

THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Thousands rally in L.A. against education cuts



Militant/Naomi Craine

Teachers, parents, and students protest May 26 outside Los Angeles school board meeting against coming layoffs and other cuts in education in California.

BY WENDY LYONS

LOS ANGELES—Some 350 students walked out of Santee High School here May 22 and marched three miles to the offices of the Los Angeles Unified School District to protest impending layoffs. They were joined by 50 students from Manual Arts High School. Another 40 students protested outside Lincoln High School.

The same day 3,000 state workers, union advocates, and home-care recipients demonstrated in downtown Los Angeles to protest proposed cuts

to the state home-care program.

The protests were in response to an escalated assault on working people. California governor Arnold Schwar-

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zenegger announced he would halt welfare payments, cut off health insurance to working-class families,
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N.Y.: Four entrapped by FBI, arrested on conspiracy charges

BY CINDY JAQUITH

NEW YORK—In a case based on FBI entrapment, four men were arrested here May 20 on charges of conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction and conspiracy to acquire and use an anti-aircraft missile. They are being held without bail.

Three U.S.-born Black workers—James Cromitie, David Williams, and Onta Williams—and one Haitian, Laguerre Payen, were arrested after they allegedly joined FBI provocateur Shahed Hussain in placing what they thought were active bombs outside the Riverdale Jewish Center and the Reform Riverdale Temple in the Bronx.

Earlier, the government says, the four had traveled to Connecticut with Hussain to pick up what they were told was a Stinger missile, supposedly for use against aircraft at Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh, New York, from which U.S. troops and supplies are regularly flown to Iraq and Afghanistan. All four defendants lived in Newburgh.

New York State representative Peter King claimed, “This was a very seri-

ous threat that could have cost many, many lives if it had gone through. There’s a real threat from homegrown terrorists and also from jailhouse converts.” All four men had served time
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‘Militant’ fund nearly \$10,000 over the goal!

BY ANGEL LARISCY

Thanks to all readers of the *Militant* who helped make the annual fund drive a big success! In eight weeks supporters of the socialist newspaper contributed and help raise \$114,785—109 percent of the \$105,000 goal.

Jacque Henderson from Houston said that they had good success following up with readers to discuss the importance of the paper and asking for contributions. Some decided to contribute because of the paper’s role in building the May Day actions for
Continued on page 4

White House uses ‘terror’ pretext to erode rights

BY DOUG NELSON

In a May 21 speech on “national security”—couched as a critique of policies under the previous Bush administration—U.S. president Barack Obama defended the use of military tribunals, indefinite “preventive detention,” and the government’s “state secrets privilege.”

The president stated his administration’s goal of improving Washington’s image in the world, criticizing the Guantánamo prison camp and Bush’s authorization of torture techniques for undermining Washington’s “war and counterterrorism efforts.” The main thrust of his speech, however, was making a case for expanding and legitimizing the U.S. government’s attack on constitutional rights and protections in the name of combating “terrorism.”

By last year it became clear that a majority of the U.S. rulers and the Bush administration had come to see the continued existence of the Guantánamo prison—and widespread public knowledge of the inhumane conditions and lack of rights there—as a political liability.

On January 22, Obama issued an executive order vowing to close the Guantánamo facility within one year. The Senate in a 90-6 vote May 20 rejected the president’s request for \$80 million to close the prison camp. Legislators
Continued on page 11

U.S. gov’t threatens N. Korea after test

BY BEN JOYCE

Led by Washington, the United Nations Security Council is threatening to impose new sanctions on North Korea after Pyongyang conducted an underground nuclear test May 25 and three missile launches.

“We are united, North Korea is isolated, and pressure on North Korea will increase,” said Susan Rice, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, referring to the Security Council vote condemning the test. She threatened that North Korea would “pay a price for their action.”

“Mr. Obama’s aides have said that they were determined to organize a significantly stronger response than the Bush administration had managed,” reported the *New York Times*.

Yukio Takasu, Japanese ambassador to the United Nations, called the test a threat to Japan, Asia, and the world. Tokyo has increased its military cooperation with Washington as part of intensifying pressure on Pyongyang.

The UN Security Council is made up of permanent representatives from China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, plus 10 rotating members, currently Libya, Mexico, Japan, Vietnam, Austria,
Continued on page 7

Socialist conference to discuss crisis, workers road to power

BY PAUL MAILHOT

The program taking shape for the June 18–20, 2009, Socialist Education and Active Workers Conference in Oberlin, Ohio, will feature talks by Socialist Workers Party leaders, complementary classes on Marxist politics, and skills-training workshops for communist workers in the garment and meat-packing industries.

This integrated program of political talks, classes and discussions, and practical communist work in the labor movement and on college campuses will deepen the understanding of conference participants in the unfolding historic world capitalist economic and social crisis. It will also point the road forward for the working class in organizing to take political power out of the hands of the capitalists and reorganize society from top to bottom in the interest of the toiling majority.

Participants from across the United States and several other countries will discuss their work in building communist parties, the opportunities to work with young people on campuses on a

range of political issues, and recruitment to and building the Young Socialists. The conference will also prepare participants to read, study, and sell the forthcoming Pathfinder book with the working title *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.

Jack Barnes, SWP national secretary, will present the conference political re-
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Unionists at N.Y. hotel stop work over wages

BY MAURA DELUCA AND HARRY D'AGOSTINO

NEW YORK CITY—About 100 hotel workers at Jumeirah Essex House on Manhattan's Central Park South conducted a four-hour work stoppage May 12. The area has some of the city's most expensive hotels.

Some 500 workers there are members of Local 6 of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International (HERE). They were protesting the bosses' withholding pay in the form of tips to the banquet staff, reportedly amounting to nearly \$2 million.

Union officials told the *New York Times* that the action had been called because of the company's refusal to comply with an arbitrator's 2007 ruling. It said that the formula used in New York City hotels to calculate banquet workers' tips has been improperly calculated since 2003.

The method has resulted in lower tips for banquet servers, captains, and bartenders, whose wages are calculated by a percentage of the cost of each event.

"The banquet waiters were never used for private functions. Instead, they would use the restaurant workers," Luis Capelo, 43, a doorman at Jumeirah, told the *Militant*. "It didn't affect me, but I stopped work as well in support of my coworkers. It felt good to show that we had the power to stop working. I've been working here 19 years, and this was my first time doing something like this."

Other workers in the hotel report-

ed that the company was combining jobs to put a heavier workload on each worker. Ramón Leon, 50, an engineer and former union delegate, said, "They are cutting personnel and want us to do the work of two people. They're talking about cutting wages as well. The company is making a profit and still trying to squeeze more out of us." To prepare for the action, delegates from each department in the hotel had a meeting the day before, added Leon.

Both Leon and Capelo reported that a meeting is being scheduled between the union, the arbitrator, and the hotel, and that workers are planning to stop work again depending on the outcome of that meeting. "We did this 10 years ago when I was working at the old Ritz Carlton over tips and vacation pay, and we won," Leon proudly stated.

Louie Jordan, 37, who works as a building engineer, said, "We need a united front against being taken advantage of. We just want fairness, and we need to provide for our families."

North Carolina teachers protest wage cuts



Militant/Greg Preston

RALEIGH, North Carolina, May 16—To chants of "Enough is enough" and "Don't balance the budget on our backs!" about 1,000 teachers and supporters affiliated with the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) rallied today at the association's headquarters here.

The teachers were protesting a decision by Gov. Beverly Perdue, who ordered state employees to take a 10-hour furlough, at a loss of 0.5 percent of their wages. She claims this will make up approximately \$65 million of the state's \$3 billion debt.

Following the rally, NCAE members organized a motorcade to the governor's mansion, where hundreds of cars festooned with banners circled the block in an effort to "get the governor's attention."

—GREG PRESTON

California inmate to appeal execution to high court

BY CHRIS REMPLE AND WENDY LYONS

LOS ANGELES—"The state of California is about to execute an innocent man," said Judge William Fletcher, who wrote a dissenting opinion in favor of a stay of execution for Kevin Cooper. A panel of federal judges in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals narrowly denied Cooper a stay May

11, with 11 judges dissenting.

Cooper was convicted in 1985 of the murder of four members of a Chino Hills, California, family and has been on death row since. Fletcher, in his dissent, noted, "The district court failed to provide Cooper a fair hearing and flouted our direction to perform the two tests" on evidence.

Fletcher pointed out that initial tests of a T-shirt with Cooper's blood on it found near the scene showed high levels of a preservative, indicating that the blood sample was planted. Police had taken a sample of Cooper's blood when he was arrested. The state expert who did the tests withdrew his results and said the specimen had been contaminated in his lab.

In 2004 the court of appeals ordered new tests of evidence in the case. This time the traces of preservative in the blood were less. Judge Marilyn Huff ruled that while preservative was found, it was in such a small amount

that tampering was not proven.

A fact sheet on the case prepared by supporters of Cooper features statements by the only survivor of the killings saying that the attackers were three whites or Mexicans. Cooper is African American.

The fact sheet also points out that evidence favorable to Cooper was denied to the defense, including a pair of bloody coveralls submitted to the police by a woman who said they belonged to her boyfriend. She said she thought he had been involved in the murders. The police destroyed the coveralls without testing them, according to the defense.

Norman Hile, Cooper's lawyer, plans to ask the Supreme Court to take the case.

THE MILITANT

Free Troy Davis! Abolish death penalty!

The 'Militant' covers meetings and protests exposing the frame-up of Troy Davis, demanding a halt to his execution and freedom now. It explains how the death penalty is a class-biased, racist weapon aimed at working people.

Don't miss a single issue!



Militant/Seth Galinsky

Protest in New York City May 19 demanding freedom for Troy Davis.

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SWP candidates oppose California budget cuts

Raise fighting perspective to confront crisis

The Socialist Workers Party campaign in California joined with students and workers in the state in opposing measures by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger aimed at "balancing" the state's budget on the backs of working people. The following statement was released May 26 by SWP candidates Eleanor García for U.S. Congress in the 32nd District in California, Gerardo Sánchez for treasurer of San Francisco, and Lea Sherman for city attorney of San Francisco.

