

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
In midst of capitalist crisis Cuban
revolution gains importance
—PAGE 8

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 45 NOVEMBER 17, 2008

Colombian army units executed civilians

BY DOUG NELSON

Gen. Mario Montoya, commander of Colombia's army, resigned November 4 in response to public outrage over executions of civilians reported by the military as combat deaths. A week earlier the government of President Alvaro Uribe had fired 27 army officers, including three generals and 11 colonels.

The firings came days after the Colombian government was forced to conduct an investigation after CNN aired a video of a riot cop firing an assault rifle at indigenous protesters.

Defense Minister Juan Santos recently acknowledged that some officers were pressing soldiers for more bodies, reported Reuters.

"The killing is engendered by his [Uribe's] policies," Luis Evelis Andrade, leader of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) told the *Militant* by phone. "They have not dismantled the offer of rewards [for combat kills]. They have not dismantled their policy of promoting officers according to the number

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Bosses fail to block carpenters' fight in S.F.

BY JOEL BRITTON

SAN FRANCISCO—Black and Latino construction workers won a victory for workers and democratic rights here October 22. A California Superior Court judge denied a construction company's request for injunctions that would have blocked carpenters and community leaders from assembling at job sites in the Hunters Point neighborhood to protest unsafe working conditions.

Rubecon General Contracting, Inc. went to court after some 150 workers stopped working at the Shoreview apartments in early October. The workers, who are mostly African Americans and Latinos, cited unsafe conditions at one rehabbing site, extortion of immigrant workers' pay, and—by the second day of the work stoppage—the firing of Gregory Hall and Will Hall.

Longtime members of the Carpenters Union, Greg Hall was the foreman for Rubecon at the job site and Will Hall was the field superintendent. The Halls are African Americans. Greg

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Socialists: workers need to organize in face of capitalist crisis

On to next 365 days of workers' fights!



Lucia Mieli

Róger Calero, SWP presidential candidate, speaks November 4 at campaign rally in New York.

Students discuss revolution, unions

BY BETSEY STONE

MERCED, California—How a revolutionary movement can come about in this country and the role of trade unions were among the questions asked during an October 28 meeting here at the University of California for Socialist Workers Party vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy.

UC Merced is located in the heart of the agricultural fields of the San Joaquin Valley.

Continued on page 4

SWP celebrates campaign success

BY LUIS MADRID
AND CINDY JAQUITH

NEW YORK—"The Socialist Workers campaign won this election," said campaign director Norton Sandler at a lively election night celebration here November 4. Joining him on the platform were the SWP candidates for U.S. president and vice president, Róger Calero and Alyson Kennedy.

"We won by telling the unvarnished truth about the capitalist system," Sandler said.

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22

The Crisis Has Barely Begun!

... and workers' fight to end the wages system is posed

Jack Barnes

National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party

Reaching to the World

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'Militant' sales are boosted in final weeks of election

BY ANGEL LARISCY

The campaign to win 2,400 new subscribers to the *Militant* has been boosted by the final weeks of campaigning in support of the Socialist Workers 2008 candidates.

In the past two weeks 800 people have subscribed to the socialist newsweekly. This bodes well for completing the drive

in full and on time.

New York campaign supporters sold 125 subscriptions in 10 days. SWP candidate for U.S. Congress Dan Fein, and others, soapboxed with a bullhorn in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Crown Heights November 1, selling 11 subscriptions.

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SWP fund has biggest 1-week collection so far

BY BEN JOYCE

Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party contributed \$14,446 toward the Party-Building Fund this week—the biggest one-week collection yet. It put the fund 3 percent above the amount needed to be on schedule. Contributions will continue through December.

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Workers seek union at New England plant raided by ICE	5
Australia vote marked by Labor Party crisis	7

UN resolution condemns U.S. embargo of Cuba

BY SETH GALINSKY

UNITED NATIONS—The UN General Assembly for the 17th year in a row called October 29 for an end to the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba. The vote was 185 to 3.

The resolution on the “Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba” was first introduced in 1992. It garnered just 59 votes in favor that year.

By 2007 the resolution was backed almost unanimously with 184 in favor, 4 votes against, and 1 abstention. This year, only the governments of Israel, the United States, and Palua, a former U.S. colony, voted no. The representative of the Marshall Islands, which voted with Washington last year, abstained, along with Micronesia.

Representatives of 18 governments, mostly from Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, spoke in the discussion to back the call for an end to the embargo. Many of them thanked Cuba for the aid the island’s revolutionary government has provided to semicolonial nations.

George Talbot, chargé d’affaires of Guyana, said, “It is remarkable that, even as Cuba struggles with its recent unfortunate string of natural disasters, it continues to assist other nations in the developing world.” He noted that thousands of students from the Caribbean “have attended Cuban universities without charge, thousands have received free surgeries and medical assistance in Cuba, and thousands more have been treated in their home coun-

tries by Cuban doctors and nurses.” Only Ronald Godard, U.S. delegate to the session, spoke against the resolution prior to the vote. He cynically claimed that “the United States has been especially sensitive to the plight of the Cuban people” in light of the devastation wrought by hurricanes Gustav and Ike and has loosened some trade restrictions, including allowing what he said were agricultural purchases of \$396 million since September 7.

He went so far as to take credit for packages that Cubans in the United States send to their relatives on the island, which he said amounted to \$240 million in 2007, even though Washington restricts those to one a month.

Godard said it was “inappropriate” for the UN General Assembly to consider the resolution. Instead, he said the assembly should “focus on effecting a transition in Cuba,” code words for overturning the Cuban Revolution.

“If the United States government was really concerned about the well-being of the Cuban people, the only moral and ethical behavior would be to lift the blockade they have imposed on my country,” Cuban foreign minister Felipe Pérez Roque replied.

Washington, under the administration of President John F. Kennedy, banned all exports to Cuba beginning Oct. 19, 1960, except for some food and medicine. In February 1962 Kennedy tightened the embargo even further, banning all U.S. trade. The embargo has been maintained by every U.S. president ever since.

The draconian measures aim to punish the Cuban workers and farmers



Getty Images

Doctor treats elderly woman in Havana September 9 following Hurricane Ike. Embargo denies Cuba right to buy common U.S.-made medical supplies such as syringes.

for their 1959 revolution, which ended U.S. domination of the island forever, and to raise the price Cuba must pay for embarking on the road to socialism.

Pérez Roque told the assembly that the almost 50-year-long U.S. embargo has caused some \$225 billion in losses. The embargo also “flagrantly violates the rights of the American people,” he added. “It destroys their freedom to travel.”

The embargo increases the difficul-

ties faced after hurricanes Gustav and Ike, which ravaged the island in late August and early September, damaging one-third of planted farmland, 500,000 homes, and thousands of schools and health-care facilities.

The U.S. government is lying when it says it authorized relaxing restrictions after the storms, Pérez Roque said. The sale of agricultural produce is not new. Since 2001 Washington has allowed Cuba to purchase some food

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Service Employees Int’l Union urges U.S. visas for wives of Cuban Five

BY SAM MANUEL

The Service Employees International Union has called on the U.S. government to grant visas to the wives and family members of five Cuban revolutionaries who have been unjustly held in U.S. jails for 10 years.

“I write to urge you to grant entry visas to the U.S. to Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez, as well as the families of the five U.S.-held Cuban prisoners Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, René González and Fernando González,” wrote the union’s president, Andrew Stern, in a July 7 letter to President George Bush.

The Cuban Five, as they are known, were arrested in 1998 and convicted in a 2001 frame-up trial on charges of “conspiracy to commit espionage” and in one case, “conspiracy to com-

mit murder.” They received harsh sentences ranging from 15 years to life. The five had been keeping the Cuban government informed about rightist groups that have a long record of carrying out bombings and armed attacks against Cuba from U.S. soil.

Salanueva and Pérez, wives of René González and Gerardo Hernández respectively, have been repeatedly denied visas to travel to the United States to see their husbands.

Stern noted that Amnesty International has singled out the case for special mention. “We share Amnesty’s concern . . . that the long-term, permanent denial of visits from their immediate families has caused substantial hardship to René González and Gerardo Hernández beyond the penalties imposed,” the letter states.

THE MILITANT

Grant Haitian immigrants legal status!

Haitian immigrants to the United States are routinely denied temporary protected status and work authorization for which immigrants from several other countries are eligible. Read about this important fight in the pages of the ‘Militant.’



West Palm Beach rally October 24 to demand legal status for Haitians.

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Socialists defend workers' rights to political activity

BY SETH GALINSKY
AND JOHN STUDER

The Socialist Workers National Campaign Committee filed a request with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) October 30 for a renewal of its exemption from requirements to report the names of financial contributors.

The party's exemption request is part of the fight of workers, farmers, and their organizations to be able to engage in political activity, including election campaigns, free from government, boss, and right-wing spying and harassment.

The request was filed on the party's behalf by attorneys Michael Krinsky and Lindsey Frank of the internationally renowned law firm Rabinowitz, Boudin, Standard, Krinsky & Lieberman.

The FEC has continuously granted six-year exemptions to the SWP's campaign committees since 1979, most recently in 2003.

In this year's request to the FEC, 62 incidents of harassment from 2002 until

2008 are documented, including "physical attacks on SWP campaign supporters and offices, threatening mail and telephone calls, job firings and discrimination, and harassment of SWP supporters and campaign efforts by federal and local law enforcement as well as private individuals."

