

UNAC conference challenges U.S./NATO war policies

UNAC Plan for Action!

- **May 20: protest NATO Summit in Chicago**
- **June 16: N.Y. protest against Islamophobia & police spying**

By CHRISTINE MARIE

On April 1 *The New York Times* reported that the U.S. and the Gulf states, meeting as the “Friends of Syria” in Istanbul, had moved dramatically closer to direct military intervention against the Assad regime. The pro-U.S. Arab nations pledged \$100 million to pay the fighters of the Free Syrian Army, and the U.S. pledged satellite communications equipment and night vision goggles.

The Times said that all this, combined with a call on the UN Security Council to set a deadline to announce the “next steps” against Assad, had brought participants “to the edge of a proxy war against Assad’s government and its international supporters.”

This proxy war and the increasing threat of direct military intervention by NATO forces under the auspices of a UN Security Council mandate was but one element of the new and dangerous context in which the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) held its second annual conference, March 23-25 in Stamford, Conn. Five hundred and seventy-five activists registered for the conference, a central goal of which was the building of the May 20 mass protest in Chicago against the wars carried out or planned by NATO.

Joe Iosbaker and Pat Hunt, leaders of the CANG8 coalition organizing the permitted march on the Chicago NATO summit, opened the conference by asking people to stand who were going to be present in Chicago or who were going to help raise funds to get others to the May 20 protest. A sizable proportion of the people in the room rose to their feet.

UNAC’s program of antiwar activity, dubbed the Action Plan, was presented to the conference by *Black Agenda Report* Executive Editor Glen Ford. This plan, Ford said, “does not shy away from condemning wars that are still acceptable to half of the population because the real reasons for them are obscured by the rhetoric of humanitarianism.” The conference approved the May 20 mobilization with the lessons of NATO’s murderous “humanitarian intervention” into Libya fresh in mind.

The UNAC conference recognized that the U.S. government has placed Iran in its sights as a target for disruption—and possible armed attack. During her March 31 visit to Saudi Arabia, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned that Iran must yield to the U.S. challenge to its nuclear program, and that the “window of opportunity will not remain open forever” for a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

In the meantime, she said, the U.S. and its allies would increase their economic pressure against Iran. Clinton’s remarks closely followed President Obama’s announcement that news of Saudi oil production goals had cleared the way for the implementation of ever more extreme sanctions designed to hinder Iran’s ability to export oil.

These overt military activities are coincident with other economic measures designed to hold back social transformation in Egypt, where the U.S.-led International Monetary Fund has negotiated a new \$3.2 billion loan that will further impoverish and disempower the revolutionary-minded masses of that nation.



(Above) Monami Maulik, from Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM) in New York, addresses UNAC conference.

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The UNAC conference highlighted Afghanistan as a nation that is still suffering the murderous rampages, night raids, and drone attacks that have accompanied the U.S.-NATO occupation.

Plenary speaker David Swanson reminded the audience that one week earlier Hillary Clinton had told reporters that the war in Afghanistan could not be ended without first winning women’s rights. However, “already we have set up a government that endorses wife-beating,” Swanson quipped. “Perhaps once it mandates invasive ultrasounds, we can leave with honor.” The UNAC Action Plan declares that the Afghanistan war must end *now*, not in 2014 or after.

A key element of the conference was education about

the history and purposes of the U.S.-led NATO military alliance. The UN Security Council, whose resolutions authorize NATO war-making, Professor Vijay Prashad reminded the crowd, meets under a mural with scenes of everyday life in Northern Europe at the top, and a scene at the bottom in which veiled women and turbaned men are targeted by a field artillery gun. This image, he suggested, revealed much about the UN Security Council’s role.

Prashad explained that during the last 20 years the U.S. and its allies have worked to codify a new public relations and legal framework for imperialist intervention. This same UN Security Council, he pointed out, has adopted a mandate boosting so-called humanitarian intervention called “The Right to Protect” (R2P).

NATO is now explicitly understood to be the enforcer of R2P and the International Criminal Court the juridical arm. In Libya, all three elements were orchestrated to work together seamlessly for the first time and to ends that were the opposite of humanitarian. Key-note speaker at the UNAC conference Andrew Murray, the chief of staff for the British public services union UNITE and a leader of the UK Stop the War Coalition, emphasized that the outcome was “a racist government of gangsters” who have brought the Libyan people little freedom.

The “Shifting Strategies of Empire,” the plenary that opened the conference, took up not only the attempts by the global 1% to expand NATO’s reach, but also the Obama administration’s decision to send combat troops to sub-Saharan Africa and to boost the U.S. naval presence in seas around China. Bernadette Ellorin of the Philippine solidarity organization BAYAN noted that Obama’s “return to Asia” is only the refurbishing of a U.S. military presence that has dominated the region for over 100 years.

The new buildup, which includes the blasting of the pristine environmental wonder of the Korean

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Wisconsin recall effort sparks labor movement debate

By CARL SACK

MADISON, Wis.—The law stripping public workers of collective bargaining rights, which spurred hundreds of thousands to take to the streets and occupy the State Capitol building last spring in what became known as the Wisconsin Uprising, was partially struck down by a federal judge on March 30.

The judge's ruling held that it was unconstitutional for the state to bar public workers from voluntarily having union dues withdrawn from their paychecks (a practice known as dues check-off) and force public worker unions to re-certify every year. However, the court left in place the provision of the law that restricts collective bargaining for public workers to quibbling over cost-of-living increases, eliminating their legal right to protect working conditions, seniority, raises, and benefits at the bargaining table.

Meanwhile, campaigning is heating up for the state's recall election to replace Republican Governor Scott Walker. It is sure to be the most expensive election in Wisconsin history. Most unions have once again kowtowed to the Democratic Party, endorsing candidates for the recalls before the election date was even set and the candidates' paperwork filed.

A massive "Reclaim Wisconsin" rally on March 10 brought some 50,000 or more working people to the Capitol Square and was largely directed toward pushing them to campaign for Democrats.

The favorite candidate among unions is Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk, the long-time administrator of the county that includes Madison. As part of her



platform, Falk cites the cuts she imposed on county workers' wages through collective bargaining for a give-back contract in 2010. The same budget included a huge increase in regressive local property taxes.

(Left) Last year's mass occupation of the State Capitol building was diverted into the Recall Walker campaign. Here petitioners table at University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire campus on Nov. 11, 2011.

This is the "good cop" approach to attacks on public workers' standards of living that has most union officials singing Falk's praises as the best possible alternative to Gov. Scott Walker!

The UW-Madison Teaching Assistant's Association, which played a leading role in last year's protests and occupation, once again made waves on the left by passing a resolution declaring its intent not to endorse any candidate that does not agree to a full reversal of these attacks, including restoration of funding for public services and the 8%-plus pay cut taken by public workers under Act 10. Unfortunately, pro-Democrat forces within the union were able to mobilize enough opposition at the following meeting to rescind the resolution; however, a motion to endorse Kathleen Falk also failed.