In the face of the deepest economic crisis in the memory of most working people, the wealthy ruling class and their Democratic and Republican party politicians are waging a counter-revolutionary assault on the conditions of life of the working class. They want working people to pay the tab for the capitalist economic crisis. Working people need to unite and fight for immediate demands that protect our interests as a class.

The Socialist Workers Party candidates urge working people to fight together around these demands:

- Guaranteed unemployment compensation at union scale for every worker until they find a job.
- An increase in the federal minimum wage to union scale.
- A federally funded crash public works program to put millions to work at union scale to build schools, hospitals, roads, and public transportation.
- No cuts to medical benefits for anyone laid off from their job—guaranteed lifetime medical care and retiree pensions for all.
- Immediate and unconditional legalization of undocumented workers.
- An immediate halt to all home and farm foreclosures.
- An immediate end to all income taxes on workers.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger says that to balance the state's budget, he must stop all state welfare payments, cut off health insurance to working-class families, end in-home care for the elderly, stop cash grants to college students, and lay off thousands of workers. He says that working people are responsible for these cuts, because we did not support ballot propositions in the May 19 special election. He says that he is just doing his job.

But "balancing the budget" is simply a set of code words for making

working people bear the weight of the economic crisis. There is plenty of money. California pays out tens of billions in interest to its bondholders. As California Treasurer Bill Lockyer said "short of a thermonuclear war" the wealthy California bondholders will be paid in full. In short, the interests of the billionaire bankers, real estate developers, and industrialists are always ahead of the interests of the working class. If working people lose our jobs, our homes, our schools and health care, well, that's just tough luck.

In California official unemployment already hovers around 11 percent and is expected to rise. In reality this figure is much higher because the bosses' government does not count so-called discouraged workers or most immigrant workers without papers in its statistics. This is not a California crisis. It



Militant/James Harris

Eleanor García (left), Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in 32nd District of California, speaking to garment worker and his daughter at May 26 rally protesting state cuts in education outside school board meeting in downtown Los Angeles.

is national and international with tens of millions of working people worldwide being thrust into conditions of unemployment, malnourishment, and with poor to no health care. Political

power must be taken out of the hands of the tiny capitalist minority by a proletarian revolution. Then we can begin to reorganize society from top to bottom in the interest of working people.

Thousands rally in L.A. against education cuts

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and stop cash grants to college students. Threats have also been made to deport up to 19,000 undocumented immigrants in California prisons.

These are the latest proposals to "balance the state budget" in the wake of the defeat of ballot propositions that would have increased taxes and fees and cut social programs. The federal government has also refused to guarantee billions in emergency short-term loans to the state.

At the same time California treasurer Bill Lockyer insists that short of "thermonuclear war" wealthy California bondholders will be paid in full.

Official unemployment in the state is more than 11 percent. In many rural areas it is above 15 percent and in the Imperial Valley it is more than 26 percent. Unemployment among 16–19 year-olds is also over 26 percent. Many workers are working short weeks.

In the first quarter of this year home foreclosures in Los Angeles County rose 38 percent. In West Covina alone, two sheriff's deputies carried out 25 evictions in one day. The two cops say they evict 80–100 families a week.

Rising taxes, social program cuts

Sales taxes in the county have gone up to 9.75 percent; gasoline has an added 12 cents per gallon tax and is rapidly rising in price. Car registration fees are doubling and parking meters now cost \$2 an hour in many parts of the city while there have been \$459 million in transit cuts.

Schwarzenegger ordered more than 238,000 state workers to take two days off per month unpaid. About 2,250 teachers have received layoff notices and are waiting to see if they will be axed.

The new measures proposed by the governor would dismantle CalWorks, which serves more than 500,000 families with children, and eliminate Healthy Families, which provides medical coverage to 928,000 children and teens. Also to be chopped is CalGrants, which provides 77,000 grants each year for college tuition to low- and middle-income students.

In a "heads I win tails you lose propo-

sition," Schwarzenegger and state legislators placed six measures on the May ballot to "solve the budget deficit." They were all defeated except Proposition 1F that prevents pay raises for legislators and statewide officeholders.

Proposition 1A and 1B would have restored billions cut from the schools in exchange for higher income, sales, and vehicle taxes and cuts in cost-of-living-increases for state payments. Propositions 1C and 1D would have cut funds for education unless a new lottery was approved and a childhood development program slashed. Proposition 1E would have drastically curtailed a mental health program.

The cutbacks to In-Home Supportive Services, which provides home care to the elderly, blind, and disabled, would reduce wages for thousands of state workers. In Santa Clara County, union workers earning \$12.35 would have their wages cut to \$8 an hour. In addition to the pay cuts, hours of service would be reduced.

At a community meeting of students, parents, and teachers May 21 to discuss the impending cuts, a representative of

the school district said that as bad as the cuts in teachers would be it would only increase class sizes by an average of two students. Teachers responded by describing classes that have already grown to 40 and even 60 students.

Christian Lopez, a student at Santee High School, said, "We need money for education. We don't care where you get it. Just get it. We are going to protest until we change this situation."

Eleanor García, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Congress in the 32nd Congressional District, explained that it is a dead end for working people to try to solve the crisis we confront in the framework of balancing the state budget. "These propositions were like asking us which poison do you want to drink to solve their crisis," she said.

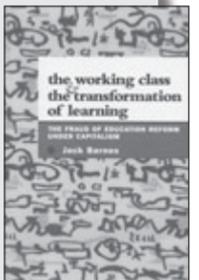
"We need to unite and fight together for what workers need, not be fighting each other for crumbs. This is a crisis of the capitalist system. We need a revolution by workers to create a system that truly meets our needs. That's what my campaign is about. Right now we need to fight together around the most immediate things we need."

Recommended reading

The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning

by Jack Barnes

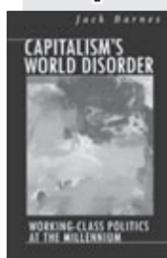
"Until society is reorganized so that education is a human activity from the time we are very young until the time we die, there will be no education worthy of working, creating humanity." —\$3



Capitalism's World Disorder

by Jack Barnes

The social devastation and financial panic, coarsening of politics, cop brutality, and imperialist aggression—all are products not of something gone wrong with capitalism but of its lawful workings. —\$25



The Changing Face of U.S. Politics

by Jack Barnes

Building the kind of party working people need to prepare for coming class battles through which they will revolutionize themselves, their unions, and all society. —\$24



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— CALENDAR —

CANADA

Toronto
Celebrate the Publication in Chinese of *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*. Speakers: Dick Chan, Song Ge, Karen Sun of Chinese Canadian National Council; Emily Lefebvre, student at Queen's University; Jorge Soberón, Consul General, Cuban Consulate in Toronto; Mary-Alice Waters, editor, *Our History Is Still Being Written*, president, Pathfinder Press. Sat., June 6. Reception, 1 p.m.; program, 2 p.m. Agincourt Community Centre, 31 Glen Watford Drive. Bus 85 from Don Mills station, bus 57 from Kennedy Station. Tel.: (416) 596-0833 Ext. 3. E-mail: info@ccnctoronto.ca.

Gov't screen of local jails aimed at deportation list

BY SETH GALINSKY

Under the guise of going after “criminal” immigrants, the administration of President Barack Obama plans to expand the deportation of undocumented workers who pass through local jails and to check the fingerprints of virtually every prisoner in the United States against a Department of Homeland Security database.

In his 2010 budget, Obama proposes a 30 percent funding increase for “Secure Communities,” a program that screens fingerprints of prisoners in local jails. A pilot effort began in October under George W. Bush and now operates in 48 counties across the United States. The project includes Los Angeles, Dallas, Houston, Miami, Boston, and Phoenix and will check 1 million prints this year.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials hope to expand the program to nearly all 3,100 local jails nationwide by the end of 2012. The matching of fingerprints is already

done at the roughly 1,200 federal and state prisons in the United States.

The fingerprints or “biometrics,” as ICE likes to call them, will be entered into the system. They will include everyone picked up and jailed for anything from traffic violations to drunk driving.

“By checking all people who are booked,” notes the *Washington Post*, the program avoids charges of “racial profiling.” If the goal is met, 14 million bookings in local jails each year would be screened against federal records. ICE deported some 117,000 immigrants accused of nonimmigration crimes last year.

ICE has also been rapidly expanding E-Verify, which allows employers to check on the immigration status of job applicants. In 2008, 63,592 companies joined the program. ICE official Michael Aytes told a congressional committee in April that more than 117,000 companies now use E-Verify. Fourteen percent of all non-agricultural new hires in the United States are checked with



Militant/Jenny Shegos

May 1, 2008, demonstration in Minneapolis. Government now plans to check fingerprints of all inmates in local jails in search of undocumented immigrants.

the program, he said.

Last year, ICE deported 369,049 people, the highest number in U.S. history. The agency held an average of 30,429 people in immigration jails every day,

also the highest ever.

Homeland Security secretary Janet Napolitano announced one change from Bush administration policies: she claims that workplace raids will now focus on prosecuting employers who hire undocumented immigrants and arrest workers only after bosses are indicted.

In 2008, 6,287 immigrant workers were arrested in factory raids. Even though this is the largest number since the Department of Homeland Security was created it is less than 2 percent of all those deported.

On May 8, construction of a “virtual fence” resumed on the U.S.-Mexico border. Seventeen camera and radio towers are being placed on a 23-mile stretch near Tucson, Arizona, and another 36 others are planned for 30 miles near Ajo.

Designed to catch immigrants entering the United States from Mexico, the \$6.7 billion project is planned to cover all but 200 miles of the 2,000-mile border by 2014.

Workers, youth to attend socialist conference

Continued from front page

port and the conference summary talk. Party leader Mary-Alice Waters will give a featured talk on the Cuban Revolution and its place in world politics.