Among the incidents:

- The Sept. 11, 2004, firebombing of the SWP campaign offices in Hazleton, Pennsylvania. A brick wrapped in incendiary material was thrown into the display window featuring campaign materials and political books, setting the headquarters on fire and threatening the lives of people living in the apartment upstairs.
- On May 16, 2007, two FBI agents arrived unannounced at the home of David Arguello, the 2006 SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in San Diego, California, on the pretense that they had information from an anonymous source that he advocated

Subscription sales increase

Continued from front page

scriptions. Another campaign table in Jackson Heights, Queens, sold 12.

"Many campaigners pointed out, no matter who wins, the day after the election workers will be confronting the same challenges they faced the day before," reports Seth Galinsky. "That's why the Socialist Workers Party platform—with demands that can unite workers and point to the need for the working class to take political power—is so important."

"I've seen you out here many times," a University of Minnesota student said to campaigners on that campus. "Because of what is happening, I'm buying a subscription now." This response is being found in working-class communities, at factories, and at schools.

Militant supporters found a hunger for the coverage in the paper when they visited two towns in Minnesota. Sixteen meat packers and other workers subscribed in Worthington and 11 in St. James, where an immigration raid had been carried out 10 days earlier, reports Tom Fiske.

An all-day Socialist Workers campaign table, near one for Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama, at the University of South Florida in Tampa, netted 10 subscriptions, reports Deborah Liatos. Supporters sold 11 subscriptions at four other campuses in the Miami area as well as 14 to farm workers in Homestead, Immokalee, and Indiantown. Four subscriptions were sold to coworkers in garment and meatpacking plants.

Along with 41 subscriptions in the last week, "teams of campaigners in Atlanta sold seven copies of *New International* no. 14 featuring the articles "Revolution, Internationalism, and Socialism: The Last Year of Malcolm X" and "The Clintons' Antilabor Legacy: Roots of the 2008 World Financial Crisis" in the last 10 days," writes Jacob Perasso. Subscribers can purchase the magazine for only \$10 with a subscription to the *Militant*.

The eight-week international subscription drive is now ahead of schedule. But local quotas don't yet add up to the international goal of 2,400 so any area that can raise their quota should consider doing so.



Militant photos by Dan Fein (above), Brian Taylor (inset)
Above: Press conference Sept. 13, 2004, outside Socialist Workers Party campaign headquarters in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, in response to firebombing there two days earlier. Inset photo shows damage from attack.

violence against the U.S. government. The FBI agents interrogated Arguello about his political views and activities and his interest in unionizing his workplace.

- In October 2005, Lisa Potash, Socialist Workers candidate for president of the city council in Atlanta, Georgia, was fired from her job at Hormel Meats Corporation after her campaign was widely publicized in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*.

Without the FEC exemption the party would be required to make public the names, addresses, and occupations of contributors giving more than \$200 to its candidates and election campaigns, as well as the names of printers and others who do work for the campaigns. This would be a ready-made "enemies list" for government agencies, employers, private spy agencies, and right-wing groups and individuals.

Such reporting requirements have been on the books since 1971, when the Federal Election Campaign Act was passed. Since then, Socialist Workers campaign committees have refused to turn over the names of contributors and have fought for the right to do so without penalty.

In 1979, after a five-year public campaign, the SWP won a federal court ruling exempting it from the provisions of the Federal Election Campaign Act. The ruling was based on the threat to First Amendment rights to free association posed by disclosure of campaign contributors' names.

One of the central arguments in the application for exemption is the findings in a landmark 15-year legal battle, won by the SWP in 1986, that revealed a decades-long campaign of harassment, spying, and disruption by the FBI and other political police agencies.

Between 1960 and 1976 the FBI carried out at least 204 "black bag jobs"—burglaries of party offices—employed 1,300 informers against the party, and collected more than 8 million documents on the party, the Young Socialist Alliance, and the organizations' members and supporters.

Under the FBI Cointelpro program of the 1960s and '70s at least 46 disruption operations were directed specifically at the SWP. This included attempts to embarrass SWP candidates, cause the arrest of candidates, and foment racial strife within the SWP and between the party and other groups.

Cointelpro-type operations have been conducted against a wide range of political, Black rights, and labor organiza-

tions in addition to the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP's victory in its lawsuit exposed government political interference and was an important gain for the political rights of all.

Changes in FBI guidelines

The letter to the FEC requesting an extension of the SWP's reporting exemption notes that over the past decade, federal agencies and state and local cops have expanded spying and harassment against political activists. This increased targeting of political activity is justified under the rubric of the need to fight "terror."

As part of this effort, the FBI recently announced changes in the guidelines that broaden its ability to spy on and infiltrate political groups. The application for an exemption notes that police agencies from New York to California have moved to rehabilitate political police units once known as "red squads."

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security now works with a nationwide network of 58 "fusion centers" across the country where federal, state, and local cops can gather and share information gathered through spying on political groups and their activities.

The new, relaxed FBI guidelines replace ones adopted in the wake of revelations in the 1970s of government harassment of the SWP and other groups.

The application notes that these new guidelines "powerfully reinforce the chilling effect of the government's long history of systematic harassment of the SWP and similarly make the recent instances of violence and intimidation even more weighty."

In this context, the SWP's application to extend its exemption is part of the fight today to defend the political rights of workers, farmers, and others exercising their constitutional rights.

The stakes in this fight are also higher today. Before the party's last application in 2002, the FEC had ruled unanimously in favor of continuing its disclosure exemption. The April 2003 decision to extend the SWP's exemption, however, was approved by a divided vote of 4 to 2. Of the two commissioners who voted against the extension one was a Democrat, the other a Republican.

Messages urging the FEC to extend the exemption can be sent to the Federal Election Commission, 999 E Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20463. Contributions earmarked for this fight can be sent to the Socialist Workers National Campaign, PO Box 31322, San Francisco, CA 94131.

'Militant' Subscription Drive Fall 2008 ♦ Sept. 27 – Nov. 23 Week 5 of 8			
Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
Twin Cities, MN*	125	120	96%
Houston*	100	84	84%
Des Moines, IA	125	94	75%
San Francisco	140	104	74%
Miami	160	116	73%
Boston	60	40	67%
Los Angeles	100	65	65%
Newark, NJ	125	81	65%
Washington D.C.	95	62	65%
New York	315	197	63%
Philadelphia	90	56	62%
Atlanta	250	134	54%
Seattle	80	41	51%
Chicago	100	50	50%
Other		2	
U.S. Total	1,865	1,246	67%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Edinburgh	40	33	83%
London	80	67	84%
UK Total	120	100	83%
CANADA	125	66	53%
NEW ZEALAND*	85	61	72%
AUSTRALIA*	65	44	68%
SWEDEN*	35	26	74%
Int'l Totals	2,295	1,543	67%
Should be	2,400	1,500	63%
* Raised quota			

Dominican workers in N.Y. hear socialist candidate

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK—Some 30 people attended a forum October 31 in Washington Heights featuring Martín Koppel, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in that district. The neighborhood has a large working-class Dominican population.

The event, “The Crisis of Capitalism and Its Impact on Immigrant Workers,” was sponsored by the New York branch of Convergence for a New Majority, a coalition of political parties in the Dominican Republic.

Among those in attendance were school bus drivers, building maintenance workers, truck drivers, and retired workers. Many were members of various political groups, including Fuerza de la Revolución (Force of the Revolution), which comes out of the Dominican Communist Party, and parties with Maoist origins.

Koppel began his presentation by pointing to several recent examples of working-class resistance to the U.S. bosses’ assaults.

“Socialist Workers Party candidates have been joining the picket line with strikers at the Stella D’Oro biscuit factory in the Bronx,” he said. “Since August they have been fighting the company’s demands for wage cuts, no sick days, and increased medical insurance payments. I urge you to join their picket lines and bring them solidarity,” Koppel said.

Such struggles, along with the large mobilizations for the legalization of undocumented workers over the past three years, show that a small but important working-class vanguard is emerging in the United States, he said.

These actions are what is important for working people, he emphasized, not

whether Barack Obama or John McCain wins the elections.

“One month after the \$700 billion bailout, the capitalist financial crisis continues to spread. It has only just begun,” Koppel explained. “The crisis is worldwide and will have increasingly devastating consequences for all working people. It poses the need for a socialist revolution in this country, to throw out the capitalist rulers and establish a workers and farmers government.”

He outlined the proposals in the Socialist Workers Party platform to defend the living standards and rights of working people, beginning with the most oppressed. To fight for jobs for all, the socialist candidates call for cutting the workweek with no cut in pay, to spread available work to all, and launching a massive public works program with wages at union scale. They demand cost-of-living clauses to increase wages and benefits as inflation goes up. They call for nationalizing the energy industry and banks, putting them under workers control. They join the struggles for legalizing all undocumented workers, and for implementing affirmative-action programs.

Working people in the United States, he said, can learn from the example of workers and farmers in Cuba, who made a socialist revolution and have been in power for the last 50 years.

Exchange of views

A wide-ranging discussion and exchange of views followed Koppel’s presentation.

“Won’t voting for the Socialist Workers Party risk splitting the progressive vote and allow the right-wing Republicans to win the election?” was



José Guichardo
Martín Koppel, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in New York’s 15th District, speaks at meeting on “The Crisis of Capitalism and Its Impact on Immigrant Workers” in Washington Heights October 31.



the first question.

“Unions in the United States organize well below 10 percent of the workers, and they are ‘yellow’ [company] unions,” another person said. “Isn’t it outdated to talk about the working class and the unions? Don’t you have to work with broader forces, like small businesses?”

What about the collapse of the Soviet Union? was a third question.

“Do you propose the working class in the United States take power through the classic Marxist road, or is there some other strategy?” another worker wanted to know. “Don’t we need unity of the left?”

