

THE MILITANT

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‘Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and Road to Workers Power’
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 73/NO. 24 JUNE 22, 2009

1,000 attend funeral for slain clinic doctor Tiller

BY MAGGIE TROWE

WICHITA, Kansas—More than 1,000 people turned out here on June 6 for the funeral of slain abortion provider Dr. George Tiller. Three days later attorneys for Tiller’s family announced that the clinic would close.

A defense guard of dozens organized by the National Organization for Women (NOW) in Kansas stood outside the church to secure the service against antiabortion rightists who had harassed a vigil for Tiller the night he was killed.

Tiller was shot to death in the foyer of his church on May 31. That same day Scott Roeder was arrested; a few days later he was charged with first-degree murder.

A day before the shooting a clinic worker found Roeder attempting to glue the clinic’s locks and chased him away. She wrote down Roeder’s license plate number and reported the incident to the FBI. An agent reportedly said nothing could be done until a grand jury was convened.

Roeder also has connections with
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Puerto Rico: workers resist layoffs, austerity

Tens of thousands march through capital



Workers march June 5 to capitol building in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to protest layoffs of government workers and other antilabor measures.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Tens of thousands marched in San Juan, Puerto Rico, June 5 to protest layoffs of government employees, a law permitting the privatization of government services, and other austerity measures threatened by Governor Luis Fortuño.

The march was organized by “All of Puerto Rico for Puerto Rico,” a

new coalition that includes unions affiliated to Change to Win, the AFL-CIO, independent unions, community groups, and church organizations.

Workers, students, church groups, and artists marched to the capitol building, often to the beat of *bomba* and *plena*, a traditional music of Puerto Rico. One union contingent included a giant inflatable rat that marchers named Ratuño, in honor of the governor.

Contingents from the Puerto Rican Independence Party and the Popular Democratic Party, the main capitalist

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N.Y. Socialist Workers mayoral campaign to petition for ballot

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The New York Socialist Workers Party campaign will conduct a citywide petitioning drive in July to place the party’s ticket on the ballot for the fall elections.

The SWP is running Dan Fein for New York mayor and Maura DeLuca for the city’s public advocate, as well as Tom Baumann for Manhattan borough president. They are the only candidates that put forward a program to unite working people to defend their class interests against the bosses’ and government’s attacks.

“Our campaign is getting a positive response on campuses and through street campaigning in working-class communities,” said Fein. “The petitioning effort provides us with an opportunity to reach more students and workers with the working-class answer to the worldwide crisis of the capitalist economic system that is leaving thousands and thousands without jobs and a deepening social crisis.”

Fein and DeLuca are both sewing-
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Socialist conference to discuss world politics, workers’ struggle

BY PAUL MAILHOT

The 2009 Socialist Education and Active Workers Conference will draw workers and young people from throughout the United States and several other countries. They will participate in three days of political talks, classes, workshops, and discussions on the central questions of world politics and working-class struggle. The conference, sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialists, takes place June 18–20 in Oberlin, Ohio.

The main presentations will include

a political report by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes and a talk on “Political Leverage and Defense of the Cuban Revolution” by Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *New Internationalist* magazine and a member of the SWP National Committee. Norton Sandler, also a member of the SWP National Committee, will give a talk on “Skills Orientation and Campus Work: Life or Death for a Proletarian Party.”

One class series will take up the themes of an upcoming international
Continued on page 5

3 million displaced in U.S.-backed Pakistan war

BY DOUG NELSON

June 8—The U.S.-backed Pakistani military offensive against Taliban forces in the country’s northwest has had a devastating toll on the toilers of the region.

News accounts suggest civilian casualties are high and millions have been driven from their homes. The impact is class-differentiated, with the worst-off layers threatened with widespread disease and starvation.

The Pakistani military has been at war with Taliban forces based in Pakistan’s Swat Valley on and off over the last two years. Islamabad’s most recent peace deal with the Swat Taliban led by Maulana Fuzlullah broke down after the Islamists began to expand their military operations and control, including an advance into neighboring Buner District, some 60 miles from the capital.

In late April, the Pakistani military launched its latest offensive in Lower Dir and Buner, two districts bordering Swat, advancing into the Swat District May 8.

Some 15,000 troops, backed by tanks, artillery, and air power, have pounded neighborhoods and razed homes to the ground over the last month, forcing some 2.8 million people to flee. Some 550,000 had already

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Broad political debate opens in Iran presidential elections

BY CINDY JAQUITH

A wide-ranging political debate has opened up on the eve of the June 12 presidential elections in Iran over the country’s nuclear program, foreign policy, the economy, women’s rights, and freedom of speech.

In an unprecedented move, state television is broadcasting six debates between the four candidates on the ballot. Running are Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the incumbent president; Mir Hossein Mousavi, who was prime minister from 1981 to 1989; Mohsen Rezaei, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards from 1981 until the mid-1990s; and Mehdi Karroubi, former speaker of parliament.

A June 3 debate between Ahmadinejad and Mousavi, watched by millions, captured the sharpness of the disagreements within the Iranian capitalist class, as it seeks to defend its interests in the face of hostile imperialist powers and a deep economic crisis that is devastating workers, small farmers, and sections of the middle class.

Mousavi assailed Ahmadinejad for his frequent anti-Semitic outbursts and his assertion that the Holocaust never happened. “AIPAC [American Israel Public Affairs Committee], the biggest Zionist institution in the U.S., sees this policy as a blessing,” Mousavi said in the debate. The president’s overall foreign policy suffers from “adventurism,”
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N.Y. bakery workers' strike enters 10th month

BY MAURA DELUCA

BRONX, New York—"We are strong like a fist and we're going to win no matter what!" proclaimed Mike Filippou, picket captain of the Stella D'oro bakery workers' strike, during a May 30 support rally.

Some 500 people joined the rally here and then marched to the factory. Speakers included strikers; Joyce Alston, president of the striking union, Local 50 of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union; and members of the Committee in Support of the Stella D'oro Strikers. The march was lively, with chants of "No contract, no cookies!" and "Boycott Stella D'oro!"

When the march arrived outside the plant about 100 marchers ran through police barricades toward the factory gates. Police quickly closed the barricades to prevent more from doing so. According to one of the strikers, Eddie Marrero, no one was working that day since the company knew the protest would be taking place. The company has had replacement workers in the plant since the strike began.

Nearly 10 months ago all 136 workers at the plant represented by the union walked out over an unacceptable contract offer.

Brynwood Partners, which owns Stella D'oro, proposed a contract that slashed wages by up to 25 percent for some workers, cut paid sick days and vacations, and would have made workers pay substantially more for health insurance. The company has since "offered" to transfer the workers' retirement funds

from a pension plan to a 401(k).

The strike has been gaining steady support from other unions. Represented at the May 30 rally were the United Federation of Teachers; District Council 37 locals 1930 and 375; Professional Staff Congress-CUNY; Domestic Workers United; New York Nurses United; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. Two busloads of teachers from New York State United Teachers attended.

Joycelyn Campbell, a Domestic Workers United organizer, spoke at the rally. "We support our allies," she told the *Militant*. "These people have been in crisis before the crisis. Hard working people should be treated just and fair."

Retired Stella D'oro table packer Alexandra Michelle, 66, said she was part of a strike at the plant 18 years ago. "I



Militant/Tom Baumann

Hundreds of bakery workers and their supporters rally May 30 in front of Stella D'oro plant. As strike enters 10th month, not one striker has crossed the picket line.

have to support my *compañeros*," she said. "I have my pension from the international coming out of that strike. This fight is just as important."

Striker Emelia Dorsu said defiantly, "Tell Brynwood Partners we are still here and we'll be here until they give us a fair contract!"

Troy Davis, on death row, wins support for new trial

BY CHERYL GOERTZ
AND LORETTA VANPELT

ATLANTA—Support continues to build in the fight to save the life of framed-up death-row inmate Troy Davis and win him a new trial.

Davis was arrested in 1989 and convicted in 1991 of killing a Savannah, Georgia, cop, largely on the testimony of nine state witnesses. Seven of them have since recanted or changed their testimony, with some saying they were coerced by cops to testify against Davis.

Members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) sent letters to U.S. attorney general Eric Holder and Chatham

County district attorney Larry Chisolm, urging action to enable Davis to have a new trial.

On May 20, several weeks after the letters were sent, two members of the CBC, John Lewis and Hank Johnson from Georgia, along with NAACP president Ben Jealous met with Davis at the prison in Jackson, Georgia. Following the nearly two-hour meeting, Lewis said, "I came away convinced that this man is an innocent man."

Jealous announced that the NAACP is making this case a national priority. The organization has sent an e-mail to 400,000 supporters, urging them to campaign for Davis.

On April 16 the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals denied Davis's appeal for a new trial. In response to that decision, attorneys for Davis have filed an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court asking that his case be sent back to a federal judge so the evidence of innocence can finally be heard.

"Mr. Davis' execution without a full and fair hearing in which he could make a truly persuasive demonstration that he is actually innocent" would violate his constitutional rights, the petition says.

On May 20, the day after the appeal

to the Supreme Court was filed, 27 former judges, justices, and prosecutors filed a friend-of-the-court brief, urging the court to grant Davis's request to have his claims of innocence heard in federal court. Among those signing the brief are former deputy U.S. attorney general Larry Thompson; nine former U.S. attorneys, including former Georgia congressman Robert Barr; and two former state Supreme Court chief justices.

Davis's supporters launched a petition drive in Savannah asking District Attorney Chisolm to reopen the case. Kathryn Hamoudah, state death penalty abolition coordinator for Amnesty International in Atlanta, told the *Militant* more than 6,000 signatures have been collected as of June 8. Hamoudah said that petitioners have encountered some opposition, but less than expected.

A new death warrant has not been issued although the stay of execution has expired. Lydia Sermons, a spokeswoman for the Chatham County district attorney's office, told the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* that no action would be taken until all appeals are exhausted.

To join in the petitioning effort in Savannah email: kathryn.hamoudah@gmail.com.

THE MILITANT

Next steps in abortion rights battle

Supporters of women's rights held rallies and vigils in the days following the May 31 slaying of Dr. George Tiller by an antiabortion thug. What are the next steps to revitalize the movement in support of women's right to choose? Follow the coverage in the 'Militant.'