Another talk will highlight the progress communist workers have made the past 12 months in improving their sewing and knife skills as part of the efforts to strengthen the SWP, a proletarian party with members in the garment and meatpacking industries.

Working collectively on improving their skills is decisive to the ability of communist workers and youth to maintain jobs and carry out political work under the increasingly difficult conditions posed by mounting unemployment and the slowdown of world trade. This talk will discuss why systematic work on campus to attract fresh forces to the communist movement is equally decisive to building a proletarian party today.

Conference attendees will choose from several classes on Marxist politics that will be repeated throughout the conference so participants can attend two or three different ones.

Three classes will focus on the themes of the upcoming international conference on José Martí, Benito Juárez, and

Abraham Lincoln, to be held in Monterrey, Mexico, next October. These interconnected classes will explain the impact that the U.S. Civil War and the defeat of the slaveholders had on revolutionary developments in Mexico and Cuba.

Classes will be given on two Pathfinder titles—*Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* and *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa* (see box on this page).

‘Militant’ fund at \$114,000

Continued from front page

immigrant rights. “When a longtime reader, a rail worker, decided he was going to give \$300,” said Henderson, “his friend, a teacher and new *Militant* reader, decided to match the contribution with her own \$300.”

“The fact that we exceeded our raised goal by a significant amount was a reflection of the response of *Militant* supporters to the quality of articles in the *Militant* in the context of the unfolding economic crisis,” said John Steele from Montreal. Supporters of the paper in Canada organized three special forums and din-

ners to raise money for the fund and brought in \$8,787—well over their increased quota of \$7,500.

In New York *Militant* supporters went more than \$1,700 over their quota. “In the final weeks of the fund drive and subscription campaign, participation in the weekly *Militant* Labor Forums increased, including a number of young workers and students,” said Cindy Jaquith, New York fund drive organizer. “This reflects greater interest in what socialists have to say about world politics, and has led to increased and new contributions to the *Militant*.”

The *Militant* Fund ran concurrently with an international campaign to sell subscriptions to the paper. Over seven weeks more than 2,100 subscribers to raise money for the fund and brought in \$8,787—well over their increased quota of \$7,500.

The fund helps finance the regular operating expenses of the paper, covering printing and shipping costs, rent and other utilities, and makes it possible to send reporters around the world to cover events and activities of interest to working people. As “a socialist newsweekly published in the interests of working people,” the *Militant* relies on donations from its readers who know its importance and realize it has been able to come out consistently for more than 80 years because of contributions like theirs.

Thank you and congratulations to all those who contributed and worked to make the campaign a success!

‘Militant’ Fund Drive Spring 2009 ♦ Final chart

Country	Quota	Paid	%
UNITED STATES			
Los Angeles	\$8,800	\$10,079	115%
Chicago	\$9,000	\$10,030	111%
New York	\$15,500	\$17,236	111%
Houston	\$3,000	\$3,235	108%
San Francisco	\$13,000	\$13,981	108%
Twin Cities, MN	\$6,600	\$7,106	108%
Washington, D.C.*	\$5,400	\$5,820	108%
Seattle*	\$7,200	\$7,629	106%
Miami	\$3,300	\$3,468	105%
Philadelphia*	\$3,600	\$3,740	104%
Atlanta	\$8,000	\$8,082	101%
Des Moines, IA	\$1,900	\$1,908	100%
Newark, NJ	\$3,200	\$3,201	100%
Boston	\$2,800	\$2,725	97%
Other		\$550	
TOTAL	\$91,300	\$98,789	108%
CANADA*	\$7,500	\$8,787	117%
NEW ZEALAND			
NEW ZEALAND	\$2,500	\$3,070	123%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Edinburgh	\$500	\$589	118%
London	\$1,500	\$1,910	127%
TOTAL	\$2,000	\$2,499	125%
AUSTRALIA			
AUSTRALIA	\$1,050	\$1,090	104%
SWEDEN			
SWEDEN	\$400	\$550	138%
TOTAL	\$104,750	\$114,785	109%
Should be	\$105,000	\$105,000	100%

*Raised quota

Classes at June 18–20 Socialist Conference

- The National Question and the Line of March to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat
- José Martí: The Class Struggle in the United States after the Defeat of Radical Reconstruction and the Fight for Cuban Independence
- Benito Juárez and the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution in Mexico: The Fight for Independence and the U.S. Civil War
- Abraham Lincoln: The Revolutionary War to Abolish Slavery and the Defeat of the European Colonial Powers in Mexico
- The Frame-Up and Imprisonment of the Cuban Five: An Assault on the Rights of U.S. Workers
- Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?
- Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa
- Iran Today and Its Impact on Developments throughout the Middle East from Beirut to Tel Aviv to Baghdad to Kabul

Hearing of Bay Area cop in killing of youth resumes

BY JOEL BRITTON

OAKLAND, California—Supporters of justice for Oscar Grant are preparing to again crowd in to an Alameda County courtroom here May 26 when the preliminary hearing in the prosecution of Johannes Mehserle, a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) cop resumes.

Grant, a 22-year-old supermarket worker and African American, was shot and killed by Mehserle on New Year's Day at the Fruitvale BART station. Passengers nearby captured the shooting on cell phones or video cameras and several testified for the prosecution on May 18 and 19. Mehserle is shown standing above Grant and shooting him in the back as another cop held Grant face down on the platform.

The earlier disclosure in the media of videos showing the unprovoked killing of Grant led to widespread outrage. On January 13, following weeks of protests, the Alameda County District Attorney charged Mehserle with murder.

The opening hours of the hearing to determine whether Mehserle will stand trial for murder or a lesser charge featured testimony from Karina Vargas and Margarita Carazo. They each said they began videoing because they thought it was "wrong" what Mehserle and other BART cops were doing in forcing Grant and some of his young friends off the train and mistreating them in the moments before Mehserle drew his handgun and shot Grant.

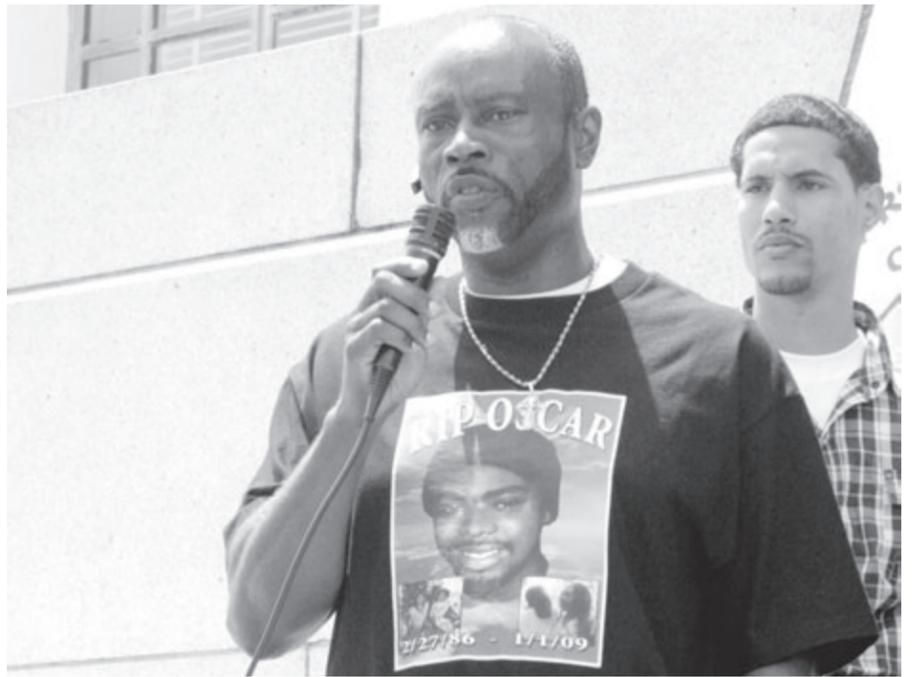
Vargas testified that the cops cursed at Grant and four of his friends while ordering them off the train. Carazo said one of the cops then pushed Grant into a wall.

After the prosecution witnesses completed their testimony, Mehserle's attorney argued his case, that the killing of Grant was not a murder "because Mr. Mehserle didn't intend to use his firearm." He claimed the cop thought he was firing his Taser, which was justified because Grant

was "resisting arrest."

When the hearing was recessed, Grant family attorney John Burris told the media that "If Mehserle had made a mistake, the first thing he would have done is told his partner, 'I made a mistake.'" Instead, Mehserle was silent, which "speaks volumes."

Cephus Johnson, Grant's uncle, told reporters that seeing his nephew get shot over and over as the videos were replayed during the hearing "is really striking to the soul. It's very painful each time I look at that video, and I'm sure for the rest of the family it's very painful. But we know this is something we have to go through at this time to get justice for Oscar."



Cephus Johnson, uncle of Oscar Grant, speaks at May 18 rally outside courthouse where transit cop is being prosecuted for killing Grant on New Year's Day. Militant/Carole Lesnick

Convictions in Miami 'terror' case stir outrage

BY ERNEST MAILHOT

MIAMI—Residents of Liberty City, a largely African American section of Miami, are outraged at the frame-up convictions of five construction workers from the neighborhood. Together with one other defendant who was acquitted, they are known as the Liberty City Six. This was the third time the government had tried to convict them.

"The government wouldn't be satisfied until they got a conviction. They kept going back over and over," Pauletta Adams, a Liberty City resident, told the *Militant*. "That was straight out wrong. The government didn't have a case. They got rid of juries until they got one that would cooperate and get a conviction."

On May 12 the trial of six Black workers here concluded with five—Narseal Batiste, Patrick Abraham, Stanley Phanor, Rotschild Augustine, and Burson Augustin—found guilty of "conspiracy to commit terrorism" and one, Naudimar Herrera, found innocent.