Joining the debated issues, one participant said, “For those who think Obama represents hope, remember that most of the wars and interventions carried out by U.S. imperialism were carried out under Democratic Party administrations.” He agreed with Koppel that the Democrats and Republicans are twin representatives of the capitalist class. He went on to say that they originated from a split in a single capitalist party.

“Yes, you’re well aware of the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965, which was carried out by the

Democratic administration of Lyndon Johnson,” Koppel said.

He added that the Republicans were founded in the mid-1800s by the emerging industrial bourgeoisie as it entered into conflict with the slavery. The party of the slaveholder class was the Democrats. “The Republicans began as a revolutionary force; the Democratic Party has never been progressive,” he said. “Today we are in the imperialist epoch, where industrial, banking, and commercial capital have merged into finance capital. There is no progressive wing of the capitalist class, which has two major parties.”

Responding to the question about “unity of the left,” he said, “There can be no ‘unity’ at the expense of a program and a course of actions that defends the interests of workers.” The Socialist Workers Party seeks to unite the working class, Koppel said.

“The term ‘left’ is not useful. When some groups say they are left-wing, what does that mean? The left wing of capitalist politics? Of the Democrats? Workers need our own *class* organizations, independent of the capitalists.

“It is a mistake to dismiss unions in the United States as ‘yellow,’ Koppel said. As they exist today, even with their bureaucratic misleadership, they are the only mass organizations our class has, the organizations that workers join today, and socialists are part of them. The unions need to be transformed into instruments of struggle.”

Cuban, Russian revolutions

Working people can look to the Cuban and Russian socialist revolutions, in which workers and peasants took power out of the hands of the capitalists, the SWP candidate said. A powerful example was set by the Bolshevik party, which led working people to victory and launched a genuinely communist movement worldwide.

After the death of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin, a bureaucracy headed by Joseph Stalin consolidated a political counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, he said. The disintegration of the Stalinist regimes in the late 1980s, he said, means that workers there, who had been driven out of politics, are now in a better position to be part of worldwide working-class resistance against the effects of the capitalist crisis.

Members of the audience purchased four subscriptions to the *Militant* and four copies of the latest issue of the Marxist magazine *Nueva Internacional*. They also bought *The Communist Manifesto*, *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* Leon Trotsky’s *Revolution Betrayed*, *Malcolm X Speaks*, and several other titles.

Students discuss revolution, unions, socialism

Continued from front page

quin Valley, home to thousands of farm workers and their families. The foreclosure rate in Merced County is one of the highest in the country and unemployment exceeds 10 percent.

The meeting to hear about the socialist campaign was chaired by UC Merced student Rafael Maravilla, who introduced Kennedy and Lea Sherman, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in the 8th District.

After Kennedy’s presentation, one of the students asked how a movement to replace the capitalist government with a workers and farmers government could

come about, if the socialist movement today is small.

“As this crisis deepens, the first reaction of many is to be stunned, shocked,” Kennedy replied. “Workers know it’s serious, but they don’t know what to do yet.

“But as was the case during the Great Depression of the 1930s, battles by workers against declining wages, speedup, and unsafe conditions on the job will start spreading. Workers will have no choice except to fight.

“As we take steps to build a revolutionary movement,” Kennedy continued, “we fight for immediate measures

to defend workers from the effects of the crisis—providing jobs by shortening the work week with no cut in pay; a public works program to create jobs at union scale building bridges, houses, schools, and levees; a halt to farm and home foreclosures; and steps to nationalize the banking system and energy industry.”

How to strengthen the unions was a focus of discussion at another campaign event, a barbecue hosted on October 25 by José Sandoval, a

leader of the fight for immigrant rights in San Jose, California. Among those attending were workers who helped build the May Day marches in San Jose demanding legalization of immigrants.

One of the workers, who was recently laid off, said the union officials at his workplace had accepted a situation where some workers were hired on a temporary basis, with fewer rights and benefits. This caused a division between the permanent and the temporary workers.

“We have to transform these unions,” Kennedy said. “We have to remember the union is not the same as the officials—the union is us and we can fight against these divisions.” She pointed to the example of Black and Latino union carpenters in San Francisco who united to fight the racist practices of the construction companies (see story on front page).

A retired worker, Cecilio Santillana, spoke about his experiences as a former *bracero*, one of the hundreds of thousands of so-called “guest workers” who came to the United States during and after World War II to work on the farms and railroads.

Santillana has participated in efforts to get back the 10 percent of the *braceros’* wages that were withheld and sent to the Mexican government, supposedly to be put into “savings accounts.” The

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Militant/Jacque Henderson
Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. vice president, center, campaigning at Tulane University in New Orleans October 31. In background is Mike Howells, one of the SWP electors that put the party on the ballot in Louisiana.

San Francisco carpenters

Continued from front page

Hall is the lead plaintiff in a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Latino and Black carpenters that seeks an end to racist, discriminatory abuses at construction sites.

The workers have waged a fight since spring 2007 that has forged unity between Latino and Black carpenters. As a result, many of the worst abuses were curtailed in May of this year when the Apartment Investment and Management Company (AIMCO) brought in Rubecon to replace other rehabbing contractors.

But in recent months, Latino carpenters reported that the bosses were extorting money from their pay—sometimes hundreds of dollars a week. Shoreview Residents Association president Dorothy Peterson reported that subcontractor Bay Area Construction Framers had an inexperienced crew installing windows, working from 30-foot ladders, without scaffolding.

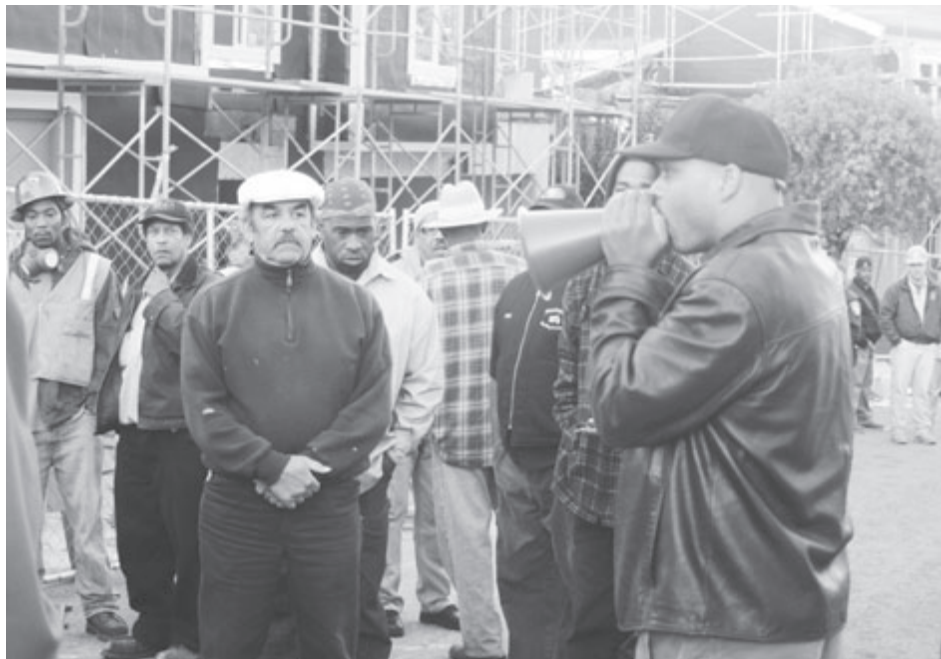
When AIMCO and Rubecon management refused to remedy the situation, Peterson told the *Militant*, she and two Latino carpenters gathered on October 2 at the Shoreview job site, explained to workers what was happening, and urged that work cease until the unsafe conditions were ended and the extortion halted. The site was shut down. Greg Hall and Will Hall were then fired by Rubecon. Sixty other carpenters were laid off.

In a scurrilous letter to Carpenters Local 22 on October 3, Rubecon president Ruben Santana blamed the Halls “for disrupting our Union project” and falsely charged that “the [October

2] protest caused by Will and Greg was violent.” Santana also falsely asserted that on October 3 the Halls got Rubecon employees “to organize themselves as an angry mob, to incite a riot, and not go to work.”

On October 9, despite city cops arriving on the scene, carpenters successfully appealed to workers who had entered the job site to stop work. Discussion of the issues ensued through a chain-link fence and in some cases workers came out of the site. After about three hours, with little work taking place, and with Local 22 officials assuring carpenters that they were pursuing grievances on the firings and willing to pursue complaints against the extortion, most workers who were not laid off returned to work.

At the October 22 court hearing, Rubecon boss Azalia Merrell and attorney Jessica Chylik falsely charged Will Hall and Dorothy Peterson with



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Carpenters conduct work stoppage October 9 over discrimination and lack of job safety at Shoreview apartments in Hunters Point neighborhood of San Francisco.

organizing an anti-Latino “riot” on October 2 and 3 and asked for a restraining order that would bar the two from the area near the construc-

tion site. Peterson and Hall refuted the charges. Judge William Gargano denied Rubecon’s request, citing no “clear and convincing evidence.”

Workers seek union at plant raided by ICE

BY KEVIN DWIRE

NEW BEDFORD, Massachusetts—More than 50 members of the UNITE HERE union and others rallied outside Eagle Industries here October 9 in support of workers seeking to organize the sewing plant. Eagle workers began their organizing drive last April.

The plant was raided by immigration cops in March 2007 when it was known as Michael Bianco, Inc. More than 300 workers were detained at the time.