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Vigil for Doctor Tiller in San Francisco

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The Militant

Vol. 73/No. 24

Closing news date: June 10, 2009

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Published weekly except for one week in January and one week in July.

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Website: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: For one year send \$35 to above address.

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Tehran book fair: major cultural event in Mideast

BY PETER CLIFFORD.

TEHRAN, Iran—Hundreds of thousands of people poured through three large exhibition halls here for the 22nd Tehran International Book Fair. The event, which ran from May 6–16, was held at the Tehran Great Mosalla (prayer) ground.

Books from some 3,600 publishers were available. Among the exhibitors was Pathfinder Books, London, which had 30 percent higher sales than at last year's fair. Farsi translations of Pathfinder Press titles—produced by local publishers—also did well.

The exhibition hall with Farsi-language books was the most popular and solidly packed area from opening at 10:00 a.m. through 8:00 p.m. each night.

Two other halls had books available from 1,700 publishers from 78 countries. One had books subsidized by the Iranian government, making them more accessible to college students, academics, and professionals. Several countries such as Turkey and China had large government-sponsored stands promoting cultural links with Iran.

Revolution opened culture

The book fair was a by-product of the 1979 Iranian revolution, in which workers and farmers overthrew the Pahlavi dynasty, a key ally of the U.S. and British governments in the region. The last shah in the dynasty had been brought back to power in 1953 after the country's democratically elected government was overthrown through a coup engineered by Washington. The 1979 revolution opened up to millions access to culture and literature denied to them by the pro-imperialist monarchy.

There was rising interest in the Pathfinder Books stand in the unsubsidized hall. The distributorship in the United Kingdom has now participated in the fair since 1992. This year its sales totaled some 244 books and pamphlets.

Titles that addressed the world capitalist crisis drew many to the stand. A substantial number of those visiting the Pathfinder booth expressed interest in politics in the United States. They wanted to know whether the election of U.S. president Barack Obama would improve relations with Iran. Others were also keen to learn about the class struggle in the United States.

Several were interested in reading articles from issue number 14 of *New Internationalist*, a Marxist magazine, including an article about former U.S. president William Clinton's antilabor legacy and the roots of the 2008 financial crisis, and an article titled "Revolu-

tion, Internationalism, and Socialism: The Last Year of Malcolm X," which provides an example of the character of revolutionary leadership that can be forged in the United States. Some 14 copies of this title were sold.

Working-class politics

The Pathfinder stand sold all its 35 English-language copies of *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* Many book fair visitors were fascinated to learn about the big May Day marches that since 2006 have been taking place in the United States. They demand legalization of all immigrants and show the potential for revolutionary struggle in the United States that the booklet addresses.

One Tehran University student who bought this title first grabbed a copy of the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. He commented, "This has always been my aim to get this book." Some 16 copies were sold in all.

Another popular title was *Art and Revolution* by Leon Trotsky, which looks at the place of art and culture in the fight for socialist revolution. Several who picked up this book were studying literature at universities.

Some 15 copies of the new Pathfinder title *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa* were sold. Many were attracted to learning about the volunteer Cuban medical brigades in Africa described in



Farsi-language hall was solidly packed at 22nd Tehran International Book Fair. Some 3,600 publishers, including Pathfinder Books, London, participated in May 6–16 event.

this book. Other titles on the Cuban Revolution were also snapped up. There was also a great deal of interest in a range of Pathfinder books on the international struggle for women's equality.

Visitors to the Pathfinder booth came from throughout the country, including from Isfahan, Khuzestan, Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, and the Caspian Sea region. Several Afghani students studying in Iran bought books. Fair participants from Nigeria, Sudan, and Kazakhstan also expressed interest in Pathfinder books.

Pathfinder stand representative Tony Hunt was interviewed by Sahar TV and also by Radio Sedaye Ashna. Both broadcast outside of Iran.

Farsi translations of Pathfinder titles

were available too. At the stand run by the Tehran publishing house Golâzin, a prominent stack of the first part of a three-volume translation of Evelyn Reed's *Woman's Evolution* was on sale. A colorful poster of the front cover adorned the wall at the side of the stand. The publisher reported interest was high in the book.

The publisher Talaye Porsoo said that their newly published edition of the *Communist Manifesto* had topped their sales with some 200 copies; overall they sold some 937 books covering some 23 titles. Top sellers included 127 copies of *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, 88 copies of *Feminism and the Marxist Movement*, and 41 copies of *Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun*.

Broad political debate opens up in Iranian elections

Continued from front page

instability, unlawfulness, and radicalism," he added.

Mousavi promises to join direct talks with Washington and other imperialist governments on Iran's nuclear program if elected, while Ahmadinejad has refused, demanding instead that President Barack Obama debate him at the United Nations.

Ahmadinejad hit back, charging that under Mousavi's reign, and that of presidents after him, "the U.S. was seeking to topple the Islamic Republic. Today the U.S. has declared officially that it is not seeking to overthrow us." He asked, "Which foreign policy has reinforced the country's independence? Should we seek to satisfy the world powers? Is it possible to be soft in the face of oppression?"

Mousavi also criticized the fact that Iran's censors have tightened requirements for publishing licenses since Ahmadinejad took office, although he has said no book "contrary to religion and the constitution" should be allowed. Ahmadinejad countered that presidents who came before him censored more books than he has.

Mousavi took office as prime minister shortly after a massive, popular social revolution shook Iran and overturned the Pahlavi dynasty, a close ally of Washington. The capitalist regime that came to power sought to tame the rebellion of workers, peasants, oppressed nationalities, and women through a government dominated by Islamic clerics. Over the next decade they imposed strict censorship and other curbs on free speech, used military force to suppress the Kurdish oppressed national minority, and persecuted leftist and communist organizations.

Like some other bourgeois political figures who took part in this counterrevolution, Mousavi has since concluded that too tight restrictions on democratic rights may backfire. He also speaks for the substantial layer of capitalists who look forward to an end to trade and financial sanctions and a rapprochement with the United States.

Ahmadinejad attacks 'corruption'

Ahmadinejad accused Mousavi of being bankrolled by Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the former president of Iran and currently head of the Expediency Council, the liaison body between Iran's ruling clerics and the parliament. Rafsanjani has earned widespread contempt from working people for having enriched himself and his family while in office.

"Which of my ministers has become a billionaire, or taken rents or usurped properties?" Ahmadinejad asked during the debate.

Discussion of women's rights has been a feature of this race. Mousavi has declared that if elected he will disband the "morality police," which harass women for not adhering to the strict dress code. His wife Zahra Rahnavaad frequently speaks in public. At a recent Tehran campaign rally that drew thousands, mostly young people, she said, "Let us hope that removing discrimination against women will not remain just a wish."

Fatemah Karroubi is also campaigning for her husband, stressing women's rights. She has criticized the Guardian Council for not granting ballot status to any of the 42 women who filed papers to run for president.

Both Mousavi and Karroubi have aimed their campaigns particularly at

young people on the campuses. Mousavi says jobs need to be created for the many university students who graduate with no prospect of finding work in their field. Karroubi says no students will be imprisoned for their political views if he wins.

Ahmadinejad also has support on the campuses; however, mostly among students in the *basij*, a volunteer militia force led by the Revolutionary Guards that frequently confronts demonstrations calling for more democratic rights. Former Guard commander Rezaei also has a base there.

All of Ahmadinejad's opponents point to the nation's high inflation, estimated at 25 percent, and persistent unemployment as reasons to oppose his reelection. Ahmadinejad won a landslide victory in 2005 in large part on populist promises to use the country's oil profits to benefit the poor. He has frequently visited the countryside, extended loans to peasants, and established rural development projects. Just weeks before the election, his office handed out cash payments of about \$100—"justice shares" from state-owned companies—to villagers. Some 5.5 million low-income Iranians are receiving these funds.

Mousavi tested the waters in the rural areas June 5 by making a campaign stop in the town of Birjand, where Ahmadinejad received his highest vote percentage in 2005. Many companies have closed there since then.

Candidate Rezaei has gone the furthest in calling for rapid implementation of Article 44, a law that calls for privatization of some state-run companies. He also argues that the next government should be a coalition of the main political factions and include members of oppressed nationalities.

Our Politics Start with the World

by Jack Barnes

"Electrification is an elementary precondition if modern industry and cultural life are to develop, and communist workers fight for it to be extended to all the world's six billion people. . . . We are part of an international class that has no homeland. That's not a slogan. That's not a moral imperative. It is recognition of the class reality of economic, social, and political life in the imperialist epoch."

—\$14—

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Puerto Rico workers

Continued from front page

opposition party, also joined the march. Fortuño was elected governor of Puerto Rico—a U.S. colony—in November 2008 on the New Progressive Party ticket. He campaigned as the candidate who would “bring a change to the island.”

Fortuño signed the “Fiscal State of Emergency Law,” known as Law 7, March 9. He threatened that if enough workers did not accept a government offer to voluntarily quit in exchange for one to three month’s severance pay and a year of medical insurance, he would lay off 30,000 or more government employees. According to official figures, less than 2,500 workers accepted the offer.

The government employs 218,000 people, about 21 percent of the island’s workforce.

Some 7,800 government workers were laid off at the end May, more than 6,000 of them “temporary” teachers. “Those teachers will be hired back in August when the school year begins,” Rafael Feliciano, president of the Federation of Teachers of Puerto Rico, said in a phone interview. The fact that the government has not yet been able to implement massive layoffs “shows that our struggle is having an impact,” he said.

The layoffs are just one part of the antilabor measures that have been passed or are before Puerto Rico’s legislature. Law 7 also freezes government employees’ wages and tears up their union contracts. The “Public Private Alliance” law would allow the Puerto Rican government to contract out “any function, service, or installation.” Fortuño signed it June 8.

“What they really want to do is privatize many public services including the electric grid and water,” Luis Pedraza Leduc, spokesperson for the Coordinadora Sindical, a coalition of independent unions, told the *Militant*. “But the private sector admits they couldn’t run these without a government subsidy.”