The first trial ended in acquittal of a seventh defendant and a hung jury for the other six. The six were retried in 2008 and again the jury was dead-

locked. Federal authorities moved to a third trial, which again appeared to be heading to a mistrial until Judge Joan Lenard removed a juror for supposedly refusing to deliberate with the others.

According to the *Miami Herald*, some of the jurors told the judge that juror No. 4—all remained anonymous under the judge's order—did not want to "follow the court's instructions" and did "not want to make any decisions based on the evidence . . . but rather relies solely upon her feelings."

But the juror told the judge that while she was willing to follow the law she was entitled to what she felt. "I'm not agreeing with what some of the others are saying, and they're holding that against me. . . . We all have our opinions," the *Herald* said the juror told Judge Lenard. She also informed the judge that most of the jurors had tried to get her to change her mind, one of them threatening to come over to her table and standing up as if to do so.

One of the groups here that has spoken out against the frame-up of the Liberty City Six is Veye Yo, a Haitian rights organization. Tony Jeanthenor, a leader of Veye Yo, told the *Militant*,

"The FBI framed these people. It has nothing to do with truth or justice. They [Liberty City Six] are mostly Haitians and have different beliefs than a lot of people so the government thought they could set them up."

The May 17 *Miami Herald* editorial expressed dismay at the conviction saying, "If the expectations were that the FBI would monitor suspect groups, eavesdrop on their conversations, surveil their activities and stop them before they acted, this is not exactly what happened with the Liberty City group. The FBI used informants to infiltrate the group, and paid them \$140,000 for their work. . . . They had no weapons, no plans and frequently asked the informants for money. . . . This wasn't so much a case of the FBI interrupting an ongoing terror plot, but of the agency providing a blueprint for it."

Lyglenson Lemorin, who was found innocent in the first trial, remains in federal detention in Georgia. Lemorin, 34, is a legal U.S. resident originally from Haiti and has lived in the United States since he was 11. He faces deportation on the same charges he was acquitted of.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



June 8, 1984

NEW YORK—Over 100 people came to commemorate the birthday of Malcolm X at a meeting here in Harlem hosted by the Manhattan chapter of the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP). The program included a panel discussion on the 1984 elections, featuring Black presidential candidates and their representatives.

The program opened with a film showing of "Malcolm X: Struggle for Freedom," in which Malcolm explains the need for Black people to organize independent of the Democratic and Republican parties.

During the discussion period, one person said Blacks should support [Democrat Jesse] Jackson because his campaign "goes beyond" the Democratic and Republican parties. [Socialist Workers Party candidate Mel] Mason responded that this was exactly the problem—it doesn't. Jackson supports the capitalist system, which is the root of the oppression of Blacks.



June 8, 1959

"Disaster in Cuba." That's the headline Barron's featured for the news about the law just passed by the Castro government reducing the legal maximum of estates to a pitiful 1,000 acres.

"So-Called Land Reform is Likely to Yield Bitter Fruit," continues the national business and financial weekly that is a favorite among bankers, stockholders, and Wall Street gamblers.

What makes the reform law particularly "disastrous" in Barron's opinion is that it "may do severe harm to foreign investments on the island, ranging upwards of a quarter-billion dollars, including those of such large U.S. concerns as the Cuban-American Sugar Co. and United Fruit."

What is most outrageous about the "ugly brute," it seems, is that instead of the Wall Street peasants who have been working the land up to now, "the veterans of Castro's army, many of whom happen to be city-bred, also will enjoy a valid claim to the seized property."



June 9, 1934

OAKLAND, Calif.—The West Coast longshoremen's strike is entering a new phase. Both the ship owners and the unions are preparing for a long and bitter struggle.

Recently new forces to augment the police have been recruited in almost all West Coast cities. These new additions to the forces of "law and order" are being used to drive the picket lines back from the waterfront, in an attempt to crush the strike.

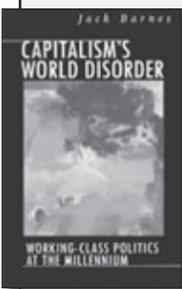
The San Francisco Chamber of Commerce boldly declares that it is going to open the port to shipping.

So far the unions have answered all such statements by new and fresh walk-outs, by strengthening the picket lines and by tightening the strike generally.

Communists have played a leading role in this work and served to strengthen the militancy, the morale, and the organization of the strike.

For further reading

Capitalism's World Disorder



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The social devastation and financial panic, coarsening of politics, cop brutality, and imperialist aggression—all are products not of something gone wrong with capitalism but of its lawful workings. **\$25**

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Women's oppression rooted in class-divided society

Printed below is an excerpt from *Is Biology Woman's Destiny?* by Evelyn Reed, one of *Pathfinder's Books of the Month for June*. In this booklet Reed rebuts biological and anthropological theories that claim genes determine the social role of men and women. Pseudo-scientific arguments that claim females are handicapped by their organs and functions of motherhood are aimed at rationalizing the oppression of women, Reed explains. The real cause of the subjugation and degradation of women is bound up with divisions in class society and the structure of the capitalist system today. Copyright © 1972 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Militant/Diana Newberry

Protesters in San Francisco march to defend women's right to choose abortion, Jan. 24, 2005. Women's right to control their own bodies is at center of fight for equality.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY EVELYN REED

According to the churches and the guardians of the established order, women's place is in the home serving a husband and children, because the family has always existed. But it is not true that procreation, which is a natural function, is identical with the family, which is a man-made institution. While women have always been the procreators of children, they have not always been isolated in self-enclosed units, each woman serving a husband and family. The "eternal family" hoax

is only the ultimate expression of the "uterus theory" of female inferiority.

The first division of labor between the sexes was not, as it is today, a division between a husband and wife, with the man doing outside work while the wife stayed at home doing housekeeping chores. Both sexes in primitive society performed social labor. This was possible because their system of communal production was accompanied by communal child care and education. Female children were trained by the adult women into their future occupations while the male children at a certain age were turned over to the adult men who became their tutors and guardians. Both production and child raising were originally social functions, performed by both women and men. It was only with the downfall of the matriarchal commune and its equalitarian relations between the sexes that women were dispossessed from social production and put into family servitude. Men took over in the new divisions of labor.

Historians often point out that with the advent of the new economy founded upon agriculture and stock raising, many new divisions of labor came into existence, replacing the former sexual division of labor. To give a few examples, pastoral activities became separated from farming; metallurgy, house construction, shipbuilding, textiles, pottery, and other crafts became spe-

cialized trades. Along with these divisions of labor in the crafts, there grew up specializations in the cultural sphere, from priests and bards to scientists and artists.

The roles of the sexes were radically transformed in the process. As these new divisions and subdivisions of labor grew and proliferated they became more and more—and finally exclusively—in the hands of the men. The women were squeezed out of these fields of social and cultural work—and pushed into home and family life. With the rise of state and church power, women were taught that their whole lives were bounded by the four walls of a home and the best women were those who served their husbands and families without complaint. In this elevation of men and downgrading of women, they were compelled to forfeit not only their former place in social production but also their former system of communal child care.

To be sure, women of the plebeian classes, the "common people," have always worked. In the long agricultural period they worked on farms as well as in cottage crafts, and they did all this along with bearing children and taking care of households. But working in and through and for an individual husband, home, and family, is by no means the same thing as engaging in socialized labor in a communal society. Participation in social production develops the mind and body; isolation and preoccupation

with home chores weakens them and narrows the outlook.

In other words, the division of labor between the sexes has *not* always been the same. The male-dominated division of labor that came in with class society, private property, and the patriarchal family represented a colossal robbery of the women. This is even more true today with the reduction of the extended, productive farm family to the tiny, nuclear, consuming family of the urban era.

To refute the myths that have helped to keep women oppressed—from the "uterus theory" to the "eternal family" propaganda—is not simply a matter for scientific and historical correction. It has profound implications for the women's liberation movement. The argument that woman's biological makeup is responsible for her social inferiority is the chief stock-in-trade for the male supremacists. If this claim proves to be unfounded their position collapses.

Females in nature suffer no disabilities compared to males as a result of their biology. Nor were women downgraded as a result of their maternal role in preclass society. They were held in the highest esteem for their combined functions as producer procreatrix. Woman's position in society, therefore, has been shaped and reshaped by changing historical conditions. The drastic transformation that overturned matriarchal communism brought about the downfall of the female sex. It was with the rise of patriarchal class society that the biological makeup of women became the ideological pretext for justifying and continuing the dispossession of women from social and cultural life and keeping them in a servile status.

Only by recognizing this can women come to grips with the real causes of our subjugation and degradation which are today bound up with the structure of the capitalist system. Our struggle for liberation will be hindered so long as we are hoodwinked into believing that nature rather than this society is the source of our oppression.

A banner carried by women in a recent demonstration proclaimed, "Biology Is Not Woman's Destiny." This should become a watchword of the feminist movement.

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June BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Workers fight asbestos poisoning in Montana

BY CECELIA MORIARITY

SEATTLE—A federal court acquitted W.R. Grace & Co. and three former executives May 8 of all charges that they knowingly allowed residents of Libby, Montana, to be exposed to asbestos.

Grace operated a giant vermiculite mine in Libby. Asbestos occurs naturally where vermiculite is found. Airborne asbestos causes mesothelioma, or cancer of the pleural lining of the lung, cancer of the lung itself, and scarring of the lungs, called asbestosis. It may take from 10 to 40 years from the time of exposure for the symptoms to appear.

Attorneys for Libby residents blame poisoning from tremolite—one of the most toxic forms of asbestos—for 2,000 cases of illness and 225 deaths in and around the mining community.

“No matter how the federal trial turned out, W.R. Grace is guilty of what they did to Libby,” stated Gayla Benefield, a long-time activist on behalf of asbestos victims, in a May 13 phone interview with the *Militant*. “The company knew when they bought the mine in 1963 that asbestos dust from the vermiculite ore was killing miners and people in Libby.”

Benefield lost both her parents to the asbestos-related disease. Her father worked in the mine. “The biggest thing for me is for people to know the story of Libby and for people to understand that the men went to work not knowing they were bringing that poison home to their families,” she said. “It was tragic when they found out.”

