

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

The Cuban Revolution and fight to eradicate racism

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 73/NO. 49 DECEMBER 21, 2009

## Cuban 5 win 2 more reduced sentences

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS AND ERNEST MAILHOT

MIAMI, December 8—Ramón Labañino walked into a Southern District of Florida courtroom here today throwing a broad smile and thumbs-up sign to more than 40 supporters who were present, and blowing a kiss to his wife Elizabeth Palmeiro, who was seated in the front row. Both Labañino and fellow defendant Fernando González entered and exited their respective court appearances today with similar dignity and gestures, exuding confidence that despite their more than 11 years in U.S. federal prisons, the campaign to win their freedom is gaining strength worldwide.

Together with Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, and René González, Labañino and Fernando González are known throughout the world as the Cuban Five. Since their arrest in September 1998 they have been unjustly held in U.S. prisons on a variety of trumped-up charges of which they were convicted in June 2001. These include both acting as an unregistered foreign agent and conspiracy to do so, the use of fraud-

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## U.S. gov't seeks wider air strikes in Pakistan

Presses Pakistani gov't to expand war



Burial in town of Miran Shah, Pakistan, November 19 for victim of U.S. drone attack in nearby village that killed six people. Another U.S. strike killed eight people in area on following day. Miran Shah is capital of North Waziristan in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. White House seeks to expand drone attacks beyond tribal areas to Balochistan Province.

BY DOUG NELSON

December 8—To complement Washington's 30,000-troop increase in Afghanistan, the White House has authorized an expansion of aerial drone strikes in Pakistan. According to the *New York Times*, Washington is pressing Islamabad to consent to U.S. strikes in Pakistan's Balochistan

Province, south of the tribal areas the CIA has targeted since 2004.

In March the *Times* reported the White House had begun discussions on carrying out drone attacks in Balochistan. But Pakistani officials have publicly opposed that course, calling it a "red line."

Washington markedly stepped up drone strikes in August 2008. They continued apace after Barack Obama was elected president and expanded to new regions within the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). But

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## Thousands in student rallies defy Iran gov't

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Tens of thousands of students and their supporters demonstrated against the government in cities across Iran December 7, turning out in far greater numbers than supporters of the regime. The protests are part of the ongoing popular mobilizations led by Iranian youth for broader democratic rights and political freedoms.

December 7 marks Students' Day, dating back to 1953 when three Tehran University students were killed by troops loyal to the shah of Iran. A few months earlier that year the CIA had helped engineer a coup in Iran to restore the shah, a king, to power. The three students were protesting the post-coup visit by then U.S. vice president Richard Nixon.

Leading up to the annual mobilization this year the regime arrested many student leaders and issued stern warnings that opposition rallies would not be tolerated. On December 5 police in Tehran arrested more than 20 women whose children were killed by security forces during opposition rallies this past summer, the *New York Times* reported. The mothers hold a vigil every Saturday in Laleh Park. Undeterred, activists planned protests for December 7 centered on university campuses, which the armed forces are prohibited from entering.

Agence France-Presse reported

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## White House officials: Troops not leaving Afghanistan in 2011

BY SETH GALINSKY

Top officials of President Barack Obama's administration have been making the rounds in Congress and the media to clarify that the president's reference to a July 2011 exit date for U.S. troops in Afghanistan is not set in stone. They say that U.S. troops will be in Afghanistan for a "considerable period of time." The

imperialist occupation is entering its ninth year.

Appearing with U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton on NBC's "Meet the Press" December 6, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said, "We will have 100,000 troops there, and they are not leaving in July of 2011."

"Some handful, or some small

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U.S. Air Force/Tech. Sgt. Efrén Lopez

U.S. and Afghan soldiers on joint patrol in Shabila Kalan, Zabul, Afghanistan, November 30.

## Obama at 'job summit': gov't can't do anything about jobs

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

According to the government unemployment figures for November nearly 18 million people are out of work.

While the jobless rate dropped from 10.2 percent in October to 10 percent in November, the number of those on the unemployment rolls without work for more than six months rose by nearly 300,000 to 5.9 million. That's the highest for that category since records began being kept in 1948. Thirty-eight percent of those receiving unemployment benefits have been out of work for at least 28 weeks.

At a one-day "jobs summit" December 3, initiated by the White House, President Barack Obama said there's little the government can do to resolve the mounting unemployment crisis.

Attending the summit were some 130 corporate executives—including from American Airlines, Nucor

Corp., Google Inc., Walt Disney Co., and Fed-Ex—as well as small business owners and some union officials.

Obama said he had called business executives together to hear some "good ideas on how to create jobs." He said that many businesses remain

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# 2 miners die on the job in Alabama, Kentucky

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Low oxygen levels led to the death of an underground coal miner November 23 at the Jim Walter Resources Mine No. 7 in Brookwood, Alabama. That same day another miner was killed in a crane accident at a surface mine in Perry County, Kentucky.

Miner James Chaney, 53, of Berry, Alabama, died of heat exhaustion that was probably caused by lack of oxygen, according to Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) spokeswoman Amy Louviere. He and another miner, Milton Etheridge, 59, both collapsed as they were inspecting a section of the large Jim Walter No. 7 mine. Chaney died at the scene. Etheridge was rushed to a local hospital and survived.

This death "is something that could have been prevented, I'm sure," James Blankenship, president of United Mine Workers of America Local 2245, told the *Tuscaloosa News*. "We've argued for the last eight years about how MSHA's lack of enforcement has led to more mine fatalities. This is just another case of it."

Eight miners who tried to rescue Chaney and Etheridge also ended up in hospitals, reported the *News*. "It took several hours for the men to emerge from the mine that day because of the conditions in the underground area," the paper reported.

The No. 7 mine employs more than 700 people and produced 2.85 million tons of coal in 2008. It is one of several mines owned by Jim Walter Resources in Alabama. Over the years the com-

pany has had a poor record on maintaining workplace safety according to records of government inspectors. According to MSHA, the No. 7 mine has been cited for 41 violations so far this year with 34 operator injuries, reported Fox News. In September 2001, two explosions at its Blue Creek Mine No. 5 killed 13 miners.

In Kentucky, miner Leslie Trent, 37, was killed at TECO Energy's Upper Second Creek portal when a hoist boom fell during construction of a new mine shaft. A second miner was injured. Both were contract workers employed by Frontier-Kemper Constructors. That same company was cited by MSHA in an August 2007 shaft accident that killed three people at a coal mine in Gibson County, Indiana.

Sixteen workers have been killed in coal mines in 2009 according to MSHA. Last year 30 lost their lives.

## Australia rallies fight attack on gay rights



Jamie Kim

SYDNEY, Australia—Students joined a rally of more than 500 people here November 28 to demand the right to same-sex marriage. Speakers at the rally condemned the rejection by the Senate of the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill the previous day. Rallies also took place in other cities as part of a national day of action called by Community Action Against Homophobia, which is launching a "National Year of Action" campaign for the right of gay couples to marry.

—LINDA HARRIS

## 'Free the refugees!' demand Australia marchers

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia—Some 150 people marched and rallied here November 29 demanding that the government grant refugee status to Tamils who have fled the war and subsequent concentration camps in Sri Lanka.

The Australian government is expanding a detention center on Christmas Island that will hold 2,000 people. Christmas Island is an Australian territory near the coast of Indonesia.

"Free, free the refugees! Close Christmas Island!" protesters chanted as they rallied at Town Hall Square

and marched through the city. Lead banners of the Refugee Action Coalition, which organized the march, also opposed the government's "Indonesia solution" and called for an end to mandatory detention of "unauthorized" asylum-seekers arriving by sea.

The Australian government has brokered the help of the Indonesian government to intercept refugees attempting to get to Australia. A detention center is being built on the Indonesian island of Bintan with funding from Australia.

The action opposed the latest moves by the Labor government here to have Indonesian authorities stop boats of asylum-seekers heading to this country and intern the passengers. Protesters also condemned the continued holding of refugees on Christmas Island, saying that all asylum-seekers were welcome.

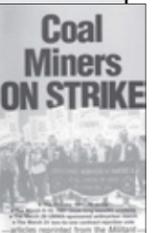
Some 78 Tamils seeking admission to Australia, who had refused for a month to disembark in Indonesia, were convinced in mid-November to do so with the promise of resettlement in "third countries" within three months if they are deemed to be

refugees. They are being held in an Australian-funded detention center in Indonesia.

However, most of the 250 Tamils on board a vessel moored at Merak, Indonesia, still refuse to land there. A live phone hook-up with a spokesperson from the group of boat-bound refugees was broadcast at the Sydney rally.

### Coal Miners on Strike

by Andy Rose, Nancy Cole  
Articles on the 111-day 1977-78 strike, the 1981 strike and contract rejection vote, the United Mine Workers and the fight for health benefits and compensation to black lung victims, and more. —\$5



The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions  
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## THE MILITANT

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Around the world women's rights supporters are confronting efforts to push back women's right to control their own bodies by seeking to outlaw, or severely limit, abortion. Follow these battles in the pages of the 'Militant.'



Militant/Ron Poulsen

November 21 march in Australia defends couple charged with "illegal" abortion.

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# Iran parliament votes to end food, gas subsidies

BY CINDY JAQUITH

The Iranian parliament has approved the phasing out of subsidies on food, gasoline, and other necessities, but many capitalist politicians are wary of the reaction from the Iranian population.