The legislature is also considering an amendment to the “Closing Time Law” that would eliminate provisions cur-

rently banning mandatory Sunday work and requiring double pay for those who voluntarily work that day.

Fortuño says all the measures from the layoffs to the “Public Private Alliance” are needed to keep up bond ratings and avoid following California to the brink of bankruptcy. He told *El Vocero* newspaper that as a result of his moves, “we have achieved a dramatic change.” He pointed to Standard & Poor’s BBB rating for Puerto Rico bonds as an example of investor confidence.

“The constitution of Puerto Rico says the bondholders must get paid first, before everybody else,” said Rafael Santiago, a spokesperson for the General Union of Workers Local 1199, which is affiliated to the Service Employees International Union.

“The budget gap could be filled just by collecting unpaid taxes from businesses and by taxing U.S. corporations that operate in Puerto Rico, but don’t pay any taxes,” Santiago said.

The June 5 protest was “a partial strike,” he added, “since it took place during working hours and at many government agencies” where few showed up to work.

Fortuño told *El Vocero* that the layoffs are “irreversible.” From now on, he said, the government will “double its efforts” to reduce costs.

“The government is refusing to negotiate with anyone,” Pedraza Leduc said. “The moderate unions would be willing to make concessions to prevent layoffs, but Fortuño won’t even talk to them. He’s forcing them to take more radical action.”

N.Y. socialist campaign to petition for ballot

Continued from front page

machine operators, and Baumann is a student at Hunter College. All three are active in working-class struggles, from backing workers on strike against union-busting assaults to defending the Cuban Revolution.

Supporters plan to obtain 15,000 sig-

natures—double the requirement—to place the SWP citywide ticket on the ballot.

The socialists’ petitioning drive opens July 7. Teams of campaign supporters will hit the streets in all-day efforts on the July 11–12 and July 18–19 weekends, in addition to weekday signature-gathering. A full-time team of volunteers will also petition in working-class districts and on campuses throughout the city.

Public forums will be organized each of the two Saturday evenings. Several classes for campaign volunteers will be held.

“A proletarian revolution that takes power out of the hands of the capitalists is needed to answer the crisis capitalism has created,” said Fein. “Toward this end our campaign puts forward immediate demands to protect working people from the devastating consequences of this crisis and strengthen our solidarity as a class.”

The SWP platform calls for guaranteed unemployment compensation for as long as a worker is jobless; a raise in the federal minimum wage to union scale; a massive, federally funded, public works program to create jobs; no cuts in medical benefits; a halt to farm and home foreclosures; immediate, unconditional legalization of all undocumented workers; abolition of the income tax for workers; and U.S. troops out of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan now.

Two-term incumbent mayor Michael Bloomberg, who is running for a third four-year term, is on the Republican Party and Independence Party ballot lines. Some prominent Democratic Party figures have also endorsed him. City

Comptroller William Thompson is running a token campaign for the Democratic Party’s nomination, as is Queens city councilman Anthony Avella.

In early June New York State governor David Paterson won agreement from officials of the Civil Service Employees Association and Public Employees Federation to cut pension benefits for future employees.

The deal raises the minimum retirement age from 55 to 62. Workers will have to contribute 3 percent of their wages toward pensions for as long as they work, not just the first 10 years. They will wait 10 years, instead of five, to become vested in the pension system.

In return, the governor promised not to lay off 8,700 workers this year. But 7,000 jobs will still be cut. Some 4,500 workers already at retirement age are getting a \$20,000 buyout and their jobs are being eliminated.

Another 2,500 positions that are currently funded but vacant will be permanently abolished, reported the June 5 New York *Daily News*.

In New York City, Bloomberg’s proposed budget threatens to eliminate some 12,000 union municipal jobs, cut \$400 million in funds for education, and slash funds for libraries by 22 percent. The library cuts will eliminate hundreds of jobs and reduce average weekly library hours from 52 to 32. Many libraries will be open only four or five days a week, reported the *Staten Island Advance*.

“This will limit access to the libraries for millions,” Fein pointed out. “We must fight to halt this and all other attacks on working people.”

N.Y. picket says ‘Free the Cuban Five!’



Militant/Tom Baumann

NEW YORK—Chanting “Freedom for the Five! Visas for their wives!” about 50 people joined a spirited picket line outside the Federal Building in lower Manhattan June 8. The protest was part of the June 6–8 international actions called to demand release of the Cuban Five.

Five Cuban revolutionaries—René González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and Gerardo Hernández—have been unjustly held in U.S. jails for more than a decade. They were gathering information for the Cuban government about rightist groups in south Florida who have carried out armed attacks against Cuba with Washington’s complicity.

The five were arrested in 1998 in Miami and convicted in a 2001 frame-up trial on charges of “conspiracy to commit espionage” and in the case of Hernández, “conspiracy to commit murder.” Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez, wives of René González and Gerardo Hernández respectively, have been denied entry into the United States to visit their husbands.

Attorneys for the Cuban Five have filed an appeal with the Supreme Court. Twelve friend-of-the-court briefs were also filed, the largest ever before the court.

—SAM MANUEL

More working people are filing early claims for Social Security

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

With mounting layoffs and declining economic conditions, there’s been a “major surge” in early filings for Social Security benefits, the U.S. government reports.

Since the current federal fiscal year began October 1, claims have been running 25 percent ahead of last year. This is 10 percent above what Social Security officials were projecting, according to Stephen Goss, chief actuary for the Social Security Administration.

For those who retire at age 62 instead of 66, Social Security benefits are reduced lifetime by as much as 25 percent. Despite these reductions those choosing this option are rapidly rising, even though many workers face economic pressures to stay in the workforce to make ends meet.

A December poll by CareerBuilder reported that 60 percent of workers older than 60 said they planned to postpone retirement. However figures from 2007 show that 42 percent of men and 48 percent of women decided to collect Social Security retirement benefits upon

becoming 62 years old.

Many early retirees are probably laid-off workers, Goss told the *Chicago Tribune*, who are claiming Social Security early despite reduced benefits because of the financial uncertainties they face.

With fewer workers covered by union contracts that protect seniority, employers are laying off older workers with the most time on the job more rapidly. Many facing greater difficulties finding work are opting for early retirement. Goss expects these numbers to continue rising as millions will exhaust unemployment benefits later this year or early in 2010.

Also affecting many workers is a significant decline in the value of funds they had put away for retirement in 401(k) investment plans. Last year more than 58 million U.S. workers placed a portion of their paychecks into these plans, which employers have been promoting as an alternative to company-provided pensions. According to Fidelity Investments, the average 401(k) balance plummeted 27 percent over the past year, eliminating in some cases tens of thousands of dollars of workers’ retirement funds.

Volunteer effort expands reach of Pathfinder books

BY THERESA KENDRICK

MIAMI—As the capitalist crisis unfolds globally with its devastating consequences for working people, Pathfinder books are sparking interest among a range of buyers, library selectors, and professors volunteers have visited.

A public library buyer, who volunteers met at a book event earlier this year, decided to add 50 Pathfinder titles to the library's collection. A Spanish-language wholesaler in Chicago has made an initial order and will now distribute Pathfinder titles. A large public library system in Miami is considering several titles in Spanish and French.

Volunteers who visit bookstores, libraries, and schools to sell Pathfinder Press titles are six weeks into a spring campaign to increase the number of visits and orders they obtain. The effort began April 15 and will run to June 17. Pathfinder's newest titles, *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa, Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* and *New International no. 14* with the article "Revolution, Internationalism, and Socialism: The Last Year of Malcolm X" are the centerpieces of sales presentations to bookstore buyers and others.

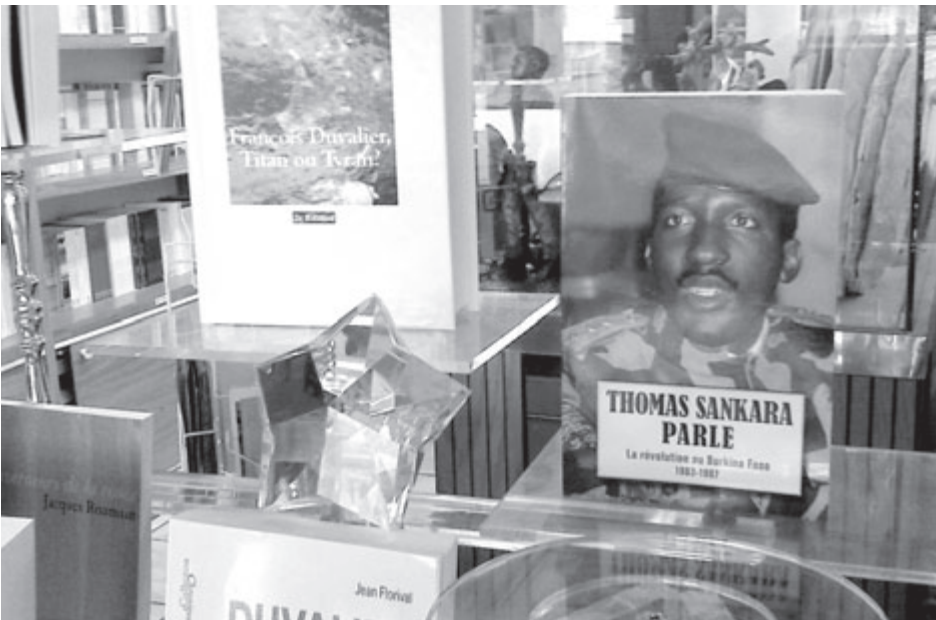
To date more than 105 visits have been made toward a goal of 120, and 25 orders obtained toward a goal of 35. Volunteers are stepping up their efforts

to make more visits and get orders by following up with contacts visited in the fall and winter campaigns; reaching out to new stores, schools, and libraries; and making regional sales trips.

Teams fanned out during a target week May 9–17, using timely promotional materials, including a flyer promoting Pathfinder titles that explain what's behind the capitalist crisis of production. Another features books about the fight by Palestinians for national self-determination. The publisher's 2009 brochures in English, Spanish, and French were also distributed.

The Chinese edition of *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution* is beginning to appear in on-line library catalogs as a result of work by sales volunteers, presentations at public meetings to discuss the book, and other promotional activity. Similarly, *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa* is showing up in larger numbers of libraries, according to www.worldcat.org, a worldwide online library catalog that includes listings of Pathfinder Press titles.