Benefield said miners were dying at a lower rate from the 1920s to the 1950s. But then “in 1955 the Zonolite Company, who owned the mine at the

time, began to use a different process to mine the ore and production was stepped up,” she said. “Before the mine was closed in 1990, it provided 80 percent of the world’s vermiculite.”

Dust from the mill stacks covered mine buildings, the mountainside, and when the wind blew from the east, the town of Libby.

In 2001 the Environmental Protection Agency moved a Libby high school, a middle school, and an elementary school to the top of its clean-up list after mine tailings from the Grace mine were found on two running tracks and a skating rink.

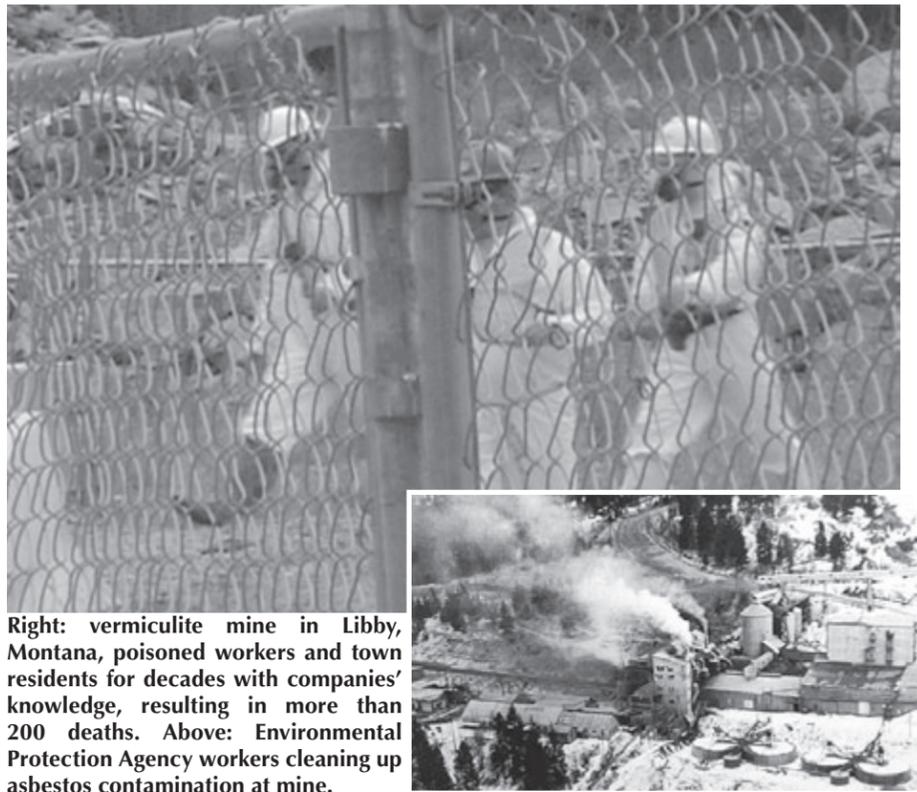
Asbestos sickening workers

Benefield said from the 1950s to the 1970s it was very obvious that the asbestos dust was sickening miners and that workers at the Libby lumber mill began to get just as sick as the miners. Tree debarkers became ill as tremolite fibers were found embedded in the tree bark in the logging areas.

“W.R. Grace did not tell miners the company’s own annual chest X-rays were showing evidence of asbestosis,” Benefield said.

A *Post-Intelligencer* investigation in 1999 reported that at least 192 people had died from asbestos in the mine’s vermiculite ore, and at least another 375 people had been diagnosed with fatal diseases caused by the asbestos. Since 1984, more than 187 civil actions had been filed against Grace on behalf of Libby miners and their families, with 120 cases pending.

Benefield said that settlements in the civil trials came with gag orders. “They offered \$20,000 to \$50,000 at first, but when it became known that it cost \$500,000 just to die of this



Right: vermiculite mine in Libby, Montana, poisoned workers and town residents for decades with companies’ knowledge, resulting in more than 200 deaths. Above: Environmental Protection Agency workers cleaning up asbestos contamination at mine.

disease, W.R. Grace raised the compensation. They offered me \$605,000 for my mother’s death. But I wanted a guilty verdict and refused, so it could go to trial and I wouldn’t be gagged. I was awarded \$250,000 after Grace was found guilty.

“We were collateral damage to the

company, victims of industrial murder. I wanted that guilty verdict.”

A number of companies in the U.S. have been under bankruptcy protection in the face of half a million asbestos and mesothelioma injury claims that had been filed by 2004. Some 50,000 were filed in 1998 alone.

U.S., UN threaten N. Korea

Continued from front page

Turkey, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, and Croatia.

After a brief meeting of the council May 25, Russian ambassador Vitaly Churkin, the body’s president, said members “voiced their strong opposition to and condemnation of the nuclear test.” The Chinese government said it was “resolutely opposed to the test.”

All permanent members of the Security Council have nuclear weapons. Washington—the only government to ever unleash nuclear weapons on human

beings—had a stockpile of more than 10,500 warheads as of 2002. Although Paris last tested an atomic bomb in 1996, it maintains its nuclear stockpile.

Using the test as a pretext, the government of South Korea announced it will now fully participate in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which legitimizes piracy by asserting the “right” of governments to arbitrary search and seizure of cargo on vessels the imperialist powers suspect are carrying “weapons of mass destruction.” South Korea has been an “observer” in PSI operations up to now.

Sanctions currently in place against Pyongyang require all UN member states to freeze the assets of institutions and individuals the UN claims are tied to North Korea’s weapons programs, including resources that would contribute to the development of nuclear power, as well as other trade restrictions.

U.S. imperialism and its allies have been trying to punish North Korea for defying their demands for decades. Since the Korean War ended in 1953 with U.S. imperialism’s first military defeat, Washington has used a variety of economic sanctions and military threats against the workers and peasants of North Korea.

For further reading

Abortion Is a Woman’s Right

by Pat Grogan

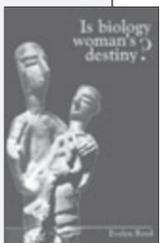
Why abortion rights are central not only to the fight for the full emancipation of women, but to forging a united and fighting labor movement. \$5

Is Biology Woman’s Destiny?

by Evelyn Reed

“It is not true that nature is responsible for the oppression of women; such degradation is exclusively the result of man-made institutions . . . in class-divided patriarchal society.” \$5

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Obama seeks ‘common ground’ with abortion foes

BY CINDY JAQUITH

In his May 17 commencement speech at Notre Dame, President Barack Obama called for seeking “common ground” with anti-abortion forces in reducing the number of women seeking abortions.

Despite that stance, right-wing groups objected to the Catholic university inviting the president to speak and awarding him an honorary degree, because he supports legal abortion and embryonic stem cell research. But their efforts to muster a protest turned out only 100 people at its height.

It was a mark of the widespread acceptance of women’s legal right to abortion, including among Catholics. While a recent Gallup poll shows 51 percent consider themselves “pro-life” compared to 42 percent who say they are “pro-choice,” a CNN poll found that 69 percent oppose the overturn of the 1973 Supreme Court ruling legalizing abortion.

In his speech Obama did not refer to abortion as the right of women to decide, but rather focused on the “moral” issues where he said pro- and anti-abortion forces can agree. This was in line with his comments to the media after his first 100 days in office, when he said, “I think abortion is a moral issue and an ethical issue. There are some who suggest that this is simply

an issue about women’s freedom and that there’s no other considerations.”

He told the Notre Dame graduates, “We must find a way to live together as one human family” and “finding that common ground . . . is not easy.”

“Maybe we won’t agree on abortion,” Obama said, “but we can still agree that this heart-wrenching decision for any woman is not made casually, it has both moral and spiritual dimensions. So let us work together to reduce the number of women seeking abortions, let’s reduce unintended pregnancies. Let’s make adoption more available.”

In his race for the presidency, Obama campaigned along similar political lines. When he first took office, he reversed the Bush administration’s ban on stem cell research, cut off funding for abstinence-only sex education, and called for revising the broad protections Bush granted medical personnel who refuse to perform abortions for reasons of “conscience.”

He had promised while a candidate that “the first thing I’d do as president” is sign the Freedom of Choice Act, a bill in Congress to codify the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. But as he said April 29, that bill is “not the highest legislative priority.”

Relatives of Cuban Five speak on frame-up case

BY PETER PIERCE

HAVANA—At the Second International Youth Meeting in Solidarity with the Cuban Five, held here May 11–12, *Militant* reporters interviewed Mirta Rodríguez and Magali Llort, the mothers of Antonio Guerrero and Fernando González, respectively.

Guerrero and Fernando González, along with Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, and René González, are known around the world as the Cuban Five. They had accepted assignments to keep the Cuban government informed of the activities of armed counterrevolutionary groups in south Florida that have a history of carrying out deadly attacks on Cuba.

In September 1998 they were arrested in Miami and later convicted in a political frame-up trial on charges including failure to register as foreign agents, conspiracy to commit espionage, and, in the case of Hernández, conspiracy to commit murder.

The youth conference called for international days of action June 6–8 to demand that the U.S. government release the five (see article in June 1 *Militant*).

Rodríguez gave a picture of the conditions at the “supermax” U.S. Penitentiary in Florence, Colorado, where Guerrero is serving a sentence of life imprisonment plus 10 years.

“The prison has some unusual characteristics,” she said. “If Tony is in Unit Three, for example, and two prisoners in Unit Ten get in a fight, they punish everyone in all the units. The good are made to pay for the sinners. If it is a major problem, they can be in this situation for hours, days, weeks, even months.”

Rodríguez described an incident April 13 last year when she was at the prison to visit Guerrero. A group of fascists, part of a white-supremacist prison gang, staged a celebration of Hitler’s birthday in the recreation yard and taunted Black prisoners. This provoked a fight. Prison guards shot and killed two prisoners and wounded five others. Although Rodríguez had been able to visit Guerrero several times during her stay in the Colorado, after the fight no more visits were allowed prior to her April 28 return to Cuba.