The rally was held at the afternoon shift change. Participants chanted,

“What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!” in English and Spanish as workers came out of the plant. While many waved and some joined the rally, at least two workers held up handmade signs saying, “UNITE is danger” and “Go Home.” Volunteers from the rally also canvassed the neighborhood on New Bedford’s South End to get out news of the struggle and to build support.

Two workers who are part of the organizing drive, Elisa Ríos and Connie Cardosa, told the *Militant* that the company just moved its biggest production line to Puerto Rico. They also said that union activists are facing stepped-up harassment from the bosses.

Cardosa and others said that the health insurance offered by the company is too expensive for most workers, starting at \$80 a month for single coverage and going up to \$250 for a family. Only 32 of the 350 workers in the plant have signed up for the coverage. Workers also said that there are only four paid holidays a year.

Scott Carver, Eagle Industries vice president of operations, tried to answer the workers’ charges, telling the New

Bedford *Standard-Times* that Eagle raised the hourly wage by 50 cents over the state’s minimum wage of \$8.

He sought to blame young female workers for the high cost of health insurance. According to the *Standard-Times*, “Health-care costs are expensive for the company—and thus the workers—because most of the workers are female and of childbearing age, Mr. Carver said.”

On August 1 workers stopped work for 20 minutes to protest the firing of a coworker for allegedly using his cell phone in the lavatory during working hours to contact his ailing mother. The worker was escorted from the factory by police.

Following that 2007 raid some 700 people attended a rally in support of the arrested workers. Six workers filed a class-action lawsuit in May 2007 against Bianco for cheating employees out of hundreds of thousands of dollars in wages over a three-year period.

According to the *Standard-Times*, Eagle Industries has maintained a contract Bianco had with the Department of Defense to make backpacks for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Homeless families in New York shelters reach record levels

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The number of new homeless families entering shelters in New York City reached record levels over the past three months, reported the city’s Department of Homeless Services.

In September, 1,464 families sought refuge in the municipal shelter system, the highest one-month amount since the city began keeping records 25 years ago. This figure is 22 percent higher than in September 2007.

“Those seeking help include working-class families never in this position before,” stated Patrick Markee, of the Coalition for the Homeless. “It shows the economic impact of the recession upon low-income families struggling to pay rent,” Markee told the *Militant*.

After declining slightly over the past year, the number of those staying at city shelters each night has increased to more than 35,000 people. The coalition reports there are 9,300 families and 15,000 children in shelters as of the end of September. Uncounted are those not seeking shelter or who have given up on being admitted to these facilities.

“African Americans comprise 50 percent and Latinos 25 percent of those in the shelter system, a disproportionately high amount,” said Markee.

The number of homeless individuals and families is rising nationwide. In Massachusetts homeless shelters

are filled to capacity so the state has put up more than 500 families in hotels and motels, compared to 27 last year at this time. In Billings, Montana, records show that 382 homeless children attended school during the 2007–08 school year, reported AHN Media.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



November 18, 1983

CINCINNATI—A major victory has just been won here for the constitutional right of GIs to speak out and demonstrate in opposition to U.S. military intervention abroad.

On November 9, Marine Sergeant Jim Stryffeler, a member of the Young Socialist Alliance, was given an honorable discharge from the Marine Corps. He had been threatened with victimization and possible court-martial because of his opposition to the U.S. invasion of Grenada and his plans to participate in the November 12 march on Washington in opposition to that invasion and U.S. intervention in Central America.

Stryffeler, while on vacation leave, scheduled a news conference at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Cincinnati.

He had been politically active for the last several months.



November 17, 1958

The Nov. 4 elections resulted in overwhelming victory for labor-backed Democratic Party candidates, defeat for such notorious reactionaries as Knowl- and in California and Bricker in Ohio, and defeat of the misnamed Right-to-Work law in five of the six states where it was on the ballot.

Organized workers backed up their leaders on the issue of defending the unions against governmental restrictions. More than that, they mandated the labor leaders by the massiveness of their vote to get some pro-labor benefits from the politician “friends of labor” they elected.

The increase of liberal Democrats in Congress, and even a liberalizing of the Republican minority, gives labor a golden opportunity to insist upon the repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act.



November 18, 1933

Peiping—About a month ago we sent you a letter in which we gave a rough description of conditions here. Now, however, the situation in North China is changing rapidly. The conditions for revolutionary activity have become more difficult. The first maneuver of General Ho Yin Chin, the right hand of Chiang Kai-Shek, upon his arrival in Peiping was the destruction of the C.P. [Communist Party] and the organizations affiliated with it and the suppression of the anti-Japanese fighters.

In a short time mass meetings were forbidden, several party militants were shot, a wave of arrests spread everywhere, three comrades of the Left Opposition and many important leaders of the party were arrested. Practically all the party organizations in North China are annihilated.

SWP celebrates campaign

Continued from front page
truth about the devastating consequences of the deepening capitalist crisis for working people around the world,” Sandler said. “We ran against the capitalist class. We presented a program to protect the interests of workers and farmers, and explained that as long as we live under the wages system, these social and economic crises will continue.”

The SWP presidential ticket won national recognition as “*the* socialist campaign,” Sandler added. “As the electioneering dies down, many among the tens of thousands we spoke to will think seriously about the perspective we raised, and will take a fresh look at the program we brought to them.”

The New York campaign offices were decorated with balloons, streamers, and displays of media coverage of the campaign, as well as photos taken by a young woman from Italy studying here who joined the socialists for an afternoon of street campaigning a few days earlier. A potluck dinner of stews, salads, fruits, and sweets kept everyone going back for more.

A young man from the Caribbean island of Grenada took part in the festivities, along with his cousin. One of them had met socialist campaigners earlier that week at a literature table in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. Also participating were a garment worker and a construction worker who were among the dozens of workers and youth who circulated petitions this summer to get the SWP on the ballot here.

Joining the celebration via phone hookup were socialist campaigners in 17 other cities in the United States and Canada—Atlanta; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Boston; Chicago; Des Moines, Iowa; Hartford, Connecticut; Houston; Los Angeles; Miami; Minneapolis; Montreal; Newark, New Jersey; Philadelphia; Salt Lake City; San Francisco; Seattle; and Washington, D.C.

“Our hard work paid off,” said vice presidential candidate Kennedy. “We won ballot status in 10 states and official write-in status in three more. Twenty-five percent of the U.S. electorate could vote for the national SWP ticket in this race.” Campaigners for the party put in thousands of hours petitioning for ballot status across the country.

The socialists also ran 33 candidates in 12 states and the District of Columbia for city, state, and federal offices, Kennedy pointed out. In four states local SWP candidates were on the ballot and they were official write-ins in two more.

Crews from a Latvian and a Finnish television station covered the celebration, an example of the kind of response the socialists received from a wide range of radio, television, and print media in the course of the race.

The response to the socialist campaign was especially strong among youth, said Kennedy, who had flown in that day from Minneapolis, where she addressed a class of 60 students at the University of Minnesota. Building on that, she reported, Minnesota socialists are helping organize a meeting on that campus November 19 to discuss the Pathfinder book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*. The feature speaker at that meeting is Martín Koppel, who was one of the SWP candidates for Congress in New York.

Kennedy said she had spoken by phone the day before to Martina Correia, sister of Troy Davis, an African American on death row in Georgia who was framed up for the killing a cop in 1989. Seven of nine witnesses in his case have recanted or changed their testimony. “I encourage everyone here to continue the fight to free Troy,” said Kennedy.

“We did what we promised at the start of the campaign,” said presidential candidate Calero. “We joined workers’ struggles wherever they unfolded.”

“We stood on the front lines with meat packers in the Midwest defending their union and we joined protests against the anti-immigrant wall being built at the U.S.-Mexico border. We walked the picket lines of bakery workers at Stella D’Oro here in New York and of Machinists on strike against Boeing in Seattle. We joined Black and Latino carpenters in their fight in San Francisco against discrimination,” he said. “We pointed to the need to fight against the government’s attacks on our democratic rights.”

“Our campaign also got the truth out about Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, and Gerardo Hernández—the five framed-up Cuban revolutionaries who are joining the struggle from inside prison.”

“And we’re going to keep going to the front lines of the struggle,” he con-



Militant/Maura DeLuca

Alyson Kennedy, left, Socialist Workers Party vice presidential candidate, speaking with reporter from a Latvian TV station November 4 at celebration of the campaign’s accomplishments in New York City. In back is SWP campaign director Norton Sandler.

tinued, announcing he would fly the next day to Caracas, Venezuela, to participate in the Venezuela International Book Fair, where Pathfinder Press will have a booth. “There we’ll discuss the consequences of the world economic crisis and the meaning of the U.S. elections and share with workers, youth, and others our experiences as part of the class struggle in the United States, and the need to forge an international revolutionary workers movement.”

In closing the rally, Sandler encouraged everyone to attend the public meeting on “The Crisis Has Barely Begun! . . . and Workers’ Fight to End the Wages System Is Posed” scheduled for the Robert Treat Hotel in downtown Newark November 22. The featured speakers are Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, and Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *New International* magazine and recently returned from Equatorial Guinea.

Students, workers discuss revolution, unions

Continued from page 4

money was in fact never returned to the workers. He said the recent settlement in a class-action suit on behalf of the braceros is too little, too late.

The settlement opens the way for some braceros to receive approximately \$3,500, if they can provide original documents to show they worked as braceros from 1942 to 1946.



BY NANCY ROSENSTOCK

NEWARK, New Jersey—Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, spoke at two colleges, addressed a group fighting police brutality, met with several Ecuadorean day laborers, and spoke at a well-attended Militant Labor Forum here at the end of October. An interview with Calero was featured on the front page of the *Brazilian Voice*, a Portuguese-language biweekly with a circulation of 50,000.