Regional sales teams have been meeting buyers who have not been visited in a number of years. This includes at stores and libraries in San Francisco; Portland, Oregon; Atlanta; Asheville, North Car-



Militant/Theresa Kendrick

French-language edition of *Thomas Sankara Speaks* published by Pathfinder Press on display at Libreri Mapou, a Haitian bookstore in Miami. Library orders and bookstore sales of books by Pathfinder have increased as readers search for explanations to the capitalist crisis.

olina; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Iowa City, Iowa.

Sales volunteers in Los Angeles were the first to surpass their visits goal of 18. Nick Castle reports, "Just getting out into the region helps broaden our

reach. While driving to one visit we noticed small independent colleges off the freeway, jotted them down, checked their Web sites and library holdings and wound up visiting and making a new contact."

Socialist education conference

Continued from front page

conference on Benito Juárez, José Martí, and Abraham Lincoln, scheduled for Monterrey, Mexico, October 15–17. These classes will draw on the writings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels on the rise of capitalism in the Americas, the U.S. Civil War and overthrow of chattel slavery, and its effects on revolutionary developments in Mexico and Cuba, including the war against European intervention in Mexico in the 1860s.

Other classes will focus on the place of the national question in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat; Iran today in world politics; and the frame-up and imprisonment of the Cuban Five and the assault on the rights of U.S. workers that it represents. Classes will also be given on two Pathfinder titles—*Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* and *Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa*.

Discussions will take place following viewings of *Juárez*, a film about the life and times of Benito Juárez; *Half Moon*, a film depicting the troubles of a legendary Kurdish musician who attempts to stage a concert in Iraqi Kurdistan with a female singer from Iran; and *The Doctors of Tomorrow*, a documentary on East Timorese students studying medicine in Cuba and Cuban medical volunteers in East Timor. There will also be dances and other activities where conference attendees can relax and socialize.

On Saturday evening a wind-up event will focus on the July petitioning campaign to put the SWP ticket on the ballot in New York City, the financial campaigns of party supporters to help fund the SWP's ongoing work, the accomplishments and future work of the project to keep revolutionary

books in print, and the international work of the communist movement.

Following the conference, supporters of the communist movement will hold a series of workshops on Sunday, June 21, to advance their skills in producing revolutionary books. That day the Young Socialists will also meet to make projections for its work over the summer and fall.

For those who are interested in the conference, contact members of the SWP and YS at the addresses listed on page 6.

Classes at June 18–20 Socialist Conference

- **The National Question and the Line of March to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat**
—by Steve Clark, Ben Joyce
- **José Martí: The Class Struggle in the United States after the Defeat of Radical Reconstruction and the Fight for Cuban Independence**
—by Maggie Trowe, Tom Baumann
- **Benito Juárez and the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution in Mexico: The Fight for Independence and the U.S. Civil War**
—by Steve Warshell, Naomi Craine
- **Abraham Lincoln: The Revolutionary War to Abolish Slavery and the Defeat of the European Colonial Powers in Mexico**
—by Dave Prince, Bonnie Blackstock
- **The Frame-Up and Imprisonment of the Cuban Five: An Assault on the Rights of U.S. Workers**
—by Martín Koppel, Jacob Perasso (Class in Spanish also)
- **Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?**
—by Diana Newberry, Aaron Bleich
- **Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa**
—by Gerald Symington, Omari Musa
- **Iran Today and Its Impact on Developments throughout the Middle East from Beirut to Tel Aviv to Baghdad to Kabul**
—by Phil Clifton, Ma'mud Shirvani

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



June 22, 1984

NEW ORLEANS—Naked, unvarnished terror. That's the only way to describe one Black family's experience in this city. Two men dressed in the uniform of the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Department knocked on the door of 64-year-old Margaret Clements this past May 17. What followed was "like a nightmare" according to Clements.

One daughter, Jule Cobb, 36, answered the door downstairs. Another daughter, Sheila Green, 32, recognized one of the deputies and also went down.

The deputies showed up because Cobb owed \$12.50 for a traffic violation. For this they said she was going to jail! Cobb turned to get her wallet, which her mother was handing to her on the stairway. The deputies then suddenly turned on Green, kicking and punching her at the bottom of the stairwell. Each cop then grabbed an arm and started ramming her head into the wall.



June 22, 1959

Top officials of the United Steelworkers of America said "No" to a corporation proposal for contract changes weakening the union inside the plants. The proposal, made by a negotiating team acting for the 12 major steel companies in the current New York bargaining sessions, implied a wage increase in return for sweeping changes in working rules and other past practices which would "enable management to make operating improvements in the interest of greater efficiency and economy."

Steelworkers union President David J. McDonald said such changes would "rip the heart and sinews" out of the union. The proposals would eliminate much of the in-plant union control over work schedules, seniority, speed-up, etc. They would give the management more power to control work stoppages and establish incentive systems.



June 23, 1934

After the first year of the New Deal the American farmers are beginning to become disillusioned with its "recovery" program. The high prices for farm products which was to follow automatically from an artificially induced economy of curtailment of production has failed to materialize and the farmers find themselves holding the sack.

At the end of 1933 the year's index showed a gain of only 9 percent over 1932. In July 1933 the purchasing power of the farmers' dollar had fallen to 71 cents, in January 1934 it was down to 60 cents, while for February it was recorded at 64 cents.

Bad times did not set in for the farmer in 1929 at the time of the general crisis of capitalism but fully ten years earlier. Depression in agriculture set in almost immediately after the world war.

The Cosmopolitan ‘Meritocracy’ and Class Stratification of Black Nationality

Chapter of ‘Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power’

Over the next two weeks the Militant will run in two parts a chapter from the forthcoming book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party.

The chapter reprinted below is based on reports presented by Barnes to an April 11–13, 2009, Socialist Workers Party leadership conference in New York and a Nov. 22, 2008, talk by him to a public meeting of some 375 participants held in Newark, New Jersey, sponsored by the SWP and Young Socialists. The book will be released this fall. Copyright © 2009 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

The tongue-in-cheek anointment of William Jefferson Clinton as “the first Black president” of the United States was more than simply a post-cocktails laugh line during a Congressional Black Caucus awards dinner in September 2001. It registered the consolidation of a bourgeoisified social layer of African-Americans, a by-product of the increasing class stratification of the Black population and an inevitable perversion of victories won by the Black rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. A perversion reinforced by the credit-fueled capitalist “prosperity,” the good times that began unraveling only in the latter half of the opening decade of the twenty-first century.

Within the Black nationality there had been a significant growth of middle-class and professional layers, even a bourgeois layer—to a degree unthinkable to people of all classes and races in the United States no more than a quarter century earlier. Well before his term in the White House began in 1993, Clinton had recognized the significance of this development for the stability of capitalist rule in the United States, and in particular its importance for the Democratic Party at the local, state, and federal levels. Clinton appointed many more Blacks to his administration than did any of the forty-one presidents before him, or, so far, the two after him. He named nine African-Americans to cabinet-level positions and nine as assistants to the president, not to mention thousands of appointments to other posts throughout the federal bureaucracy.

The Black Caucus members were honoring Clinton for his contribution to the career advancement of their own social peers, not for promoting the economic and social advancement of the toiling majority of African-Americans or of workers and farmers as a whole in the United States.

It’s important for the working-class movement to understand the scope, pace, and limits to the expansion of this layer of the Black population in recent decades.

The proportion of Blacks in the United States with annual family incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000 (in constant 2006 dollars) has jumped from 12 percent in 1967 to 23 percent in 2006. Some one in ten Black families today—9.1 percent—have annual incomes of more than \$100,000 (again in 2006 dollars), compared to under 2 percent only



William J. Clinton Presidential Library

William Clinton and Jesse Jackson at Congressional Black Caucus dinner in 2000. At caucus’s dinner the next year Clinton was anointed “the first Black president.” Politically, Clinton’s administration marked the consolidation of a bourgeoisified social layer of African-Americans. Barack Obama’s election in 2008 registered something different: the explosive growth of a ‘meritocracy’ of bourgeois-minded professionals and middle-class individuals of all hues of skin.

forty years ago.

As recently as 1988 there had never been a single chief executive officer (CEO) of a major U.S. corporation or corporate division who was Black—not one. Today there are more than twenty. And not of small companies “the average American” has never heard of. Over the last half decade, businesses known the world over that have had CEOs who are Black include American Express, Mer-

“Within the Black nationality there has been a significant growth of middle-class and professional layers, even a bourgeois layer . . .”

rill Lynch, Time Warner, Sears, Fannie Mae, Duke Energy, Dun & Bradstreet, Symantec, Aetna, Oracle, Xerox, and Avis. The most recent addition, the new chief executive at Xerox, is both female and Black.

This is the tip of a new *social layer* of the African-American population, a layer (as opposed to a large handful of individuals) that has existed for only a generation or two at most. It is different from the small middle class among African-Americans throughout most of the twentieth century: school teachers; preachers at large churches; owners of funeral parlors, auto dealerships, and other small businesses catering to Blacks; and a handful of lawyers and doctors practicing almost exclusively in Black neighborhoods and serving Black-owned businesses.

One indication of the newness of this middle class within the African-American nationality is the lag between the growth in its members’ median annual *income*—which expanded quite rapidly, once certain racist barriers had been battered down by the Black rights movement—and their median *wealth*, which takes a lot more time to accumulate and to pass along tax free through inheritance and family trusts and foundations. The median annual income of Blacks is now 62 percent of that of whites, up from 56 percent in the 1960s. For Blacks who are married, median family income is now 80 percent of that of comparable families both of whose adults are white. But

the median net worth of Black families (not just those who are married)—that is, their accumulated wealth—remains less than 20 percent that of whites. And a much higher percentage of the wealth held by Blacks is accounted for by a house, not by stocks, bonds, and other capital. In that sense, Blacks, relative to whites, remain “house rich and cash poor,” as the old expression goes.