In spite of the difficult conditions in the prison, Antonio has distinguished himself in the eyes of fellow inmates.

“The five are respected because they deal with people with respect,” Rodríguez said. “Tony gives classes in prison: Spanish, English, three mathematics

classes, and literature. Ever since he arrived at the prison he has taught classes for those who have not graduated from high school.”

In her interview, Llort spoke about the importance of building solidarity for the case in the United States. Her son, Fernando González, is serving a 19-year sentence at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana.

“One example that demonstrated the power of solidarity was what happened when the war in Iraq started,” she said. “Each of the five was transferred to solitary confinement. They were thrown in ‘the hole.’ It was an order from the U.S. attorney general to isolate them.

“Thanks to the number of protests that were sent to the White House and the U.S. Department of Justice, they were released from those conditions after 28 or 29 days—this measure was originally set to last a year or more.”

Speaking at the conference, Llort emphasized the importance of bringing the campaign to free the five to university campuses.

“The universities are ideal places to build solidarity for this fight,” she said. “Young people are more receptive to these types of things. They are less tied to tradition, less timid, more open. They often communicate with many other young people in other universities and can rapidly help spread knowledge about this case.”

Jacob Perasso contributed to this article.

Youth tribunal condemns attacks on Cuba



Militant/Tom Baumann

HAVANA—Irma González Salanueva, daughter of René González, testifies at the May 12 Youth Tribunal against Terrorism held here at the José Martí Anti-Imperialist Plaza. René González is one of the Cuban Five, five Cuban revolutionaries unjustly held in U.S. jails for more than a decade.

More than a dozen youth from Cuba and around the world addressed the gathering. The tribunal served to denounce the U.S. government for including Cuba in its list of countries sponsoring terrorism. The event was held as part of the activities for the Second International Youth Meeting in Solidarity with the Cuban Five.

Other speakers included relatives of victims of several terrorist attacks on Cuba and a Cubana airliner, a Cuban farmer, a Mapuche Indian from Chile, and international students currently enrolled at the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana. Rolando Pérez Labrada, whose father was killed attempting to prevent the hijacking of a Cuban vessel, and Jacob Perasso, representing the Young Socialists from the United States, also spoke.

—TOM BAUMANN

California campus meeting: End Cuba embargo

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

RIVERSIDE, California—Defense of five Cuban revolutionaries who have been unjustly held in U.S. jails for more than a decade was a featured part of a May 20 conference here on “Ending the U.S. Embargo of Cuba” at the University of California Riverside (UCR). More than 250 people attended.

Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, René González, and Fernando González—internationally known as the Cuban Five—were arrested by FBI agents in south Florida in September 1998 and sentenced to long prison terms on false charges ranging from “conspiracy to commit espionage” to, in the case of Hernández, “conspiracy to commit murder.” They had been in the United States keeping tabs on counterrevolutionary

groups that have carried out violent attacks against Cuba. The U.S. Supreme Court will decide this month whether or not to hear their appeal.

Panelist Saul Landau, who is making a documentary on their case, urged participants to join the fight to protest their unjust imprisonment. Armando Navarro, professor of Ethnic Studies at the University and coordinator of the National Alliance for Human Rights, announced that participants were invited to a follow-up meeting on June 27 to discuss the next steps in the fight to end the U.S. embargo of Cuba and campaign to free the five.

“To my knowledge we are the first university to organize an event of this kind, but there needs to be more meetings like this,” said Navarro. “This calamitous embargo is anachronistic, and it needs to be ended.”

A broad range of academic departments and programs, and student groups on the campus, sponsored the meeting.

Latin American Perspectives, a theoretical journal for discussion and debate on the political economy of capitalism, imperialism, and socialism in the Americas, also sponsored the event. Ron Chilicothe, the journal’s managing editor and an economics professor at UCR, explained that the most recent issues were “a celebration of 50 years of the Cuban Revolution.”

Big boost in libraries in Cuba

Rhonda Neugeleaur, a bibliographer in Latin American Studies at UCR, said, “Percentage-wise, there are more

libraries in Cuba today than in California.” Before the 1959 revolution, she noted, Cuba had 32 public libraries. Now there are nearly 400 in addition to school libraries. She showed slides of her July 2008 trip on a bookmobile with fellow librarian Dana Lubow to Granma Province in the Cuban countryside. The bookmobile was filled with 3,000 donated books.

“The embargo creates real shortages of basic resources for Cuban librarians,” she said. “Librarians in the U.S. are also limited by the U.S. embargo, because we cannot share databases and resources with our Cuban counterparts.”

Other speakers at the meeting included Miguel Salas, a history professor at Pomona College; Paul Ryer, an anthropology professor at UCR; and Blaise Bonpane, the host of “World Focus” of KPFC radio.

In the discussion, UCR student Jesus Meza reported that students who do not have health insurance have to pay an additional \$700 to attend college. “On top of that tuition just went up by 10 percent. What can we learn from Cuba about health care and education?” he asked.

“Millions of people are asking themselves that same question as the capitalist crisis deepens,” said James Harris, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Los Angeles in the recent elections. “The example Cuba offers is that in order to solve our most basic problems, workers need to make a proletarian revolution and take political power.”

For further reading...

Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?
by Mary-Alice Waters

Revolutionary struggles by working people are inevitable, forced upon us by the crisis-driven assaults by the propertied classes. In growing solidarity and the emergence of a fighting vanguard of working people, the outlines of these coming class battles can be seen. —\$7

Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution

Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong talk about the historic place of Chinese immigration to Cuba, and the more than five decades of revolutionary action and internationalism. Available in English, Spanish, and Chinese. —\$20

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FBI wanted Cuban 5 to become traitors

Gerardo Hernández: Fear, intimidation didn't work, so they put us in 'the hole'

The following is the second installment of an interview with Gerardo Hernández, one of five Cuban revolutionaries who have been held in U.S. prisons on frame-up charges for more than 10 years. Saul Landau, a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., who is making a documentary on the case, conducted the April 1 interview by phone. The first installment appeared in last week's *Militant*. The remaining three parts will be printed in the coming weeks.

Known internationally as the Cuban Five, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, and René González have been in prison since their arrest on Sept. 12, 1998. They had been gathering information on counterrevolutionary Cuban American groups that operate from south Florida with Washington's complicity and have a history of violent attacks on Cuba.

The five were framed and convicted in 2001 on charges that included failing to register as agents of a foreign government and "conspiracy to commit espionage." They were given sentences ranging from 15 years to life. Hernández, who was also falsely accused of "conspiracy to commit murder," was sentenced to two life terms plus 15 years, and is currently being held in the federal penitentiary in Victorville, California.

A 2005 federal appeals court ruling that the five had not received a fair trial because of the hostile political atmosphere in Miami was reversed a year later on review by the full court. In 2008 the court ruled that the sentences against Guerrero, Labañino, and Fernando González were excessive and sent those cases back for resentencing.

The five have appealed their convictions to the U.S. Supreme Court. A decision by the Supreme Court on whether it will hear the appeal is expected in June.

The English translation of the interview was checked against the original Spanish and revised by the *Militant*. Footnotes are by the *Militant*.



Saul Landau: Did you personally meet any of the terrorists,¹ as you call them?

Gerardo Hernández: No, I saw some of them. But I had no contact with them. Some of us were accused of being illegal agents. In my case, I used a false identity—Manuel ViraMonte. I compiled information brought to me by agents who maintained their own identities, like René González. He kept his own name. He stole an airplane from Cuba. Someone like that is trusted enough to



Gerardo Hernández (center) with sister Isabel Hernández and Alier Tapia, a nephew, during prison visit. FBI offered Hernández bank accounts and new identity if he would "cooperate" with U.S. government. Like all of the Cuban Five, he refused.

get close to an organization. Not so in my case, since I didn't even have a real story. So my task was to compile information the others gave me and send it to Cuba.

Landau: During the day you worked as a graphic artist, didn't you?

Hernández: It was more like having my own business. At least that was my story. I did a few illustrations for a newspaper, but it was just to maintain the image.

Landau: So you supervised those who had infiltrated the groups? Explain how you did this.

Hernández: It's not appropriate to give too many details, right? The trial record showed there were a number of agents with access to certain organizations. Their assignment was specifically to protect Cuba by learning beforehand about the plans of these organizations and forewarning Cuba.

For example, René was in *Brothers to the Rescue*²; he finds out that Basulto said they have a weapon ready to test on targets in the Everglades. They had been firing it and it worked well. The plan is to find a place in Cuba where they can unload them. I'm alerted through a previously arranged method of communication, let's say a beeper. I answer his call and with a previously arranged coded language we'd arrange to meet. We would meet somewhere after taking a number of precautions and he'd tell me, "Look, this is happening, or they're testing a weapon they want to get into Cuba." Or, "Alpha 66 is planning an expedition. They want to get close to the Cuban coast again to fire weapons." Or, "They want to put a bomb on a plane going from Central America to Cuba to disrupt tourism."

I'm not making any of this up! I'd give them instructions on how to find out more information without taking unnecessary risks. I'd send this information to Cuba and Cuba would answer,

2. *Brothers to the Rescue*, headed by José Basulto, and Alpha 66 are rightist outfits based in Florida that promote violent actions against targets in Cuba. *Brothers to the Rescue* falsely portrays itself as a "humanitarian" aid group, but as the Cuban Five testified, was organizing armed provocations in Cuba.

"It's necessary to do this or that, to seek information this way or that way." Basically, that was the task.

Landau: Can you describe in detail what happened the day the FBI arrested you?

Hernández: It was a Saturday. I was sleeping. It was about 6:00 a.m. I lived in a small, one-room apartment in a building. My bed was pretty close to the door because the apartment was small. I remember hearing in my sleep someone trying to force open the lock. I barely had time to react because I heard a loud sound as they knocked the door down. It was a SWAT team. In reality it didn't even give me time to sit up in bed.