Under the dictatorship of the shah, a U.S.-backed monarch who ruled Iran until 1979, workers won limited subsidies. When working people overthrew the shah in a popular revolution that year, subsidies were expanded, drastically reducing the cost of many basic necessities. Covering fuel, water, flour, bread, wheat, rice, oil, milk, sugar, and transportation, the subsidies have largely remained in place.

The parliament's plan is to gradually eliminate subsidies over five years. Part of the money "saved" by the government is to be distributed to the lower-income half of Iran's population in the form of cash handouts.

The subsidies have made a qualitative difference in the lives of working people. The cost of riding a bus across town in the capital, Tehran, is less than 5 cents, for example. A loaf of bread costs between 12 cents and 15 cents. Without subsidies the research office of parliament estimates that food costs will rise by 60 percent. Gasoline prices will quadruple.

The government currently spends about \$100 billion on subsidies annually. The move to end them comes as Washington and other imperialist powers are increasing threats to tighten the economic noose around Iran because it won't back down on the development its nuclear program. Sales of gasoline to Tehran are being

discussed as targets for additional sanctions. The country imports about 40 percent of its gasoline.

Capitalist politicians in Iran have been trying to get rid of the subsidies for years, long before the current confrontation with imperialist powers over nuclear power. Previous presidents Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami tried to eliminate them, but popular opposition made them back off.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has gone the furthest of any Iranian president in attacking what remains of the social wage won by the 1979 Iranian revolution. Using populist demagoguery, he argues that subsidies allow the rich to get their food cheap and that it would be better to make them pay more, while providing state charity to those with the lowest incomes. Cash grants to low-income Iranians have been one of his methods of maintaining a popular base and a way to avoid increasing the minimum wage or pensions, steps that would actually advance the workers' fight for a better standard of living.

In 2007 Ahmadinejad's administration raised the price of gasoline, provoking an immediate backlash. At least 19 gas stations were burned down.

Since then the economic situation in Iran has worsened, as it has around the world. Mousa Vafayan, head of the chamber of commerce in the city of Sari in northern Iran, reported to the Web site KhabarOnline.ir that 30 percent of the city's factories have closed. Virtually every working-class family in Iran has one or more adults unemployed. The crisis has sparked some strikes and protests by workers



Market in Iran. Elimination of subsidies could increase food prices by as much as 60 percent, parliament research department said.

for back wages and action by the government to bring relief.

Mindful of this, the question of whether and how to lift subsidies was hotly debated in parliament, but Ahmadinejad prevailed. His opponents are now expressing concerns. Parliament speaker Ali Larijani said December 4 that elimination of subsidies should be done very slowly to avoid "a shock in the society." Opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi, who challenged Ahmadinejad in the last presidential election, said, "Those who reason that the subsidies are bad and must be eliminated . . . are wrong." He warned that the end of subsidies "will lead to chaos and corruption."

The bill adopted by the parliament will now be reviewed by the Guardian Council, a cleric-dominated body that oversees all legislation. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the country's most powerful political figure, has ultimate decision-making authority.

Side by side with removing subsidies, the government is proceeding

with the privatization of industry that was nationalized after the 1979 revolution. Fifty-one percent of the government-owned telecommunications company TCI is now in private hands. TCI is the largest cell phone network, main Internet provider, and has a monopoly on fixed-line infrastructure. Thirty-seven percent of each of the two largest car companies, Saipa and Iran Khodro, is scheduled to be sold on the Tehran Stock Exchange.

The Iranian government's 10-year privatization plan envisions reducing state-owned companies to less than 20 percent of the GDP. Currently about 40 percent to 45 percent is still nationalized.

Some Iranian businessmen anxious to buy up privatized factories complain that companies owned by the Pasdaran, the most politically influential branch of the armed forces—or the Basij, the Pasdaran's auxiliary militia—get priority in purchasing plants previously run by the government.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

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**Capitalism Is the Source of Ecological Destruction: The Defense of Land and Labor Is a Working-class Task.** Speaker: Eric Simpson, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

### NEW YORK

#### Manhattan

**Venezuela International Book Fair: Why Participants Sought Out Communist Literature.** Speakers: Laura Garza and Paul Pederson, helped staff Pathfinder booth at Nov. 13–22 book fair in Caracas. Sat., Dec. 19, dinner: 6 p.m.; program: 7 p.m. 307 W 36 St., 10th Fl. Tel.: (212) 736-2540.

### PENNSYLVANIA

#### Philadelphia

**Copenhagen Climate Conference: Why the Stewardship of Nature Falls to the Working Class.** Speakers: Brian Nevins, Socialist Workers Party; Gordon Barnes, Young Socialists. Fri., Dec. 18, 7:30 pm. 188 W Wyoming Ave. Tel.: (215) 455-2682.

## —CALENDAR—

### NEW YORK

#### Manhattan

**51st Anniversary of the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution.** Guest speaker: Cuban ambassador to the UN. Thurs., Dec. 31, 8 p.m. \$25 donation includes food and refreshments. Proceeds go to legal defense fund of the Cuban Five. Sponsored by Casa de las Américas, July 26 Coalition. Taino Towers, 240 E 123 St., between 2nd and 3rd Aves. Tel.: (212) 348-5547.

## Iran: protesters outnumber gov't supporters

Continued from front page

that a student group at Amir Kabir University in Tehran, calling itself "Green students of Iranian universities," issued an online call to the general population to come out to join the student protests. Green was the color adopted by the presidential election campaign of Mir Hossein Mousavi, who challenged President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the June elections.

Demonstrations for democratic rights and against electoral fraud exploded after the government declared Ahmadinejad the winner and have continued since, particularly on national holidays.

Demonstrations on December 7 took place at eight universities in Tehran, as well as in a wide range of other cities, including Tabriz, capital of East Azerbaijan, home of the oppressed Azeri people. One thousand demonstrated at the university in Sanandaj and others rallied in Kermanshah, both Kurdish cities. A recent crackdown against fighters for Kurdish national rights, including the execution of one young Kurdish political prisoner, Ehsan Fatahian, has stirred wide opposition to the Ahmadinejad regime in that region. Videos posted on YouTube also showed an action at a girls' high school in Isfahan.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported that "thousands of ordinary citizens

in Tehran, Shiraz and Isfahan were reported gathering outside university campuses chanting 'Don't be afraid; Don't be afraid; We stand with you,' to the students inside." In the streets surrounding Tehran University many homes "had their doors left open, ostensibly to shelter protestors escaping security forces," the paper said.

Marchers chanted slogans not only against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad but also against Ali Khamenei, known as the Supreme Leader, and the most authoritative figure in the regime. Since 1979 it has been taboo to question, much less criticize, any action of the Supreme Leader. But "Khamenei is a murderer—his rule is illegitimate" was one of the chants December 7. "Death to the oppressor, whether it's the shah or the leader" was another.

Other slogans called for freeing political prisoners. Roughly 80 of those arrested during demonstrations this past summer have received sentences of up to 15 years. Five have been sentenced to death.

Some protesters chanted "separation of religion and politics, this is our demand." Many carried Iranian flags without the Islamic religious emblem that was added by the cleric-dominated capitalist government that succeeded the shah.

The actions were also marked by

defiance of the Basij, a "civilian" militia under the direction of the country's security forces, that is used to attack protesters. Students at one university waved bank notes at Basij thugs and yelled, "Mercenaries, get lost!"

Most of the Iranian press tried to dismiss the scope and militancy of the protests. The pro-government Fars New Agency reported that 7,000 backers of the government rallied at Tehran University in support of Khamenei while 50 "rioters" on the sidelines "made trouble."

More than 200 were arrested on December 7, police announced, one quarter of them women. Iran's chief prosecutor, Gholam Hossein Mohsen, announced "there will be no tolerance" of further opposition rallies and that demonstrators and their families would be punished.

The threats are unlikely to intimidate the increasingly confident opponents of the regime. Anti-government marches are expected in mid-December, a time of religious holidays, and during the annual celebrations of the 1979 revolution in February.

**THE MILITANT**

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# ‘Mobilize workers to support Cuban Five’

BY NAOMI CRAINE

TIJUANA, Mexico—The international campaign to free the Cuban Five and the world capitalist economic crisis were the central themes of the sixth Cuba/Venezuela/Mexico/North America Labor Conference, held here December 4–6. About 120 trade unionists and others attended the conference from the United States, Mexico, Cuba, and elsewhere in the Americas.

The gathering opened with a program on the fight to win freedom for Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and René González. These five Cuban revolutionaries have been imprisoned in the United States for more than 11 years on frame-up charges that include “conspiracy to commit espionage” and, in one case, “conspiracy to commit murder.” They had been monitoring right-wing groups in the United States that have carried out violent attacks against the Cuban Revolution. (See article on front page.)

Silvia García, a member of the National Assembly of People’s Power in Cuba, reported on the current stage in the fight against the unjust imprisonment of the five. The fact that three of the political prisoners have won resentencing hearings to lower their prison terms “shows that solidarity is important,” García said. “We have to continue putting pressure on the U.S. government and on [President Barack] Obama.”

Carmen Godines, of the international relations department of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), also spoke on the program. She reviewed the increased support in the labor movement for the campaign to release the Cuban Five, including resolutions from locals of the International Longshore Workers Union, Service Employees International Union, and San Francisco Labor Council in the United States, as well as from unions in Canada, Portugal, United Kingdom, and elsewhere.

“We need to mobilize workers to support” this fight, she said. “We have to remember that workers are the revolutionary class. We produce, so we are an important class. We ask the labor movements around the world to help us.”