But that, too, has been changing. In fact, based on government figures, a little more than 10 percent of those categorized as “nonwhite or Hispanic” directly own stocks today (that is, not just indirectly—and for most, insecurely—through limited participation rights in a pension fund, medical plan, etc.), up nearly 60 percent from a quarter century ago. The respective figure for those categorized as “non-Hispanic whites” is 24.7—that is, roughly two and half times the percentage of “nonwhite or Hispanic” stock owners.

A few hundred thousand African-Americans, roughly 0.4 percent of Black households, hold bonds. In this case, the respective figure for non-Hispanic whites is 3.8 percent—that is, nearly ten times the percentage of African-American bondholders. (For the tiny handful of propertied ruling families, bonds—government, agency, and corporate—are the single biggest storehouse of the “permanent” wealth they obtain from their share in the total surplus value squeezed from exploiting the social labor of workers, farmers, and other toiling producers around the world.)

This well-off social layer of the African-American population also has substantially more weight than ever before among Democratic Party officeholders and functionaries. Forty-three members of the U.S. House of Representatives today are Black—10 percent—up from only four members, or less than 1 percent, in 1963. The number of state legislators who are African-American has tripled since 1970, and nearly a third

were elected in districts with predominantly white populations. Today Blacks are mayors of some 50 of the 600 U.S. cities with populations of 50,000 or more, while prior to 1967 there had not been a single African-American mayor of a major city for almost a hundred years—since the bloody crushing of Radical Reconstruction.

In fact, this privileged layer of the Black population has become the third leg of the “coalition” that turns out the vote for the imperialists who run the Democratic Party—the other two being the trade union officialdom and the patronage-based political machines of major U.S. cities. The political representatives of this layer have replaced the “Dixiecrats,” the Democratic Party functionaries of the former Confederate states, who prior to the defeat of Jim Crow segregation in the 1960s had for decades formed the institutional bulwark of that racist system and guaranteed the Democrats’ viability as a national party.

Obama and the ‘meritocracy’

This growth of the Black middle classes and newly enlarged Black bourgeoisie, which rose on the crest of the debt-driven capitalist expansion of the 1980s and 1990s, is a shift that is already largely behind us. Politically it culminated during the Clinton administration of 1993 to 2000.

Despite what is often said in the capitalist media and elsewhere, the election of Barack Obama as president registers not the existence of this social layer among African-Americans but something different in the evolution of class relations in the United States. It’s not “a Black thing.” The Obama administration is a product of the explosive growth in recent decades of a new stratum of bourgeois-minded professionals and middle-class individuals—*of all hues of skin*—in cities, suburbs, and university towns across the country.

From the beginning of his years in Arkansas state politics in the mid-1970s, Clinton had opportunistically recognized what the by-products of the

Continued on next page



June 6 *Business Week* with cover story on Ursula Burns, Xerox’s new chief executive. As recently as 1988 there had never been a single CEO of a top U.S. company who was Black. Today there are more than 20.

Continued from previous page

conquests of the Black rights struggle opened for Democratic Party politicians such as himself. From the outset he actively *worked* to ensure himself and his party a broader and broader “Black vote.” Clinton’s relationship with the Congressional Black Caucus and bourgeois misleaders of civil rights, labor, and women’s organizations was to some degree symbiotic, but he certainly needed these “brothers and sisters” as much, if not more, than they needed him.

The Obama phenomenon came later and is quite different. Not only did Obama not need to exert substantial effort during his election campaign to win the Black vote, there is virtually nothing he could realistically have done *to lose it*. The same is true, even if to a slightly lesser degree, among Latinos, and even among student youth, including a sizable majority of students who are white. As a result, Obama’s relationship with the Black Caucus and civil rights and other misleaderships is decidedly not symbiotic; *they* need *him*, not vice versa. (The broader Democratic Party congressional “leadership” is another and more difficult problem for the new administration.)

This expanding layer of the comfortable middle classes, whose place in bourgeois society *is* registered by Obama’s election, is composed of the handsomely remunerated staffs of so-called nonprofit foundations, charities, “community organizations,” and “nongovernmental organizations” (NGOs)—in the United States and worldwide; of well-placed professors and top university administrative personnel; of attorneys, lobbyists, and others. The lives and livelihoods of these growing foundation- and university-centered strata in capitalist society—who, along with bankers and businessmen, cycle back and forth into and out of government positions—are themselves largely unconnected to the production, reproduction, or circulation of social wealth. Their existence is more and more alien to the conditions of life of working people of *any* racial or national background.

This reality was reflected in the presidential election results in November. Obama, of course, largely locked up the so-called Black vote. That isn’t what pushed him so decisively over the top in the race against Republican John McCain, however. Among the most striking changes from previous elections is that Obama won 52 percent of the votes from those with annual incomes of more than \$200,000, whereas Democrat John Kerry had won 35 percent of this layer only four years earlier.

And for the first time in many decades, the Democratic presidential candidate in 2008 won more than 50% of the votes in the nation’s largely white suburbs, compared to the 41% and 47% share taken by Clinton in 1992 and 1996. What’s more, while the Republicans still dominated many suburbs populated by more established “old wealth”—places such as New Canaan and Darien, Connecticut; Saddle River and Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey; or Sunfish Lakes and North Oaks, Minnesota—he tallied substantial margins in towns with larger congregations of high-income professionals, the parasitic users of wealth—places such as Westport (65%), West Hartford (70%), and Greenwich (54%), Connecticut; Montclair (84%), Tenafly (64%), and Ridgewood (56%), New Jersey; Edina (56%), Minnesota; and numerous others. More than 65% of voters in Scarsdale, one of New York City’s most exclusive

suburbs, voted for Obama, and Westchester County—the second wealthiest county in the state, and twelfth richest in the United States—went for Obama by a 63% margin (up from 58% for Kerry in 2004 and 56% for Clinton in 1998).

The aspiring social layer Obama is part of is *bourgeois* in its class interests, its values, and its world outlook. But it is not a section of the capitalist class in becoming. It is not “entrepreneurial.” It is not composed of the owners, top managers, or large debt holders of rapidly expanding new capitalist businesses—factories, farms, technology companies, or financial or commercial enterprises. The long, debt-fueled capitalist “boom” of the past three decades was marked by the stagnation of investment in capacity-expanding plant and equipment, and by an accompanying slowness in the drawing of production labor into the creation of social wealth. This stagnation of capital accumulation, together with the expansion of the middle-class layer we’re discussing, are in fact two sides of the same coin. Its members enjoy high incomes, but very few can or will pass down sizable capital through family trusts to coming generations.

Instead, this is a self-designated “enlightened meritocracy,” determined to con the world into accepting the myth that the economic and social advancement of its members is just reward for their individual intelligence, education, and “service.” Its members truly believe that their “brightness,” their “quickness,” their “contributions to public life,” their “sacrifices” (they humbly point out they could be making a lot more in business or banking) give them the right to make decisions, to administer society on behalf of the bourgeoisie—what they claim to be on behalf of the interests of “the people.” In exchange they get better and bigger homes, obscenely expensive K-through-16-plus education for their bloodline, consumer “necessities,” plus the equivalent of a “law enforcement discount” on all major financial transactions. (The killing the Obamas made on their Hyde Park manse and grounds in Chicago, generously subsidized by a big-time Daley machine fund-raiser, is but one example typical of these milieus.) And believe it or not, these bourgeois wannabes see all this as social sophistication, not the conspicuous consumption of schlock.

While the existence and expansion of these strata are largely divorced from the production process, they are very much bound up with the production and reproduction of *capitalist social relations*. They have a *parasitic* existence. To maintain their high incomes and living standards, they are dependent on skim-



Demolition of General Motors plant in Lansing, Michigan, in 2006. Debt-fueled capitalist “boom” of recent decades was marked by stagnation of investment in capacity-expanding plant and equipment and employment of labor.

ming off a portion of surplus value—“rents”—produced by working people and appropriated by the bourgeoisie. Yet the big majority of them contribute nothing to the creation of that value, even in wasteful or socially harmful ways.

Instead, many of them pursue careers—in the universities, the media, “think tanks,” and elsewhere—that generate ideological rationalizations for class exploitation and inequality (as they strive to “reform” it, of course). Others, whether as highly paid supervisory per-

“The ‘meritocracy’ of all skin colors promotes myth that their high incomes are just reward for their education, service, and above all, intelligence . . .”

sonnel, staffers, or attorneys, administer the rulers’ efforts through foundations, “advocacy groups,” charities, and other “nonprofit” institutions, here and around the world, to postpone and buffer the explosive social and political responses by working people to our worsening living and job conditions.¹

This is a social layer that is insecure in its class position. It lacks the confidence exhibited by the bourgeoisie, even by the nouveau riche bourgeoisie. The propertied rulers—comprising only hundreds of families, not thousands—are a confi-

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1. The trade union officialdom, despite their petty-bourgeois lifestyles and bourgeois outlook, is not really a part of this layer. They are still too connected, just by the character of their dues base and function in capitalist society, to the grit and grime of working. —JB



Department of Defense photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chad J McNeeley
President Barack Obama with Pentagon officials, January 28. More than any administration in history of U.S. imperialism, Obama administration is stamped by near total deference to top echelons of professional officer corp in foreign, military, and “domestic security” policies.

dent class (except during prerevolutionary crises or times of a rapidly accelerating breakdown of the capitalist order). Not only do they own, control, and hold the debt in perpetuity on the commanding heights of industry, banking, land, and trade. They also dominate the state and all aspects of social and political life, and finance the production of culture and the arts, including its “cutting edges.”

The meritocracy, to the contrary, is *not* confident. Dependent on cadging from the capitalists a portion of the wealth created by the exploited producers, these privileged aspirants to bourgeois affluence—a lifestyle they are convinced “society” *owes* them—nonetheless fear at some point being pushed back toward the conditions of the working classes. On the one hand, due to their very size as a stratum of society—*it’s millions, if not tens of millions* in the United States today—they recognize that the rulers find them useful to bolster illusions in the supposedly limitless “careers open to talent” under capitalism. At the same time, and despite their shameless self-promotion, many of them also sense that since they serve no *essential* economic or political functions in the production and reproduction of surplus value, they live at the forbearance of the bourgeoisie. In the end, large numbers of them are expendable, especially at times of deepening social crisis.