Left activists in the union are continuing to organize and push publicly for what should be a given—independent workplace action and no confidence to the so-called friends of labor who stab us in the back! ■

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A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

- 1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.
- 2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.
- 3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.
- 4) Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops and mercenaries from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.

5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

6) To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.

7) Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.

8) Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.

9) To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.

10) To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers' government!

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Broad coalition responds to NYPD spying

NY police targeted Black, Muslim, labor, antiwar, and social justice groups around the country.

By ANDREW POLLACK

NEW YORK—After months of revelations by the Associated Press of spying by the New York Police Department (NYPD) on the Muslim community here and throughout the Northeast, the AP recently exposed surveillance by the N.Y. cops on racial justice, antiwar, labor, anti-repression and other movements as far afield as New Orleans.

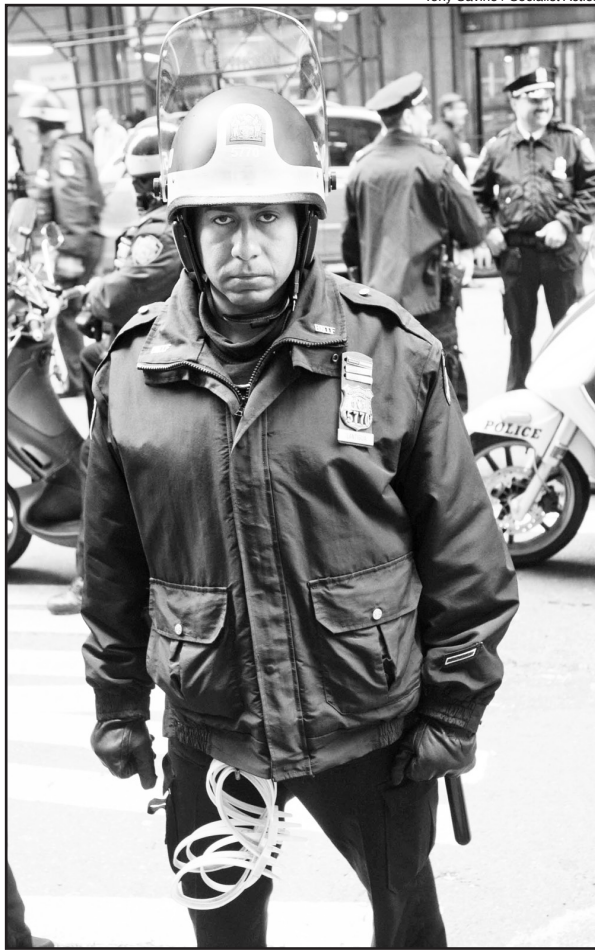
The revelations have broadened a coalition initiated in response to the spying on Muslims, which quickly linked up with Black groups fighting the NYPD's "stop and frisk" and other repressive policies, and Occupy Wall Street activists battling police repression.

At a March 28 press conference, representatives of all the groups mentioned in the leaked NYPD memo participated, including DRUM-Desis Rising Up & Moving, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, War Resisters League, International Action Center, Al Awda NY, Ruckus Society, Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood Justice Committee, Peoples' Justice for Community Control and Police Accountability, Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, Domestic Workers United, May 1st Coalition, and Critical Resistance.

Endorsers included the National Lawyers Guild NYC Muslim Defense Project, the Majlis ash-Shura (Islamic Leadership Council) of Metropolitan New York, Council on American Islamic Relations-NY, South Asian Solidarity Initiative, Brooklyn For Peace, Muslim Consultative Network, Raha: Iranian Feminist Collective, Occupy Wall Street and the OWS Immigrant Worker Justice Working Group, New York Committee to Stop FBI Repression, Where Is My Vote-NY, and the United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC).

Fahd Ahmed, Legal and Policy Director of DRUM-Desis Rising Up & Moving, told the press that the NYPD, which had already been exposed as spying on every Muslim mosque, community and student organization, and business in New York City and in many other states, had now been revealed as having spied on a wide variety of movements simply for being engaged in political activities.

The police, of course, claimed the spying was needed to stop "terrorism," yet the leaked memo reports nothing other than rallies, e-mails with endorsements, and routine speeches of peaceful political groups. The document reveals that in 2008 an undercover NYPD officer traveled to New Orleans to attend the People's Summit, a gathering of progressive groups opposed to pro-corporate trade agreements between the U.S.,



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

Canada, and Mexico as well as to racist immigration policies, pro-business labor laws, and racial profiling.

Among the individuals singled out were New Orleans activist Jordan Flaherty, well known for his writing and work around Hurricane Katrina and Palestine solidarity, and Marisa Franco, a labor organizer for Domestic Workers United (a group whose thousands of mostly Black and Latin@ members recently won a landmark victory recognizing their rights on the job from the New York State government).

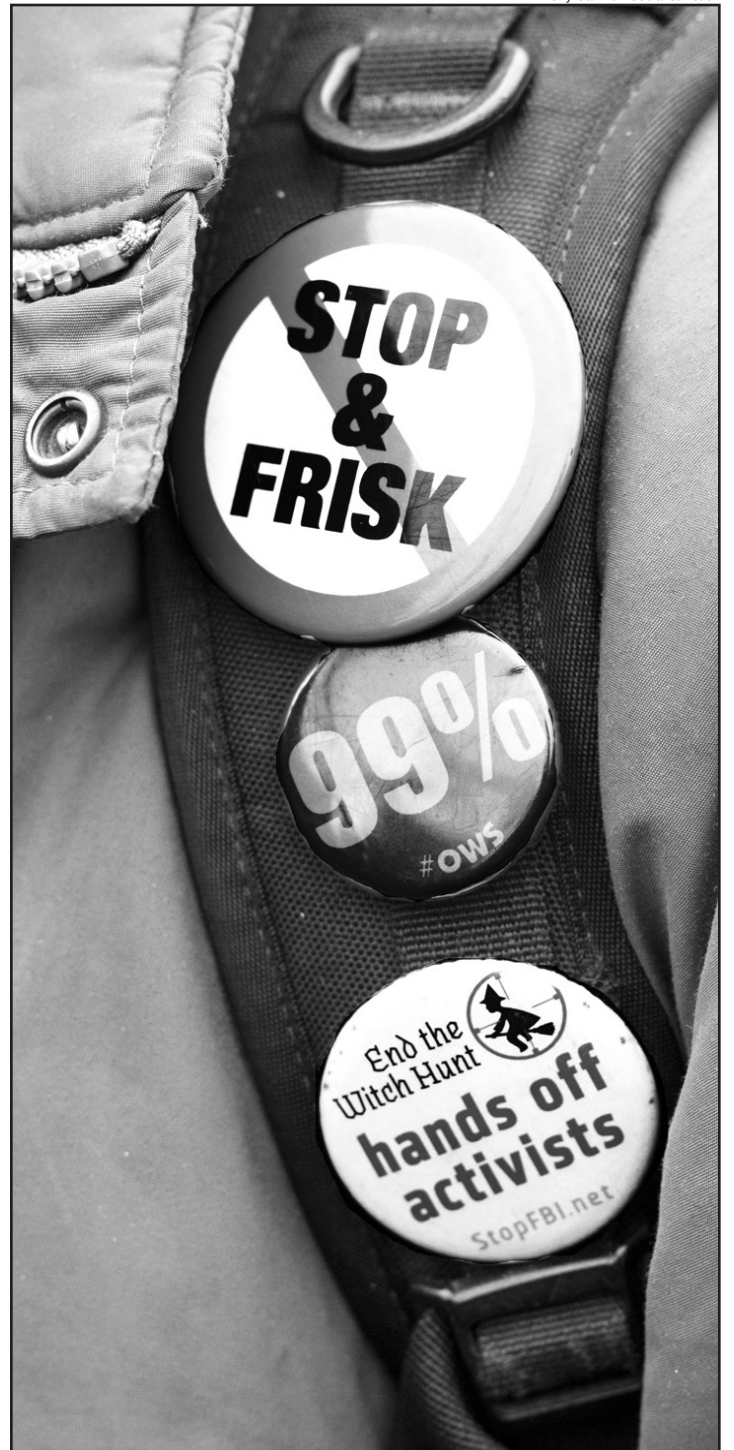
The NYPD memo also goes into great detail about spying on those active in protests against the racist murder by cops in 2006 of an unarmed Black man, Sean Bell. Ironically, the very same week as the coalition's press conference, two detectives involved in the shooting were forced to retire—an admission, despite the NYPD spying, that the activists' accusations were correct.