“What about national security? What is your position on the wall being built between the United States and Mexico?” asked a student following a talk by Calero at Bloomfield College. “The Socialist Workers campaign is opposed to the wall. We stand for legalization of all undocumented immigrants now,” responded Calero. “Immigrants strengthen the working class in this country—they strengthen the fight for better wages and jobs.”

Calero addressed a meeting of the African Student Union at the Rutgers Newark campus and a class the following day where supporters of the Green Party and Ralph Nader had previously spoken. Sara Lobman, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in New Jersey, stayed at Rutgers to field a wide range of questions, while Calero left to address a meeting of the People’s Organization for Progress, a group opposing police brutality and other gov-

ernment attacks.

Calero opened his presentation by thanking the organization for its support for his successful fight against the government’s effort to deport him in 2003. Many of those at the meeting gave Calero a standing ovation at the close of his remarks.

At the end of the day Calero met four day laborers originally from Ecuador for a political discussion at a local restaurant.



BY MARY MARTIN

SEATTLE—Alyson Kennedy spent October 29 on the picket lines of striking machinists at Boeing plants in Seattle and Renton, Washington. The machinists voted to end their strike and accept a proposed contract settlement on November 1.

“What do you think about the fighting going on in the Congo?” asked James Kennedy, a Boeing worker for more than 20 years. “It seems like their government is out of control.”

“What we see in the Congo is the legacy of colonial domination and exploitation,” Kennedy replied. “The colonial powers pit one ethnic group against another in Africa to keep working people divided. In the 1960s and ’70s the exploited masses throughout the continent fought to win their independence from the United Kingdom, France, Portugal, and other imperialist powers. Today these same imperialists, along with Washington, want to expand their economic and political influence in the region, and to do so they have to keep the workers and peasants divided.”

Workers had mixed views on the tentative contract agreement by union officials with Boeing. Some told Kennedy they believed more could have been won, while others felt that the contract

was the best that could be won given the state of the economy.



BY STEVE WARSHALL

NEW ORLEANS—Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party campaign in Louisiana organized a tour here October 30–31 for Alyson Kennedy, SWP candidate for vice president. Kennedy campaigned at Tulane and Loyola universities, spoke at a coffeehouse meeting in the Upper Ninth Ward, and addressed a local coalition fighting for public housing.

Kennedy was invited back to Louisiana by three New Orleans electors—Howard Allen, Mike Howells, and Eloise Williams—who were among nine electors who had successfully put the SWP presidential ticket of Róger Calero and Kennedy on the ballot in

Continued on page 11

Socialist Workers Campaign Initial Presidential Vote Totals:	
New York	5,694
Minnesota	810
Louisiana	739
Iowa	662
Florida	520
New Jersey	503
Washington	346
Vermont	139
Colorado	129
Delaware	58
Total: 9,600	
Local SWP Candidates:	
<i>Martin Koppel</i> , U.S. Congress, New York’s 15th Dist. — 2,083	
<i>William Leonard</i> , Mass. State Senate, 2nd Suffolk Dist. — 3,047	
<i>Sara Lobman</i> , U.S. Senate, New Jersey — 8,395	
<i>Michael Taber</i> , U.S. Congress, New Jersey’s 10th Dist. — 1,564	
<i>Frank Forrestal</i> , U.S. Congress, Iowa’s 3rd Dist. — 4,562	

Australia vote marked by Labor Party crisis

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia—Communist League candidates in a four-week campaign won a hearing among working people here as the impact of the world financial crisis deepened.

A by-election was held in Lakemba following the resignation of New South Wales (NSW) Labor Premier Morris Iemma. Nathan Rees, a former senior advisor to Iemma, replaced him as premier September 5 following a factional struggle in the NSW Labor Party stemming from the deepgoing financial crisis of the state government. Rees has been in parliament for less than 18 months. It is the first time in the 117 years of the Australian Labor Party that a serving NSW premier has been removed by the parliamentary caucus.

“I am standing in the Lakemba by-election to present a working-class

voice in politics independent of the parties that support capitalism,” said Robert Aiken in an interview printed in a local newspaper, *The Torch*. Aiken was the Communist League candidate for the NSW state parliament seat of Lakemba in the October 18 by-election.

The resignations of two other Labor Party cabinet members forced by-elections in the Sydney electorates of Ryde and Cabramatta. Alasdair Macdonald stood as the Communist League candidate in Cabramatta. The elections held October 18 resulted in a 22 percent swing against the Labor Party in both electorates.

Macdonald took part in an October 13 debate along with four of the other five candidates standing for the state seat of Cabramatta. It was moderated by journalists from the local newspapers.



Militant/Ron Poulsen

Robert Aiken (right), Australia Communist League candidate for New South Wales state parliament seat of Lakemba, campaigns at an October 4 march in Brisbane to protest the frame-up of Aborigine activist Lex Wotton.

In response to a question put to the panel about parking problems in Cabramatta, Macdonald said, “A range of problems, including more importantly

the lack of housing and infrastructure, could be addressed through a massive public works program that would also give work to the rising number of unemployed.”

Covering the meeting and the by-elections, the *Fairfield Advance* quoted Macdonald saying that “the unfolding financial crisis shows the need for a socialist revolution to throw out the billionaire ruling families and replace them with a workers and farmers government.”

Aiken joined a rally and march to support Lex Wotton in Brisbane October 4. Wotton was the last of 18 Aborigines to face trial over protests that boiled over on Palm Island following the death of Mulrunji Doomadgee at the hands of the cops four years ago. (See article “Australia: rallies demand justice for Aborigines” in November 3 *Militant*.)

“Working-class fighters are fighting today to defend our unions, oppose racism, protest police brutality and frame-ups and defend Aboriginal rights,” Aiken said in *The Torch* interview.

Wotton was found guilty by the Brisbane District Court October 24 of “inciting a riot” and remanded in custody to be sentenced in Townsville November 7. Protests on that date demanding that Wotton be freed have been called in Sydney and other cities around the country.

United States falls behind on infant mortality

BY CINDY JAQUITH

The United States is losing ground in improving its infant mortality rate, another sign of the impact of the U.S. employers’ offensive against the living conditions of the working class.

According to an October report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 28 countries, including Cuba, have lower infant mortality rates than the United States.

There were 6.86 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in the United States in 2005. Twenty-two countries had rates below 5.0, most of them in Europe but also in Asia and the Pacific, including Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand. Cuba, with an infant mortality rate of 5.3, was ranked 27th. The United States tied for 29th place with Poland and Slovakia.

The U.S. rate was the 12th lowest in the world in 1960. Since then, the soaring cost of health care combined with a sharp decline in the number of people covered by health insurance and cutbacks in government spending has led to deteriorating health conditions that hit the worst-off sections of the working class the hardest. From 2000 to 2005, the CDC report said, there was no progress at all in lowering the U.S. infant mortality rate.

Babies born in the United States who are Black are 2.4 times more likely than white infants to die before the age of one, the CDC report said. The mortality rate for African American infants is 13.6. The rate is about 8.3 for Puerto Ricans, and 8.1 for Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

With the spreading capitalist financial crisis, workers can expect government officials at every level will seek to slash medical care further. South Carolina, which has the third highest infant mortality rate in the United States—averaging 13.2 for Blacks and 5.7 for whites—plans to cut health spending next year by 10 percent. Most of the cuts will come from family health programs.

In Cuba, on the other hand, health care is a right, not a commodity sold for profit. Ever since the 1959 revolution on that island replaced the wealthy

ruling families with a government of workers and farmers, the government has prioritized providing free health care to all.

Cuba is also a world leader in life expectancy, averaging 77 years, one of the highest rates in the western hemisphere.

‘Students are asking me about economy; your books may help’

BY KATY LEROUGETEL

MONTREAL—Pathfinder sales volunteers in Canada are well on their way to meeting their goal of 35 visits to bookstores between August 1 and December 31. So far 31 visits have been logged.

“Students are asking about the economy, and I don’t know what to say. These books might help me answer their questions,” said a high school teacher browsing at the Pathfinder Books table during the British Columbia Social Studies Teachers Association conference in Port Coquitlam on October 24.

Pathfinder sales volunteers in Canada have successfully presented titles addressing the financial workings of capitalism, such as issues of the magazine *New International* and its French counterpart *Nouvelle Internationale*, to bookstore buyers and librarians recently, as part of their campaign.

A bookstore in Montreal close to the downtown French-language University of Quebec put in an order for the first time, choosing *Nouvelle Internationale* issues 5 and 7, as well as *Thomas Sankara parle* (*Thomas Sankara Speaks*) during a recent sales visit.

Toronto sales volunteers have followed up with visits to university professors who participated in the Humanities and Social Sciences academic conference held in Vancouver, British Columbia, this summer and who expressed interest in Pathfinder titles. They have also visited several southern Ontario librarians, eliciting orders for a substantial number of titles, including the Chinese edition of *Our History Is Still Being Written*:

As with infant mortality, life expectancy is widely differentiated depending on what class you belong to. According to a report by the World Health Organization, average life expectancy is 81 years for the richest 10 percent of the world’s population and 46 years for those in the poorest 10 percent.

The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution.

One librarian was interested in Pathfinder’s Russian-language titles, another wanted labor titles. The owner of a Toronto Farsi-language bookstore also welcomed a sales visit.

Toronto volunteers staffed Pathfinder’s booth at the Word on the Street outdoor book festival at the end of September and Montreal volunteers will staff Pathfinder’s booth at the Salon du livre, Montreal’s French-language book fair, in November.