The capitalist rulers are *utterly pragmatic* in their policies, but they *do* have class policies. They do what they deem necessary to defend their profits, their property, and above all their class dictatorship. They *use* that dictatorship—they *use* their state power: their cops, their courts, their armed forces, their currency, and their border controls.

In contrast, this “meritocratic” middle layer has no class policy course of its own. To the degree they commit themselves to a course of action—often camouflaged as caring, feeling, thoughtful, and above all very intelligent—such policies are in fact derivative of the needs and demands of their bourgeois patrons. Despite the Obama *campaign’s* mantra of “change,” for example, the Obama *administration* is relying on exactly the same top Wall Street bankers and financiers as its predecessors, in fact, the very same moneyed interests—even the same individuals—who are the architects of today’s accelerating capitalist economic and financial crisis. And more than any other administration in the history of U.S. imperialism, its foreign, military, and “domestic security” policies are stamped by near total deference to the top echelons of the professional officer

Continued on page 8

Cosmopolitan ‘Meritocracy’ and Change

Continued from page 7

corps of the U.S. armed forces.

This is the social layer from which Barack Obama emerged. Not from the majority proletarian Black nationality. Not from the producing small-business milieu, the petty bourgeoisie. And not from the bourgeoisie. It is with the class interests and world outlook of this increasingly multinational “meritocracy” that Obama identifies.

The major “trope” of these wannabes is “irony,” a veneer behind which lies social hypocrisy. The main public “persona” they affect is one of measured empathy (they really “feel our pain”). The main pretension is the clarity of their thought and skill at winning over their listeners (“Let me be clear...”).

They resent their vulnerability in face of the actual holders of capital. It rankles and instills in them a thinly veiled cynicism toward traditional bourgeois values such as patriotism, thrift, faith, and

of my country.” Barack Obama himself initially decided not to sport an American flag lapel pin (a decision he later reversed as the contest with Hillary Clinton became nail-bitingly tight in Pennsylvania). And when the Democratic candidate spoke to a 200,000-strong crowd in Berlin last July, he announced he was “a proud citizen of the United States and a fellow citizen of the world.” The Republican right raised a hue and cry over each of these incidents, and—given what has long been deemed acceptable from the standpoint of their class—they had reason for complaint.

The new president, of course, is now showing in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, North Korea, and elsewhere that his administration will unleash U.S. imperialism’s massive economic power and death-dealing military might to “defend” the national borders, currency, and broader interests of this country’s ruling class. That’s true. But Obama and many

others in the meritocracy, of whatever skin color, do *not* consider themselves, first and foremost, Americans.

That doesn’t mean that those in this layer are internationalists, even bourgeois internationalists, much less proletarian internationalists. But the cosmopolitans *do* identify with their privileged social peers around the world. They *do* have a class identification with these layers. The Obamas *do* care what professors, NGO staffers, attorneys, and other “brights”³ in Paris, Berlin, Rome, and London think about them. They *do* rely on such support as a counterweight to the ruling families at home who ultimately tell them what they will and will not do.

Above all, they are mortified to be identified with working people in the United States—white, Black, or Latino; native- or foreign-born. Their attitudes toward those who produce society’s wealth—the foundation of all culture—extend from saccharine condescension to occasional and unscripted open contempt, as they lecture us on our manners and mores. Above all, they fear someday being ruled by those they worry could become the “great mob”: the toiling and producing majority. Obama, in fact, aims to protect the meritocracy the world over from those perceived in



Barack Obama at highly publicized campaign stop at a overwhelmingly African-American church in Chicago. Obama’s community—saying “Any fool can have a child”—graduating from eighth grade. The Democratic candidate is primarily accountable for education, nutrition, and Jack Barnes, Obama’s arrogant campaign talk “was

his petty-bourgeois circles as “gauche,” ignorant, bad-tempered, flag-waving, gun-hugging, family-centered, religious “populists.”

It’s a class question

What I’ve called the “meritocracy” here is, in large part, what Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray were describing in the mid-1990s in their book *The Bell Curve*.⁴ As implied by the book’s subtitle, *Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, they were attempting to provide a “scientific” rationalization for the rapidly rising income and class privileges of this particular middle-class social stratum in the United States—a stratum they euphemistically, although not modestly, dubbed “the cognitive elite.”

The authors wrote that while ideological differences, at least in words, would continue to distinguish “liberals” from “conservatives,” and the “intellectuals” from the “the affluent” (“the affluent” being their lingo for the capitalist class



(Above) 1963 civil rights march of 250,000 in Washington, D.C. (Right) Blacks stand their ground in face of national guard bayonets in Newark, New Jersey, during 1967 rebellion. Urban uprisings and growth of Black nationalist consciousness convinced U.S. rulers they had to concede something in addition to formal equality.



family (that is, values *promoted* by the bourgeoisie as essential mainstays of social order, not necessarily common currency among the propertied classes themselves). And since, as Marx explained more than 150 years ago, “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas,”² such cynicism also puts this elect of “intelligence” and advantage at odds with the values and standards held by broad sections of the working class in the United States as well.

Like others in his social milieu—white, Black, Latino, or otherwise—Obama thinks of himself as a cosmopolitan in the way the dictionary defines the word: “*having wide international sophistication, worldly*.” Sharply different from straightforward bourgeois nationalism (usually called “patriotism”).

After several primary victories in early 2008, Michelle Obama said that “for the first time in my adult life I am proud

2. Karl Marx, “The German Ideology,” in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 59.

RECOMMENDED READING

New International # 14
Revolution, Internationalism, and Socialism: The Last Year of Malcolm X by Jack Barnes
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ing Class Structure of Black Nationality



Reuters/John Gress

On Father's Day, June 2008, at a large and over-Obama smugly condemned absent fathers in Black—and berated those who “get carried away” with midate was holding individual Black family members d health care of children. From start to finish, says all aimed at the voters of ‘white America.’”

and its top managers and professionals), these “old lines” had in reality begun “to blur” on the most fundamental class questions.

“[T]here are theoretical interests and practical interests,” wrote the authors of *The Bell Curve*. “The Stanford professor’s best-selling book may be a diatribe against the punitive criminal justice system, but that doesn’t mean that he doesn’t vote with his feet to move to a safe neighborhood. Or his book may be a withering attack on outdated family norms, but that doesn’t mean that he isn’t acting like an old-fashioned father in looking after the interests of his children—and if that means sending his children to a lily-white private school so that they get a good education, so be it. Meanwhile, the man with the chain of shoe stores may be politically to the right of the Stanford professor, but he is looking for the same safe neighborhood and the same good schools for his children.... He and the professor may not be so far apart at all on how they want to live their own personal lives and how government might serve those joint and important interests.”

What we can add—something Herrnstein and Murray already knew—is that neither the private school nor the “safe neighborhood” any longer need to be “lily white.” In fact, even well before *The Bell Curve* was published, that certainly was not the case for the middle-class Chicago neighborhood of Hyde Park from which Barack and Michelle Obama most recently hail, and where they sent their two daughters to a private elementary school at a combined tuition cost of nearly \$40,000 a year (a total above the annual income of about half of all families in Chicago, and at least 40 percent of families in the United States).

It is Obama’s comfortable immersion in this arrogant, self-congratulatory, and bourgeois-minded milieu that is responsible for the few “blunders” he made during the 2008 presidential campaign. In comparison to other Democratic and Republican primary candidates, Obama was cautious and disciplined during the campaign. He was determined not to let carelessness scotch his ambitions. That’s

why his slips were revealing.

There were his widely publicized remarks at a fund-raiser in April 2008, for example, where he was speaking to a small group of supporters at a home in San Francisco’s exclusive Pacific Heights neighborhood. Obama was so at ease in that company that he let down his guard. His class prejudices poured out for all to hear.

Working people in the small Pennsylvania towns where Obama had just been campaigning, he said, and in “a lot of small towns in the Midwest,” have been seeing job opportunities decline for a long time. “They fell throughout the Clinton Administration, and the Bush Administration, and each successive administration has said that somehow these communities are going to regenerate, and they have not. And it’s not surprising, then, they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren’t like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations.”

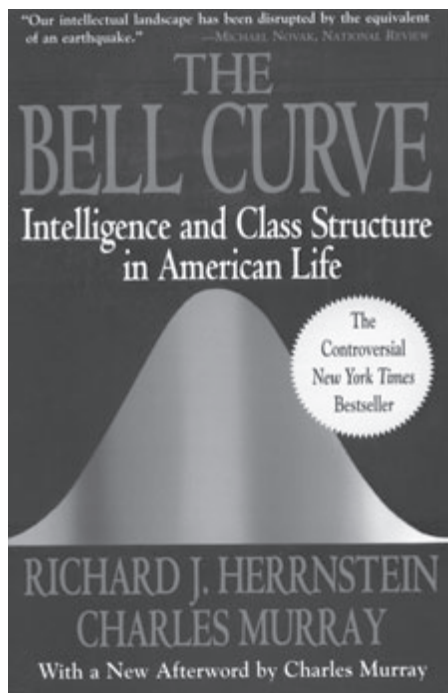
We working people, you see, may be “bitter,” intolerant gun-huggers, Bible-thumpers, and jingoists—but that’s “not surprising,” since we’re so insular, beaten down, and demor-

“The fight for quotas in hiring, seniority-based layoffs, and college admissions is indispensable in forging class solidarity ...”

alized! (By the way, isn’t it hard to imagine a more insular “small town” than San Francisco? Or Manhattan’s Upper West Side? Or Obama’s own Hyde Park in Chicago? Talk about “rural” idiocy!)

A bourgeois perversion of working-class gains

The fact that growing numbers in this “cognitive elite” social layer are African-American today is something that would have been impossible thirty years ago. That testifies to the expansion of the Black middle class and the evolution of social attitudes we’ve already discussed. What came to be known by the latter half of the 1960s



The 1994 book *The Bell Curve* attempted to provide a “scientific” rationalization for the rapidly rising income and class privileges of what the authors called “the cognitive elite.”

as affirmative action—that is, not simply the concept of equal justice under bourgeois law, fought for and more broadly codified by the mass civil rights struggles, but explicit and transparent *quotas* in hiring, college admissions, promotions, and seniority-based layoffs—is what broke down barriers that had long blocked large numbers of African-Americans from achieving such social status. And it was the urban rebellions by Blacks during those same years—in Harlem, Watts, Chicago, Newark, Detroit, and smaller cities all over the country—and the rise of Black nationalist consciousness and organizations during that same period, that convinced the U.S. rulers that they had to concede something in addition to formal equality. At least for a time, they had to accept the need for quotas.

