delphi workers and their supporters have organized themselves as "Soldiers of Solidarity" (SOS).

SOS has already held meetings in Michigan and other states, attracting hundreds of workers wherever they go. They understand that their real fight is not with their sluggish and compromising union leaders but with Delphi and ultimately General Motors. They are not, however, waiting for official approval to begin the fight.

Central to SOS's strategy is the concept of "work to rule." Work to rule involves slowing production solely by following the company's own rules to the letter. At a recent SOS meeting in Flint, Mich., work-

ers from a number of plants described how they are insisting on obeying all safety regulations, rejecting parts and vehicles of substandard quality, and otherwise refusing to cooperate with management unless absolutely mandatory.

This is empowering the workers. "Workers rule when they work to rule," explained Gregg Shotwell, leader and spearheader of SOS, in his opening remarks to the Flint meeting. "We are not victims, we have power." Work to rule prepares workers psychologically to think about the next step.

On the question of whether or not to strike, Shotwell posed the question, "Why not stay inside?" This sentiment was seconded in a number of comments during a three-hour meeting dominated by the rank and file attendees. At least half a dozen speakers identified themselves as sons or grandsons of the original Flint sit-down strikers of the 1930s.

Other ideas offered include a one-day nationwide work stoppage, having retirees use their free time to build support among teamsters and dockworkers, and reaching out to Delphi workers in other countries. Workers in Brazil, where Delphi has a subsidiary, have already contacted the group, offering support. The SOS steering committee announced plans to demonstrate at the North American Auto Show and at the Delphi world headquarters—on the aptly named Crooks Road in Troy, Mich.

A leaflet by the Job is a Right Campaign gave additional ideas for consideration, including demonstrating at the bankruptcy court in New York, having the UAW call a special emergency convention, and holding a general strike in the entire auto industry.

While the meeting was taking place in Flint, 1,000 Delphi workers and allies rallied in Kokomo, Ind., where Delphi is one of the largest private employers.

The fight is taking on many forms, but it is clearly on and is not likely to die down soon. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis



NYU strikers ignore deadline

The Graduate Student Organizing Committee, UAW Local 2110, has kept its word. The GSOC strike, begun on Nov. 9, continues despite New York University President John Sexton's ultimatum that all stipends and teaching assignments would be stopped for those who continued to strike after a Dec. 7 deadline.

Support for the GSOC continues to pour in. It held a rally, including representatives of national and local labor organizations, on the day of the deadline. A petition signed by more than 5,000 scholars around the world urges Sexton to recognize and negotiate with the union. (Read it at petition online.com.) On Dec. 3 the Collective Bargaining Congress of the American Association of University Professors, on behalf of the 28,000 unionized academic employees it represents, called on Sexton "to rescind immediately his threat to retaliate against workers exercising their democratic rights."

A letter signed by about 90 international graduate students notes their special concerns: "We, as international students, feel especially vulnerable to your antagonizing, intimidating and outrageous threats. Many of us have had to deal with increasingly restrictive U.S. immigration policies, enhanced surveillance and record keeping and with hostility when being questioned by immigration officers. Some of us have suffered the threat of deportation. Thus, we are concerned with maintaining our legal status in this country." Despite that, the letter affirms the students' support for the right to unionize.

In the meantime there have been several new proposals to create various graduate-student bodies at NYU. GSOC spokesperson Susan Valentine said of them: "All the proposals say the same thing—to get rid of our union. And nothing has shown us that we need a union more than the administration's willingness to threaten and intimidate us as we try to bargain for better working conditions."

NWA mechanics hold the line

Mechanics at Northwest Airlines (NWA), who've been on strike for nearly four months, are continuing to walk picket lines despite freezing weather. Rallies were held recently in the Minneapolis area and in Detroit.

At the Dec. 7 rally for all NWA workers in Minneapolis, the mechanics' union handed out a leaflet that expressed solidarity with all the workers. It pointed out that NWA's ultimate aim is crush all the unions and just "monitor outsourcing contracts." The final paragraph reads: "As an employee group that has been under attack and forced to strike by NWA management, we recognize and unconditionally support the efforts of all other groups to defend themselves, their jobs, and their living standards from company assault."

Breakthrough for unionization in South

In what has been described as "the biggest unionization drive in the South in decades," the Service Employees union has just won collective bargaining rights for thousands of janitors in Houston as part of its Justice for Janitors campaign.

The janitors, nearly all of them immigrants, earn just over \$100 a week on average, usually working part time for \$5.25 an hour. No wonder the union billed the union drive as an anti-poverty movement. Of course, the workers do not receive benefits.

Because the union movement is not strong in Texas, the union had to use creative ways to pressure the companies that employ the janitors. Calling a strike at one building in Houston helped, but sympathy strikes at 75 office buildings in four other states really stepped up pressure.

Office building janitors average \$20 an hour in New York and \$13.30 in Chicago and Philadelphia, where office rents are comparable with those in Houston. In New Jersey a recent union contract boosted wages for 4,500 janitors from \$5.85 an hour three years ago to \$11.90 an hour today. Many workers also achieved full-time status with health benefits.

U.S., Cuba, Venezuela and Mexico

Conference builds worker solidarity

Special to Workers World
Tijuana, Mexico

Trade union leaders from Cuba and Venezuela, along with unionists, students and activists from Mexico, the U.S., and several other countries, gathered in Tijuana on Dec. 9, 10 and 11 for a labor conference organized each year by the US/Cuba Labor Exchange.

Ignacio Meneses of the US/Cuba Labor Exchange chaired the first plenary session, which heard a presentation by Ermela García Santiago, director of the National School of Cadre of the CTC/Lázaro Peña. The CTC is Cuba's national labor organization.

García focused on new government measures and plans to benefit Cuban workers that emphasize raising the incomes of those who earn the least. Recently, the minimum wage was increased from 100 pesos to 225 pesos. One and a half million Cuban workers have benefited from this increase.

New apartments are being built jointly by the government and the people who will live in them. There is also an expanded effort to make medical services more convenient by decentralizing facilities. Electric power sources are also being decentralized.

New municipality-based universities are being set up and a "university of the elderly" has been established. García added that the unions are playing an active role in all these efforts, and there is a process of continual evaluation and adjustment.

José Ramón Rivero, director of the Metalworkers Union of Venezuela and a member of the Venezuelan parliament, spoke about how the U.S. dominated Venezuela economically and militarily for decades, but today the Bolivarian Revolution has opened a new and inspiring chapter in the country's development. He cited attempts of the imperialist media to portray the government of President Hugo Chávez as a dictatorship when, in fact, the Bolivarian revolutionaries have won 10 elections in a row, elections certified as legitimate by European Union observers.

Rivero indicated that Venezuelans expect no letup in U.S. plots against their country, but said that they are prepared for whatever new



WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

Ruth Vela of San Diego FIST speaks at plenary of Labor Exchange conference hosted by Mexican former "braceros."

aggression the U.S. has in mind.

He also dealt with ongoing efforts to democratize the Venezuelan union movement, which has been used in the past by the right wing against the revolution. Rivero addressed the important role that youth have played in bringing Chávez to power and predicted they will continue to be active both in their communities and in the government. The youngest member of Venezuela's parliament in history, a 27-year-old, was just elected there.

The second plenary focused on the trade pact known as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA—ALCA in Spanish), which is being pushed by the U.S. Speakers said that, if implemented, it would bring to the rest of Latin America the same economic disaster already experienced in Mexico under NAFTA.

Leonel González González, director of foreign relations of Cuba's CTC, summarized the current debilitated state of the workers' movements in the U.S., Europe and Latin America. He said the overriding goal of a recent labor conference in Havana, attended by representatives from 72 countries, was the renewal of the class struggle. He urged participants at the Tijuana conference to get copies of the 28 resolutions passed at the Havana conference and distribute them widely, especially to trade unionists.

Other topics addressed by speakers were the situation of the Cuban

Five—the heroic Cubans now held in U.S. federal prisons for the "crime" of exposing terrorist plots against their country—and the escalating efforts by Washington to keep people in the U.S. from visiting Cuba.