UN resolution opposes embargo

Continued from page 2

products, but only if it pays in cash in advance and “after a complicated and bureaucratic process of granting licenses, case by case,” he explained.

Washington has intensified some elements of the embargo over the last year, including heavier economic sanctions on companies that do business with Cuba and increased financing and support to groups inside Cuba that oppose the revolution.

In February, the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control fined Bank Atlantic and RMO, Inc. for allegedly handling funds involving Cuba.

Even though Washington claims it has eased restrictions in the importation of food and medicine, Cuba has been unable to obtain equipment needed to insert catheters for repairing congenital heart defects. Syringes for administering insulin for diabetics have to be bought in Asia, at a higher cost.

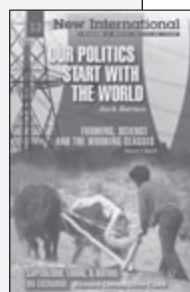
While Cuba is allowed to buy some agricultural products, Washington has prohibited the purchase of high-yield seeds that could significantly increase Cuba’s food production.

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‘Cuban Revolution gains importance in midst of world economic crisis’

BY JACOB PERASSO

MERCED, California—Nearly 100 people, mostly students, participated in a discussion on the book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*, held October 21 at the University of California campus here. The featured speaker was Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press and editor of the book.

At UC Merced and three other campuses the same week, Waters spoke to some 150 students at five classes about the Cuban Revolution and related topics. One of the classes at San Francisco State University focused on Cuba’s revolutionary internationalist solidarity in Africa (see accompanying article.)

Our History Is Still Being Written tells the stories of Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong, three young Cuban rebels of Chinese ancestry, who in the 1950s became combatants in the revolutionary war to overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship, rose to the rank of general in Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces, and continue to play leading roles today in Cuba’s socialist revolution.

The UC Merced meeting was sponsored by the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts; the Chicano Student Association; and the Center for Research in the Humanities and Arts. The campus, the newest in the University of California system and located in the center of the state’s agricultural heartland, opened three years ago. Enrollment has now grown to 2,700 students.

The meeting was opened by Ignacio López-Calvo, professor of Latin American literature at UC Merced, who had invited Waters to come to the campus. Waters addressed a similar meeting last May at the University of North Texas, where López-Calvo was then teaching.

Author of the recently published book *Imaging the Chinese in Cuban Literature and Culture*, López-Calvo spoke about the history of Chinese immigration to Cuba. “Before reading this book, I thought that all Chinese-Cubans had left Cuba after the revolution in 1959,” he said. “After reading it I had to rewrite my manuscript.”

Before Waters spoke the audience watched a portion of the documentary film *Ancestors in the Americas: Coolies*,

Sailors and Settlers, produced by filmmaker Loni Ding. It graphically depicts how hundreds of thousands of Chinese were forced into indentured labor in Cuba and elsewhere in the Americas during the 19th century.

In her remarks Waters noted that the example of the Cuban Revolution, which is the real subject of *Our History Is Still Being Written*, has added importance today given the rapidly unfolding world economic and production crisis, which has only just begun.

“The crisis is a product of the lawful workings of the capitalist system, not of policy errors,” and poses the need for socialist revolution in the world today, for working people to take power as they did in Cuba, Waters said.

She pointed to Sío Wong, Choy, and Chui as examples of the millions of men and women in Cuba who made a deep-going social revolution. “The Cuban Revolution wasn’t, as many of us learn here in the United States, the product of a dozen men who picked up guns and went to the mountains. It was the product of the action of millions,” she said.

During the discussion period Yang Li, a student who lived in China until he was eight, asked, “How is the situation in Cuba after the revolution and the cultural integration of Chinese in Cuba relevant to the United States?”

Racism based on property relations

Waters said the discrimination that Blacks and Chinese faced in Cuba prior to the revolution had the same roots as the discrimination they confront in the United States. The revolutionary government adopted laws that prohibited discrimination based on the color of a person’s skin and enforced those measures.

“Socialist revolution changes the



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Ignacio López-Calvo, professor of Latin American literature, speaks at meeting on *Our History Is Still Being Written*, at University of California-Merced, October 21. At far right is Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press.

property relations on which institutionalized racism in our society is based,” she said. “The revolution doesn’t eliminate prejudice, but opens the door and makes it possible to combat it.”

“I thought I was the only one on campus who thought this way, but now I know that’s not true,” said Rafael Maravilla, a student, after the discussion.

Waters also spoke about the Cuban Revolution to two classes at Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill, California, at the invitation of English professor David Vela.

“Is it possible that in this economic crisis other countries in Latin America will become socialist? Will capitalism last only for a time and then go into socialism?” asked Carla, a student in a first-year English composition course.

“Capitalism is based on a different economic foundation from socialism, but property relations don’t just change on their own,” Waters answered. “A contradiction grows up under capitalism between the increased concentration and productivity of labor and the private appropriation of wealth. The problem is not bad guys on Wall Street. It’s capitalism itself.

“Many countries have similar conditions to those that existed in Cuba prior to 1959,” Waters noted. “However, revolutions don’t just come out

of conditions of poverty and desperation. Revolutions come from traditions of struggle, growing consciousness, and political leadership.”

Prejudice against homosexuals

Waters also addressed a “Critical Thinking” course taught by Vela. Students asked how she would respond to the accusation that in Cuba there has been discrimination against homosexuals. A similar question was asked in one of López-Calvo’s classes at UC Merced.

In both classes, Waters noted that in the early years of the revolution there was strong prejudice against homosexuals. In this Cuba was not different from other countries at the time, including the United States. Mistakes were made in the treatment of homosexuals in Cuba that the revolutionary leadership later corrected, she noted, adding that the position of women and diminishing prejudice against homosexuals in Cuba today is far better than in other Latin American countries, and is among the most advanced in the world.

“One of the foremost proponents in Cuba of the fight against discrimination of homosexuals is Mariela Castro, who heads the National Center for Sex Education in Cuba” and is the daughter of Cuban president Raúl

Continued on page 11

San Francisco students discuss Cuba and Africa

BY LEA SHERMAN

SAN FRANCISCO—Students at San Francisco State University who are studying in Professor Aguibou Yansané’s class on “Development and Foreign Policy in Africa” listened intently to an October 22 presentation by Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, on Cuba’s internationalist role in Africa.

“Revolutionary Cuba has a long history of aid to national liberation struggles, from Algeria to the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, South Africa, and beyond,” Waters noted to the nearly 40 students.

One outstanding example was the role of more than 300,000 Cuban volunteers who beginning in 1975 defended Angola from multiple attacks by the South African apartheid regime. The decisive defeat of the South African forces in 1988 at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, Angola, also led to the independence of Namibia and accelerated the fall of the apartheid regime itself. The last Cuban troops left Angola in 1991.

Waters, who had led a two-week fact-finding trip to Equatorial Guinea in August, following up on an initial visit

there three years ago, also talked about the changing social and economic relations in that Central African country.

The conditions in Equatorial Guinea are shared by millions throughout Africa, Waters noted. The legacy of centuries of colonial domination and imperialist exploitation have left a country in which agriculture is subsistence farming, there is no national electrical grid, and virtually no manufacturing. At the same time, the recent discovery of vast reservoirs of oil and natural gas is creating the conditions out of which capitalist relations of production are being born. Both a capitalist class and a working class are emerging.

While U.S. and other imperialist powers seek to plunder the national resources of Equatorial Guinea, some 160 Cuban doctors, nurses, and medical technicians are providing quality health care in every region of the country. Most importantly, they are training Guinean youth as doctors and nurses at the Cuban-led medical school there.

Unlike capitalist governments and businesses that offer “aid” to African countries, “to the Cuban internationalist

volunteers, medical care is a basic human right, not a commodity,” she said. “And that is an expansion of the class character of the Cuban Revolution.”

One of the students asked what other countries in Africa were receiving Cuba’s medical assistance. “Cuba has medical brigades in 35 countries in Africa, as well as medical schools in Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Eritrea,” Waters replied.

During the course of her presentation, Waters talked about and showed a number of Pathfinder titles providing facts on Cuba and Africa. These included *How Far We Slaves Have Come* by Fidel Castro and Nelson Mandela; *Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution 1983–87*; *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution*, by Víctor Dreke; and *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*, by Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong. Waters, who is also the editor of *New Internationalist*, added that several issues of that magazine take up Cuba and Africa as well.

Our History Is Still Being Written

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Black workers and the fight for political power

The communist movement's role in the proletarian battles for Black rights

BY BEN JOYCE

"As a result of the social weight, disproportionately proletarian composition, and vanguard political experience of the oppressed Black nationality in the United States, workers who are African-American will make up a larger component of the fighting leadership of the workers movement in the class battles ahead," states a 2005 resolution of the Socialist Workers Party.

The political course presented in the resolution draws upon the writings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, founders of the modern communist movement, on the need for workers to champion the struggle of oppressed peoples against racial and national oppression, and the application of their programmatic conquests on this issue by the Russian Bolsheviks and the Communist International in its early years.

The struggle for Black rights in the United States began to accelerate during the militant labor battles and strike waves in the 1930s. Unlike the American Federation of Labor, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, formed out of these struggles, opened its doors to Black workers. African American workers responded enthusiastically and played an important role in strengthening the labor movement. Some of the best of them were recruited by communists working alongside them in industry.