Just two weeks before, a court hearing in Manhattan highlighted another insidious aspect of NYPD spying. In their opening arguments in the case of Ahmed Ferhani—an immigrant from Algeria who is charged with working to commit a violent act against a synagogue—defense lawyers showed how the police informant who entrapped him had spent years in surveillance and infiltration of the Palestine solidarity movement. And when the informant's handlers grew desperate for results to justify his and their expenditures, they latched onto Ferhani, a young man who has been re-

peatedly institutionalized for mental illness.

As in other recent entrapment cases—many of which also center on individuals of questionable mental health—Ferhani's alleged crimes are nothing more than supposed verbal responses to a fictional plot dreamed up by the informant.

The weekend after the press conference, these revelations were highlighted at the national conference of the United National Antiwar Coalition, from the welcoming remarks Friday night on through plenary sessions and workshops against repression. Attendees discussed ways to continue building solidarity with the communities and movements under attack, and passed a resolution initiated by the Muslim Peace Council for a June 16 rally in New York. ■



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

By ANDREW POLLACK

Every year on March 30, Palestinians and supporters rally to commemorate Land Day, the anniversary of the 1976 rallies inside the 1948 borders of Palestine in which the Zionist authorities gunned down six protesters fighting to save their land from ethnic cleansing. This year the demonstrations were coupled with a "Global March to Jerusalem," a worldwide effort aiming to draw attention to the deepening ethnic cleansing in that city.

Marchers gathered in many locations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and in '48 Palestine. Two young Palestinian protesters were executed in Gaza, and hundreds injured there and at other rally sights.

In addition, there were solidarity demonstrations around the world organized by Global March, which also sent contingents from other continents to countries bordering Israel. The GMJ was intended to be evocative of the spirit of last year's "Marches for Return," in which Palestinians marched right up to the borders demanding to be allowed back to their land (and in which dozens were gunned down



in cold blood by Zionist soldiers). In the end the GMJ rallies mostly stopped well short of the borders.

These protests occurred two weeks af-

ter several days of attacks by Israel on Gaza had left at least two dozen dead, attacks which began with the assassination of two resistance leaders.

Meanwhile, throughout March activists around the world were publicizing the hunger strike of Palestinian political prisoner Hana Shalabi. As we go to press there is news that she ended the hunger strike after 43 days when Israel agreed to free her from administrative detention—the cause of her protest—and to deport her to Gaza. Addameer, the Palestinian political prisoner rights group, pointed out that Gaza has inadequate medical facilities to handle her now severely weakened body, and that in any case, her home is in the West Bank.

Supporters also noted that, as in the recent case of Khader Adnan, who ended his hunger strike after 66 days, Shalabi was released from administrative detention without any charges ever being filed against her and no evidence being offered of the alleged "terrorist" actions that she

was supposedly jailed to prevent. This proves once again that administrative detention is simply a tool to intimidate political activists (a point made during protests against the Obama-approved indefinite detention bill recently passed in the U.S.).

Of particular note in the movement in solidarity with these hunger strikers have been statements from families of the martyrs of the H-Block hunger strikers in Ireland.

Meanwhile, at the end of March, Amnesty International issued a strong statement demanding the immediate release of jailed Bahraini human rights activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, who began a hunger strike on Feb. 8. Al-Khawaja is protesting the life sentence he received in June for allegedly plotting against the state. The sentence in fact was meted out by the regime, a key U.S. ally in the region, simply for his exposure of human rights abuses in the context of a growing move-

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We'll demand our right to protest within sight of the NATO Summit

By MARILYN LEVIN

Below are introductory remarks to the March 23-25 UNAC conference by UNAC co-cordinator Marilyn Levin.

When I started preparing for this talk, I thought back to July 2010, when UNAC began, and where we are today. It is astounding how much has changed over the past year and a half, although many of the challenges we face are the same.

We experience an Empire that is losing ground, and in its desperation to control world resources and maintain its power, engages in expanding brutal wars, draconian measures to cut spending on social needs, increases assaults on the environment, and institutes police-state measures to scapegoat vulnerable populations and stifle dissent.

But just think of what has happened for the good, when our side—in the millions—has fought back. There were the uprisings against despots, backed by the United States, in North Africa, which inspired the fightback by workers in the U.S., in Madison, Wis., Greece, and around the world, against austerity measures imposed by the rich. That, in turn, triggered the Occupy movement, directed at Wall Street, that spread like wildfire across the country, and brought a new vocabulary to the movement—*Mic Check!*

The Muslim and Arab communities have taken the lead in organizing to stand up to Islamophobia and



Marilyn Levin speaks from the floor during the discussion of the UNAC Action Plan.

the intensified repression of the War of Terror, raining down on us all. The Palestinians have inspired us by their unflagging determination to end over 60 years of ethnic cleansing and U.S.-backed Israeli oppression.

How has UNAC and the broader movement fared? Our first conference was the largest movement conference held since 9/11. Glen Ford summed it up this

way in *Black Agenda Report*, in a report titled: “An Anti-War Movement That Won’t Cave to Obama or Israel.” He wrote: “A renewed antiwar movement is under construction, one that breaks decisively from the Cult of Obama, demands an end to all U.S. aid to the Israeli ‘apartheid regime,’ and calls for ‘immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops, mercenaries and contractors from Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan, and the immediate closing of all U.S. bases in those countries.’”