Alicia Jrapko, U.S. coordinator of the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five, reported that in the previous days supporters of the five were able to publicize the case with the media in Tijuana and the nearby city of Mexicali. “We need to multiply our actions,” she said.

Participants decided to send a letter to

President Obama on behalf of the conference, demanding the release of the Cuban Five and the immediate granting of visas for Adriana Pérez and Olga Salanueva, the wives of Gerardo Hernández and René González, respectively. Washington has repeatedly refused them entry to visit their husbands in prison.

## Workers face depression conditions

The deepening world capitalist depression was the framework of much of the weekend’s discussions. José Rivera, of the telephone workers union and the Broad Front of Solidarity and Struggle in Puerto Rico, described the attacks on workers in that U.S. colony. In the name of fighting budget deficits, the government is carrying out “privatization, 14 new taxes, deregulation, elimination of worker protection laws, and is firing 30,000 public workers,” he said. “Our response is that the capitalist crisis is not the fault of the workers—let the rich pay.”

Rivera said workers have organized pickets, protests, and mass marches. Nearly 50,000 marched on May Day 2009. He pointed to an October 15 day-long strike that included a massive protest and rally in the banking center in Puerto Rico’s capital San Juan.

“The world crisis has had a big impact on us in Cuba,” said Raymundo Navarro of the CTC. “It’s the third big obstacle we face,” alongside the U.S. blockade and the devastation by hurricanes last



Militant/Naomi Craine

December 4 program on fight to free Cuban Five prisoners in U.S. jails. From left: translator; Alicia Jrapko, International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five; Silvia García, National Assembly of People’s Power in Cuba; Carmen Godines, international relations department of Central Organization of Cuban Workers; Judge Claudia Morcom.

year. The price of nickel, one of Cuba’s main exports, has fallen from \$51,000 per ton in November 2008 to \$8,000–9,000 per ton today. At the same time the price of food Cuba must import has risen dramatically. The collapse of the price of sugar has forced a restructuring and large layoffs in the sugar industry.

“In a capitalist country the sugar workers would be in the streets,” Navarro noted, “but in Cuba we organized study programs in which workers are paid 100 percent of their wages while they learn another trade or complete a university program.”

“I prefer a system like in Cuba, where

if there’s problems it’s equalized” among the population, commented Héctor, a vendor who came to the conference from Mexicali. He asked that his last name not be used.

“Here in Mexico the government is trying to privatize education and health care. The first thing they try to do is get rid of the unions like they’re doing to the electrical workers,” Héctor said. Unemployment is continuing to worsen, he added, causing a lot of social devastation.

Other speakers at the conference hailed from Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and the United States.

## White House officials ‘clarify’ war plans

Continued from front page

number, or whatever the conditions permit,” he said, “will begin to withdraw at that time.”

The pace of any withdrawal, Gates emphasized, “will depend on the circumstances on the ground, and those judgments will be made by our commanders in the field.”

Clinton said that the July 2011 date mentioned by Obama at West Point, where he announced he was sending 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan, was set to get the Afghan government to feel a “sense of urgency.”

U.S. officials have expressed their disappointment with the pace at which Afghan president Hamid Karzai has attempted to establish a stable government and expand the Afghan security forces.

Obama’s national security advisor, Gen. James Jones, was interviewed on CNN also on December 6. Jones said that many of the U.S. troops being sent to Afghanistan would be deployed near the Pakistan border, “where really the most important struggle that we’re going to have is to make sure that on the Pakistani side of the border, that we eliminate the safe havens.” Jones was referring to Taliban and al-Qaeda bases in Pakistan, which shares a 1,640-mile-long frontier with Afghanistan.

The Pentagon has already given orders to 16,000 U.S. troops to get ready to head to Afghanistan. Some 1,500 marines from Camp Lejeune in North Carolina are expected to arrive before the end of the month.

The 30,000 new troops will more than triple the number of U.S. soldiers that were there when Obama took office. The *Wall Street Journal* reported

December 7 that the Pentagon has received authorization from the White House to send an additional 3,000 U.S. soldiers, bringing the total to 33,000. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who heads U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, had requested 40,000.

Although Obama did not announce measures to rapidly double the size of the Afghan army and police, as proposed by McChrystal, some 4,000 trainers for the Afghan security forces were included as part of the 21,000 additional U.S. troops authorized earlier this year.

While some Republican leaders complained that Obama’s “withdrawal” date sends a “mixed message,” for the most part they backed the war escalation.

“President Obama has ordered sufficient reinforcements to Afghanistan to execute a war strategy that can succeed,” said the *Weekly Standard*, a conservative magazine. “We urge everyone to rally round the effort to defeat our enemies”

## Obama ‘without a political base’

*Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan also lauded Obama’s action. But she said this is the first time a U.S. president declared a war “without a political base.”

Noonan was referring to the lack of enthusiasm for the war escalation from many in the Democratic Party. House speaker Nancy Pelosi issued what the *New York Times* called a “noncommittal” statement saying that “the American people and the Congress will now have an opportunity to fully examine this strategy.”

Senate majority leader Harry Reid, however, said that Obama “made a con-

vincing case” for sending more troops.

NATO secretary-general Anders Fogh Rasmussen said that 25 governments have agreed to send 7,000 more troops to Afghanistan to back up Washington’s escalation. There are currently about 36,000 NATO troops from 41 countries in Afghanistan in addition to the U.S. forces.

But neither NATO nor Washington has detailed where the 7,000 will come from. At least 1,500 of these “additional” NATO forces have been in Afghanistan for months. They are being counted as new troops because they had been scheduled to depart.

## Civilian deaths

More than 1,000 Afghan civilians died as a result of the war in the first six months of 2009, according to the United Nations. The UN report claims that almost 60 percent of the deaths were caused by the Taliban and other armed opponents of the U.S. occupation and the Afghan regime.

U.S. military officials say that NATO air strikes declined by nearly 50 percent since early July, when McChrystal issued a directive to restrict attacks that risk hitting residential areas. They claim that the pace of civilian deaths has also declined.

On December 7, Afghan officials report, six civilians were killed during a predawn raid by U.S. troops in Laghman Province, east of Kabul. NATO officials insist only combatants were killed.

Hundreds of people marched to Mehtar Lam, the provincial capital, to protest the killings the next day. At least one demonstrator died after clashing with Afghan police.

For further reading . . .

### Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

by Jack Barnes

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### United States vs. The Cuban Five

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by Rodolfo Dávalos Fernández

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### Hoping in Solitude

Antonio, Fernando, Ramón, René, Gerardo

by Eduardo Heras León, editor

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# U.S. air strikes in Pakistan

Continued from front page

thus far they have seldom occurred outside the FATA. In November 2008 and March 2009 the CIA conducted strikes in Bannu District, just east of the official tribal areas.

Based on figures compiled from Pakistani press reports, there have been 49 drone strikes this year, killing more than 540 people. An analysis of press accounts by the New America Foundation estimates that roughly one-third of those killed in drone strikes are civilians.

The inevitable civilian deaths and disregard for Pakistan's sovereignty have fomented popular opposition to the U.S. government. As a result, the Pakistani government and military are critical of the U.S. strikes in public. It is widely reported, however, that they tacitly support and provide intelligence for them.

At the same time, Washington has denied requests by Islamabad for direct access to aerial drones.

The Pakistani government is embroiled in a U.S.-backed war on its own soil against the Taliban Movement of Pakistan (TTP) and allied Islamist groups. But it has shown no inclination to move against other Taliban enemies of Washington in Pakistan that don't challenge Islamabad's authority. This includes the Afghan Taliban, whose leadership Washington insists is based in and around Quetta, Balochistan's provincial capital. From there, U.S. officials say, the Taliban plan and direct attacks on U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan.

The Afghan Taliban is made up of forces led by Mullah Mohammad Omar that controlled most of Afghanistan before the 2001 U.S. invasion.

The Taliban movement was molded and backed by the Pakistani government in the early 1990s. It was used as a proxy to contest, primarily with India, for influence in Afghanistan during the chaos that ensued following the defeat of the Soviet invasion there. The Pakistani government also helped prop up pro-Taliban parties in Balochistan as a counter to Baloch nationalist movements.

Pakistani officials have repeatedly denied any knowledge that Omar or other Afghan Taliban leaders are currently in Balochistan.

## Wary over Balochistan

Islamabad could be reluctant to break its connections to the Afghan Taliban at a time when the Indian government is deepening its economic and diplomatic ties in Afghanistan and the outcome of the U.S.-led war is uncertain. It may also be concerned about unintended consequences U.S. operations could have in Balochistan.

In southwest Pakistan, Balochistan is the country's largest, but most sparsely populated province. While Pashtuns from Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan make up a majority in Quetta, the rest of the region is dominated by Balochis, an oppressed nationality in Pakistan and Iran.

Pakistani forces have put down five Baloch rebellions there since the

country was founded in 1947. A low-level insurgency continues to simmer. Mass strikes and protests erupted throughout the province in April against the killing of three nationalist leaders by government forces.

Baloch representatives have demanded the government release or provide information on some 1,000 disappeared persons. The Pakistani government has promised to release 20 Baloch leaders and is hashing out a "Balochistan package" that promises Balochis greater autonomy and control over the region's natural resources. Most Baloch leaders, however, have repudiated the proposed legislation.

## Ground battles spread

Meanwhile, as many Taliban flee Islamabad's offensive in South Waziristan, Pakistani air strikes and ground battles have spread to other tribal agencies including Kurram, Orakzai, Khyber, Mohmand, Bajaur, and Lower Dir.