I was surrounded by people with machine guns and helmets like you see in the movies. They arrested me, lifted me out of the bed, handcuffed me, and looked in my mouth. I guess they had seen a lot of James Bond movies and they thought I would have cyanide in my mouth. So, they checked to make sure that I wouldn't poison myself. I asked them why I was being arrested. They said, "You know why." They put me in a car and took me to the main headquarters of the FBI in south Florida on 163rd Avenue in Miami. There, the interrogation began. But the arrest is the way I described.

Landau: They put you in the "box"?

Hernández: At the FBI headquarters we were each put in separate offices. They sat me in an office, handcuffed me to the wall. There, they interrogated me. I had the "honor" that Hector Pesquera came to see me. He was the di-

rector of the FBI in south Florida, and he was Puerto Rican. And my assumed identity, Manuel ViraMonte, was Puerto Rican, too. I told him I was from Puerto Rico and so he started to ask me questions about Puerto Rico. All kinds of questions. Who was the governor that year? Where did you live? What bus did you take to get to school? Where did you catch it? And when he saw that I was able to answer these questions he got really upset. He slammed his fist into the table and said, "I know you are Cuban and you are going to rot in prison because Cuba isn't going to do anything for you."

Then, not him specifically, but the others who took part in the interrogation, started to make all kinds of offers. They would say to me, "You know how this business works. You know that you are an illegal agent. And what it says in the books is that Cuba isn't going to admit that they sent you here with a fake passport. Cuba won't do that, so you will rot in prison. The best thing you can do is cooperate with us and we'll offer you whatever you want. We will change your identity, give you bank accounts." Whatever I want, so that I become a traitor.

They would say, "Here is the phone. Call your Consulate." Strategies designed to get me to be a turncoat. This is what happened to all five of us separately. Later, they took us to the prison, the Federal Detention Center in Miami, and put us in what is called "the hole."

Landau: For how long?

Hernández: Seventeen months. The first five months were hard for the five, of course. Those of us with false identities didn't have anyone to write to, no one to write to us, nor anyone to phone. Every so often it was our turn to make a phone call. The guards would open the little window in the door, and put the phone there. "Aren't you going to call anyone? Your family in Puerto Rico?"

"No," I would say, "I'm not going to call anyone."

"But why don't you make a call?" they'd say to annoy me, because they knew I wasn't Puerto Rican and wouldn't use the phone. Those were difficult months.

Landau: Describe "the hole."

Hernández: It's an area that every prison has, for disciplining prisoners, or for protective purposes if they can't be with the rest of the population. In Miami it was a floor, the 12th floor. The cells

Continued on page 11

1. A reference to Luis Posada Carriles, Orlando Bosch, and others. Posada Carriles was convicted by a Venezuelan court in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner over Barbados killing all 73 people aboard. Bosch was also implicated in the attack. In a 1998 New York Times interview, Posada Carriles bragged of his involvement in a series of bombings of Havana hotels in 1997, including one that killed an Italian tourist, Fabio di Celmo. He later retracted his account, claiming he didn't understand English well. Both Posada Carriles and Bosch today walk freely in the streets of Miami.

Recommended Reading

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution
by Jack Barnes



The Cuban Revolution of 1959 had a worldwide political impact, including on workers and youth in the imperialist heartland. \$10

United States vs. The Cuban Five: A Judicial Cover-up
by Rodolfo Dávalos Fernández

Cuban jurist Dávalos Fernández reviews every aspect of the U.S. government's prosecution of the five men in the light of U.S. and international law, legal tradition, and procedures. \$22

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Sri Lankan assault deals blow to Tamil struggle

BY PATRICK BROWN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—In the wake of its defeat of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the country's 26-year civil war, the Sri Lankan government has interned some 300,000 Tamils. Government troops have invaded the last enclave held by the Tamil guerrilla group, killing many thousands of people and dealing a blow to the Tamil struggle for self-determination.

The central leaders of the LTTE, including its top commander, Velupillai Prabhakaran, were killed May 18 in a final assault by government troops.

"The writ of the state now runs across every inch of our territory," President Mahinda Rajapaksa boasted May 19, adding that "we have completely defeated terrorism."

"No longer are there Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and any other minorities," Rajapaksa said. "There are only two peoples in this country. One is the people that love this country. The other comprises the small groups that have no love for the land of their birth. Those who do not love the country are now a lesser group."

As a self-styled representative of Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese, Rajapaksa is one of a long line of capitalist politicians who have built a career on divide-and-rule policies targeting the oppressed Tamil minority.

As they drew their noose around the shrinking northeastern coastal area in which the Tiger forces were corralled, Sri Lanka's generals painted the artillery, air, and infantry assault as a mission to rescue the tens of thousands

of civilians trapped in their war zone. Reporters were denied access to the area.

The military monopoly on "news" in Sri Lanka was partly broken by several doctors who reported from hospitals near the front lines that government shells had killed many civilians. Several of the doctors have been arrested on charges of providing false information. Associated Press reports that 8,000 civilians have been killed since January.

The Toronto *Globe and Mail* reported May 22 that some 280,000 Tamils are now being held in government internment camps called "welfare villages"—mostly tent camps encircled with barbed wire.

The military is interrogating some 3,000 alleged Tamil Tiger fighters in "rehabilitation centers," said the *Globe and Mail*. Even higher security facilities are reserved for alleged LTTE officials. "This is our Guantanamo Bay," said one officer.

Tamil struggle for rights

As many as 100,000 people have been killed in the war since 1983, according to the United Nations. The conflict is rooted in the discrimination of the Tamil minority by the Sinhalese-dominated ruling layers since independence in 1948.

The Tamil language and religions—Hindu, Christian, and Islam—were relegated to second-class status, below Buddhism and the Sinhalese language.

Sinhalese speakers number about three-quarters of Sri Lanka's 21 mil-



Refugee camp in Mullivaikkal, Sri Lanka, May 1, 2009. Some 300,000 Tamils have been forced into internment camps as part of government offensive. Quarter-century war has left as many as 100,000 dead. Military assault has dealt a blow to fight for Tamil self-determination.

lion people. There are about 4 million Tamils. Indigenous Sri Lankan Tamils are concentrated in the north and east of the country and the capital Colombo. There are also descendants of Indian Tamils brought as laborers by the British colonialists in the 19th century, many of whom still work in the tea-growing areas in the south.

When Tamil organizations demanded equality and self-determination, they were met with systematic violence. Many turned to armed resistance in 1983 after a series of bloody pogroms.

In preparing the rulers' military offensive, Rajapaksa was able to count on powerful allies. Washington, London, and other imperialist powers listed the LTTE as a terrorist organization and stifled the flow of funds into Sri Lanka from the hundreds of

thousands of Tamils forced into exile by the war.

The U.S. government has been relatively muted in its response to the latest events, feigning an even-handed concern over the plight of civilians. U.S. president Obama said May 14, as the government's final offensive unfolded, that he was "saddened by the desperate news in recent days." He called on both sides to spare civilians.

Speaking one week later, the outgoing U.S. ambassador to Sri Lanka, Robert Blake, described the military victory as a "new beginning." He added, "Now begins the critical process of national reconciliation."

The editors of the *Wall Street Journal* were less restrained. "The war on terror scored a big victory this weekend," they said in a May 20 editorial. Victory "has not been cheap or easy," it said. "Military spending in the 2009 budget is \$1.7 billion, 5 percent of GDP and 20 percent of the government's budget."

The government is now reportedly seeking to recruit 40,000 new soldiers to patrol the north.

The Sri Lankan government organized victory celebrations on May 22. According to TamilNet, Sinhalese nationalist gangs "visited Tamil houses to demand money under threat to help fund the celebration."

Tamils discuss their fight at Montreal forum

BY ANNETTE KOURI

MONTREAL—Several Tamils in Canada, who have participated in protests of tens of thousands of workers in Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver against the Sri Lankan government's massive repression of the Tamil population, spoke May 15 at the Militant Labor Forum. To this day hundreds of Tamils continue 24-hour picket lines in front of the U.S. consulate here.

The panelists included three speakers invited by the Quebec-Tamil Women's Association—Niruthan Nagalingam, Girija Kathiraimalainathan, and Thasha Murugatasan. Joe Young spoke on behalf of the Communist League.

Nagalingam explained how British colonial rule left a divided and underdeveloped Sri Lanka. This set the stage for successive regimes after independence to install and maintain systematic discrimination and repression against the Tamil minority, he said. This included removing Tamil as an official language of the country.

Kathiraimalainathan thanked forum organizers for an opportunity to detail the crimes that she personally knew of. She explained that many family members have no idea what has happened to their loved ones. "I ask everyone here to continue supporting the Tamil people and demand that media be allowed into the war zone," she said.

Murugatasan spoke of the actions organized by Tamils, many of them young like her. "We spent 14 days in front of Parliament. I am proud of be-

ing Tamil," she stated.

Young said, "We all need to protest the massacre of thousands of Tamils, putting the blame squarely where it belongs—on the rulers of Sri Lanka and their army. Those who bemoan the bloodbath, like the Canadian government, the Liberal Party, the United Nations, and others

without saying who's responsible, are in fact covering up for the Sri Lankan government and the imperialist governments that support them." Young said that we must ask our unions to support the Tamils' fight and pointed to participation of about 70 steelworkers in one of the protests in Toronto.

4 entrapped by FBI, arrested on conspiracy

Continued from front page

in prison and are Muslims.

New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg praised the arrests. Police commissioner Raymond Kelly said the police-FBI operation was "a textbook example of how a major investigation should be handled."

According to the indictment, Cromitie and the other three were bent on attacking Jews and symbols of the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan. A large part of the "evidence," however, is based on taped conversations in a house especially outfitted for surveillance by the FBI, weapons supplied by the FBI, and the word of FBI spy Hussain.