Today the privileged layers Obama

their own individual cases, that *they* got where *they* are without need of quotas.

Affirmative action in the misshapen forms increasingly implemented by the capitalist rulers has more and more been incorporated into advancement of the meritocracy to the degree the bourgeoisie deems it necessary to the maintenance and reproduction of stable bourgeois social relations. Given this supraclass character, the main function of affirmative action as it has come to be applied by the bourgeoisie in the United States is to reinforce illusions in imperialist democracy. It is used to further divide African-Americans and other nationally oppressed layers along class lines, and to deepen divisions within the working class as a whole.

That’s why communists and other vanguard workers explain that while



William Farrington

Thousands lined up for job fair at Pierce Hotel in Manhattan, October 2008. Jobless rate for workers who are Black is more than 75 percent higher than for workers who are white.

is part of are proud of being colorblind in a way that is new to bourgeois society in the United States. The glue holding them together is not color but social class—or, to be more accurate, their entrenchment in *a certain section* of a social class. Whatever their racial or national background or sex, virtually none of them perceive affirmative action as it has evolved today as a threat to *their* status, and it’s not uncommon for some of those who are Black, Latino, or female to insist, in

unconditionally opposing the rollback of any programs that would restore racist or anti-woman patterns of hiring, promotions, firings, or college admissions, we give no political support to how the bourgeoisie has implemented what they call affirmative action over the past two decades. What the working class conquered through victories such as wresting the *Weber* decision in 1979⁵—like other gains by the toilers, if the class struggle does

Continued on page 10

5. In June 1979 the Supreme Court upheld a contract negotiated by the United Steelworkers of America with Kaiser Aluminum to upgrade employment for those targeted by longstanding discrimination by establishing a quota that one-half of the places in a new job-training program would be reserved for Blacks and women. The court rejected claims by attorneys for Brian Weber, a worker at Kaiser’s plant in Gramercy, Louisiana, that he had been illegally excluded from the training program because he was white. Prior to that, while 39 percent of the workers at the Gramercy plant were African-American, only 5 of 273 skilled jobs at the plant had been held by Black workers, and none by women. At the time, socialist workers and others actively campaigned across the country and throughout the labor movement with the seventy-five-cent Pathfinder pamphlet *The Weber Case: New Threat to Affirmative Action; How Labor, Blacks, and Women Can Fight for Equal Rights and Jobs for All*. See also Jack Barnes, *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* (Pathfinder, 1994), especially pp.

338–41 and 401–03, [2008 printing.]

A decade later, however, the Supreme Court began handing down decisions that increasingly restricted—in the words of a January 1989 decision (*City of Richmond v. Croson*)—“the use of an unyielding racial quota.” Following another such Supreme Court decision in 1995 (*Adaran Constructors Inc. v. Peña*), the Clinton administration issued a memorandum aimed at further exacerbating divisions among working people by calling for the elimination of any program that creates “a quota,” “preferences for unqualified individuals,” or “reverse discrimination”—three longtime battle cries of opponents of the *Weber* decision and other prior victories. A 2003 Supreme Court decision (*Grutter v. Bollinger*), while conceding the University of Michigan Law School could continue to take discretionary measures to maintain “a diverse student body,” ruled at the same time that “universities cannot establish quotas for members of certain racial or ethnic groups or put them on separate admissions tracks.”

The growth of the cosmopolitan ‘meritocracy’

Continued from page 9

not continue to advance—has more and more often been perverted into programs that provide a golden key for a relative few to enter an increasingly exclusive club further up the income rungs of U.S. society.

With unemployment sharply rising today, and with the jobless rate for workers who are Black more than 75 percent higher than for workers who are white, the victories the working class has won through decades of struggle against racial divisions—divisions that are part and parcel of the workings of capitalism, and are consciously fostered by the bosses to pit us against each other and weaken the labor movement—are increasingly threatened. So long as capitalist relations exist, the fight for *quotas* in hiring, promotions, seniority-based layoffs, and college admissions—that is, openly stated numerical targets or separate lists for those facing discrimination based on their race or sex—will continue to be an indispensable element in forging class

solidarity along the road toward the revolutionary fight by the working class to take state power, hold it, and aid those the world over fighting to do likewise.⁶

Contempt for workers who are Black

What is so instructive about Obama’s class identification is not just, or even primarily, his patronizing view of workers who are white. When it comes to workers who are Black, Obama’s attitudes, if anything, are even more contemptuous.

Take, for example, his remarks on Father’s Day in June 2008 at Chicago’s Apostolic Church of God, which has an overwhelmingly African-American congregation. Much of the news coverage of that church service focused on Obama’s remarks about absent fathers, but he said a lot more than that. He

scolded members of the congregation not to “just sit in the house and watch ‘SportsCenter’.... [R]eplace the video game or the remote control with a book once in awhile.” (In February 2008, again speaking to a largely African-American audience, he lectured those in attendance about feeding their children “cold Popeyes” for breakfast—unlike him and Michelle, we presume.)

“Don’t get carried away with that eighth-grade graduation,” Obama said at the Chicago church. “You’re *supposed* to graduate from eighth grade.” (It’s less harmful to workers and farmers than getting carried away with a Yale or a Harvard law degree, but that’s another question.)

And then he scornfully added, “We need fathers to recognize that responsibility doesn’t just end at conception. That doesn’t make you a father. What

makes you a man is not the ability to have a child. Any fool can have a child. That doesn’t make you a father. It’s the courage to raise a child that makes you a father.”

Too many fathers, Obama said, “have abandoned their responsibilities, acting like boys instead of men. And the foundations of our families are weaker because of it,” he added. “You and I know how true this is in the African-American community.”

It was creepy. *It was all aimed at the voters of “white America.”* Obama was holding individual Black family members primarily accountable for the quality of the education, nutrition, and health care their children receive. “If fathers are doing their part,...” he said, “then our government should meet them halfway.” Halfway!

Continued next week

3 million displaced in U.S.-backed Pakistan war

Continued from front page

been forced from their homes by military operations in the region since last August, bringing the total number displaced to well over 3 million.

Some 265,000 internal refugees are staying in 19 crowded camps with scarce resources set up by international aid organizations and the government. The camps are confined to the North West Frontier Province; none are being set up in the more populous and prosperous Punjab Province.

The other 3 million are living wherever they can. Some are staying with families, others are in makeshift shelters, such as school buildings and tents scattered throughout the broader region.

“With the monsoon season fast approaching, concerns are growing about an increase in avoidable sickness and death due to disease outbreaks, such as acute respiratory infection, acute diarrhea, malaria, and meningitis,” Daniel Baker of the United Nations Population Fund told *Dawn*, a Pakistani daily.

The Pakistani military boasted at the end of May that it had taken control of Buner District and Mingora, Swat’s capital. Gen. Ashfaq Kiyani, the country’s army chief, said June 4 that the tide had “decisively turned” in favor of the military. At the same time, none of the top local Taliban leadership has yet been captured or killed.

By June 6 the military reported that more than 1,300 Taliban fighters had been killed. It did not release figures on civilian casualties.

One man from Mingora, who did not want to give his name, described to the UN news agency *IRIN* the conditions under which he left the city. “We had lost count of the days and nights and waited to die. There was no electricity, gas, or even water. Cell phones did not work because the army had jammed communications.” He finally left with his family of nine after witnessing “the annihilation of the village of Teeraman Dehri, with about 150 people. . . . The entire village came under heavy missile attack by the army, killing the entire population.”

Those fleeing the battlefields are on their own, risking injury and death from government strikes, Taliban fighters, and other dangers. Those without means to escape—some 20 percent of the population in Swat—remain trapped in the battlegrounds.

“I saw a family including some old



Refugees from recent fighting in northwest Pakistan wait in line at camp. Some 265,000 internal refugees are staying in 19 crowded camps.

people, trekking through the hills,” villager Gul Mohammad told *Dawn*. The family was making the difficult eastward journey from Swat to Shangla. “A pregnant woman of the family died amid a downpour.” Still far from their destination, the family was forced to turn back to the battlegrounds, he said.

24-hour curfews

The entire area of operations has been under 24-hour curfew, with only brief periods of respite to allow some to escape or find food.

In Mingora the curfew was relaxed for six hours May 31 for the first time in 10 days. “Thank God the curfew has been relaxed. We can now leave the area, otherwise all of us will die of starvation,” Mohammad Nisar told *Dawn* May 31.

Some 20,000 people remain in Mingora, a city of some 375,000. In much of the region, food is scarce; running water, electricity, and gas have been cut off, and there are no working medical facilities or communications. Even in Shangla, where the military has not yet launched operations, there is no power and a 24-hour curfew.

The Pakistani military had threatened tribal chiefs in Shangla that they would launch an assault in the district if tribal militias failed to expel Taliban forces that had retreated into the area.

A tribal militia of at least 400 in Upper Dir attacked Taliban areas, torching homes and killing 14 in response to a June 5 suicide bombing of a mosque, which killed more than 30 people. Letting the Taliban stay would be “inviting a military offensive, which we don’t want,” tribal chief Mohtabar

Khan told Pakistan’s *Daily Times*.

“I am incredibly heartened by the resolve shown by the Pakistani people, government, and military,” U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton said in a June 1 *USA Today* interview.