A highlight of the conference was a focus on Islamophobia and the targeting of Muslims and Arabs—culminating in a march to a local mosque. This was the first time that an alliance was forged between antiwar and Muslim activists. From that, the Muslim Peace Coalition was organized and a new civil liberties group, the National Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms, was formed—and leaders and members of those organizations are here with us today.

Before the conference, there had not been national mass actions for a long period, and as a result, the antiwar movement was considered half dead. We, in UNAC, believe that, along with other types of actions, periodic, visible, mass actions in the streets are critical to building a powerful and inclusive movement. Mass actions bring new people into political action, demonstrate our power, and give heart to people around the globe that there is a movement demanding change in the United States.

We called for bicoastal demonstrations on April 9 and 10, 2011. Some 13,000 people marched last year in New York and San Francisco, and for the first time, there was a significant contingent of Muslims.

Today, UNAC is a well-established force on the left, the largest and most visible coalition in the country. We see our role as making the connections between the issues we all deal with as coming from the same source—the profit-making demands of the 1%. We are proud of what we have accomplished, and we are confident about our ability to build unity with all sectors of the antiwar, social justice, environmental, and international solidarity movements in united-front actions that will truly challenge imperialist power. Egypt taught us that things can change on a dime when the time is right and the mighty can fall.

This is an election year, when the lesser-evil Democrats tell us to leave the streets and campaign for the Democrats—or the evil Republicans will bring fascism down upon us! There is not a shred of evidence that this is true. The expanding wars and drone attacks, cuts in services, gifts to the obscenely wealthy, the trampling of our rights, assassinations of American citizens, and attempts to crush the fledgling Occupy movements, are horrendous bipartisan acts, happily led by the present big honcho Democrat in the White House.

Historically, the liberals, when in office, have been more dangerous, because many movement leaders mute their protests when Democrats are in power. When the powers-that-be hold the movement in their back pockets, they can readily move to the right without strong opposition.

Well, this year, we got a gift by the [Obama] Administration. They decided to bring the world’s economic and military rulers here, to plot their diabolical schemes. UNAC took the lead, in June 2011, in calling for national demonstrations in Chicago in May 2012,

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UNAC Action Plan — No to U.S./NATO wars! Civil liberties for all!

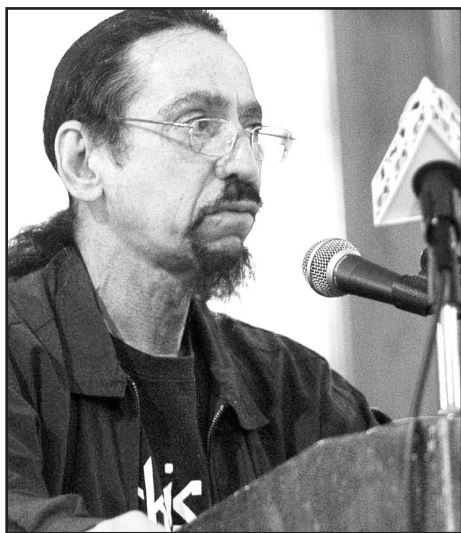
By GLEN FORD

*Below are remarks on UNAC’s draft Action Plan, presented by Glen Ford, executive editor of **Black Agenda Report**.*

Power to the people! Power to the 99% of the world! I thank UNAC for the honor of presenting the conference Action Plan. We have gathered at this convention to do two things. First, as you can see from the program, we are going to share analyses and educate ourselves about the wars, plans for wars, and dreams of war of the 1%.

Second, having armed ourselves with that knowledge, we are going to plot the way forward toward putting thousands of people back in the streets to directly and clearly and unequivocally oppose U.S. and NATO wars of aggression everywhere—from the Middle East and South Asia, from Africa to East Asia, and right here in the Americas. We are going to spend two major plenary sessions debating and voting up an Action Program for this coming spring and fall—that is, what we will actually *do* to fight U.S. and NATO wars in the coming months.

To facilitate that discussion and help us arrive, in this very short two days, at a reasonable plan of action, the Coordinat-



ing Committee of the United National Antiwar Coalition has drawn up a draft resolution. You should have picked it up at registration and you now have it before you. Later today, and then again tomorrow, we will discuss the general merits of this document, the merits of various amendments that have been proposed by you before and during this conference, and vote them up and down.

My job is to introduce this draft Action Plan to you. To explain a bit of the thinking behind it. To inspire you to take time

(Left) Glen Ford introduces draft Action Plan to UNAC conference.

between now and the first deliberative plenary session to look at it more closely.

The basic raison d’être of the Action Plan is spelled out in the first paragraph. We need such a plan, a plan to mobilize the largest numbers in mass actions to oppose U.S. military intervention because history tells us this is the only way forward. It says, “The history of all successful social movements demonstrates that the few, the one percent, *never* yield to the many unless the many are organized democratically, independent of the institutions of the status quo, united in struggle in massive numbers and confident in victory.”

Think about that for one minute. This is a plan organized around the idea that the 1% will not retreat from their wars of economic plunder unless we find a way to move the majority who oppose these horrors into the streets, again and again, in ever growing numbers, and in open direct protest against the whole of the institutions of the status quo.

This action plan does not just target some U.S. wars. UNAC does not view the multitudinous wars in which the U.S. is engaged as a menu to pick and choose

from: “I’ll oppose *that* war. I’ll let that one pass.” It does not target only the currently unpopular wars. It does not shy away from condemning the wars that remain acceptable to half of the population because the real reasons for them are obscured in the rhetoric of humanitarian intervention. It does not advocate that we avoid putting U.S. boots on the ground by mounting embargoes that bring economic devastation on the peoples of Iran.

The Action Plan does not condone war by other more sanitized means. It does not cheer on wars that minimize U.S. combat deaths by the use of robotic unmanned planes or the highly trained murder squads of the Joint Special Operations Command. It does not see war by mercenary as somehow less threatening to the peoples of the world and the U.S. than war by the economic draft. It does not give credit to Washington for removing brigades from one country in order to deploy them in the next.

The draft Action Plan says: “We, the 99 percent, demand that the government of the United States, the self-appointed cop of the world, the imperialist, neo-colonial one percent, who live and profit at the expense of the world’s people:

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... *UNAC to challenge NATO*

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Jeju Island to build a new naval port, is designed to pressure nations to look to the U.S. rather than China for trade alliances and economic partnerships. Abayomi Azikiwe, who brought greetings from “the embattled city of Detroit,” recounted the growth of the U.S.-backed multinational forces waging war in Somalia and the U.S. combat troops recently sent to Uganda. For the Black community, Azikiwe said, the relationship between the wars abroad and the war at home could not be more apparent.