Solidarity statements were offered by a number of conference participants, including a British activist, a leader of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union, a Teamster and several teachers from Los Angeles.

A unique, politically powerful and highly moving part of the conference was the Sunday morning plenary, held at a large hall several blocks from the conference site. Close to 500 members of the Mexican Ex-Bracero Movement were meeting there. These former immigrant workers have been engaged in a long battle to recover the substantial funds deducted from their pay by the Mexican government, with the help of the Wells Fargo Bank, while they worked in the U.S.

The Braceros generously opened their meeting to the Labor Conference participants and listened attentively to the presentations. A high point of this plenary was a presentation on immigrant workers by Ruth Vela of the San Diego International Action Center and the revolutionary youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together. The text of her talk is available in Spanish and English at the WW web site, www.workers.org. □

NYC security guards unionize

As part of its program to organize 75,000 security guards nationwide, Service Employees Local 32BJ will now represent 1,000 security guards with Burns International Security Services in New York City. This is the union's first victory to unionize 10,000 security guards there. Local 32BJ will soon negotiate better wages and benefits for guards at City University campuses, Yeshiva University, AT&T and Pfizer. □

Marxism, Reparations & the Black Freedom Struggle

- ◆ Racism, national oppression & the right to self-determination
Larry Holmes
- ◆ Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery Sam Marcy
- ◆ Reparations & Black Liberation Monica Moorehead
- ◆ Harriet Tubman: woman warrior Mumia Abu-Jamal (Guest Commentary)
- ◆ Black labor & the fight for reparations Bill Cecil
- ◆ Alabama's Black Belt: Legacy of slavery, sharecropping & segregation
By Consuela Lee (Guest commentary)
- ◆ Black farmers demand justice Monica Moorehead
- ◆ Greetings from Mumia Abu-Jamal to the 3rd UN World Conference
Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia & Related Intolerance
- ◆ Nigerian women take over Chevron Texaco Monica Moorehead
- ◆ Nigerian women's takeover ends in victory Monica Moorehead
- ◆ Causes of turmoil in Jamaica PART I PART II PART III Pat Chin
- ◆ The driving force behind the land seizures Monica Moorehead

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Jackson conference

'Justice after Katrina: The people must decide!'

By Monica Moorehead
Jackson, Miss.

More than 400 Hurricane Katrina survivors and their supporters converged on Anderson United Methodist Church in Jackson, Miss., on Dec. 9 for a one-day conference to help organize a national movement to rebuild the Gulf Coast in the interests of the people, not big business.

The conference was organized by the People's Hurricane Relief Fund and Oversight Coalition, founded by Community Labor United. Its theme was based on a popular South African anti-apartheid slogan: "Nothing about us without us." Besides the survivors themselves, anti-war, labor and community activists attended from all parts of the country.

The purpose of this gathering was to put forth a united action plan for Katrina survivors to be able to rebuild their devastated cities and eventually return to their homes.

Small and large group discussions and plenaries were held throughout the day where the Katrina survivors had a platform to express the horrors that they faced immediately after the hurricane destroyed their homes. They described how government agencies and police authorities exploited this natural disaster by separating families and imprisoning youth. They spoke for the tens of thousands of mostly Black survivors who were abandoned, left to try to make it on their own without water, food and other basic necessities. An estimated 300,000 Katrina survivors who once lived in New Orleans and other parts of the Gulf Coast region have been displaced.

Labor, youth and women's caucus meetings were also held. A youth speak-out on the impact of Katrina had been held the day before at the historically Black college of Jackson State.

At the conference, the Katrina survivors agreed upon a New Orleans "People's Declaration." It includes the following objectives:

"We demand that the local, state and



WW PHOTOS: GLORIA VERDIEU

Workshop reports, left; Father Luke speaks on Vietnamese Katrina survivors, above.

Northland poster for the conference above right. Below, Monica Moorehead and Curtis Muhammad, Community Labor United leader.



federal governments make conditions possible for our immediate return. This includes the following:

"The [Mayor Ray] Nagin administration must make temporary housing such as apartments, hotel rooms, trailers and public housing developments available for us while we rebuild our homes.

"The government must put an end to price gouging, stop all evictions and make rents affordable.

"Local residents must take the lead in rebuilding our communities and must be hired to do the rebuilding work.

"There must be immediate debt relief for debt associated with this disaster.

"Quality public education and childcare must be provided for our children.

"Quality affordable health care and access to free prescriptions must be provided.

"The government must immediately clean up air, water and soil to make it safe and healthy for people to return home.

"We demand that the government provide funds for all families to be reunited and that the databases of FEMA, Red Cross and any organizations tracking our

people be made public.

"We demand accountability for and oversight of the over \$50 billion of FEMA funds and the money raised by other organizations, foundations and funds in our name.

"We demand representation on all boards that are making decisions about relief and reconstruction. We also demand that those most affected by Hurricane Katrina be part of every stage of the planning process.

"We demand that no commercial Mardi

Gras takes place until the suffering of the people is lifted.

"We are calling for survivors and supporters to participate in a Martin Luther King Jr. weekend 2006 conference and demonstration to make these demands heard!"

The full statement can be found at www.communitylaborunited.net.

Many of these demands were raised the next day, International Human Rights Day, during a march and rally on New Orleans led by the Katrina survivors. □

March on New Orleans 'We shall not b



WW PHOTOS: GLORIA VERDIEU AND MONICA MOOREHEAD
Historic Congo Square—also known as Louis Armstrong Park

By LeiLani Dowell
New Orleans

The streets of New Orleans were filled with angry and determined protesters, both survivors of Hurricane Katrina and their supporters, on Dec. 10, International Human Rights Day. Chanting "We're back to take it back" and "No justice, no peace!" a crowd estimated at 5,000 marched from the historic Congo Square—also known as Louis Armstrong Park and described by Reuters as "a centuries-old meeting place where African slaves once gathered to trade, play music and dance"—to City Hall for a rally, where they demanded "Justice after Katrina."

The march was a vibrant display of the culture and resistance of the people of New Orleans. Babies were pushed in strollers alongside marching youth and elders. Groups represented on the march included Community Labor United; Common Ground Col-



lective; Million Worker March Movement; Millions More Movement; Troops Out Now Coalition; FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; New Black Panther Party; ANSWER and others. African drums accompanied the chants, and the march was led by the Soul Rebels, a New Orleans brass band.

Survivors traveled from as far away as Texas and California to speak their minds and lend their voices and feet to the effort. The march and rally were organized by the People's Hurricane Rights Fund and Oversight Coalition, which raised money to bring survivors home for the day. The PHRF announced a list of demands to be

Katrina survivors revisit the Ninth Ward

By Gloria Rubac
New Orleans

We met at 4 a.m. in a dark parking lot near Houston's Mosque #45. About a third of our group were Hurricane Katrina evacuees, and we were about to take the bus from Texas to New Orleans for the Dec. 10 march and rally. It was decided that afterward we would make time to drive through New Orleans, particularly the lower Ninth Ward.

The march and rally charged everyone. But the profound impact of the day came when we drove through the French Quarter, through the lesbian/gay/bi/trans community and then entered the Ninth Ward.

We passed a giant red steel barge in the middle of a field. Then we saw the house of rock and roll legend Fats Domino. His possessions were piled in the street like garbage. His daughter's sixth-grade reading book, stacks of 45-rpm and 78-rpm records, books, papers and other items that were surely treasured by the family were now filthy, mildewed garbage.

While many of us walked around, most of those from New Orleans stayed on the bus, too heart-sick to look any closer.

We drove on to the lower Ninth Ward. The evacuees on the bus were quiet. They began whispering to themselves and could barely look up.

The streets were deserted and there was not a light anywhere, just a vast wasteland of houses that had floated onto other houses, cars and trucks. Some houses

were twisted and topless. Many, with roofs still intact, had holes in them where people had clawed and chopped their way through to survive the floodwaters.

One of the evacuees recalled being on top of the family house and seeing helicopters fly over. When the people waved to get their attention, those on the helicopter would mock them and wave back, as if saying hello. "We were deliberately left to die," she said.

Brother Miller X with the New Black Panther Party in Houston said, "When we were here right after Katrina, we saw dead bodies floating down these streets. What you see now has been cleaned. It was horrible."