According to the London *Times*, Hussain became an FBI informant in 2002 to avoid deportation for fraud charges. This is not his first "terrorist" case. Attorney Terence Kindlon said a client of his was sentenced to 15 years in jail in 2004 on charges of laundering money for a "terrorist plot." The star witness in that trial

was also Hussain.

In the case of the four just arrested in New York, "A federal law enforcement official described the plot as 'aspirational'—meaning that the suspects wanted to do something but had no weapons or explosives," reported the *New York Times*. "It was fully controlled at all times," a federal cop told the *Times*.

According to the indictment, FBI spy Hussain told the four defendants that he belonged to Jaish-e-Mohammed, a Pakistan-based armed Islamist group. Cromitie, the government claims, asked to join Jaish and said he wanted to "get a synagogue." Onta Williams is accused of calling for killing U.S. soldiers with bombs and Stingers.

Salahuddin Muhammad, the imam at the mosque in Newburgh, said people were suspicious of Hussain when he first began visiting there: "He came to the mosque and started right away trying to meet up with different people." One man told Muhammad that Hussain had offered him \$25,000

"and he started talking about jihad." The man said he told Hussain, "I don't want no part of that."

Muhammad pointed out that "provocateur" is a better word for Hussain than "informant," according to the *Newburgh News*.

Lord McWilliams, brother of defendant David Williams, told the *New York Daily News* that Hussain led the family to believe that he would pay \$20,000 for a liver transplant for Lord that his Medicaid insurance would not cover.

"We're not entrapping or encouraging anyone to commit a crime," claimed Joseph Demarest, head of the New York FBI office. "We merely facilitated their wishes."

"You have to be skeptical," said Utya Habif-Afres, interviewed by the *Washington Post* as she picked up her son from a class at the Riverdale Jewish Center. "I was also questioning if the police informant didn't provide the bombs, would these people have been able to get bombs?"

Defend our constitutional rights!

Working people should oppose recent steps by the Obama administration to assault constitutional rights under the guise of “fighting terrorism” and of deporting “criminal” immigrants. These attacks on workers’ rights follow the course set by the Clinton and Bush administrations.

While seeking to clean up Washington’s image, tarnished by controversy over U.S. torture of prisoners abroad and the denial of their rights, the White House is asserting its prerogative to use military trials against Guantánamo prisoners, including the use of secret evidence and other violations of the right to due process.

In a further step, Obama calls for codifying into law the U.S. government’s authority to jail indefinitely—without charges or the right to a trial—anyone it designates a “terrorist threat.” The Guantánamo prison may eventually be shut down, but some of its current inmates will be either jailed without charges elsewhere, dragged before a military kangaroo court, or tried in a federal court. In continuity with the Bush administration, Obama has rejected releasing any more photos of U.S. abuse of Iraqis at the Abu Ghraib prison.

At the same time, the U.S. government is expanding funding for a program to fingerprint every prisoner in every federal, state, and local jail and compare this information with Homeland Security immigration databases. The pretext is to deport “criminals” who are immigrants.

These government measures are not just directed at “foreigners,” Muslims, or immigrants. The target is working people as a whole—and our ability to organize to defend ourselves against ongoing attacks on our living standards and rights.

What will stop the government from checking fingerprints of all those caught up in the “justice” system not just for immigration status, but for political views or union activity? All moves toward establishing a national government ID card or databank should be opposed; they will give a handle to cops and bosses for harassment and victimization.

If the FBI and other cops can use secret evidence and “preventively” detain “terror” suspects, won’t they try to use the same methods against the labor movement or those who fight for immigrant and Black rights?

The U.S. government and the wealthy capitalist rulers know that the effects of the worldwide economic crisis will sooner or later generate increasing resistance by working people. They want to lay the groundwork to block that resistance.

Defending constitutional rights—including the right to a trial and to see the evidence against you—is crucial to the ability of workers to defend our interests against the bosses today and in the class battles to come. This goes hand in hand with demanding the legalization of all undocumented workers and an end to deportations in order to help unite the working class in struggle.

Interview with Gerardo Hernández

Continued from page 9

are for two people, but there are some people there by themselves. For the first six months, we were alone, each in an individual cell—with no contact. Later, our lawyers took legal measures so that we could meet in pairs. But the first six months we were in “solitary confinement,” with a shower inside the cell so you can bathe whenever you want. But that way you get everything in the cell wet when you take a shower.

You’re in the cell 23 hours a day. And there’s one hour a day of recreation when they take you out to another place. In Miami, it was basically just another cell, but a little bigger, with a grate that let you see a little piece of the sky. You could tell if it was day or night and fresh air would come through. That was what they called “recreation.” But often we didn’t go because they’d take too long, handcuffing you, searching you, your cell, taking you. Sometimes, they’d put us all together in the same cell and we could talk.

The regimen was very strict. It’s used to discipline prisoners, as punishment for having committed a serious infraction. We were inside those four quite small walls 23, sometimes 24, hours a day, with nothing to

do. It’s very difficult from the human point of view. And many people couldn’t take it. You would see them lose their minds, screaming.

Landau: Did you do something bad?

Hernández: No, we were sent there from the beginning. They told us it was to protect us from the general population. But in my opinion, it had to do with their attempt to get us to change “sides” and become traitors. After fear and intimidation didn’t work they thought, “Well let’s put them in solitary for a few months and see if they change their minds.”

The only thing to read was the Bible, and you had to submit a written request to the chaplain. I made the request, to have something to read, and I asked for a Bible. When they brought it to me—I don’t know if it was a big coincidence or what—it had some cards inside, including ones with the telephone numbers of the FBI. Just in case I had forgotten, right? As if, “Well, this communist guy is asking for the Bible . . . he must be about to turn.” I imagine that’s what they were thinking, given their way of thinking, their prejudices.

LETTERS

Tamils in Sri Lanka-I

I have a question. Some of my Tamil coworkers have supported the call for international intervention in Sri Lanka to impose a cease-fire. Given the history of UN and other international “peace-keeping” efforts, I am leery of such a demand. What would be a better demand to raise in the current situation?

Jon Teitelbaum

Raleigh, North Carolina

Tamils in Sri Lanka-II

As an avid reader of the *Militant*, which helps me understand world events, I must admit to being a little disappointed by the coverage on Sri Lanka. I know it is difficult to sometimes keep pace with world events but this has been on the news here in the United Kingdom every day for two solid weeks.

I need the *Militant* to keep me in-

formed and I do not feel informed.

Chrissie Hodgkinson
London, England

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Correction

The article in the June 1 *Militant* titled “Free Troy Davis! Stop the execution!” stated in error that “Seven of the nine prosecution witnesses who claimed to have seen Davis shoot” a police officer have since recanted or contradicted their stories. The article should have said that seven of the nine nonpolice witnesses recanted or contradicted their stories. Three of these witnesses never claimed to have seen the shooting.

‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

The Prisoners’ Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked “Prisoners’ Fund” to 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

Attack on rights

Continued from front page

said that Obama had presented no plan to Congress for what to do with the 240 remaining prisoners.

Obama criticized Bush for setting up a system at Guantánamo in which only three prisoners were convicted in seven years and where more than 525 prisoners were released. Only one prisoner has been released since Obama took office. U.S. courts have ruled that the government has no reason to hold 21 of the prisoners remaining in Guantánamo.

Indefinite detention

While taking a critical position on the highly public Guantánamo prison, the Obama administration has insisted that prisoners from around the world at the U.S. base in Bagram, Afghanistan, can be jailed indefinitely without charges and have no right to challenge their detention. The administration is fighting an April 2 ruling by a U.S. federal district court that stated Bagram prisoners have the same minimal rights as those in Guantánamo.

Obama said his administration’s goal “is to construct a legitimate legal framework” for the indefinite incarceration of Guantánamo prisoners who “pose a threat,” but can’t be prosecuted.

“Prolonged detention should not be the decision of any one man,” he said, in reference to the method under George Bush of fighting the courts to carry this out by executive decree. Obama complained that the Bush course has left his administration with a flood of time-consuming legal challenges.

In another departure from policy under Bush, Obama explained his administration’s intention to try some of its stronger cases in U.S. federal courts. He answered critics who argue that the government can’t secure “terrorism” convictions in a civilian court. He cited the sentencing to life of Ramzi Yousef and Zaccarias Moussaoui as examples. “They are wrong,” he said. “The record makes that clear.”

Military tribunals to proceed

In his January executive order, Obama suspended all military tribunal proceedings, while a “Special Task Force” reviewed the procedure. The task force is headed by the U.S. attorney general and secretary of defense.

Congress established the current rules that govern the Guantánamo tribunals in 2006. The judge and jury are military personnel appointed by the Pentagon. Hearsay, secret evidence, and statements extracted through threats, beatings, and forms of torture are permissible.

Obama addressed the military commission trials in his speech. Those who “violate laws of war,” Obama said, should be tried by military tribunal, which allows for the use of evidence that “cannot always be effectively presented in federal courts.” Obama said he has always supported the use of military commissions, but that they needed to be reformed to make them “more credible and effective.”

He defended his recent decision to block the release of photographs of torture and degrading treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq taken between 2002 and 2004, because they “would inflame anti-American opinion.”

‘State secrets privilege’

Obama also defended use of “state secrets privilege” to keep classified information on government activity from the public. The Obama administration recently invoked the “privilege” in *Mohamad v. Jeppesen Dataplan, Inc.* A Justice Department lawyer for the case said the Obama administration was taking “exactly” the same position as the Bush administration in its move to dismiss a lawsuit against a Boeing subsidiary for transporting kidnapped CIA prisoners to locations for torture.

Obama acknowledged the widespread opposition to torture worldwide, saying that those who argue for use of it are on “the wrong side of history.”

In his January executive order, Obama revoked a 2007 Bush order authorizing torture techniques for interrogations. At the same time he assigned the Special Task Force to evaluate interrogation techniques that are authorized in the Army Field Manual to determine whether they “provide an appropriate means of acquiring the intelligence necessary to protect the Nation.”