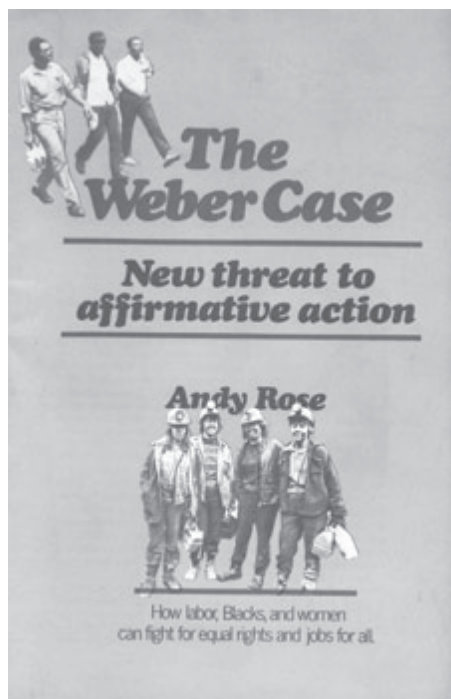
Prime Minister Yusuf Gilani asked Washington June 5 to write-off Pakistan’s \$1.5 billion debt to offset the economic burden of waging the assault on the country’s crisis-ridden economy.

A June 3 editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* titled: “A Victory in Pakistan” had nothing but praise for the military offensive. “The success in clearing Buner and Swat, all of which should be in government control in days, shows the military can sustain this sort of campaign. . . . The even better news is that Pakistanis say the army won’t stop at Swat. Next should come a push into lawless Waziristan.”

While current operations have been confined to areas of the Malakand Division in the North West Frontier Province, the Waziristan agencies are located in Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), a very underdeveloped region governed under the executive authority of the president though government-appointed agents.

The FATA is where U.S. aerial drone strikes have been concentrated over the last several years, particularly in the tribal agencies of North Waziristan, South Waziristan, and Bajur.

A peace deal signed three months ago with the Taliban in Bajur, led by Maulvi Faqir Mohammad, remains in effect.



In 1979 socialist workers and others actively campaigned across the country and throughout the labor movement with this Pathfinder pamphlet to oppose the challenge in the “Weber” case to a union contract containing quotas for a training program for Blacks and women. The fight for affirmative action is necessary to unify working class, the pamphlet explains.

Fight to defend abortion rights!

The closing of the Women’s Health Care Services clinic in Wichita, Kansas, operated by Dr. George Tiller until he was shot down by a rightist, is a blow to the right of women to choose abortion. It was one of only a handful of U.S. clinics providing late-term abortions.

Scott Roeder, charged with killing Tiller, gave CNN an interview from his jail cell, calling the clinic’s closing “a victory.” Antiabortion outfits Operation Rescue and the Kansas Coalition for Life say the same thing.

The right-wing forces are emboldened by the shooting of Tiller and the clinic’s closure. The Kansas Coalition for Life has announced that it may now direct its campaign of intimidation and harassment at clinics in the Kansas City area and North Dakota.

Cops from the local to federal level were fully aware of Roeder and his history of antiabortion vandalism and violence. A worker at Tiller’s clinic reported to FBI agents that Roeder had attempted to glue the clinic’s door locks shut the day before he gunned the doctor down. The agents took no action. Statements by leading capitalist politicians like President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton about the need to find “common ground” with opponents of a woman’s right to choose further embolden the rightists.

The closing of the clinic underscores the pressing

need to rebuild a movement to defend a woman’s right to choose. Like the two-decades-long movement preceding it by Blacks and their supporters in the fight against racial discrimination, the movement for women’s rights in the early years following legalization of abortion in 1973 refused to subordinate its demands to the hollow promises and career aspirations of capitalist politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties.

But the main women’s rights organizations have pursued the opposite course, increasingly compromising on issues like abortion in order to put “friends of women” in office. Their course has contributed to the demobilization and political disorientation of generations of women and their supporters, at a time when support for a woman’s right to choose and for women’s rights in general remains the majority sentiment.

In many cities across the country protest rallies were organized immediately upon hearing about the killing of Dr. Tiller. That response is an important indication that many understand the stakes involved, and are looking for political discussion on the road forward and action that can mobilize support for women’s right to choose abortion, answer the lies of the antiabortion forces, and increase the confidence of women’s rights fighters.

1,000 attend funeral for slain doctor

Continued from front page

organized rightist outfits such as Operation Rescue, the Freeman, and David Leach’s Des Moines newsletter *Prayer and Action News*, which describes the killing of abortion providers as “justifiable homicide.”

Marla Patrick, state coordinator of Kansas NOW, told the *Militant* that more people had volunteered for the “wall of martyrs” defense guard than had been expected. Eighty T-shirts with the NOW insignia on the front and the phrase “Attitude is Everything: Dr. George Tiller, 8/8/41–5/31/09” printed on them had been prepared for the defense guard. Many of those attending the funeral were from the Wichita area, along with others from neighboring states and as far away as New York and California.

Chaimi Winegarner, 23, a student from Wichita, said, “I’ve always supported the right for a woman to choose. I’ve gone to the clinic with my friends as a support system. Every day people are outside the clinic with signs and pictures of fetuses and they come up to your car screaming, ‘You’re going to hell.’ I don’t let them faze me. I’ve always admired the strength and the courage every day that man showed for a cause that he believed in.”

‘Stand up for my rights as a woman’

Magda Garrett, 50, a Wichita social worker, explained, “I just joined NOW this week after Doctor Tiller was killed. I’ve sat on the sidelines on the whole abortion thing. Now I feel compelled to stand up for my rights as a woman. And I have a 13-year-old daughter. I want her to have the choice.”

In response to the announcement of the decision to close Doctor Tiller’s clinic, Dr. LeRoy Carhart,

who had worked with Tiller, said he was exploring every option to keep late-term abortion services available to women who need them.

A statement from Troy Newman, president of Operation Rescue, said that he hoped “threats to open another third-trimester abortion clinic in Kansas will not come to fruition.”

Antiabortion groups say they are emboldened by Tiller’s killing and the closing of his clinic. Kansas Coalition for Life president Mark Gietzen said that outfit might turn its attention to abortion clinics in the Kansas City area and North Dakota. Gietzen’s group has organized harassment of clinic workers and patients outside Tiller’s center since 2004.

During the service for Tiller there was a heavy presence of police and U.S. marshals at and around the church, and posted at windows of nearby buildings. A police helicopter circled overhead.

A group of rightists organized by Fred Phelps’s Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kansas, were kept a block away from the College Hill United Methodist Church, site of the funeral. They held signs that read, “God sent the shooter,” with a background of simulated splattered blood. Some residents of the neighborhood gathered to protest the presence of the rightists.

The Wichita *Eagle* reported that as of June 6, 45 vigils had been scheduled in 24 states to honor Tiller, including actions in Jacksonville, Florida; Santa Monica, California; Milwaukee and Madison, Wisconsin; Portland, Oregon; Baltimore; Rochester, New York; Denver; and Washington, D.C.

Rebecca Williamson and Lisa Rottach from Des Moines, Iowa, contributed to this article.

Buffalo, New York: turning point in abortion rights fight

BY CINDY JAQUITH

The letter that appears on this page from reader Barbara Greenway adds to the experiences in defending clinics from Operation Rescue thugs in the early 1990s and presents some information not included in the *Militant*’s review of those battles in the article last week. The most important omission in the article, however, was the story of how the defense of clinics in Buffalo, New York, turned the tide against the rightists.

In the summer of 1991, thousands of opponents of abortion rights led by Operation Rescue descended upon Wichita, Kansas. They blocked clinics there for six weeks. Leaders of traditional women’s rights organizations, such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), refused to organize a countermobilization to defend the clinics, counseling instead reliance on elected officials, the cops, and the courts. But the police moved as slowly as possible to remove the thugs blocking access to the clinics. Some local officials spoke at the rightists’ rallies.

REPLY TO A READER

Emboldened, Operation Rescue left Wichita and later announced its next big campaign: a month-long siege of clinics in Buffalo, New York, beginning April 20, 1992. Buffalo mayor James Griffin invited Operation Rescue to town, as the Wichita mayor had done the previous summer.

But women’s rights supporters had drawn some lessons from the defeat in Wichita. Activists began organizing in January, building a broad coalition called Buffalo United for Choice, which included campus women’s groups, NOW chapters, and many other organizations. The goal from the beginning was to get as many people into the streets as possible to ensure that clinics remained open.

The coalition didn’t wait for Operation Rescue to act. It held a march April 11 to rally abortion rights supporters, drawing 2,000 from New York, California, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Canada. The crowd was overwhelmingly young.

Many of those people returned when the Operation Rescue forces went into action. As had happened in Wichita, the police treated the rightists with kid gloves, allowing them to block clinics for hours before taking action.

But clinic defenders were ready this time. Some 1,500 people, most of them young, joined in the defense effort, compared to 500 who turned out for Operation Rescue. Hundreds of people reported every morning at 5:00 a.m. to be dispatched to defend whichever clinic needed reinforcements. They underwent training in how to withstand the rightists and how to deal with the cops to avoid provocations.

By the end of the second week, Operation Rescue had failed to close a single clinic. Instead of staying a month, most of their troops left town, demoralized.

This victory for women’s rights demonstrated that the rightists could be stopped—not by relying on the cops, or the courts, or Democratic and Republican politicians, but by outmobilizing the right-wingers in the streets.

Defenders of legal abortion went on to confront Operation Rescue in other cities and successfully beat them back. Out of this experience emerged a layer of confident young leaders, schooled in battle with the rightists, who had learned how to organize a disciplined, effective defense of the clinics.

LETTERS

Abortion clinic defense in ’90s

In regards to your June 15 article on “How attempts to shut abortion clinics were defeated,” I note some important omissions. First, the most recent mass demonstration was in 2004 when hundreds of thousands marched in Washington, D.C., in defense of abortion rights.

Also, although there is a photograph of the defense of the clinics in Colorado, the fact that hundreds, if not thousands, from states all across the country mobilized to say, “You’re not in Kansas anymore!”

(to the Operation Rescue forces) was not mentioned. We soundly beat the antiabortion forces there. I am proud to say I was there for both these important events.

*Barbara Greenway
Frederick, Maryland*

Enjoyed Black farmer coverage

I enjoyed your coverage of the protest of Black farmers in D.C. around the issue of discrimination and nonenforcement of the Pigford settlement.

*John Leschak
Washington, D.C.*

Congratulations on fund drive

Enclosed is a money order for a *Militant* subscription renewal. I appreciate your consistently working-class analysis and political clarity.

*Sandy Porter
Alameda, California*

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.

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