Joy had just fixed up her house and had moved in only three weeks before Katrina hit. "I have worked all my life and never asked anyone for anything. Now I have been hit by a disaster and I wonder if any-

one will help me. I want to come home so badly. I know this government has money but I wonder if I will ever see any."

Other evacuees reminisced about the wonderful meals of seafood gumbo and crayfish etouffee in days gone by. They spoke softly of how now their kitchens were ruined, the cast-iron pots rusted and their dining-room tables gone.

Njeri Shakur, with the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement, said she felt such empathy with those from New Orleans.

"The African people, the poor, working people—their culture, their dignity—that's what made New Orleans what it was. When my family and my neighbors were evicted from public housing in Houston because our land became too valuable for the poor to live on, I felt violated. But what the government did in New Orleans is beyond comprehension," she said.

"I am more determined than ever to help our sisters and brothers rebuild their lives and their city." □



Dec. 10 contingents; PHRF activist, Malcolm Suber speaks, above; Mama Dee at the podium, below.



WW PHOTOS: GLORIA VERDIEU AND MONICA MOOREHEAD

Katrina survivors at City Hall.

When the hurricane hit, these toxics leached out into the rest of the area.

Mama Dee, a New Orleans resident who opened her own home early in the wake of Katrina for relief efforts, described the poverty and neglect that Black people in the region had suffered long before Katrina struck. She demanded, "Come clean, New Orleans! Enough of my babies are dead, and it didn't start with Katrina!" □

be moved'



presented to the office of Mayor Ray Nagin that included an end to evictions, the right to return for evacuees, and a halt to Mardi Gras festivities in the midst of the devastation of the Black community.

The rally at City Hall was chaired by New Orleans resident and activist Malcolm Suber, who told the cheering crowd: "We want our voices heard. We're here standing tall, ready to fight. The government promises everything and gives you nothing. This government don't give

a damn about poor people, the working class, and especially don't give a damn about Black people."

Speaker after speaker pressed their demands and told horror stories of the travails they had to endure at the hands of the government, both local and federal. One protester noted, "They could get troops over to Iraq overnight, but couldn't get anyone here to save our people." Another young man told about being beaten, along with his pregnant sister and another

female friend, at the hands of the police.

An environmental justice activist led the crowd in a chant: "We have the right to healthy and safe neighborhoods." She spoke about the high levels of toxic arsenic that have been found in every area where flooding occurred, and how the federal government has consistently done nothing about it. The toxicity in the wake of the hurricane was exacerbated by the environmental racism that allowed housing for the poor to be built on top of a landfill.

Florida jury rejects anti-Arab charges

How a government frame up failed

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

One month before the U.S. launched its war on Iraq, then-Attorney General John Ashcroft on Feb. 20, 2003, personally announced that the government had filed charges against Dr. Sami Al-Arian, declaring him to be the "North American leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad."

Ashcroft said Al-Arian's arrest was a "milestone in the war against terrorism" and credited the Patriot Act for facilitating the case against the Florida professor. His remarks were carried live on CNN as breaking news.

He insinuated that the public would be safer now that Al-Arian was behind bars, demagogically linking him with Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.

The Bush administration expected to be able to railroad the outspoken supporter of the Palestinian people. That plan was shattered on Dec. 6, when a Tampa, Fla., jury acquitted Al-Arian and his co-defendants of most of the charges lodged against them.

Al-Arian was found not guilty of eight of the 17 counts, including conspiracy to maim and murder and providing material support for Islamic Jihad. Two co-defendants, Ghassan Ballut and Sameeh Hammoudeh, were acquitted on all charges and Chicago business owner Hatem Fariz was found innocent of 25 of 33 charges. The jury deadlocked on the remaining counts, with the clear majority in favor of acquittal.

In the U.S. and around the world, newspaper articles all commented on what an embarrassing setback and stunning defeat the verdict was for the U.S. government in its moves to silence dissent in this country.

It was the relaxed provisions of the Patriot Act that had allowed federal inves-

tigators to present intelligence gained from foreign surveillance into a domestic criminal trial.

The government persecution and surveillance of Sami Al-Arian goes back more than 10 years.

Born in Kuwait to Palestinian parents, Al-Arian came to the U.S. as a student in 1975. An esteemed computer engineering professor at the University of South Florida (USF) in Tampa since 1986, Al-Arian was a recognized leader in the Muslim community. He had founded a mosque, developed a school and initiated a research center. He was well-known for his active support of the Palestinian people and their struggle to end Israeli occupation, speaking at meetings and conferences across the country.

Ironically, during the closely contested 2000 presidential election in Florida, the well-spoken academic was courted by the Bush campaign to influence Arab and Muslim voters to vote Republican.

The FBI tapped his phone for more than nine years and twice raided his home and offices, seizing dozens of boxes of personal belongings.

In 1996, then-USF President Betty Casto placed him on paid personal leave after learning he was under investigation by the Justice Department.

Academic organizations came to his defense. Two years later, when the FBI admitted it had no grounds to charge him, Al-Arian was restored to his position as a tenured professor.

Almost immediately, the U.S. government detained his brother-in-law, Mazen Al-Najar, who worked at the university as well, and held him in prison without charges on "secret evidence" for three years.

Al-Arian worked passionately to win the release of Al-Najar. He was on the verge of

getting Congress to consider legislation outlawing "secret evidence" when 9/11 happened.

After the courts ruled that Al-Najar had to be released, he was deported in August of 2002.

Right-wing and pro-Israeli elements, including local reporters for the Tampa Tribune and Bill O'Reilly of Fox News, undeterred by the lack of evidence, publicly tried to link Al-Arian to acts of terrorism—not only in the Middle East, but even in the Oklahoma City bombing—in an unrelenting campaign to vilify him.

For example, the Tampa Tribune has printed more than 700 stories about Al-Arian and his pro-Palestinian views—an average of one article every five days for 10 years.

Following his arrest in February 2003, Al-Arian and his co-defendant Hammoudeh were imprisoned in the maximum-security section of the federal penitentiary in Coleman, Fla. Kept in solitary confinement in a small cell that was constantly lit, he was denied regular contact with his family, restricted in the practice of his religion, and shackled hand and foot when allowed limited meetings with his defense team. Even getting pencils and paper to aid in his defense became a matter of litigation with federal officials.

10 years of surveillance

Although the government had been spying on him and monitoring his activities for close to 10 years, the Justice Department told the presiding judge in the trial, U.S. District Judge James Moody, that it needed at least two more years to prepare its case.

The much-hyped trial began on June 6, 2005, almost two and a half years after Al-Arian's early-morning arrest at

his Florida home.

For six months, prosecutors from the Justice Department presented some 80 witnesses and introduced 400 pieces of evidence, mostly edited transcripts of the more than 20,000 hours of taped phone conversations. Many of the tapes had been recorded prior to 1995, when the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) was first included on the "terrorist" list maintained by the government.

Israeli witnesses to bombings attributed to the PIJ were brought to Tampa to testify. Videos of exploded buses were shown to the jury, even though the prosecution agreed that the defendants had nothing to do with the planning or carrying out of these attacks.

Under cross-examination, the defense exposed the lack of any evidence tying the four men to any terrorist activity.

On Oct. 27, Al-Arian's lawyers shocked the courtroom. William Moffit told the jury that the defense would rest without calling a single witness or introducing any evidence.

"Because there is a document called the U.S. Constitution ... it protects Dr. Al-Arian's right to speak and the government has not proven that Dr. Al-Arian has done anything but speak... The fact that Dr. Al-Arian is a Palestinian deprives him of no civil rights."

Thirteen days later, the jury's decision shocked the Bush administration. As the four defendants stood in a packed courtroom of family and supporters, they heard "not guilty" over and over as the charges were read.

Jurors interviewed by St. Petersburg Times reporter Meg Laughlin all mentioned that they found no evidence of crime in the voluminous record presented

Continued on the next page

Air marshals shoot passenger

Racial profiling behind brutal killing?