Racism and Islamophobia

The degree to which racism continues to be central to U.S.-NATO war efforts was dramatized by the number of plenaries and workshops devoted to addressing this war at home on Black, Latino, and immigrant people in the United States. Dr. Khalilah Brown-Dean keynoted a lunchtime panel and highlighted the way in which mass incarceration and the criminalization of the Black community was being used to drive African Americans, one of the most antiwar sections of the U.S. population, out of political life. Bruce Dixon described the way that mass incarceration works to disenfranchise Black Georgians.

A workshop on connecting Black community struggles and the fight against war was one of the best-attended workshops at the conference. Another led by a board member of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights connected the massive new surveillance of border regions and immigrant communities in the U.S. with the same in Egypt and other parts of the world where millions of displaced peoples are victimized by the surveillance state. Another immigrant rights workshop focused on how best to integrate immigrant rights and union rights with the overall themes of the upcoming May Day “strike” called by the Occupy Movement.

Attendees also celebrated the heroic strike effort of the Longview, Wash., longshore workers by rising in a standing ovation for ILWU Local 21 rank-and-file striker Mike Fuqua. Local 21, by standing up to the union-busting corporation EGT, inspired and then helped to lead a West Coast outpouring of community solidarity for their militant labor fight back.

At least 175 participants at the conference hailed from the Muslim American community. Abhorrence at the use of Islamophobia and anti-immigrant prejudice to create war fever permeat-

ed every aspect of the conference. Plenary sessions and workshops featured activists and educators from a host of Muslim, South Asian, and civil liberties groups—including the Muslim Peace Coalition, Desis Rising Up and Moving, the Council on American Islamic Relations, the Muslim Solidarity Coalition, Project SALAM, and the National Coalition to Defend Civil Freedoms.

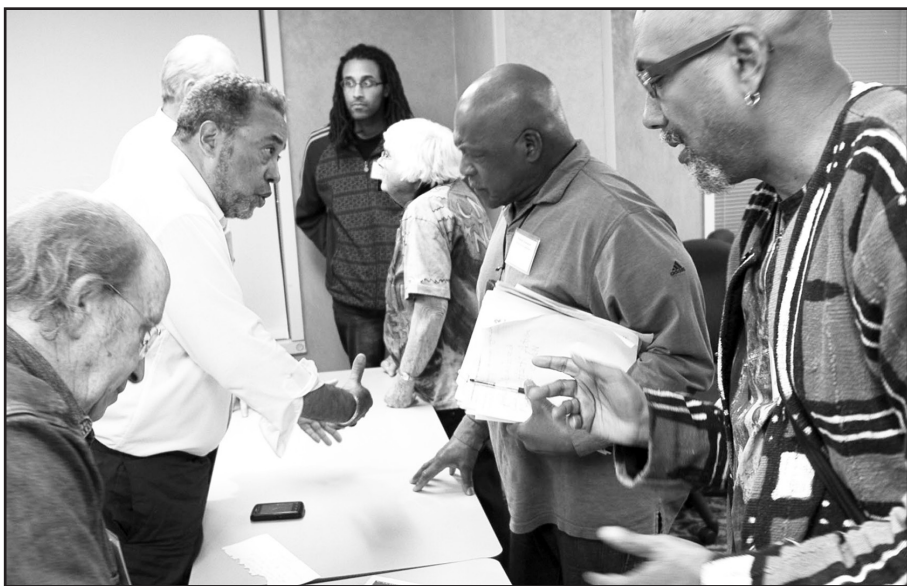
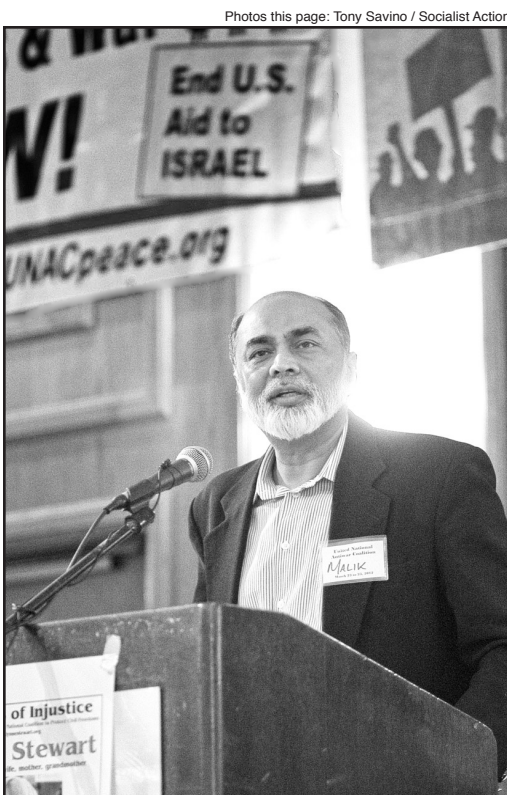
A special dinner plenary session introduced attendees to such leaders in defense of Muslim rights as Imam Talib Abdurrashid of the Muslim Leadership Council of Metropolitan New York, Cyrus McGoldrick of New York City CAIR, the victimized Guantanamo chaplain James Yee, and Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid—whose decision to found the Muslim Peace Coalition arose out of his desire to partner with the United National Antiwar Coalition in this fight.

Conference meetings with forces that included the Muslim Peace Coalition and Desis Rising Up and Moving developed a proposal, passed unanimously by the UNAC group as a whole, to hold a mass mobilization and demonstration in New York City on June 16 “to protest against the violation of the civil and human rights of all people, the undermining of the Bill

(Above photo) Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid, Muslim Peace Coalition, speaks on UNAC panel on Islamophobia.

(Right) Nellie Bailey, Occupy Harlem, speaks on conference panel, “War at Home on the Black Community.”

(Below) UNAC workshop on Haiti: Presenters (from left) are Marty Goodman and Ray LaForest.



of Rights, and the purposeful erosion of our civil liberties.”

How to defend Iranians?

The continued threats of outright war on Iran and the growing impact of the war by sanctions on Iran generated a passionate discussion about how best to organize on this front. In the past, the antiwar movement has been divided on this question.

Forces organized around the International Action Center argue that when a country is under attack by U.S. imperialism, all criticisms of the regime under fire by forces in the U.S. should be muted. Our fire, they say, should be exclusively on the U.S. government.

Others, including those who attended the conference from the Iranian feminist collective Raha and the new coalition Harvaar, argue that the U.S. antiwar movement, in order to avoid being used politically by the Ahmadinejad regime, should clearly express solidarity with those actively opposing that

regime inside Iran.

Both views were presented in talks at major plenary sessions, in workshops, and in resolutions. All participants in the discussion agreed on absolute opposition to U.S. threats of war against Iran. All sides were opposed to U.S. sanctions, embargoes, and assassination plots. After a sometimes heated debate, the conference voted to reaffirm UNAC’s traditional view that the best position for an antiwar coalition that aspires to mobilize the largest numbers is to support the right of the Iranian people to self-determination. The winning proposal stated that UNAC has full confidence that the Iranian people, freed from imperialist threats, can create a just society without the intervention of U.S. forces.