Areas of South Waziristan have been leveled and more than 400,000 people have fled eastward. Most are largely left to fend for themselves, relying on charity from Pakistani residents in the nearby North West Frontier Province.

In response to the offensive, the TTP and its allies have organized a stepped-up campaign of terrorist bombings and attacks outside the tribal areas that have killed nearly 500 people.

The TTP claimed responsibility for a December 4 assault on a mosque in Rawalpindi used by military officers and their families. The attack killed 40 people, including 16 children, and injured more than 70.

Such tactics are fueling growing hostility to the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other Islamist military formations in Pakistan. In recognition of this fact, the TTP leadership has sought to distance itself from some of the deadliest civilian attacks, spreading conspiracy stories that they are the work of U.S. mercenary company Xe Services and Pakistani intelligence.

## New Zealand wage freeze protested



Militant/Baskaran Appu

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—"Zero percent won't pay the rent," and "Fair deal, get real," chanted more than 1,000 school support workers as they marched through the central city here November 28. They were demanding the government lift its freeze on wage increases for public sector workers. These workers, predominately women, hold jobs as teacher aides, librarians, special needs support workers, school secretaries, and technicians. Thousands of hospital workers nationwide protested the pay freeze the day before, with a four-hour strike and rallies.

—BASKARAN APPU AND JANET ROTH

# Massachusetts: Warehouse workers fight for contract

BY KEVIN DWIRE

BOSTON—Chanting "Yes we can" in several languages, over 200 members of UNITE HERE Local 331 held a spirited rally outside the TJX distribution center in Worcester, Massachusetts, December 4 as part of their fight for a new contract. The current contract expires December 31.

Union members passed out red UNITE HERE T-shirts to cheering workers as they left the plant at the end of their shift.

Workers made signs in English, Spanish, Albanian, Vietnamese, and Arabic against the mandatory overtime and against a proposed "no fault" attendance policy that would result in termination after 13 absences.

Workers also said they oppose a company proposal to increase their health

insurance costs and are demanding a wage increase of \$2.85 over three years.

Union representatives and several workers in the plant spoke at the rally. An Albanian worker from second shift led the crowd in a chant. "Ne do te fitojme," he yelled, raising his fist in the air. "Po! Po! Po!" roared the crowd in response, even though most do not speak Albanian. A worker offered the *Militant* a rough translation: "Can we do it—yes, yes, yes?"

Workers said they have been holding rallies in the company cafeteria during breaks and lunches.

TJX is the parent company of the retailers TJ Maxx, HomeGoods, Marshalls, and AJ Wright. TJX reported a net profit of \$347.8 million in the third quarter this year, a 47 percent increase over last year.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 21, 1984

What caused the catastrophe at the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India? The drive by Union Carbide for superprofits. It was a criminal sacrifice of human life stemming from the domination of India by imperialism.

One Indian official from the Bhopal area charged Union Carbide and other corporations with "declaring war on the Third World."

The gas leak in Bhopal was the worst industrial disaster in history. Incomplete estimates of the toll range as high as 2,250 dead and 200,000 injured. Many of the injured will also die. Others, doctors say, will suffer blindness, sterility, mental retardation, and kidney and liver damage.

When the gas erupted, a church worker said, "The whole city became a big gas chamber."

The city became a human river of blinded and suffocating people trying to escape the deadly fumes.



December 21, 1959

MINNEAPOLIS—Striking packinghouse workers, a thousand strong, have offered a magnificent demonstration of militant resistance to a scab-herding operation at the Albert Lea plant of Wilson & Co., about 100 miles south of here. After two days of company-inspired violence, Gov. Freeman declared martial law in the area and the National Guard shut down the plant.

A major battle broke out at the struck plant last Wednesday when a mob of scabs, armed with guns, knives and blackjacks, tried to leave the plant by crashing through a mass picket line of the 1,100 striking members of the United Packinghouse Workers Union, Local 6, AFL-CIO.

Several strikers were almost run down and a scab car struck one of the pickets. The strikers returned the attack with a barrage of bricks and rocks. A number of the strikebreakers' cars were overturned.



December 22, 1934

Recent events in the Soviet Union, commencing with the assassinations of Kirov and followed by secret executions totaling 103 at the present writing, cause the deepest alarm to the thinking revolutionary workers of the entire world for whom the Soviet Union is and has been since 1917 the star of hope and inspiration.

For days after Kirov's assassination there was complete lack of any explanation as to the identity of the assassin or the reason for his act. Then the Soviet authorities placed the blame upon White Guards, counterrevolutionaries left from the old Czarist regime. Later it was hinted that representatives of some foreign capitalist power were engaged in dastardly counterrevolutionary activities.

If the Soviet Union is in danger the advanced workers throughout the world will rally to its defense as they have always done and they will not object to drastic measures against conspirators.

Help sell the 'Militant'  
See directory of distributors  
on page 10

# S. Korea rail workers end strike over job cuts

BY SETH GALINSKY

Rail workers in South Korea ended their eight-day strike December 4 after the government declared the strike illegal, raided the union office, and issued arrest warrants for 15 union leaders.

Nearly 15,000 rail workers launched the strike after the government-owned company unilaterally terminated the union contract as part of a plan to restructure the company and cut jobs.

"We failed to thwart the company's annulment of the collective agreement and to achieve our demands," said Kim Ki-tae, president of the Korean Railway Workers' Union, in a statement. "I'm asking members to go back to their workplaces for a while and to prepare for our next fight."

The company claimed the union had surrendered, but said that new contract talks "will be possible only when it openly declares that it won't strike again."

During the first few days of the strike, only 11 out of 300 daily freight trains were in service. The government sent in army engineers, some retired workers, and railway college students to operate the trains. It also shifted workers from passenger rail to freight, causing a 60 percent drop in commuter service.

Large manufacturers appealed to truckers to move cargo which was piling up as a result of the strike. But the Korea Cargo Transport Workers Union refused. Unionized truck drivers were on strike for four days in June and for a week in 2008.

South Korean president Lee Myung-bak claimed that the strikers' demands were "unreasonable and selfish." At a meeting attended by 130 government ministers and heads of state-run firms, he said the strike could not be tolerated "especially at a time when hundreds of thousands of our young people are suffering because they cannot find jobs."

This is not the only attack on labor by the Lee administration. On the same day that cops raided the railway union headquarters, confiscating computer hard disks and documents, they raided the offices of the Korean Government Employees' Union.

In August workers at the Ssangyong car factory were forced to end a 77-day occupation of the plant after battling thousands of riot cops.

The government has proposed revising South Korea's labor law. Among the new measures: doubling the time that companies can employ temporary workers without giving them the same rights as permanent workers to four years and allowing more than one union at a work place. The new law would also prohibit full-time union officials from receiving wages paid by the company where workers have a contract, a common practice. Instead payments from the company would be allowed only when union officials are participating in contract negotiations or addressing grievances.

The South Korean government wants to curtail the power of unions, which have a long history of strikes and mass demonstrations, and make workers bear the brunt of the economic crisis.

The *Financial Times* of London complained in a September 18 article that South Korea "has six times more strikes than Japan."

"South Korea's fiery unions have long

## Newark pickets say, 'Bring troops home now!'



Militant/Sara Lobman

NEWARK, New Jersey—Some 40 people picketed in a steady rain here December 2 against the Obama administration's decision to send tens of thousands more troops to Afghanistan. The rush-hour protest was in downtown Newark in front of the offices of U.S. senators Robert Menendez and Frank Lautenberg.

Protesters chanted, "Bring the troops home now!" "Lautenberg and Menendez: Stop the funding for the killing," and "Bush, Obama: Different name, same game."

The picket line was sponsored by New Jersey Peace Action, United for Peace and Justice, Veterans for Peace, Military Families Speak Out, Teaneck Peace and Justice Coalition, and People's Organization for Progress.

—BY SARA LOBMAN

been cited," the daily said, "as one of the main reasons why investors steer clear of Asia's fourth-biggest economy."

After the rail strike ended prosecutors said they still wanted to arrest union leaders. A total of 197 union members

were indicted, including Kim, and 884 were fired from their jobs.

The rail company also said it plans to sue unionists for what the company claims are \$7.8 million in losses due to the strike.

## N.Y. rally condemns attack on abortion rights

BY BARBARA BOWMAN

NEW YORK—Over 50 supporters of abortion rights rallied here December 4 to protest the Stupak-Pitts amendment in the health "reform" bill, HR 3962. The amendment would ban the use of government funds for abortion procedures, except in the case of rape, incest, or when the wom-

an's life is in danger. It would also prohibit those receiving government health subsidies from buying insurance plans that cover abortions. The bill was passed in a bipartisan House vote of 240-194 November 7. A vote is pending in the Senate.

The rally was called by the New York City chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW). Participants and speakers included members of various NOW chapters, members of the NOW Young Feminists Task Force, Hunter College Women's Rights Coalition, National Dominican Women's Caucus, Radical Women, The World Can't Wait, Socialist Workers Party, and others.

Speaking at the rally, Bill Baird, founder of the Pro-Choice League, described dangerous home-abortion remedies and back-alley procedures that have taken the lives of many. "Never again will women go back to those conditions," he said.

Erin Matson, action vice president for NOW, addressed the rally, pointing out that the Hyde Amendment is "equally as bad as Stupak-Pitts." The Hyde Amendment was passed in the mid-1970s and bars Medicaid funding for abortion, except in cases of rape, incest, or endangerment of a woman's life.