As the rulers prepared for U.S. entry



Left: Blacks in Birmingham, Alabama, sprayed with water cannons by cops at a 1963 demonstration. Upper right: Malcolm X speaks at the Militant Labor Forum in New York, April 8, 1964. Lower right: E.D. Nixon, center, speaks at a December 1965 Militant Labor Forum on the 10th anniversary of the Montgomery bus boycott, joined by his wife (left) and Farrell Dobbs (right).

into the second imperialist world war, patriotic campaigns were launched to paint Washington as a defender of "freedom" and "democracy." The Stalinized Communist Party zigzagged as the war progressed, based on the shifting diplomatic needs of the privileged bureaucracy in Moscow. During the Stalin-Hitler pact, the CP denounced Washington's war drive. After German imperialism invaded the Soviet Union, the Stalinists backed the "Allied" imperialists as "antifascist" and "pro-democratic." Throughout this latter period, the leaders of the CP called for subordinating the Black struggle to the "war effort." In 1942, CP leader Benjamin Davis insisted that the leaders of the Black struggle

who were fighting against Jim Crow segregation were working "against the war and against the best interests of Negroes."

The Socialist Workers Party on the other hand deepened its work in the trade unions and the Black struggle as it campaigned against the imperialist world war. The party joined with Black organizations and worked to win labor's support in the fight for desegregation of the armed forces and society as a whole. A week-by-week account of the SWP's role in the Black struggle at this time is contained in the book *Fighting Racism in World War II*.

Rise of the civil rights movement

Following World War II, the fight to end Jim Crow segregation exploded in the 1950s and '60s. Mass battles emerged in several cities around the country. In 1955-56 a pivotal battle ensued against segregation on city buses in Montgomery, Alabama. E.D. Nixon, president of the local Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union and a leader of the local and state NAACP, organized a campaign to boycott city buses after Black rights fighter Rosa Parks was arrested for not giving up her seat on a bus to a white passenger.

The Socialist Workers Party threw its full support into the "Station Wagons for Montgomery" campaign. Station wagons, tires, and other auto parts that were badly needed to maintain the carpools for those boycotting city buses were collected and donated by the party. Farrell Dobbs, then SWP candidate for U.S. president, went down to Montgomery to give a firsthand account, week by week in the pages of the *Militant*. Clifton DeBerry, who would later be the SWP candidate for U.S. president in 1964, was a leader in the effort to get the station wagons down to Montgomery.

A broad movement of marches and other protests swept the South over the following years. Rebellions erupted in several Northern cities between 1964 and 1967. The 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King set off further rebellions in

more than 100 U.S. cities.

In the early 1950s, communists working at an aircraft engine plant in New Jersey met Robert F. Williams, a militant Black from North Carolina. Williams later returned to Monroe, North Carolina, where he led the NAACP chapter in struggles to desegregate public facilities and organized armed self-defense against attacks by the Ku Klux Klan.

In 1958-59, the SWP and Young Socialist Alliance, a communist youth organization, joined Williams in leading the defense campaign around the infamous "kissing case." Two young Black boys—one seven, the other nine—had been arrested in Monroe in October 1958 for "letting" a seven-year-old white girl kiss one of them. At the trial, the presiding judge convicted the boy who was kissed of "assaulting and molesting a white female" and the other boy as an "accomplice." They were both sentenced to a reformatory. The defense campaign was waged broadly, garnering support from across the country and around the world and won the boys' release in February 1959.

Independent Black political action

The militant battles against Jim Crow segregation and the collusion of the capitalist parties, Democrats and Republicans, with the segregationists increasingly posed the need for independent political action. The Freedom Now Party (FNP) was launched in 1963 as an independent Black political party and ran a serious electoral effort against the Democrats and Republicans. Its platform, which was printed in the Oct. 5, 1964, issue of the *Militant*, called for united, independent political action by Blacks and aligned itself with liberation movements worldwide. In Detroit, where the FNP centered its campaigning during the 1964 elections, the Socialist Workers Party withdrew its candidates for state and county offices in order to support the FNP and the break from capitalist

Continued on page 11

Fund drive ahead of schedule

Continued from front page
tions now stand at \$41,763.

Top contributions this week come from Twin Cities at \$2,685, and Chicago at \$2,042. This leap in contributions puts supporters of the fund in a good position to extend the lead on next week's target and continue momentum through the rest of the nine-week drive.

Fund organizers in Seattle report that they will raise their goal. Pledges there

now exceed their previously adopted quota. Party branches that are in a position to raise their goals over the coming weeks will help close the \$1,200 gap between funds currently pledged and the \$90,000 national goal.

"I joined the St. Paul branch of the Socialist Workers Party in the fall of 1938, so this is my 70th anniversary of voting Socialist," writes one contributor in Duluth, Minnesota. "Now we see the workers becoming politically active again and in the coming struggles we will have the opportunity to help lead them in a communist direction. Celebrate!"

As the capitalist crisis deepens and the bosses' assaults mount on working people, resistance by workers and farmers to these attacks will inevitably pick up. The Party-Building Fund will boost the ability of the Socialist Workers Party to take advantage of revolutionary opportunities that come its way, wherever they may be. To find out how you can contribute to the fund, contact a local office listed on page 10.

\$90,000 Socialist Workers Party Party-Building Fund Fall 2008 ♦ Week 4 of 9			
CITY	QUOTA	PAID	%
Twin Cities, MN*	\$6,000	\$4,535	76%
Seattle	\$6,500	\$4,198	65%
Des Moines, IA*	\$2,000	\$1,196	60%
Houston	\$2,500	\$1,395	56%
San Francisco	\$13,000	\$7,237	56%
Newark, NJ	\$3,500	\$1,800	51%
Chicago*	\$9,000	\$4,371	49%
Miami	\$3,200	\$1,556	49%
Washington, D.C.	\$4,300	\$1,740	40%
New York	\$15,500	\$5,706	37%
Los Angeles	\$8,500	\$3,037	36%
Boston	\$2,800	\$925	33%
Atlanta	\$8,500	\$2,706	32%
Philadelphia	\$3,500	\$812	23%
Other		\$550	
Total	\$88,800	\$41,763	47%
Should be	\$90,000	\$40,000	44%
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Communist continuity

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New International no. 14

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Capitalism's march toward depression and war

Printed below is an excerpt from The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions, one of Pathfinder's books of the month for November. The piece here is from the chapter "Capitalism's March toward War and Depression" and is based on talks presented in November and December 1990 by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. The excerpt describes the bosses' stepped-up antilabor offensive as the working class faced the effects of a recession and Washington prepared for its first ground troop assault on Iraq. Copyright © 1994 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JACK BARNES

As the working class in the United States goes into the current recession, it has already been the victim of a more than decade-long offensive by the employing class against our living and working conditions. Workers' real wages dropped by 8 percent in the 1980s. In fact our buying power has dropped so sharply that it is now at the same level as in 1961. Since 1980 our pensions, health benefits, and insurance protection have



Walkout by 1,000 workers at Smithfield Foods slaughtering plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina, Nov. 17, 2006, after bosses fired immigrant workers for allegedly not having proper papers. While labor movement has suffered blows, workers' capacity to resist has not been broken.

dropped about 15 percent on average in real money terms. As a result of the pressures from this assault on workers' incomes, the debt burden on working-class families has skyrocketed as they desperately seek to somehow buffer the blows to their living standards.

With unemployment already rising sharply, only one-third of those out of work in this country are currently receiving jobless benefits, largely because of major government slashes in the form of stiffer eligibility requirements. This contrasts to more than three-quarters of jobless workers during the 1974-75 recession and about half during the deep capitalist downturn in 1981-82.

Working farmers are in for another round of accelerating indebtedness, bankruptcies, and foreclosures. The capitalist farm crisis that drove tens of thousands of exploited producers off the land in the early and mid-1980s—the worst times since the 1920s and '30s—is far from resolved.

The capitalists are weighed down under an enormous debt structure that reached historic heights during the 1980s. Investment in new, capacity-expanding plant and equipment stagnated throughout the decade. Meanwhile, there was an explosion of real estate speculation, debt-financed buyouts and mergers, and junk bonds, plus growing instability on the stock and commodities markets. The Third World debt

continued to climb to staggering levels, devastating the workers and peasants in those countries and putting new strains on the imperialist banking structure. The banks, savings and loan institutions, and giant insurance companies in the United States—as well as the funds today available to government agencies that supposedly protect depositors and beneficiaries—are in their weakest condition in many decades.

Sudden breakdowns or partial crises on any one or more of these fronts—all of which are more vulnerable given today's capitalist downturn—threaten to turn a recession into a collapse of the international banking system that can plunge the world into a major depression and social crisis.

Antilabor offensive

The employers, their government, and the Democratic and Republican party politicians continue to press their anti-working-class, union-busting offensive. The ultimate solution to all the country's economic problems, they insist, is to guarantee workers the "right" to work in a "union-free environment." More and more they act as if the only good worker is a "permanent replacement" worker.

The bosses continue to demand take-back contracts that deepen divisions in the working class by agreeing to trade off wages, conditions, and job oppor-

tunities for younger workers and new hires in return for the will-o'-the-wisp of "job security" for a declining number of higher-seniority union members. The employers continually push to gut health and pension benefits, speed up production with less union control over safety on the job, and ravage the environment.

City and state governments around the country—as in the mid-1970s—are complaining of "declining tax revenues" and "tightening budgets," and "reluctantly" point to the need to sharply cut the rolls of public employees and impose takeback contracts. Governors and mayors are slashing expenditures on basic health services, education, child care, and other social programs that millions of working people depend on. Bridges and roads continue to deteriorate dangerously.

So workers and farmers in this country face a double march today: a march toward a horrible war; and a march not only into a recession but toward a seemingly inexorable worldwide depression and social crisis.