Such a position, ideally, will allow all political tendencies, no matter what their analysis of the Green movement in Iran, to unify in the streets and create larger actions than would be possible otherwise. As numerous speakers on the question explained, such a stance must be coupled with a commitment to an open, welcoming, and non-exclusionary coalition where all views can be freely expressed on speakers’ platforms, on signage, and on flyers.

While the ability of UNAC and other formations to mobilize really huge numbers against the U.S.-NATO wars underway is limited by election-year politics and by illusions that Washington is winding down its military engagement in the Middle East and South Asia, the Stamford conference went a long way toward creating the broad alliances that are indispensable to challenging the U.S. war machine. ■

... *Right to protest*

(continued from page 4)

and helped to initiate CANG8, the Chicago-based coalition, doing a terrific job in leading the fight with the city and Homeland Security for our constitutional right to protest. Some movement leaders, warned us not to demonstrate—“now is not the time; it’s an election year, you know.” [Chicago Mayor] Rahm Emanuel and Obama cockily thought they could intimidate us from demonstrating, but our organizing efforts and civil liberties campaigns for the right to protest gave them second thoughts, and we chased the G-8 out of Chicago to Camp David.

We will continue to demand our right to protest “within sight and sound” of the Summit, and we will win! Thousands of us will be in Chicago to say No! to the NATO/G-8 Agendas of War, Poverty, and Repression. And we’ll be seeing the U.S. leaders again in August and September at the Democratic and Republican Conventions.

At this gathering of a broad and diverse movement, we have an incredible program for you to enjoy. There are 50 amazing workshops reflecting all sectors of activism and analysis. The panels of leading thinkers and activists reflect the major concerns we face today.

Last night, we set the stage by taking stock of the

changing strategies of the 1%. We need to “Know thy Enemy” and what’s really motivating their actions—and as we heard, it ain’t freedom and democracy. This morning’s panel deals with our response to their military and economic plans.

Our lunchtime panel features the War at Home on the Black community, the most oppressed group in the country, and the most antiwar—and usually overlooked by the majority white left. We see the blatant racism that killed Trayvon Martin and the spontaneous response of sorrow and anger. We see the new Jim Crow of mass incarceration of Black youth, police brutality and surveillance, where over 40% of all prison inmates are African American and one-third of Black males born since 2001 will spend time in prison.

We see the crushing economic deprivation of a Black official unemployment rate of 13.6%, and a real rate that includes people who have given up is much, much higher. These conditions, in my opinion, will inevitably trigger a new civil rights struggle, and we all need to be part of it and stand together in solidarity.

Tonight’s panel will focus on the domestic repression targeting Muslims, the Bill of Rights, and the ceaseless war on workers and the organizations that represent their interests. Tomorrow, we will hear firsthand about the victims of repression, recognizing once again, that an attack on one is an attack on all.

Our lunch panel tomorrow features very different keynoters: Environmental activist Bill McKibben by

SKYPE, foreign affairs analyst Vijay Prashad, and economist Richard Wolff. We finish tomorrow afternoon with a NATO/G-8 protest organizing session to hear about the plans for Chicago.

The other thing that makes UNAC unique and vital is that we discuss and debate major issues, vote democratically on our public positions, and decide on a program of actions that will take us through the next year. We believe in the united front.

While we may have differences on some issues, even some hot button ones, where emotions run high, we can calmly have a high-level discussion, debate the issues, and then unite around the principled demands and actions we can all agree with, while maintaining our different positions through our individual organizations. This is what allows us to grow and makes us strong.

We invite all of you whose organizations are not yet affiliated with UNAC to join us. We urge you to be an active partner in carrying out the mandates of this conference. We have application forms at the UNAC table for organizations that want to join and be part of the organizing and decision-making process. We want and need to have a leadership body—our coordinating committee—that is representative, broad, and diverse and reflects the composition of the movements that make up the coalition.

Make your travel plans now for Chicago and don’t miss the major mass demonstration of 2012! ■

Fukushima nuclear disaster

Buddhika Weerasinghe / Getty Images



(Left) Anti-nuclear protesters in Osaka, on March 11 anniversary of Fukushima nuclear power station disaster.

One year later, grave dangers persist ...

By CHRISTINE FRANK

On March 11 last year, Honshu Island of Japan was hit by a magnitude 9.0 earthquake at a subduction zone, followed by a horrendous tsunami that knocked out the emergency diesel generators and cooling pumps at the Fukushima Dai'ichi nuclear power station. The natural disaster resulted in a triple meltdown, two hydrogen explosions, and exposed spent fuel rods in at least one of the cooling pools. Massive amounts of radiation were vented into the atmosphere and discharged into the ocean, making it 10 times worse than the 1986 Chernobyl catastrophe in the Soviet Union.

The entire northern island of Japan was thoroughly irradiated, along with North America as the plume wafted across the Northern Pacific. For weeks afterward, the Japanese people and the rest of the world stood by in trepidation as their government and TEPCO, the utility that owns the complex, struggled ineptly to get the situation under control. That has yet to happen since the facility is still leaking radiation into the environment, putting millions at extreme risk for prolonged exposure.

On the anniversary of the cataclysm, anti-nuclear actions occurred in Japan and around the globe, demanding an end to the nuclear nightmare.

The residents of Fukushima Province live in constant fear for their health, as do the 35 million living in Greater Tokyo, because neither the industry nor government have been forthcoming about the amounts of radiation to which they are being exposed. Their air, soil, water, and food are contaminated with dangerously high levels of radionuclides such as iodine, cesium, strontium, and plutonium.

In other words, the area is completely uninhabitable and should be abandoned, but to tell the truth would be to admit that there's trouble in Nuclear Paradise, so the subterfuge continues. Everyone is living under great stress and anxiety about their health and that of their children. More than half the population of traditionally conformist Japan no longer trusts the corrupt government. Many have taken to self-monitoring with equipment donated by other countries.

The authorities have basically abandoned the people of Fukushima. Tsunami debris is still piled in heaps. In desperation, many have taken to scraping off the radioactive topsoil from their yards themselves and dumping it in parks, woodlands, and streams.

Liability for reactor operators is only a small fraction of the actual damages. Those who were among

the 150,000 evacuated have lost everything—homes, possessions, livelihood, and communities—yet they have been denied adequate compensation (a mere \$13,045) to start over and rebuild their lives. Those who left voluntarily have received far less—a one-time payment of \$1043.

Therefore, TEPCO has largely managed to escape paying for the consequences of its misdeeds. To avoid decontamination costs, its attorneys are claiming that the radiation is now the problem of the landowners, not the company, so the financial burden for whatever remediation measures are taken will be born by taxpayers—which is always the case with environmental destruction by big corporations.

The health consequences

Health consequences will be devastating, with some experts predicting over a million cancers in future. These estimates are based on peer-reviewed epidemiological studies of the victims of the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl disasters. And before the cancers appear, other medical problems will show up.