Maura DeLuca, who was the Socialist Workers Party candidate for public advocate of New York City in the November elections, also addressed the rally. DeLuca pointed out how the proposed health bill not only attacks a woman's right to abortion, but working people on a broad scale by excluding undocumented immigrants from coverage and imposing fines on those who do not have health

insurance. "We should look to the example of Cuba," DeLuca said, "where, after workers and farmers overturned the capitalist system, real health care became a lifelong right for all, and where the only illegal abortion is a 'back-alley' abortion."

Several elected officials sent representatives to give statements, including Democrats Rep. Carolyn Maloney, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, and Sen. Charles Schumer. Schumer's statement called for a "carefully-worded compromise" and "no further restrictions on women's right to choose."

Organizers of the rally encouraged participants to march over to St. Peter's Cathedral to protest the anti-abortion position of Catholic Church officials, which some 20 protestors joined in.

## Workers turn bosses' bribes against them by giving to Capital Fund

A new round of contributions has come in to the communist movement's Capital Fund from workers who refuse to take bribes from their bosses.

In an attempt to deflect any response by working people to their deteriorating living and working conditions, the bosses and their government periodically give out bribes—"blood money"—in the form of bonuses, gifts, and other token gestures, as an attempt to buy workers' acceptance of their brutal system of exploitation. It is a proud tradition in the communist movement for class-conscious workers to turn these bribes against the bosses by giving them to the movement dedicated to ending the dictatorship of capital once and for all.

Contributions made to the Capital Fund do just that by financing the production of books that contain the program and theory of the communist movement as carried out and developed through a century and a half of the modern class struggle.

"Two weeks ago my coworkers and I were left outside the leather factory we work in only to find out that the boss wasn't coming in, so we couldn't work," said Maura DeLuca in a note attached to a \$10 contribution. "Our contract states that if this happens, we must be paid four hours. The boss told us the next day that he will not pay us anything. . . . The following day the boss went around giving each of us \$10 'for transportation that day.' It is a bribe."

Pattie Thompson sends her contribution of \$238 with a note saying that the bribe comes as bosses where she works plan to shut the place down in May.

Two workers at a meatpacking plant in South St. Paul, Minnesota, Frank Forrestal and Tony Lane, sent in a contribution of \$55 they get as a "safety bonus"—a way the bosses try to get workers to not report injuries that result from line speedup and other dangerous job conditions.

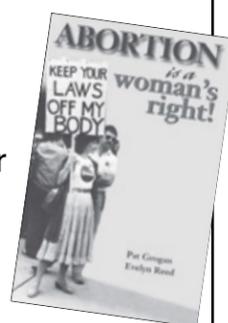
—BEN JOYCE

## Abortion Is a Woman's Right!

by Pat Grogan, Evelyn Reed

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

—\$6.00



Available from PathfinderPress.com or distributors on page 10

# Cuban Five: 'We will continue until victory'

The statement below was distributed to the press following the December 8 hearing to resentence Fernando González and Ramón Labañino, two of the Cuban Five prisoners. A third prisoner, Antonio Guerrero, had his life sentence reduced to 21 years and 10 months at a resentencing hearing on October 13.

Dear Sisters and Brothers of Cuba and the World:

We have now served more than 11 years in prison without justice being done in any part of the process that we have been through in the U.S. judicial system.

Three of us were transferred to Miami to be re-sentenced by order of the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals of Atlanta, which determined that our sentences had been erroneously imposed.

Our brother Gerardo Hernández, who is serving two life sentences plus 15 years in prison, has been arbitrarily excluded from this re-sentencing process. His situation continues to be the primary injustice of our case. The U.S. government knows the accusations against him are false and that his sentence is unjust.

This has been a complex process, thoroughly discussed in every detail, in which we participated together with our lawyers. We have not given up even one iota of our principles, honor, and decency, always defending our innocence and the dignity of our homeland.

Just like when we were arrested, and on other occasions during these long years, this time we have also received proposals from the U.S. government to collaborate in exchange for more benevolent sentences. And once again we reject such proposals, something that we will never accept under any circumstances.

The work of the legal team and the indestructible solidarity of all of you is present in the results of these re-sentencing hearings.

It is a significant fact that the US government, for the first time in 11 years, was forced to recognize that we caused no damage to its national security.

Also for the first time the prosecutors publicly acknowledged the existence of

a strong international movement in support of our immediate freedom that is affecting the image of the U.S. judicial system in the eyes of the international community.

Once again, the absolutely political character of this process is confirmed.

We the Five are being punished for accusations that have never been proven. Although three of our sentences have been partially reduced, the injustice against all of us has been maintained.

Meanwhile the Cuban American terrorists continue to enjoy total impunity.

We reiterate: The Five are innocent!

We are deeply moved and thankful for the permanent solidarity that you have given us and that is so decisive in this long battle for justice.

Together with all of you we will continue until the final victory, which will only be achieved with the return of the Five to the homeland.

*Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez  
Fernando González Llort  
Ramón Labañino Salazar*

Miami, December 8, 2009

## N.Y. pickets: 'Free Cuban Five now!'



Militant/Ben Joyce

NEW YORK—Some 50 people gathered here at Federal Plaza December 8 to demand the release of five framed-up Cuban revolutionaries held for more than 11 years in U.S. prisons, known internationally as the Cuban Five.

The five were railroaded to jail in 1998 by the federal government for the "crime" of monitoring counterrevolutionary groups who were planning violent acts against Cuba (see article on front page). Supporters of the five and opponents of attacks on workers' rights have waged a campaign to win their freedom since then, which has become international in scope.

The protest here took place the same day that two of the five received new sentences, after a federal court ordered the original trial judge to reduce the draconian prison terms for three of the men.

—BEN JOYCE

## 2 more Cuban 5 sentences are reduced

Continued from front page

lent identities and documentation, conspiracy to commit espionage, and conspiracy to commit murder.

In June 2008 a federal appeals court vacated the sentences for three of the five—Guerrero, Labañino, and Fernando González—ruling the sentences were inconsistent with the court record. The appeals court ordered that each of the three be resentenced.

In the case of Guerrero and Labañino, the court ruling noted they had been convicted of conspiracy to commit espionage, but "the district court did not find that top secret information was gathered or transmitted." The life sentences they were given in December 2001 by Federal District Judge Joan Lenard were therefore inconsistent with federal sentencing guidelines.

In the case of Fernando González, the Court of Appeals ruled that there was no finding that he "asserted control or influence" over any other participant in "the crime." For that reason the sentence of 19 years was excessive. Their cases were sent back to Lenard for resentencing.

Labañino, who had been serving a life sentence plus 18 years (with no possibility of parole), left the courtroom today with his sentence reduced to 30 years. González's sentence of 19 years was reduced to 17 years and 9 months. On October 13 Antonio Guerrero's sentence of life plus 10 years had been reduced to 21 years and 10 months.

The Court of Appeals refused to vacate the draconian double life plus 15 years sentence given Gerardo Hernández, or the 15-year sentence given to René González. One of Hernández's life sentences was imposed on the same erroneous grounds as Guerrero and Labañino's life sentences. The appeals court, however, ruled that "Hernández need not be

resentenced because the errors . . . are harmless." Hernández was also sentenced to life imprisonment on a trumped-up murder-conspiracy conviction related to the shooting down of two airplanes violating Cuban airspace in February 1996. The appeals court ruled that "any error in the calculation of Hernández's concurrent sentence for conspiracy to gather and transmit national-defense information is 'irrelevant to the time he will serve in prison.'"

The reduction of Labañino's sentence to 30 years—the minimum within the advisory federal sentencing guidelines—was recommended by attorneys for the U.S. government and by defense attorney William Norris. The recommendation was accepted by Lenard at the conclusion of a brief hearing.

In the case of González there was no recommendation from attorneys for the two sides, and Caroline Heck Miller, assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida, introduced a lengthy summary of testimony and documents presented in the 2001 trial. She attempted to rationalize the government's position that the seriousness of the threat to U.S. national security represented by González's action merited the longest sentence possible. She was answered by defense attorney Joaquín Méndez.

The five Cuban defendants, as they have reiterated over and over again in the course of their fight for freedom, were in the United States at the request of the Cuban government to monitor the activities of ultraright Cuban-American organizations in Florida and to provide advance warning to the Cuban government of violent attacks planned on Cuban targets. Prosecutor Miller, however, described them as agents of a foreign government carrying out "acts of vigilantism on U.S. soil." She called for the harshest possible sentence to be given

to González as a "deterrent" against "all foreign agents."

Miller said the conduct of the Cuban Five is "celebrated by a foreign government, providing a powerful incentive to others" to engage in similar activity within the United States. She said that needed to be met with "a powerful disincentive." She was referring to the fact that in Cuba the five are national heroes whose names and faces are seen everywhere, and that a growing, worldwide campaign for their freedom continues to gain momentum.

During the resentencing hearing for Guerrero two months earlier, Miller had acknowledged the heat the U.S. government feels as a result of the broad international support that has been won for the five. In response to the judge's questions, Miller told the court that the government hoped the reduced sentences would calm the "contentiousness" and "noise" swirling around the case.

As Judge Lenard imposed a barely reduced sentence on Fernando González, she echoed the arguments advanced by the U.S. government attorney referring to acts of "vigilantism by a foreign government." Lenard said that "foreign governments have to know that such activities will not be tolerated" in the United States. She called attention to the recent "tragedy at Fort Hood" and said that "protection of the constitutional rights of citizens and safety of U.S. military installations and personnel" was fundamental to the national security interests of the country.