By Larry Hales

Air marshals shot Rigoberto Alpizar to death on Dec. 7 on a boarding bridge to an American Airlines jet in Miami International airport. The naturalized U.S. citizen—Alpizar was born in Costa Rica—and his wife had just boarded the plane for a short flight to Orlando after returning to Florida from a trip to Peru.

Initial reports given by the two air marshals who shot Alpizar stated that he yelled he had a bomb before running off the plane and reaching into his backpack. However, several witnesses have come forward and stated that Alpizar never yelled he had a bomb.

Passenger Mike Beshears told reporters, "He just was in a hurry and exited the plane."

Another passenger, John McAlhany, stated, "I heard him saying to his wife, 'I've got to get off the plane.' He bumped me, bumped a couple of stewardesses. He just wanted to get off the plane."

In fact, not one witness has come forward to substantiate the claims of the air marshals who brutally shot Alpizar, a mentally disabled man diagnosed with bipolar disease.

The government agents claimed they were justified in the shooting and have the right to "neutralize" a suspect deemed a threat. Alpizar was clearly no threat. He was unarmed and made no threatening motions to anyone. He merely wanted to get off the plane.

His wife, Anne Buechner, who was behind him as he tried to exit the aircraft, told the air marshals that her husband was bipolar, that he was harmless but had been off his medication. Her words went unheeded. Moments later, after Alpizar left the aircraft, followed by two marshals, the 44-year-old Home Depot worker was gunned down.

John Amat, a federal official and a deputy with the U.S. Air Marshals service



Rigoberto Alpizar and his wife, Anne Buechner.

in Miami, said the marshals had the right to shoot to stop the "threat" and even repeated their story that Alpizar had said he had a bomb. Amat wasn't there, and not one passenger recalled hearing him say anything about a bomb. They first heard the word from the FBI when being questioned.

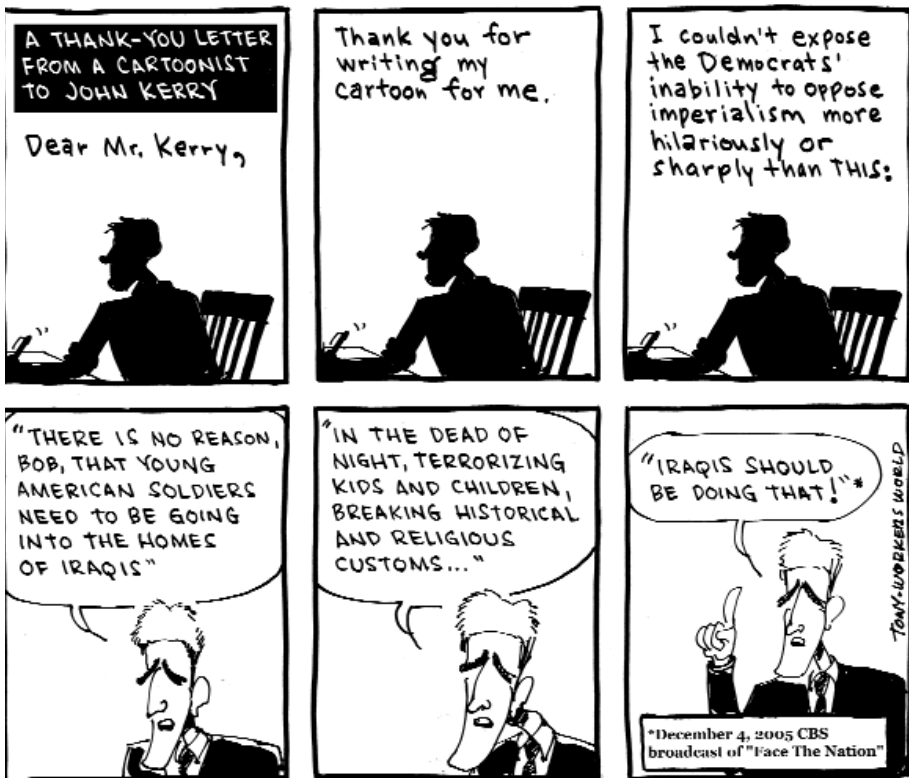
"They kept asking if I heard him say the B-word. And I said, 'What is the B-word?' And they were like, 'Bomb.' I said no. They said,

'Are you sure?' And I am," said passenger McAlhany, a construction worker.

This shooting is very similar to the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes in London. The police who shot the young Brazilian worker there were caught lying from beginning to end.

They said Menezes was wearing a bulky jacket, that he appeared agitated, and that he jumped a turnstile and ran into a subway car. However, videotape doesn't lie, nor did witnesses. The video showed a calm young man in a light jeans jacket who used a subway card and walked, rushing only to catch his train. He was grabbed by several cops while sitting in the subway car, was knocked to the floor

Continued on page 11



As U.S. grip weakens in Latin America

Venezuela becomes full member of Mercosur

By Arturo J. Pérez Saad

The incorporation of Venezuela into the Common Market of the South (Mercosur) is a historic step in the economic integration of Latin America. Venezuela was upgraded from associate to full member at Mercosur's 29th summit meeting, held on Dec. 8-9 in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Mercosur's four founding members are Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Its associate members include Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

The inclusion of Venezuela comes one month after its president, Hugo Chávez, brought a shovel to the Third Summit of

the Americas at Mar del Plata, Argentina, to symbolically bury the U.S.-proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Chávez was joined by the representatives of Mercosur and Cuba in a vote that defeated this attempt to extend imperialist trade agreements to the whole Western Hemisphere. The U.S. and Canada, with Mexico as their lap dog in NAFTA, have used trade agreements to impoverish the producing countries' working people while enriching the importing countries' transnational corporations.

The defeat of the FTAA and Venezuela's acquiring full-member status in Mercosur are due in part to the success of the Bolivarian Revolution and "to a large part, [to Brazilian] President Lula da Silva," said President Chávez to a TeleSur correspondent in Montevideo, "because he played a key role for us to be included."

Meanwhile, Washington continues to discredit itself with every unilateral and undemocratic attempt it makes to alienate Venezuela and overthrow its popularly elected leader. The neoliberal policies it

has imposed on Latin America have undermined attempts to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, bigotry and racism in the area.

In a giant step for the region, Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela have signed an agreement to complete a gigantic gas-petroleum pipeline within five years. This agreement, based on cooperation and integration of the region instead of an imperialist-imposed FTAA, is part of the Venezuelan-initiated Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). President Chávez says that "not only is this historic but we, the heads of state, are responsible for the demands set upon us" to make sure it benefits the 367 million people in the region.

Cuba's press agency, Prensa Latina, explains, "This pipeline would run from Venezuela over Brazilian territory to Manaus in the north and then to the northeast, continuing to the south of Brazil, Buenos Aires and Montevideo."

The pipeline would extend to between 4,969 and 6,211 miles long and cost up to \$10 billion.

This new trade bloc now represents member nations with more than \$1.3 trillion in gross domestic product, and associated nations with \$2.1 trillion GDP. With Venezuela's oil reserves, it will be the third most important economic and geopolitical trading bloc in the world.

Venezuela is now the only South American country with full membership in both the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and Mercosur. These two trade blocs are expected to be fully integrated by 2007, bringing the entire continent into the South American Community of Nations (CSN)—another step to fulfilling the dream of Simón Bolívar, who in the 19th century tried to liberate the continent from colonial rule. When completed, the CSN would have a GDP of over \$2.6 trillion and encompass 367 million inhabitants.

During the course of the Mercosur summit meeting, Chinese Minister of Construction Wang Guangtao said in a speech that China wants to broaden and deepen bilateral cooperation with Mercosur member states. (Xinhua, Dec. 11) □

Anti-Arab frame up

by the government. Prosecution attorney Cherie Krisgman had urged the jury to "trust them" that evidence existed to show that the defendants belonged to a "terrorist" cell operating in the U.S.

One juror said, "We were a hair's breadth away from acquitting on four more Al-Arian charges when the judge stopped us."

Judge Moody said that a juror had sent him a note saying she was feeling "coerced" by the rest of the panel.

"It shocked us," said a Vietnamese-American woman juror.

Todd, a 40-year-old truck driver, added, "If we had stayed and worked... we would have acquitted on everything but the immigration fraud charge."