After massive radiation releases, the initial health impacts appear in the reproductive and developmental stages with decreased fertility, fetal viability, and increased metabolic defects that will become generational. For example, infant mortality (measured from birth to one year) in eight Pacific Northwest cities spiked 35% after the Fukushima plume reached our West Coast, according to toxicologist Janette Sherman and epidemiologist Joseph Mangano.

It is the young who are most vulnerable because of their rapid cell division and growth. Radioactive cesium is absorbed in the muscles, acting as potassium does in cellular metabolism. As a result, children near Chernobyl suffer from mal-formed hearts. Due to exposure to Iodine 131, one-third of Fukushima children tested *already* have lumps in their thyroids. Many parents are still waiting to have their kids tested.

Last year, the Japanese government cynically raised the acceptable level of radiation exposure to 20 milliSieverts (mSV) per year (in U.S. measurements, 2 REM) for all members of the population regardless of gender or age, claiming it was safe. This amounts to a one in 500 risk of cancer for the general population. Everyone will receive these high doses for every year they are in the radiation zone. Consequently, the effects are cumulative. However, children and women, compared to adult males, are at the highest risk. The cancer risk for young girls is five times as much as adult males, and one in 100 will get cancer.

In 2007, a worldwide study of 400,000 nuclear industry workers in 15 countries found a “significant association” between protracted, low-dose, ionizing radiation exposure and cancer. The average length of nuclear industry employment was 10.5 years with a total exposure of 19.4 mSV over that time span. The average yearly dose was *only* 1.95 mSV.

This is less than one-tenth of the “allowable” amount for Fukushima residents, who will be getting much more as long as the radioactivity persists in the environment. Radiation researchers have found that slow, low doses can cause even more harm than the fast, high ones, as in the case of the atomic bomb explosions.

Contamination of ecosystems

Not only are all the agricultural lands irradiated, but the forests as well. It is so extreme that when the male cedar flowers open this spring, their budding will unleash another wave of radioactive cesium into the environment. Populations of 14 bird species native to both Northern Japan and East Europe have experienced a decline two times higher in the Fukushima radiation zone than in Chernobyl's, pointing to the much greater severity of the more recent accident.

Due to favorable winds last year, about 20 percent of the fallout from the radioactive plume fell on the Japanese mainland, 78% into the Pacific Ocean and 2% on North America, particularly the Cascades region. However, cedar buds in California proved positive for two cesium isotopes last year.

With millions of gallons of radioactive coolant deliberately discharged into the sea, researchers have found fish and crustaceans near Fukushima containing 10,000 times levels deemed “safe” by the government, and micro-algae at 19,000 times those levels.

Last summer, scientists from Woodshole Oceanographic Institution, investigating four months of radioactive discharges, discovered cesium levels in the Pacific at 45 million times pre-accident levels, meaning the ocean was not diluting the radiation as authorities claimed it would. Although it has leveled off since the peak discharges, it is believed that radioactivity is still flowing from groundwater and coastal sediments into the sea. As a remediation effort, TEPCO has begun pouring tons of concrete from ships onto the seabed to retard the spread of previously dumped radionuclides, turning the marine ecosystem into an utterly lifeless parking lot.

The sea provides a vast pathway for the spread of radioactivity via powerful ocean currents. In addition, it bioaccumulates up each chain in the food web. Despite widespread ocean contamination, the Japanese fishing industry continues to take large catches from near shore and out in the open sea, as do other nations, and to export seafood.

To ensure that Japan can function at a “full-scale” economy, Secretary of State Clinton promised the prime minister that the U.S. would continue to support its enterprises and not reject contaminated products. Both Canada and the U.S. are accepting Japanese imports, and our governments conveniently halted all radiation monitoring last spring to keep the lines of commerce running smoothly as well as to maintain public ignorance of how much radioactivity is in the environment. There is also the concern for North American consumers of the radiation levels in our migratory fish, such as salmon and tuna.

The tsunami generated 25 million tons of debris, a good portion of which (a quarter to a third) was sucked out to sea at least 24 hours before the radiation releases from the nuclear power plant. The stuff has begun arriving on the Pacific Northwest Coast, cluttering beaches, creating navigation problems, and spreading plastics and other toxins an entire year ahead of the predictions. It is expected that some of it will join the Northern Pacific garbage gyre, where it will pollute the marine habitat for years.

The horrors of the Japanese nuclear disaster are due to decades of perpetuating the cruel myth of the “absolute safety” of nuclear power. The propaganda from both industry and one subservient government after

(continued on page 7)



Kyodo News / AP



Jay Directo / AFP / Getty Images

Contamination will last for generations ...

(continued from page 6)

the other was cranked out to get the Japanese people to accept the “peaceful use of the atom” after experiencing the devastation of the murderous atomic bomb blasts over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Consequently, just as with Big Oil and Big Pharma in the U.S., the nuclear industry has been allowed to write its own rules. In Japan, TEPCO executives, with a wink and a nod from corrupt agencies, chose to ignore 2000 years of earthquake evidence in the region, and then claimed that the magnitude 9.0 tremor and tsunami were “unanticipated” events. Both industry and government are guilty of collusion, lying to the public, incompetence, and criminal negligence.

The capitalist media and pro-nuke academics have chimed in, repeating *ad nauseum* that the radiation to which millions are exposed is no cause for alarm—when, in fact, there are no safe levels. *All* radiation is mutagenic and carcinogenic, and we are *all* exposed to background and medical radiation as well as that from the nuclear fuel cycle and weapons production. They have habitually lied about the dangers of atomic bomb fallout and the routine emissions of radioactive gasses and tritiated water from the daily operation of nuclear reactors.

They have also done their best to cover up the impacts of catastrophic accidents such as Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and now Fukushima. We are told, “Don’t worry, be happy,” but more and more people are no longer accepting the Big Lie and are getting fed up. Their frustration and disgust are expressed in the words of one Fukushima resident, Kouta Miyazaki, who said, “We’re being told to get radiated and drop dead.” This is no longer acceptable.

The Japanese archipelago is peppered with 54 nuclear reactors. All but two have been taken off line for various reasons. Ten were knocked out by the tsunami, six are on active faults, and some were shutdown for refueling at the time of the earthquake.

Towns must approve the restart of reactors, so the utility has tried to scare people, claiming there will be a power shortage, especially in the summer months, if nuclear facilities remain shut down. They’ve even tried to pack town meetings to swing the vote in favor of restarting. As a result, there have been big clashes between townsfolk and company representatives. The anti-nuclear movement in Japan now constitutes 20 percent of the population, with swelling petitions and protests, saying, “Enough!”

Another round of radioactive roulette

Despite all kinds of rhetoric about safety, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has not learned one lesson from the Fukushima debacle. It has been extending licenses on aging and decrepit reactors left and right, allowing them to expand their power outputs without, for what it’s worth, implementing a single new safety measure

beforehand. This is occurring while their spent-fuel pools are perilously overloaded and their dry-cask storage is filling up with no safe, long-term way to sequester the deadly rad-waste.