This reality is sensed by growing numbers of working people. And it poses big challenges and responsibilities for every thinking worker, every rank-and-file union militant, every communist.

The U.S. working class and labor movement have suffered blows; our unions have been further weakened by the class-collaborationist and proimperialist course of the labor officialdom; and we have been put on the defensive by the accelerated onslaught of the employers in the 1980s.

But we have not been defeated. The labor movement has not been shoved out of the center of politics in this country. Our capacity to resist has not been broken.

Since the middle of the 1980s, as resistance by the working class and unions in the United States has evolved, a pattern has emerged. Despite the difficulties, despite the blows, workers and unionists in the United States pushed to the wall by the employers' assaults have found ways to fight. Layer after layer of workers have managed to avoid simply being handcuffed, chained, and prevented from organizing to defend themselves.

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November

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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10 The Militant November 17, 2008

End U.S. military aid to Colombia

Since 2000, Washington has given \$5.5 billion to the Colombian military, making it the third-largest recipient of U.S. military aid, behind only Israel and Egypt.

It is no accident that during the same period more than 750 trade unionists have been assassinated in Colombia and at least 100 more “disappeared.”

The latest revelations that the Colombian military lured unemployed workers with promises of jobs, murdered them, and then claimed they were guerrillas killed in battle, has sparked international outrage.

Gen. Mario Montoya, the top commander of Colombia’s army, resigned in the wake of the latest news, including revelations that military officers were promoted and informants given rewards based on the number of alleged guerrillas killed, even when they knew the charges were false.

Long known for his ties to right-wing death squads, Montoya was a “favorite” of U.S. officials. Colombian president Alvaro Uribe called him “one of the best generals the republic has had.”

Under the guise of fighting “terrorism” and “drug-trafficking,” Washington and its allies in Bogotá seek to intimidate workers and peasants there who continue to fight for better wages, work conditions, and their

rights to organize. At the same time Washington uses the Colombian regime as a watchdog for U.S. imperialist interests in Latin America.

As a result of the U.S. assistance, the Colombian army is more than twice the size of the Venezuelan and Ecuadorean armies combined. Washington hopes that Bogotá will be a reliable ally in its attempts to push back workers and farmers in Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and other countries where toilers are challenging U.S. imperialist domination of the region.

U.S. training and direct support for military and paramilitary groups that wage war on working people in Latin America is nothing new: From El Salvador to Argentina, Democrats and Republicans in the White House have backed dirty wars against Latin American workers. This has also been part and parcel of Washington’s 50-year war against the Cuban Revolution.

As the worldwide economic crisis continues to unfold, there will be more resistance by workers and farmers in Latin America. They will continue to fight to get the U.S. boot off their necks.

Working people the world over should demand that Washington end its military aid to Colombia, remove its troops, bases, and military advisers from all of Latin America, and end the U.S. embargo of Cuba.

‘Our History’ meeting in California

Continued from page 8

Castro, Waters said.

At an Asian American studies class at San Francisco State University, taught by professor Wesley Uenten, a student who is Asian asked Waters, “Why don’t we learn about our own history in schools here?”

“Discrimination is part of the fabric of social relations perpetuated by capitalism,” Waters said in response. “The capitalist owners seek to foster and exacerbate divisions in the working class to divide

and weaken us. This will be especially true as the current crisis deepens.”

“Capitalism has no interest in teaching us the real history of struggle by Asian Americans and others, but many youth and working people, as they begin to resist the conditions imposed on us, discover this history for themselves,” she noted. “Our proud history of struggle gives us confidence in our own capacities to resist, to change the world in which we live.”

Black workers and political power

Continued from page 9

politicians by Blacks.

In early 1965, Blacks, mostly farmers and farm laborers, in Lowndes County, Alabama, began to organize around issues such as voter registration and inadequate educational facilities. Out of these struggles emerged the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. The group mobilized a broad campaign in opposition to the two major parties and gained 40 percent of the vote in the 1966 county elections.

After breaking with the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, one of last century’s most outstanding working-class leaders, set on a revolutionary internationalist course in the fight against racist oppression and imperialist domination. In championing anticolonial struggles throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America, he came to work with revolutionaries regardless of race. He supported Cuba’s socialist revolution and its leadership.

Malcolm more and more collaborated with the communist movement, promoting the *Militant* newspaper and working with the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance. He spoke at meetings organized by supporters of the *Militant* on three occasions and gave an interview to leaders of the Young Socialist Alliance, which was published in the March-April 1965 *Young Socialist* magazine.

Gains of the mass movement

The massive proletarian movement to end segregation and racist discrimination won sweeping gains for the working class. The passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts in 1964 and 1965 codified the victory in defeating Jim Crow. Broader gains for the working class were won as a result of the political radicalization the movement produced in the 1960s, including expanded funding for social programs and the extension of many democratic rights.

The Socialist Workers Party’s participation in the massive proletarian struggles that defeated Jim Crow segregation and transformed the political consciousness of millions of Blacks in the United States confirms

the conclusions reached by the communist movement more than 70 years ago. These class struggle experiences form the basis for the party’s continued confidence in the vanguard role of Black workers in the class battles ahead.

New Orleans

Continued from page 6

Louisiana. Howells and Williams organized area events for the candidate.

Howells, a leader of the Concern, Community, Compassion/Hands Off Iberville Coalition, which fights for public housing, spoke at the group’s meeting. Iberville is one of the public housing developments in this city threatened with demolition.

“The Socialist Workers Party is the only campaign to call for an immediate and massive program of public works to begin to solve some of the really big problems we face here in New Orleans,” Howells said.

“Here the Democrats and Republicans in city and state government are organizing the demolition of public housing, hospitals, and schools. The SWP campaign calls for putting millions to work in building these vitally needed facilities. That’s one of the reasons that I decided to be an elector for the SWP.”

“One thing we can be sure of,” Kennedy told the coalition meeting, “whether it’s Obama or McCain who finally gets elected, the next administration will carry out the same anti-working-class offensive that we have seen for the past 25 years.”

Kennedy also spoke to a political science class of 20 students at Tulane University. She was invited by Asst. Prof. Brian Brox. Her tour ended with a community meeting at a neighborhood coffeehouse in the Bywater district of the Upper Ninth Ward.

Jacquie Henderson contributed to this article.

Colombia

Continued from front page

of supposed guerrillas they kill.”

The widespread killing and intimidation of workers and peasants by the army came more into public view after the discovery in late September of bodies of at least 11 young men who had disappeared from a working-class suburb of Bogotá earlier this year. The incident became widely known, forcing the Uribe government to conduct an investigation.

According to families of the victims, the unemployed men from Soacha were lured by promises of farm work in the north. There they were found shot to death, registered by the military as guerrilla fighters killed in combat.

One of the victims was 19-year-old construction worker Julian Oviedo. He was killed March 3, one day after leaving home for a job. “The official explanation is absurd,” his mother Blanca Monroy told the *International Herald Tribune*. “He was here just a day earlier living a normal life.”

“The disappearances and assassinations are nothing new and it’s not just in Soacha,” Apécides Alviz, president of the Confederation of Colombian Workers (CTC), told the *Militant* in a phone interview from Bogotá. “In other regions they also kill people and then say they were guerrillas. This has also happened to unionists in the CTC.” So far this year 46 unionists have been murdered, Alviz said. Last year there were 39.

The International Observation Mission, an organization representing about 100 human rights groups, told Agence France-Presse that some 1,000 similar disappearances were reported at a congressional debate three years ago. Currently, more than 1,000 cases of civilian murders by soldiers and cops are under investigation by the Bogotá attorney general’s office.

Summary executions by military personnel in Colombia increased following President Uribe’s pact with right-wing militias in 2003 as part of a stepped-up military offensive aimed primarily at the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

According to Amnesty International, army soldiers carried out 330 recorded “extrajudicial executions” last year; 300 more were done by right-wing paramilitaries. In most cases the murderers tried to pass the victims off as guerrillas killed in combat.

Washington provides the Uribe government, its closest ally in Latin America, more than \$500 million a year. U.S.-financed military units carried out about half of the reported executions.

The recent murders of young workers have come to light amid mounting antigovernment protests by the country’s indigenous people for land and basic social services. CNN obtained footage taken by a protester October 23 that shows a riot cop firing an M-16 assault rifle at a demonstration.

“The capitalist system our government imported from the United States is a failure. This world is bankrupt,” Aida Quilcue, a protest leader, told CNN. “This shouldn’t just be a fight by Indians, but by everyone in Colombia and across the world who rejects this deadly capitalist model.”

The Colombian government had denied all accusations that soldiers were firing live rounds, wounding and killing demonstrators. After CNN aired the footage, the government was forced to retract its claim and pledged to investigate.

One person was killed and some 100 injured on the day of the filmed incident, ONIC leader Luis Andrade said. Several more have been killed and many more injured since mass protests erupted October 10.

The Uribe government has responded to growing militancy among the indigenous people with military repression. “In the six years since Uribe came to power, 1,246 indigenous people have been murdered,” Andrade said.

Between 20,000 and 40,000 indigenous people marched for four days from Cauca to Cali to demand land the state had promised them. President Uribe was to meet with indigenous leaders. But he showed up three hours late and protest leaders refused to talk to him. Uribe attempted to address the crowd, but demonstrators ignored him.

Some 19,000 sugar cane cutters on strike since September 15 in Colombia’s Cauca River Valley have also been targets of recent government repression. Uribe has accused their union, the Colombian Sugar Cane Growers Association, of connections to the FARC to justify its antiunion assault.