Federal prosecutors are now considering retrying Al-Arian and Fariz on the deadlocked charges. Conviction on a racketeering conspiracy charge carries a possible 20-year prison sentence. They say there is no deadline for when they will announce their decision.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) has said that it will proceed with deportation hearings if Al-Arian is released from jail on bail or if the Justice Department declines to retry the case.

Defense lawyer Moffit declared any effort to deport his client "totally vindictive," since he has not been convicted of any crime.

However, in these much-publicized "terrorism" cases, following the arrest of many thousands of Arab and Muslim men since 9/11, the overwhelming majority of defendants have been found guilty of no crime but were deported on the basis of immigration technicalities.

Like Al-Arian, they suffered months and even years of imprisonment, public slander, separation from their families, loss of jobs and homes, denial of civil rights and deliberate mental and physical anguish at the hands of a clique of right-wing ideologues in pursuit of a political agenda.

The government counted on fear and racism to convict Al-Arian and his co-defendants, but the public distrust of the Bush administration's policies since the war in Iraq and Hurricane Katrina certainly gave the jurors a context in which to judge the political views of the Palestinian activists.

They ultimately agreed with Moffit's summation: "This case concerns Dr. Al-Arian's right to speak, our right to hear what he has to say and the attempt by the powerful to silence him." □

Cuba plays key role in Pakistan quake aid

By G. Dunkel

The disaster from the powerful earthquake that on Oct. 8 devastated the northeastern part of Pakistan in the Himalayan foothills is still unfolding. The quake immediately killed an estimated 73,000 people and left 3.5 million homeless. Now, as temperatures plummet, hundreds of thousands remain at risk of extreme suffering and death.

While a variety of groups have rushed tents, food and medical care to the survivors, it hasn't been enough.

Many international aid agencies dependent on the rich imperialist countries for most of their funds have been operating in the area, from the Red Cross/Red Crescent to Oxfam, the UN children's fund (UNICEF), the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) and Médicins Sans Frontiers/Doctors Without Borders. Their own personnel complain that they haven't enough resources to cope with this disaster.

Socialist Cuba, which by contrast is a relatively poor country after having been blockaded for almost half a century by the U.S., has sent over 1,000 doctors and nurses from its Henry Reeve International Medical Contingent. They make up the largest medical contingent working in the area.

The left-wing Pakistan Trade Union Defense Committee has tried to bring in relief supplies purchased in nearby India, but has been blocked by the Musharraf government. A variety of Islamic groups are also helping the people.

The U.S. Army, which is fighting a merciless war in neighboring Afghanistan and has enormous military resources in the area, has supplied helicopters to fly in tents and take out some of the injured. These flights, it should be noted, have increased in an obvious response to the political impact of Cuba's solidarity.

According to the UN, about 800,000 of the homeless have only their blankets to keep off the falling snow. Just 10 percent

of the 400,000 tents delivered so far are winterized. Oxfam and the UNHCR are trying to buy 20,000 small stoves to heat the tents that have been winterized.

As of Dec. 2, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), just \$160 million, or 29 percent, of the \$550 million needed for the first six months of earthquake relief had been received, although \$240 million had been promised for delivery by that date.

The British, Irish and Australian press report scattered deaths, particularly among the most vulnerable populations in isolated villages not reached by relief teams. As conditions get worse, many more thousands are expected to die, not just from the cold but from pneumonia and bronchitis due to lack of shelter. Some areas affected by the earthquake normally get 20 feet of snow by midwinter. Some survivors are digging graves before the ground freezes.

The Cuban contingent has 17 field hospitals in action and plans to set up another 13. Cuba's deputy minister of foreign affairs, Bruno Rodríguez, is responsible for coordinating Cuban efforts in Pakistan. He says the contingent has 789 doctors, about half of them specialists with experience in natural disasters, 315 paramedics, all university graduates or technicians, and 128 backup staff. This includes 80 engineers who set up the high technology that the field hospitals use—ultrasound, electrocardiograms, x-rays and clinical laboratories.

All the Cuban medical personnel live under the same conditions as their patients.

UNICEF's director of operations in Pakistan, Indiana Gonzalez Mairena, told the Cuban newspaper Vanguardia, "I recognize this as valuable humanitarian aid which we would not expect from other countries possessing much more resources than Cuba. It's just a matter of will." □

Oliver Behn, coordinator of Médicins Sans Frontiers in the Hattian Bala region, comments: "When we arrived here with MSF there were great needs in the Hattian population which we could only partially satisfy. A few days later the Cuban medical team of doctors and nurses arrived. They have made a significant contribution to cover the needs of the population. I think they are doing a very good job."

U.S. and British military

According to the English newspaper The Guardian of Dec. 4, "large boxes of Stars and Stripes-branded toys and scarves [are] regularly delivered by U.S. helicopters with aid packages." A large number of U.S. helicopters are taking part in the fighting in Afghanistan, a few hours' flight time away. Given that many roads and bridges were destroyed by the earthquake, along with houses, schools and clinics, helicopters are often the only mode of transportation in this rugged and devastated area. Britain also has commando teams in Pakistan providing engineering help to the Pakistani army.

After the number of Cuban doctors grew from 300 to 789, the U.S. freed up some of the resources it has been using to occupy and control Afghanistan.

The presence of foreign troops has raised the hackles of some of the Islamic groups in Pakistan, in particular the six major Islamic parties in a coalition called Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), who see the troop presence as an extension of their activities in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of the ethnic groups in this part of Pakistan also live in Afghanistan.

Washington is urging the Pakistani army to take control of all the relief efforts and undercut the Islamic groups. While it hasn't moved against the Islamic groups, the Pakistan army did stop the trade unions' Fifth Revolutionary Solidarity Caravan at the border, after it had picked up supplies in India, and seized all its goods. □

workers world editorial

The Montreal summit

In its first term the Bush gang not only unilaterally sparked aggression against Iraq and Afghanistan, and tried to bully China, North Korea, Iran and Venezuela—it also thumbed its nose as the rest of the world attempted to come to grips with global warming's link to greenhouse gases. That is, Washington refused any cooperation with the Kyoto Protocol, a first and limited international attempt to lessen damage to the environment.

Now, 30 months of Iraqi resistance have shown that building a foreign policy based on fear of the Pentagon can expose U.S. military weaknesses and lead to a disastrous quagmire. Hurricane Katrina has shown in a most devastating way that the global warming threat goes beyond South Pacific islands and the frozen tundra in the North. The war, and the water, can come home to the U.S., which produces 25 percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions with only 5 percent of its population.

After a precedent-setting hurricane season coupled with a shift in the Gulf Stream and a long-lasting drought in—all places—the Amazon basin, a large majority of scientists and a solid majority of people, including in the U.S., are convinced that global warming is real and that it is connected with burning oil, gas and coal. The Bush gang, however, still think they can unilaterally flip a finger at the world.

They showed this arrogance once again at the 10-day-long Global Warming Summit in Montreal that ended Dec. 12. Washington came in once again as the major world power refusing to cooperate with plans to at least slow down the climate's descent into chaos.

The world demanded much more from the summit. There were protests in New Orleans and 40 other U.S. cities, as

well as in Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Russia, South Africa, South Korea and Turkey—a total of 100,000 people on Dec. 4. Some 10,000 people marched through London, carrying banners linking Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair as “climate criminals.” That can be added to the charges against them for war crimes against Iraq.

The biggest demonstration was in Montreal itself, where Inuit people from the far north explained how the melting ice is ruining their home economy of fishing and hunting.

Many U.S. mayors took part in the summit, but the Bush administration remained dead set against in any way subjecting the economic strategy of the major U.S. private corporations to the needs of humanity. There, it is clear, is the crux of the problem. The Bush administration, still in bed with the oil monopolies and serving their greed, refuses all cooperation. But the other capitalist governments also have their hands tied to profit-hungry corporations. The forces involved represent competing capitalist economic entities and their bottom line is—the bottom line, that is, profit.