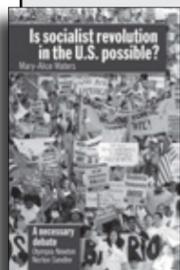
As a statement by Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, and Fernando González released to the press immediately after today's hearings makes clear (see accompanying article), the reduced sentences that have now been won for three of the defendants place all in a stronger position to step up the fight for the freedom of the five.

### For further reading

#### Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?

by Mary-Alice Waters

Waters explains why revolutionary struggles by working people are inevitable, initiated not by the toilers, but forced upon us by the employing class's crisis-driven assaults on our living standards and job conditions—on our very humanity. —\$7



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# Cubans answer slander of racism against revolution

Below is a response by several prominent Cuban writers and artists to an “open letter” issued November 30 by 60 African American figures charging the Cuban government with practicing racial discrimination. The Cuban writers and artists explain that from its beginning in 1959 the Cuban Revolution has waged a battle to eradicate all forms of discrimination, including based on race. They also note that Cuban writers, artists, and working people are involved in a vigorous ongoing discussion and debate on the contributions of Cubans who are black to the island’s revolutionary struggles—from its independence to today—and how to use their conquest of state power to advance the fight to overcome the final vestiges of racial prejudice.

The translation from the Spanish and the subtitles are by the *Militant*.



A Yoruba proverb states: “A lie may run for a year, but the truth will catch up with it one day.”

Although the most intolerant political circles and the most powerful mass media have long tried to impose a distorted image of contemporary Cuban society on American public opinion, the reality comes through in the end, in one way or another.

We are sure that will happen when the arguments with which we refute the false statements about our society—contained in a document circulated December 1 on behalf of a group of Afro-American intellectuals and leaders—become known.

To say that among us there is a “callous disregard” for black Cubans, that they are deprived of “civil freedoms on the basis of race,” and to demand that “the unwarranted and brutal harassment of black citizens in Cuba who are defending their civil rights” be ended, would seem like delirious fantasies if there wasn’t, behind those fictions, a malicious intention of adding respectable voices from the Afro-American community to the anti-Cuban campaign that seeks to undermine our sovereignty and identity.

## Cuba and Africa

If the Cuba of these times was the racist nation they want to invent, its citizens would not have contributed massively to the liberation of the African peoples. More than 350,000 Cuban volunteers fought against colonialism alongside their brothers and sisters in Africa. More than 2,000 combatants from our island fell on that continent. A figure of undisputed worldwide prominence, Nelson Mandela, has recognized the role of those volunteers in the definitive defeat of the infamous apartheid regime. From Africa we brought back only the remains of our dead.

If Cuba today had such contempt for blacks, more than 35,000 African youth would not have been educated in our schools over the past 40 years, nor would 2,600 young people from some 30 nations of that region be studying right now in our universities.

A people wracked by racism would refuse to collaborate in the training of doctors and other human resources in

health care at the medical schools established in Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, and Eritrea.

They would have turned their backs on the health-care programs that have saved thousands of lives in many parts of Latin America and the Caribbean where there is a large African diaspora. They would have ignored the more than 20,000 Haitians and English-speaking Afro-Caribbean people who recovered their eyesight through surgery performed free of charge in our country.

It’s very likely that most of the signers of the document are not aware that when New Orleans was devastated by Hurricane Katrina, dozens of Cuban doctors and paramedics volunteered to provide help to the storm victims, in a humanitarian gesture that received no response from the American authorities.

## Mortal blow to racism

On a different subject, perhaps those who signed the document are unaware of how the institutional and legal foundations of a racist society were dismantled from the earliest days following the popular victory of 1959.

In 1959 the Cuban Revolution found the majority of the population in desperate conditions. Cubans of African descent, who had been among the victims suffering the most from the neo-colonial model on the island, immediately benefited from the battle waged by the revolutionary government to eradicate all forms of exclusion, including the cruel racism that marked Cuba at that time.

Cuba’s policies against any form of discrimination and in favor of equality have constitutional backing, registered in the chapters of the Cuban Constitution that refer to the essential political, social, and economic foundations of the state, and the rights, obligations,

## Health group withdraws from anti-Cuba letter

BY SAM MANUEL

One of the signers of a November 30 declaration alleging that the Cuban government practices racial discrimination against black Cubans has asked that her name and that of her organization be withdrawn. Several prominent Cuban artists and writers also issued a response to the declaration December 2, recounting the contributions made by the Cuban Revolution to the advancement of blacks in Cuba and around the world. (See statement above.)

Among the 60 prominent African Americans who signed the declaration charging racism in Cuba are Princeton professor Cornel West, Atlanta’s Emory University professor Kathleen Neal Cleaver, former president of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists and University of California at Sacramento professor David Covin, Bennett College for Women president Julianne Malveaux, Africana Studies professor at Cornell University James Turner, actress Ruby Dee, film director Melvin Van Peebles, and Rev. Jeremiah Wright. The statement charges the Cuban government with “unwar-



Granma

Cuban volunteer troops in southern Angola, helping to defend the country from attack by apartheid South Africa.

and guarantees of its citizens.

These constitutional rights, together with the mechanisms and means to enforce them and reaffirm the law in face of any violation, are guaranteed through very detailed accompanying legislation.

Blacks and mestizos, as never before in the history of our country, have found opportunities for social and personal development in the course of the transformations carried out over the past half century. These opportunities have been backed by policies and programs that have made possible the rise of what Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz called the unpostponable integration phase of Cuban society.

It’s a process, as we know, that is not exempt from conflicts and contradictions, burdened by inherited social disadvantages as well as prejudices deeply rooted over centuries.

Six years ago Fidel Castro, in a discussion in Havana with Cuban and foreign educators, commented how “even in societies like Cuba that arose from a radical social revolution where the people achieved full and complete legal equality and a level of revolutionary education that demolished the subjective component of discrimination, it still exists in a different form.” He described it as objective discrimination,

a phenomenon associated with poverty and with a historical monopoly on access to learning.

Anyone who observes daily life anywhere in the country can see that an enormous effort is under way to overcome completely the factors causing that situation, through new programs aimed at eliminating any social disadvantages.

## Afro-Cuban artists, intellectuals

The Afro-American intellectuals need to know how their Cuban colleagues have dealt with these questions and how they promote actions from the prominent positions they hold in civil society.

Some of the previously mentioned programs came about as a result of the discussions that took place in 1998 during the Sixth Congress of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC), in an open and frank dialogue with the highest state authorities and then-president Fidel Castro.

It should be remembered that UNEAC, which brings together the vanguard of Cuba’s intellectual and artistic movement, had as its founding president a black poet, Nicolás Guillén, one of the most outstanding poets of the Spanish language in the 20th

Continued on page 9

ranted and brutal harassment of black citizens” and “callous disregard.”

In withdrawing her name and organization from the attack on the Cuban Revolution, Makani Themba-Nixon, executive director of the Praxis Project in Washington, D.C., wrote, “I know as a person with family on the island, that racism is not by any stretch of the imagination solved. I also know that the progress made in Cuba is enviable by U.S. standards. This does not mean that there should not be criticism and advocacy to push for even more progress. I just don’t want any public statement that we sign to become fodder for attacking a nation and a revolution that has contributed so much to the world.” Praxis Project is a health advocacy group for African Americans.

The statement condemning the Cuban government was largely driven by Carlos Moore, reported the December 1 *Miami Herald*. Moore is a decades-long opponent of the Cuban Revolution. It repeats many of the slanders against the revolution that can be found in his two books, *Castro, the Blacks, and Africa* and *Pichón: Race and Revolution in Castro’s Cuba*.

Moore convinced Abdias Nascimento, described by the *Herald* as a leading figure among blacks in Brazil, to send a letter to Cuban president Raúl Castro denouncing racism in Cuba. Moore, who now lives in Brazil, then approached friends and contacts among U.S. Blacks, including Susan Taylor, former editor of *Essence* magazine.

The declaration calls on the Cuban government to release Darsi Ferrer, whom a press release issued with the statement describes as a leader of the island’s “budding civil rights movement.” The release says that Ferrer has angered Cuban authorities by setting up “people’s clinics” in homes and garages for black Cubans who “no longer receive medical attention,” from the government.

Cuba’s health-care system is unrivaled in the world and is provided free to all Cubans. In addition thousands of Cuban doctors and other medical specialists provide health care in the most remote parts of Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Cuban medical schools also train students from many semicolonial countries.

# Afro-Cubans defended anticolonial fighters

The following article appeared in the November 26 issue of the Cuban daily *Granma* under the headline “138 years since the colonial power’s crime of November 27.” It recounts the execution of eight Cuban medical students in 1871 by Spanish colonial authorities. The article also tells the story of five black Cubans, members of the Abakuá society who were killed attempting to rescue the students. The Abakuá was a secret society of both free and enslaved blacks, organized for self-defense and to protect their culture in the face of slavery and colonial rule. A broadly sponsored commemoration of their heroic action was held November 27 for the first time in Cuba. It is part of the vigorous discussion and debate in Cuba on the legacy of black Cubans in the island’s history from the independence war to the 1959 revolution to the challenges of overcoming remaining vestiges of racial discrimination today.



BY PEDRO DE LA HOZ

What lay behind the colonial authorities’ decision to carry out the horrendous crime of Nov. 27, 1871? Madness or calculated treachery? An irrational hatred for the emerging national sentiment that was taking shape in the countryside? Or a premeditated attempt to teach a lesson to those of rebellious spirit who sympathized with the movement for freedom?