Every attempt should and must be made to slow down the rush toward environmental disaster that unrestrained capitalism represents. But the only way for humanity to get a grasp on the vast problems caused by global warming is for the means of production to be in the hands of that section of humanity that doesn't live off of profits—the working people. Only they can decide how to control development so that the world economy develops without putting the world itself in peril. That means socialism. □

RICHARD PRYOR

A comedian who told it like it is

By Larry Hales

Richard Pryor, recognized as one of the greatest comedians to take the stage, died from a heart attack on Dec. 10. He was only 65 years old and had suffered with multiple sclerosis for 20 years.

In all the news articles that have appeared surrounding the comedian's death, Pryor's history of drug addiction along with other troubles is dredged up along with interspersed acknowledgment of the comedian's unique talent. Though everything that Pryor did and said and every mistake made by him were part of who he was, there was no need to addle articles with tales of mistakes or addiction. His life was always an open book and he never shied away from it.

Very simply put, Richard Pryor was ingenious. He was the embodiment of the struggle of Black people for justice in the United States. Like Paul Robeson, with his booming baritone voice; or John Coltrane's abstract jazz improvisation that soared, breaking form, almost imprinting the clouds; or hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur, whose life ended too soon, exclaiming the many degradations of being Black in North American society but who left an indelible mark on the consciousness of so many young Black males—Richard Pryor was able to communicate the Black struggle for self-determination with humor devoid of being self-effacing. Comedian Chris Rock stated, “Richard Pryor was the Rosa Parks of comedy.”



Richard Pryor

Pryor was born in Peoria, Ill., in 1940 in a brothel owned by his grandmother. He started stand-up comedy as a teenager. He began to find himself and his act in the late 1960s, and by the early to mid-1970s he was in full stride. His act began to reflect his frustrations, and those of Black people in general, as he remarked on racist police brutality and the Black community's distrust of the police, which can never

be rectified. He commented on the Vietnam War as well and on Richard Nixon, remarking, “If you can pardon Nixon, you can pardon anybody.”

Pryor didn't tell jokes. He told stories about unforgettable characters, many of whom he grew up with, that lingered in the mind. He was great at it and drew endless laughter, but the stories could just as easily make a person cry. His talent was that he would make people double over laughing until tears welled up in their eyes and, even while being entertaining, at the same time make observations from a Black perspective.

Richard Pryor will be remembered for his groundbreaking material and how it sprang from outrage and hurt and combined both entertainment and social commentary. He will forever be remembered as one of a number of Black artists who brilliantly expressed the anger and determination of an oppressed people through culture.

HAROLD PINTER'S NOBEL SPEECH

'Bush & Blair are war criminals'

British playwright Harold Pinter used the platform of accepting his Nobel prize for literature on Dec. 7 to call for putting George Bush and Tony Blair on trial as war criminals. He was too ill to travel from his home in London to Stockholm but recorded his 45-minute talk on video. Below are excerpts.

What has happened to our moral sensibility? ... Look at Guantanamo Bay. Hundreds of people detained without charge for over three years, with no legal representation or due process, technically detained forever. This totally illegitimate structure is maintained in defiance of the Geneva Convention. It is not only tolerated but hardly thought about by what's called the “international community.”

This criminal outrage is being committed by a country, which declares itself to be “the leader of the free world.” Do we think about the inhabitants of Guantanamo Bay? What does the media say about them? They pop up occasionally—a small item on page six. They have been consigned to a no man's land from which indeed they may never return.

At present many are on hunger strike, being force-fed, including British residents. No niceties in these force-feeding

procedures. No sedative or anaesthetic. Just a tube stuck up your nose and into your throat. You vomit blood. This is torture. What has the British Foreign Secretary said about this? Nothing. What has the British Prime Minister said about this? Nothing. Why not? Because the United States has said: to criticise our conduct in Guantanamo Bay constitutes an unfriendly act. You're either with us or against us. So Blair shuts up.

The invasion of Iraq was a bandit act, an act of blatant state terrorism, demonstrating absolute contempt for the concept of international law. The invasion was an arbitrary military action inspired by a series of lies upon lies and gross manipulation of the media and therefore of the public; an act intended to consolidate American military and economic control of the Middle East masquerading—as a last resort—all other justifications having failed to justify themselves—as liberation. A formidable assertion of military force responsible for the death and mutilation of thousands and thousands of innocent people.

We have brought torture, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, innumerable acts of random murder, misery, degradation and death to the Iraqi people and call

it “bringing freedom and democracy to the Middle East.”

How many people do you have to kill before you qualify to be described as a mass murderer and a war criminal? One hundred thousand? More than enough, I would have thought. Therefore it is just that Bush and Blair be arraigned before the International Criminal Court of Justice. But Bush has been clever. He has not ratified the International Criminal Court of Justice. Therefore, if any American soldier or for that matter politician finds himself in the dock, Bush has warned that he will send in the Marines. But Tony Blair has ratified the Court and is therefore available for prosecution. We can let the Court have his address if they're interested. It is Number 10, Downing Street, London.

Death in this context is irrelevant. Both Bush and Blair place death well away on the back burner. At least 100,000 Iraqis were killed by American bombs and missiles before the Iraq insurgency began. These people are of no moment. Their deaths don't exist. They are blank. They are not even recorded as being dead. “We don't do body counts,” said the American general Tommy Franks.

Early in the invasion there was a pho-

tograph published on the front page of British newspapers of Tony Blair kissing the cheek of a little Iraqi boy. “A grateful child,” said the caption. A few days later there was a story and photograph, on an inside page, of another four-year-old boy with no arms. His family had been blown up by a missile. He was the only survivor. “When do I get my arms back?” he asked. The story was dropped. Well, Tony Blair wasn't holding him in his arms, nor the body of any other mutilated child, nor the body of any bloody corpse. Blood is dirty. It dirties your shirt and tie when you're making a sincere speech on television.

The 2,000 American dead are an embarrassment. They are transported to their graves in the dark. Funerals are unobtrusive, out of harm's way. The mutilated rot in their beds, some for the rest of their lives. So the dead and the mutilated both rot, in different kinds of graves. ...

Many thousands, if not millions, of people in the United States itself are demonstrably sickened, shamed and angered by their government's actions, but as things stand they are not a coherent political force—yet. But the anxiety, uncertainty and fear which we can see growing daily in the United States is unlikely to diminish. □

Why the youth rebelled in France

Below are excerpts from an article by Senegal-based Samir Amin, president of the Third World Forum and the World Forum of Alternatives, and Rémy Herrera, a teacher at the University of Paris and researcher at France's National Center of Scientific Research (CNRS). The full article is available at www.workers.org.

Our goal here is to try to explain the reasons for the revolt that the media called the "insurrection of the suburbs," which took place between the end of October, after the suspicious deaths of two young people pursued by the police force of Clichy-Sous-Bois, and the end of November, after the decision of the government to extend a state of emergency for three months.

Many reports exaggerated the extent of these events. The disorders took place only in or near the extensive public housing projects, called "cités," in the poorest working-class suburbs, where tourists and business executives seldom go. The young people who revolted against the established order focused their attack on property, setting fire to thousands of cars and to shopping centers, police stations and banks but not attacking people—except for the police force.

Without accepting the forms that it took, much of France understood this explosion and, indeed, considered it absolutely inevitable. The entire capitalist society here offers nothing to these young people—neither satisfactory housing conditions, nor education leading to stable employment, nor hope of social advancement, nor recognition—nor does it listen to them. The capitalist state connects with these young people through its police stopping, questioning and searching them; this is sometimes brutal, and is always intimidating and humiliating.

Many observers rightly condemned the repression directed at the youths, but in general concentrate their criticisms on Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, a candidate for the 2007 presidential election. His resignation would obviously not of itself resolve the problems of the suburbs. Sarkozy says he wants "to clean with the karcher" (high-pressure water hose) the cités of the "rabble" which "pollutes them."

The inhabitants of the cités consider

Sarkozy's remarks not only insulting, but also a demonstration of hatred against the poor in general. The working class as a whole, employed and unemployed, all those who undergo and who resist the destructive offensive of neoliberalism, felt they were his targets.

A class problem

Those who interpreted the rebellions solely through the prism of race and religion forget that this revolt is at root a problem of class. It was a rebellion of the children of the common people, whose conditions of life are insecure and who are currently experiencing the class struggle from the blows of the repressive state apparatus: reinstatement of the double penalty of prison and deportation, disproportionate sentences given to first offenders, even the very night of their first arrest—such as one year in prison for setting fire to garbage cans and eviction of those holding residence permits who were picked up during the riots.

This is class repression, directed against the poor, against this underprivileged class of the cités, of diverse origins. That many are of North African and sub-Saharan origin does nothing to diminish the fact that the common feature of those who revolted, whether they be from French parentage or from immigrants or from foreigners, is poverty.

This class repression, aggravated by the race hatred of the narrow, bloated, coupon-clipping French elite that weighs down the young rebels of the suburbs, can expose a fact that is often hidden. The struggles of these young people cry out for an alternative to the current society, to the hard reality of the cités: the failures at school, discrimination, unemployment, noisy and deteriorated housing, badly served by too-expensive public transport, with all-too-rare social and cultural infrastructures.

These young people, along with their parents, friends and neighbors, are in the front line of the struggle for an alternative being built today of an ethnically mixed, multicolored France, open to the world—and especially to the South, the Third World, a France strong and proud of its diversity.

In the very fury of these events, these young people remind us that France is growing more diverse, that Marianne (the

symbol of the French Republic—ed.) has brown skin. The evidence is there: in the working classes, the ordinary people, many of the young people, and also those not so young, made their choice long ago. Despite the difficulties confronting such an anti-racist project, in the poor districts—the fields of battle on which the decisive combat against racism takes place—very broad sectors of the people consciously chose to accept each other, live and build a life together in mutual respect. Even if the majority of these young rebels are not politicized, their action is political.

The great majority of the young people who rose up are French citizens and have no need to be "integrated"—into what? They need to be accepted and recognized for what they are and what they do. They are French like the others, they will build the France of tomorrow: a society of mutual acceptance, a community of the races and nationalities.

Since Nov. 8, 2005, in the "significant zones," the rebels face a state of emergency: exception laws that, allow the authorities to prohibit circulation, make house arrests, close performance spaces and prohibit meetings, search homes, control the press, publications, radio and cinemas, and allow military tribunals to seize people for crimes and offenses concerned with the common law. That is to say, a repressive law which the "democrats" who control us had resorted to only against the Algerians (1955) or the Kanak people of New Caledonia (1985)—but which, in metropolitan France, they didn't use even in 1968 [when there was a general strike of 10 million workers].

Role of the left

It is nevertheless true that many young people of the suburbs, and in France generally, are today completely cut off from the struggles for emancipation by the French labor movement and knowledge of its history. But what is undoubtedly more serious still is that many militants and progressives are unaware of all the history and the news of resistance in the cités and of the immigrants in France.

MARTINIQUE

Marchers say no to 'law of shame'

By G. Dunkel

Thousands of inhabitants of the Caribbean island of Martinique marched through the streets of its capital, Fort-de-France, on Dec. 7 to denounce a 'law of shame' recently reaffirmed by France's parliament.

Martinique is one of France's colonies in the Caribbean. Its 430,000 people are descendants of Africans kidnapped and enslaved to work on sugar plantations. As citizens of France today, they are subject to its laws.

The controversial law instructs schools to teach "the positive aspects of the French presence overseas and in North Africa." It was passed last February, but some progressives in the French parliament recently tried to amend it by removing the word "positive."

The UMP, France's ruling party, voted the amendment down after a campaign led by Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy. This was after the French government had

clamped a tight lid on angry protests by young people in October and November in poor, working-class public housing projects surrounding the major cities of France, where the residents are mainly North African and West African in origin.

Sarkozy, who used inflammatory, racist and derogatory language to describe the youth in revolt, was due to visit Martinique on Dec. 7, igniting a firestorm of anger. Some 30 unions, associations, student groups, and the independence movement in Martinique called for the mass mobilization in Fort-de-France to make sure Sarkozy knew he was definitely not welcome.

Aimé Césaire, who represented Martinique in the French parliament from 1946 to 1993 and is a major French literary figure, announced he would not meet with such a "shameful" politician.

On Dec. 6 Sarkozy canceled his trip, but the demonstration happened anyway because it was about "a law, not the man." □

On Dec. 6 Sarkozy canceled his trip, but the demonstration happened anyway because it was about "a law, not the man." □

Racial profiling behind brutal killing?

Continued from page 8

and shot at point-blank range.

Had Menezes been agitated or nervous, he would have had due cause. The British government had just given greater profiling powers to cops and authorized them to use deadly force after a group of bombings on subway cars. These had been attributed to anger among young Muslims over the brutal war in Iraq and Britain's junior partnership with American imperialism. It kicked up rampant racism against people of Middle Eastern, Indian and South East Asian descent, as well as from Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa.

The two shootings highlight the racism that is endemic to the U.S., Britain and

France. While the police of all these imperialist countries are used to beat down workers and "keep them in their place," the violence and brutality is especially intense against people of color and occurs daily. That is why the outlying ghettos of Paris burned recently. Young North and Sub-Saharan African youth expressed outrage by rebelling in the streets after two youth died while being hunted by cops.

The youths' righteous clamor came after years of brutality by cops and years of oppression and poverty. That outcry can be heard in oppressed communities throughout the United States, and it should indeed be extended to the racist profiling involved in the Alipizar shooting. □

El juicio de Saddam Hussein

El movimiento en contra de la guerra tiene que rechazar la 'justicia' colonial

Por Sara Flounders

El juicio de Saddam Hussein, que comenzó con mucha publicidad internacionalmente, es un intento desesperado para justificar y prestar algo de legitimidad a la criminal invasión y ocupación de Irak. Es un intento por desmoralizar y dividir la resistencia a la ocupación. No tiene nada que ver con la justicia o la verdad.

Todas las fuerzas que internacionalmente se han opuesto a la guerra que por 15 años ha librado EEUU contra Irak — la cual ha incluido sanciones causantes de hambruna, bombardeos e invasión, también deben oponerse a todos los esfuerzos para justificar la ocupación, incluyendo el actual juicio del ex mandatario de Irak y siete miembros de su gobierno.

No importa la variedad de perspectivas políticas sobre el carácter del gobierno de Saddam Hussein, lo que es esencial es oponerse a esta justificación de los EEUU para la guerra. Guardar silencio sobre esta cuestión significa prestar credibilidad a la falsa corte creada por los EEUU en el gigantesco centro de comando de los EEUU conocido como la Zona Verde.

El gobierno de los EEUU no tiene ningún derecho a mantener ni siquiera un solo soldado en Irak. No tiene el derecho a bombardear, imponer sanciones o forzar a que la gente de Irak pase hambruna. No tiene el derecho a imponer un gobierno colonial o a establecer cortes en Irak. No tiene el derecho a decidir el destino de Saddam Hussein así como no tiene el derecho a controlar el petróleo y los demás recursos naturales de Irak.

La detención de Saddam Hussein y los otros acusados, al igual que la de decenas de miles de otros iraquíes, está totalmente basada en una guerra criminal e ilegal de agresión.

El Tribunal Especial Iraquí y el juicio de Saddam Hussein también son violaciones al derecho internacional. La Convención de Ginebra, de la cual los EEUU son firmantes, explícitamente prohíbe que un poder ocupante cree cortes. Además, el juicio en sí, junto al aislamiento de los acusados, la prohibición del derecho a visitas y la privación de los derechos legales, viola la Convención Internacional sobre los Derechos Políticos y Civiles.

Los abogados defensores que se han presentado han sido amenazados e intimidados. Dos abogados defensores, miembros del equipo de defensa, han sido asesinados.

Hoy en Irak no hay sistema judicial. No hay códigos, ni leyes, ni cortes. Aún no hay un acuerdo sobre una constitución. La estructura completa del estado iraquí fue destruida. En su lugar sólo queda la forma más brutal de dominación militar.

El Tribunal Especial Iraquí ha sido ilegítimo desde su formación. Es la creación de L. Paul Bremer III de los EEUU, el ex jefe de la Autoridad Provisional de la Coalición —el poder ilegal de ocupación. Bremer inicialmente nombró a Salem Chalabi, el sobrino del Primer Ministro Suplente de Irak, Ahmad Chalabi, a que organizara y encabezara la corte.