That day, eight Cuban medical students received in their flesh a mortal salvo of rifle fire as punishment for supposedly desecrating the grave of a Spanish writer who had called, in a lampoon, for the extermination of everyone born on the island. It was soon learned that no such desecration had taken place; it was merely a pretext for carrying out the crime.

The first to be charged were five young people who had been found in the Espada cemetery November 23, the day on which the crime that had never taken place was alleged to have been committed. Three others were chosen at random. Thirty more received sentences of up to six years in prison in the frame-up trial.

Ángel Laborde, Anacleto Bermúdez, José de Marcos Medina, Juan Pascual Rodríguez, Alonso Álvarez de la Campa, Eladio González, Carlos Augusto de la Torre, and Carlos Verdugo were the victims. They ranged in age from 16 to 21.

Unrecorded, however, are the names of five other Cubans killed that same day, in an attempt to rescue the students on their way to the firing squad. They were five men of black skin, one of them “a milk brother” of Álvarez de la Campa—that is, someone nursed by the same black nanny.

An account of the failed action was written by no less than Ramón López de Ayala, captain of volunteers in charge of the execution of the young people. In a letter to his brother, who

worked in Madrid’s Ministry of Overseas Territories, he wrote: “Blacks discharged their firearms at a group of artillery volunteers, killing their lieutenant. Those under attack responded immediately against the blacks, tearing to pieces the five authors of the aggression on the spot.”

The blacks belonged to the Abakuá group Bakokó Efó, one of the associations under whose name African slaves and their descendants on Cuban soil organized to defend themselves physically and preserve their culture against the colonial oppressors. The action taken Nov. 27, 1871, has been preserved and passed down orally by the Abakuás as part of the most valuable patrimony of their revolt. Taken by force to be exploited in the plantations of the island, the Abakuás brought essential ethical values to the forging of the nation.

Those anonymous fighters merit the words our [José] Martí used to honor the murdered students, praising the capacity of the Cuban soul “. . . to rise up in arms, sublimely and, at the moment of sacrifice, to face death without hesitation in the holocaust of the homeland.”

## Cuban artists, writers refute racism charges

Continued from page 8

century, an active fighter against racial discrimination, and personal friend of Langston Hughes and Paul Robeson.

Within UNEAC, an organization that was never oblivious to these problems, a permanent committee has been established to fight, from a cultural standpoint, against any vestige of discrimination and racial prejudice.

In a racist country it would be inconceivable to create and operate institutions such Africa House, the Fernando Ortiz Foundation, the Caribbean House in Santiago de Cuba, the Center for Caribbean Studies at Casa de las Américas, and the National Institute of Anthropology, which, along with others, conducts in-depth research on African heritage in our culture and on interracial relations in our country.

Likewise, artistic groups and entities such as the National Folkloric Dance Ensemble, the Camagüey Folkloric Ballet, and the Folkloric Dance Ensemble of Oriente would not have received the support and broad social recognition they have.

Nor would the Slave Route Museum exist. The first of its kind in Latin America and the Caribbean, this museum is one of the principal results of Cuba’s commitment to the UNESCO-sponsored program to give recognition to the contributions made by Africans forcibly removed from their lands of origin and brought to these lands where they helped forge new identities.

If racial hatred was a predominant trend in our society, the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Independent Party of Color would have been nothing but a rhetorical gesture. The commemoration was part of recovering the historical memory of that stage in the struggles and aspirations of the Cuban people for their rights and their libera-

### Guineans rally at UN against junta’s massacre



Militant/Ben Joyce

NEW YORK—Some 250 Guineans living in the United States and their supporters rallied at the United Nations here December 9. Organizers of the protest said it was called to draw world attention to the killing of more than 150 people and the rape of many women by the Guinean military at a pro-democracy rally at a stadium in the capital city of Conakry September 28. The rally held at the United Nations also demanded a return to civilian rule of Guinea. Many protesters carried signs with photos on them of the September 28 attacks by the military.

Speakers at the rally here included Kadiatou Diallo, the mother of Amadou Diallo, a Guinean immigrant who was killed by the New York City cops in 1999; former New York City mayor David Dinkins; Norman Siegel, head of the New York Civil Liberties Union, and Francois Fall, a Guinean bourgeois party opposition leader.

—NORTON SANDLER

tion from all forms of domination.

Genuine bearers of traditional musical culture much appreciated by American audiences, such as Los Muñequitos de Matanzas, Yoruba Andabo, and Clave y Guaguancó, would have to be working as poorly paid laborers on the docks, as parking lot attendants, shoe shiners, and domestic employees, had their extraordinary values not been recognized.

A racist society would not have committed itself so deeply to translating and publishing hundreds of literary works by African and Afro-Caribbean authors.

On one of his visits to Cuba, Nigerian Nobel Prize laureate Wole Soyinka stated, “It is difficult to find another place in the Western Hemisphere where eagerness to learn about African writers goes beyond the interest among academic institutions, as I have seen here.”

Cuban artists and intellectuals are grateful for the solidarity, understanding, and respect that many Afro-American figures have shown toward the Cuban reality over the past half-century.

We have never asked them to share

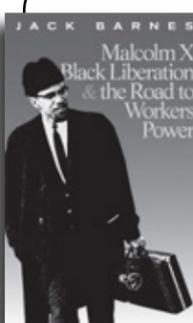
our political ideas, nor have we demanded that dialogue be contingent on support of any kind. We respect their points of view out of an elementary sense of ethics.

Perhaps it would be appropriate for the signers of the declaration we are commenting on to listen without prejudice to these views. We are certain that in doing so, as the Yoruba saying proclaims, “truth will have its day.”

Havana, Cuba  
December 2, 2009

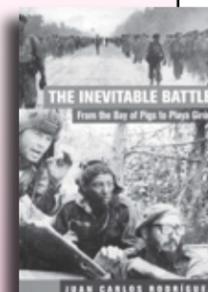
- Nancy Morejón*, poet and essayist
- Miguel Barnet*, poet and anthropologist
- Esteban Morales*, political scientist and essayist
- Eduardo Roca (Choco)*, artist
- Heriberto Feraudy*, historian and essayist
- Rogelio Martínez Furé*, Africanist
- Pedro de la Hoz*, journalist and essayist
- Fernando Martínez Heredia*, sociologist and essayist
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### For further reading



**Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power**  
by Jack Barnes  
Available in January.  
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**The Inevitable Battle: From the Bay of Pigs to Playa Girón**  
by Juan Carlos Rodríguez  
Available in English and Spanish.  
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# The Bolshevik Revolution and women's emancipation

Printed below is an excerpt from *Women and the Family* by Leon Trotsky, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. In this collection of writings and speeches Trotsky explains how the victorious Russian Revolution in October 1917 transformed the fight for women's rights. He describes the steps taken by the Bolshevik-led government to establish equality in economic and political life, set up child-care centers, and guarantee the right to abortion and divorce. The piece below, titled "To build socialism means to emancipate women and protect mothers," is from an article written by Trotsky that appeared in *Za Novyi Byt* in December 1925. Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Women attending literacy class in Soviet Union in early 1920s. "It is impossible to move to socialism without freeing the peasant woman and the woman worker," Trotsky explained.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LEON TROTSKY

Just as it was impossible to approach the construction of the Soviet state without freeing the peasantry from the tangles of serfdom, so it is impossible to move to socialism without freeing the peasant woman and the woman worker from the bondage of family and household. And if we used to determine the maturity of a revolutionary worker not only by his attitude to

the capitalist but also by his attitude to the peasant, i.e., by his understanding of the necessity of freeing the peasant from bondage—so now we can and must measure the socialist maturity of the worker and the progressive peasant by their attitude to woman and child, by their understanding of the necessity of freeing from bondage the mother in penal servitude, of giving her the possibility of straightening her back and involving herself as she should in social and cultural life.

Motherhood is the hub of all problems. That is why each new measure, each law, each practical step in economic and social construction must also be checked against the question of how it will affect the family, whether it worsens or lightens the fate of the mother, whether it improves the position of the child.

The great number of homeless children in our towns bears most terrible witness to the fact that we are still caught up on all sides in the tangles of the old society, which manifests itself in the most vicious way in the epoch of its downfall. The position of mother and child was never so difficult as in the years of the transition from the old to the new, especially in the years of the civil war. . . .

The general growth of the economy is creating the conditions for a gradual reconstruction of family and domestic

life. All questions connected with this must be posed in their full magnitude. We are approaching from various directions the renewal of the basic capital of the country; we are acquiring new machines to replace the old ones; we are building new factories; we are renewing our railways; the peasant is acquiring plows, seeders, tractors.

But the most basic "capital" is the people, i. e., its strength, its health, its cultural level. This capital requires renewal even more than the equipment of the factories or the peasant implements. It must not be thought that the ages of slavery, hunger, and bondage, the years of war and epidemics, have passed without a trace. No, they have left behind in the living organism of the people both wounds and scars. Tuberculosis, syphilis, neurasthenia, alcoholism—all these diseases and many others are spread widely among the masses of the population. The nation must be made healthy. Without that, socialism is unthinkable.