Chalabi había regresado a Irak desde su exilio con la ayuda de tanquetas de los EEUU en abril del 2003. Abrió un despacho de abogados para hacer un anteproyecto de nuevas leyes que abrieran a Irak al capital extranjero, en colaboración con el despacho de abogados de Douglas Feith, un beneficiario de la guerra e ideólogo de la pandilla de Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld y arquitecto principal de la guerra.

Bremer también nombró a los jueces del tribunal. El financiamiento y el personal están controlados totalmente por las fuerzas militares de los EEUU. El Congreso de los EEUU ha apropiado \$128 millones para pagar por el funcionamiento de la corte. Por supuesto, la corte no tiene ninguna jurisdicción sobre los crímenes cometidos por las fuerzas militares de los EEUU durante la invasión y la ocupación.

El papel de la satanización

El juicio que ahora está en proceso es parte del esfuerzo sostenido de los EEUU por totalmente satanizar a Saddam Hussein. Esto ha sido parte esencial de la guerra de 15 años contra Irak.

La propaganda estadounidense incesantemente ha descrito a Hussein como un maniaco malévolo, un dictador brutal y una amenaza a todo el planeta, que estaba listo para atacar con armas nucleares, químicas o biológicas en pocos minutos. Fue acusado de jugar un papel en el ataque del 11 de septiembre y estar colaborando con al-Qaeda.

Tanto los republicanos como los Demócratas sabían que esto era un fraude. Las bombas de los EEUU habían destruido totalmente la capacidad industrial de Irak. Pero ningún político fue capaz de cuestionar la satanización.

Todas las guerras de los EEUU contra pueblos y naciones oprimidas han comenzado saturando completamente a la población civil con propagandas de guerra que satanizaban tanto al líder de la población que cualquier crimen era entonces tratado como algo aceptable y fuera de cuestionamiento. Esto ha sido la realidad desde las guerras contra las poblaciones indígenas y la satanización de Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Jerónimo y muchos otros líderes indígenas, hasta los líderes de todas las luchas progresistas y revolucionarias durante los últimos 50 años.

No importa cuán comprometido esté el líder con la no violencia. Consideremos el caso del ex sacerdote secuestrado, el Presidente Jean-Bertrand Aristide de Haití, que fue acusado de corrupción, narcotráfico y violencia pandillera. Hoy, el Presidente Hugo Chávez de Venezuela y el Presidente Mahmoud Ahmadinejad de Irán están descritos cada vez más como si fueran maníacos, dictadores y el mal encarnado.

Desde la época del Imperio Romano, la justicia practicada por el vencedor ha significado la humillación, degradación y el aislamiento del líder vencido para así establecer un orden nuevo. De este modo

se oculta la brutalidad de la abrumadora agresión y da legitimidad a los nuevos soberanos.

Los procesos de Denmark Vesey y Nat Turner en el Sur de los EEUU durante el período anterior a la guerra civil fueron, para los dueños de esclavos, la manera de esconder la violencia y brutalidad degradante de la esclavitud como derechos de propiedad "otorgados por Dios". El secuestro y el proceso del presidente de Yugoslavia Slobodan Milosevic después del bombardeo estadounidense/NATO de Yugoslavia que duró 78 días, y en que cientos de personas murieron, fue un caso similar de justicia del triunfador.

Estados Unidos y las Armas de Destrucción Masiva

Mientras Estados Unidos convierte a Saddam Hussein en un demonio, debe recordarse que el Pentágono ha usado armas de destrucción masiva, no solo en Irak sino en contra de otras innumerables poblaciones indefensas, desde Corea y las Islas Filipinas, hasta Vietnam, Laos, Camboya, Nicaragua, Granada, Libia, Líbano y Yugoslavia.

Es el aparato militar estadounidense el que debe ser enjuiciado por haber usado las armas más horribles, desde bombas nucleares a napalm, pasando por fósforo blanco, armas contra-personales, las llamadas bunker busters (armas de penetración), y armas radioactivas de uranio reducido.

En Irak, la destrucción civil intencionada fue calculada, fotografiada, y estudiada. La infraestructura fue deliberadamente convertida en objetivo militar. Los depósitos de agua, los sistemas de alcantarillado y saneamiento, las estaciones de cloro y los surtidores de agua fueron bombardeados. Redes eléctricas y de comunicaciones fueron destruidas. La producción de alimentos fue un objetivo militar, desde la irrigación, fertilizantes y pesticidas, hasta el procesamiento, refrigeración y almacenamiento. En el bombardeo de 1991 más de 150.000 iraquíes murieron, comparado con 156 soldados estadounidenses muertos.

Año tras año, las delegaciones internacionales que fueron a Irak, incluyendo muchas organizadas por el Centro de Acción Internacional encabezadas por el ex fiscal general estadounidense Ramsey Clark, han informado sobre el impacto del bombardeo de 1991 y los años de sanciones de la ONU impuestas por los Estados Unidos. Las sanciones crearon una hambruna artificial. Las importaciones de alimentos, medicinas y materiales necesarios para la vida civil eran negadas.

Según cálculos de la misma ONU, más de 1,5 millones de iraquíes murieron de enfermedades prevenibles. Medio millón de niños menores de 5 años murió entre 1991 a 1996. Tanto las sanciones como el bombardeo, que comenzaron bajo George H.W. Bush, continuaron a lo largo de los ocho años de la administración de Clinton. El bombardeo estadounidense continuó a un promedio de 25 incursiones al día por

12 años.

Clark, fundador del Centro de Acción Internacional, y como asesor legal de Saddam Hussein, ha desafiado valientemente la ilegitimidad y la ilegalidad del Tribunal Especial Iraquí.

Como abogado internacional de derechos humanos, su posición es totalmente consistente con sus 15 años de oposición a la guerra estadounidense en Irak—desde su visita a Irak en 1991 cuando Estados Unidos bombardeó cada 30 segundos por 42 días, a lo largo de los 12 años de sanciones, hasta su oposición a la invasión del 2003. Es consistente con su oposición ética a otras guerras e intervenciones estadounidenses en Vietnam, Nicaragua, Granada, Irán, Libia, Líbano, Panamá y Yugoslavia.

Oponerse a la satanización (de Saddam Hussein) es parte de la oposición a la guerra estadounidense y su aparato de propaganda.

El objetivo político y militar es la soberanía iraquí

Los agentes del imperialismo estadounidense han establecido dictaduras brutales y corruptas y han financiado gobiernos militares desde una parte del mundo al otro—desde Indonesia, hasta Chile y el Congo.

Su problema con Saddam Hussein no es que fuera un dictador. Es que él se negó a rendir la soberanía de Irak. Él rehusó dar a las corporaciones estadounidenses control sobre el petróleo iraquí, el cual había sido nacionalizado desde los años 60. Para los imperialistas, el peor crimen fue que él rechazó someterse al Nuevo Orden Mundial.

Son Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld y Blair quienes deben estar encausados por sus crímenes de guerra y sus crímenes contra la humanidad.

El movimiento global que se opone a la ocupación estadounidense de Irak debe considerar en serio su responsabilidad de oponerse a cada aspecto de la guerra estadounidense — especialmente a las cortes falsas y las elecciones montadas que tratan de legitimar y legalizar esta piratería.

Implícita en el llamado de regresar las tropas ahora es la demanda de detener todo el brutal proceso de recolonización. Esto quiere decir la cancelación de los contratos de las corporaciones estadounidenses que han privatizado y saqueado los recursos iraquíes, la clausura de cientos de bases estadounidenses y los miles de puntos de inspección, la cancelación de las misiones de "buscar y destruir" y la clausura de las prisiones secretas donde miles y miles de iraquíes están siendo torturados y humillados.

Y la clausura de las cortes ilegales creadas por los Estados Unidos.

Sara Flounders es co-directora del Centro de Acción Internacional. Ha redactado cinco libros sobre Irak y ha coordinado varias delegaciones, encabezadas por Ramsey Clark, que han visitado Irak para desafiar el bombardeo y las sanciones estadounidenses.