We must reach the roots, the sources. And where is the source of the nation if not in the mother? The struggle against the neglect of mothers must be given first place! Housing construction, the construction of child-care facilities, kindergartens, communal dining rooms and laundries must be put in the center of attention, and that attention must be vigilant and well or-

ganized. Here questions of *quality* decide all. Childcare, eating and laundry facilities must be set up so that by the advantages they provide they can deal a deathblow to the old closed-in, isolated family unit, completely supported on the bent shoulders of the housewife and mother. Improvement of the environment inevitably calls forth a surge of demand, and then a surge of means. Caring for children in public facilities, as well as feeding of adults in communal canteens, is cheaper than in the family. But the transfer of material means from the family to the child-care centers and canteens will take place only if the social organization learns to satisfy the most primary demands better than the family. Special attention must now be paid to the questions of quality. Vigilant social control and constant urging on all the organs and institutions which serve the family and domestic needs of the toiling masses is essential.

The initiators in the great struggle for the liberation of mothers must of course be the advanced women workers. At all costs this movement must be directed against the village. In our city life too, there is still much of the petty-bourgeois peasant character. The view of women held by many working men is still not socialist, but conservative, peasant, essentially medieval. Thus the peasant mother oppressed by the yoke of the family pulls the worker mother down with her. The peasant woman must be raised up. She must desire to raise herself, i. e., she must be awakened and shown the way.

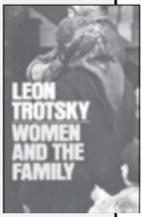
It is impossible to move forward while leaving the woman far in the rear. Woman is the mother of the nation. From the enslavement of women grow prejudices and superstitions which shroud the children of the new generation and penetrate deeply into all the pores of the national consciousness. The best and most profound path of struggle against the superstition of religion is the path of all-sided concern for the mother. She must be raised up and enlightened. Freeing the mother means cutting the last umbilical cord linking the people with the dark and superstitious past.

*December* BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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# Continue fight to free Cuban 5!

The reduction of the sentences for three of the five Cuban revolutionaries framed up and jailed in the United States is not justice, but is an important victory. All supporters of democratic rights must use it to continue the struggle and demand that they be freed immediately. (See article on front page.)

Known internationally as the Cuban Five, the prisoners have been jailed on frame-up charges since their arrest in 1998. They were working in the United States to monitor counterrevolutionary groups with a history of armed attacks against Cuba, carried out with Washington's complicity.

The decision by the courts to reduce the sentences of three of the five represents an important victory that can be built upon.

This concession by the U.S. government is due to the growing support the case of the five has gained internationally, which the prosecution for the first time acknowledged during the resentencing of Antonio Guerrero in October.

With this important development on the legal front, supporters of the Cuban Five are in a better position now to win broader support among working people the world over for the release of all five.

Gerardo Hernández, jailed on charges that include "conspiracy to commit murder" and "conspiracy to commit espionage," still faces two life sentences plus 15 years. The reductions won so far also puts supporters of the five in a stronger posi-

tion to fight Hernández's outrageously severe punishment.

Working people and supporters of democratic rights everywhere—especially in the United States—have a direct stake in this fight. At every stage their case has been characterized by gross violations of workers rights, including unwarranted searches by the FBI, use of secret "evidence," spying and wiretaps, use of "conspiracy" charges, and the denial of a change of venue for the trial, despite a hostile environment where any semblance of a fair trial was not possible.

The U.S. rulers have stepped up attacks on democratic rights and civil liberties as they prepare for battles with working people that will emerge from the deepening capitalist crisis.

The Cuban Five case is a purely political one. The U.S. government is not persecuting the five for the results of their actions while in the United States. Washington has even admitted that their actions did not represent a compromise to "national security."

They are being punished for being proud soldiers of the Cuban Revolution, where working people have taken political power, transformed society for the benefit of the toiling majority, and defended their gains in the face of U.S. imperialist aggression for more than five decades.

Let's take the victory we have won and use this momentum to extend the gains.

Build the campaign to free the Cuban Five now!

# 'Stewardship of nature' printed in Greek

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN

ATHENS, Greece—The book *Capitalism, the Working Class and the Protection of Nature* was released this autumn in Greek by the Athens-based publishing house Diethnes Vima.

This new book contains the resolution adopted by the Socialist Workers Party "The stewardship of nature also falls to the working class: In defense of land and labor," drafted by SWP leaders Jack Barnes, Steve Clark, and Mary-Alice Waters. It first appeared in English in issue 14 of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*.

*Capitalism, the Working Class and the Protection of Nature* also contains the speech by Thomas Sankara titled "Imperialism is the arsonist of our forests and savannas." Sankara was the leader of the 1983–87 revolution in the West African country of Burkina Faso.

In addition, the book features the article "The part played by labor in the transition from ape to man," written by Frederick Engels, a founder of the modern workers movement.

A six-week campaign to place the new title in bookstores netted orders for 55 new books and 93 other titles in three cities. A visit to the northern industrial city of Thessaloniki netted orders from six bookstores for a total of 22 copies and 42 other titles. In Athens 29 were placed in nine bookstores along with 44 additional titles.

A visit to the southern port city of Patras in the Peloponnese also netted orders from two bookstores for four copies of the new book as well as seven other titles.

Fifteen people attended a presentation of the book November 22 sponsored by Diethnes Vima. It was held at the Immigrant's Club in Athens and attended by immigrant workers from West Africa, the Middle East, and Afghanistan.

Bobbis Misailides, speaking on behalf of the publishers, said this new book should be read along with "Capitalism's long hot winter has begun" and "Our politics start with the world," talks by Barnes that have been translated to Greek by Diethnes Vima. Misailides said they help understand what the depression that capitalism has entered holds for working people and nature, the two sources of wealth.

Roberto Scilipoti, a high school teacher of ecology, also spoke. Scilipoti said, "This book provides a deep appreciation of how the environment is exploited for profit. I particularly appreciated the speech by Sankara because there we see that the mobilizations by working people can confront the crisis in the environment."

During the discussion, Ahmed Hamado, president of the Burkina Faso Community in Athens, said, "We in the community are studying what happened during the Sankara years. In the four years of the Burkina Faso revolution more was accomplished than in the 22 years since. On the question of the environment too."

So far this year 791 books have been sold by volunteers in Athens to bookstores or off literature tables in Greece, Cyprus, and Lebanon. This is 132 percent of the goal the volunteers set at the beginning of the year.

# 'Jobs summit'

Continued from front page

skittish about hiring and that many "have figured out how to squeeze more productivity out of fewer workers." This is "not translating into hiring," he said.

The president insisted that there's not very much that the government is going to do. "Our resources are limited," he stated. "So we can't make any ill-considered decisions right now." He added, "We don't have enough public dollars to fill the hole of private dollars that was created as a consequence of the crisis."

Obama said he would announce some of his own "new ideas" shortly. Among them is a "cash for caulkers" program to weatherize houses and businesses, according to the *New York Times*. It would be modeled after the July–August "cash for clunkers" initiative that was supposed to boost automobile sales and production, but had very little impact on putting back to work the tens of thousands of laid-off auto workers.

## Long-term unemployed

The total number of those without work in November was 15.4 million, according to the Labor Department. Another 2.3 million unemployed workers "marginally attached to the workforce" are not counted, as the government claims they are "discouraged" or haven't looked for work in the past four weeks. With 9.2 million others having to accept only part-time work, the combined unemployed and underemployed rate is actually 17.2 percent, or nearly 27 million workers.

The Labor Department numbers continue to show a disproportionate impact on Blacks, other oppressed nationalities, and youth. The unemployment rate for African Americans in November was 15.6 percent; for Latinos, 12.7 percent; and for teenagers, 26.7 percent. One-third of 16–24-year-old Black men are out of work.

Attacks on workers continue both through layoffs and through "productivity" speedup by the bosses. Labor "productivity" in manufacturing rose by 13.4 percent in the third quarter of 2009, with fewer workers producing more. On December 3 Harley-Davidson announced the layoff of 950 union workers at its largest plant in York, Pennsylvania.

Unless Congress renews federal jobless benefits, more than 1 million workers will lose benefits in January. Even though Congress recently approved a 14-week federal extension, it's based on previous extensions that are slated to end December 31, reported the *New York Times*. Without an extension of the entire federal benefits program, those who started getting state benefits after July 1, 2009, won't be able to get any federal benefits after state payments end in six months.

The day after the "jobs summit," Obama took this discussion on the road, visiting Allentown, Pennsylvania. At a town hall meeting at Lehigh Carbon Community College, he said he planned to summon top bankers to the White House later this month to urge them to make more credit available and tell them "the taxpayers were there for you to clean up your mistakes. You now have a responsibility to be there for the community now that we're bearing the brunt of a lot of these problems that you caused," reported the *Washington Post*.

The crisis, however, is rooted in the contraction of capitalist production worldwide. In the United States, employers over the past 23 months have slashed 7.2 million jobs.

# LETTERS

## Rising U.S. hunger

The 4 percent absolute rise in working people facing hunger relative to the entire U.S. population between 2007 and 2008 reported by Brian Williams in the November 30 *Militant* correctly reflects the Census Bureau report cited. More tellingly of the precipitous decline in working-class conditions within the space of a year this means 36 percent more people lack access to

adequate food.  
*Karl Butts*  
*Tampa Bay, Florida*

## UK postal strike

Your report [November 23 *Militant*] on calling off the United Kingdom postal workers' strike referred to the Business Secretary Lord Mandelson's earlier proposal for what he called a "partial privatization" of Royal Mail. Most postal workers do not see this as partial but as a first

stage of a total privatization.  
*Murdo Ritchie*  
*Glasgow, United Kingdom*

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

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