Twenty-three reactors in 16 locations have the defective GE Mark 1 design used at Fukushima Dai’ichi, and 27 are situated on active fault lines. The operators of Diablo Canyon in earthquake-prone California claim it will be safe from a tsunami because the plant stands 100 feet above sea level on the coast. But as nuclear engineer and whistleblower Arne Gundersen points out, this is part of the delusion of nuclear safety since the emergency cooling pumps—the ultimate heat sink—have to be at sea level to access the water, and it was the tsunami that destroyed the pumps at Fukushima.

Make no mistake, *all* reactors are vulnerable to seismic activity and accidents, whether they are due to natural disasters, human error, equipment failure, or a combination of all three.

As part of the so-called nuclear renaissance—justified with greenwash about climate change—the NRC has recently approved two nuclear reactors (the first since 1978) to be built in Georgia and backed up with federal loan guarantees at taxpayers’ expense. The facility will consist of two AP 1000 pressurized-water reactors built by Westinghouse-Toshiba, despite numerous objections from engineers and scientists over design flaws, including an easily corrodible containment vessel, and other major safety issues.

April 26 marks the anniversary of the Chernobyl reactor explosion, which irradiated the entire Northern Hemisphere. According to a Russian study published by the New York Academy of Sciences, that terrible

(Above) Philippine environmental activists protest at Japanese embassy in Manila, March 12.

(Left) Fukushima Dai’ichi Unit 3 reactor, one year after earthquake and tsunami.

calamity caused 985,000 deaths between 1986 and 2004, with more to come. The fuel is still fissile and the temporary concrete-and-steel covering is leaking.

Immediately following the accident, there were numerous stillbirths throughout Europe, and the people of Ukraine and Belarus have been plagued by male sterility, female infertility, and reproductive cancers, along with thyroid cancers and other health problems in their children. Biologists have observed dramatic declines in wildlife in the exclusion zone, with mutation rates and developmental abnormalities up and fertility and survival rates down. West European livestock, because of irradiated pasture, as well as wild game, are still unfit to consume. Certain species of wild mushrooms, very effective at absorbing radiation, are banned from being collected and sold in markets 26 years later.

For the sake of private profit, the big corporations are playing radioactive roulette with our lives. With 435 nuclear reactors worldwide, the industry claims that the risk of major accident is very low with the probability of a core meltdown being one in 250 years. Experience has shown that this is complete rubbish since a significant nuclear accident has occurred approximately once every decade since the dawn of the nuclear age. We don’t like the odds, and we say, “No More Nukes!”

Solution: Nuke-free renewable energy

There is an alternative to this specter that haunts humankind. We must stop listening to the Orwellian doublespeak and cooperating in our own destruction in a state of passive acceptance, either blissfully ignorant or gripped by constant uncertainty and fear.

We must free ourselves from dependence upon this insane form of electrical generation that the human genius is clearly unable to control. There is no need for it, not with clean, renewable energy that is *genuinely* carbon-neutral—unlike nukes, which produce greenhouse gases at every energy-intensive stage of the nuclear cycle.

Even the UN’s conservative IPCC issued a landmark study stating that “Renewable energy can power the world.” Locally generated and distributed wind, solar, and geothermal power can be achieved through a crash program funded by the war budget. Also, industry can be retooled and converted for the green production of the necessities of life, including organically grown food, which can also *feed* the world.

If we are to put and end to environmental devastation

and allow the deep wounds inflicted upon the planet’s ecosystems by capitalist exploitation and greed to heal, we must live in harmony with Mother Nature. It takes decades to decommission nuclear power plants.

In addition, global heating, due to the profligate burning of fossil fuels, is racing toward irreversible tipping points—so this great enterprise must begin immediately. It has to be done for the sake of humanity, Earth’s climate, and the other species with whom we humbly share this world.

Keeping in mind that the human economy is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Mother Nature, this will require a mode of production that puts ecological and human needs before private profits, one that is based on communal decision making and cooperative action. Therefore, an eco-socialist revolution is the only way forward with the toilers of the world—in factories and on farms—in the lead. The future is in the hands of workers and farmers, who have the collective power to grasp the reins of production and put an end to capitalist rape and plunder. — CHRISTINE FRANK

Kevin Cooper: A ‘Scapegoat’ on Death Row

By PATRICK O’CONNOR

Dave Siccardi / San Diego Union Tribune / AP

Investigative journalist Patrick O’Connor has written a new book, “Scapegoat: The Chino Hills Murders and the Framing of Kevin Cooper.” Below is the talk that O’Connor gave on a recent Northern California speaking tour.

“Scapegoat” is a book about a horrific murder case, painfully recounted. It is also about how justice can go astray. Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes corrupted law enforcement to frame an innocent person—corrupted investigators, corrupted crime lab personnel, corrupted medical examiners, and a district attorney’s office willing to prosecute a trumped-up case.

In showing how the sheriff’s office and the district attorney’s office of San Bernardino County framed Kevin Cooper for these horrendous murders and how the justice system has failed him at almost every turn in his long, drawn-out appeal process, “Scapegoat” examines the broken justice system in the United States. It presents a microcosm of that broken system—a system where far too often homicide detectives and district attorneys become blinded by their goal of closing cases, particularly when the case is so high-profile, and winning convictions rather than searching for justice for both the victims and the accused. The Kevin Cooper case is a prime example of justice gone begging at both the trial and appeal levels.

If it were not for a court-ordered moratorium on executions in California over the lethal injection controversy, Cooper—with no appeals pending—would have been executed by now. It is expected the moratorium will not be lifted until at least 2013.

Two days before the murders of Doug and Peggy Ryen, their 10-year-old daughter Jessica, and 11-year-old Christopher Hughes, Cooper escaped from a nearby prison and holed up in a vacant house 125 yards below the murdered family’s hilltop house. Two days after the San Bernardino sheriff’s department established that Cooper had hidden out there, it locked in on him as the lone assailant, despite numerous eyewitness reports that implicated three young white men as the perpetrators.

From that day forward, four days after the murders were discovered, the sheriff’s department discarded information that pointed at other perpetrators, destroyed evidence that exculpated Cooper, and planted or fabricated evidence that implicated him. Looking first at the discarded information that implicated other perpetrators:

- The only survivor of the attack, 8 1/2-year-old Josh Ryen, told ER personnel and a sheriff’s deputy that his assailants were three white men. Cooper is Black.

- Around midnight on the night of the murders, a couple, attempting to exit a driveway in their truck, saw three young white men driving rapidly down the only road that leads away from the Ryens’ house in a station wagon that was stolen from the murdered family.

- Shortly after that sighting, two women in a nearby bar saw two young white men, one wearing coveralls, with blood splatter on their faces and clothing.

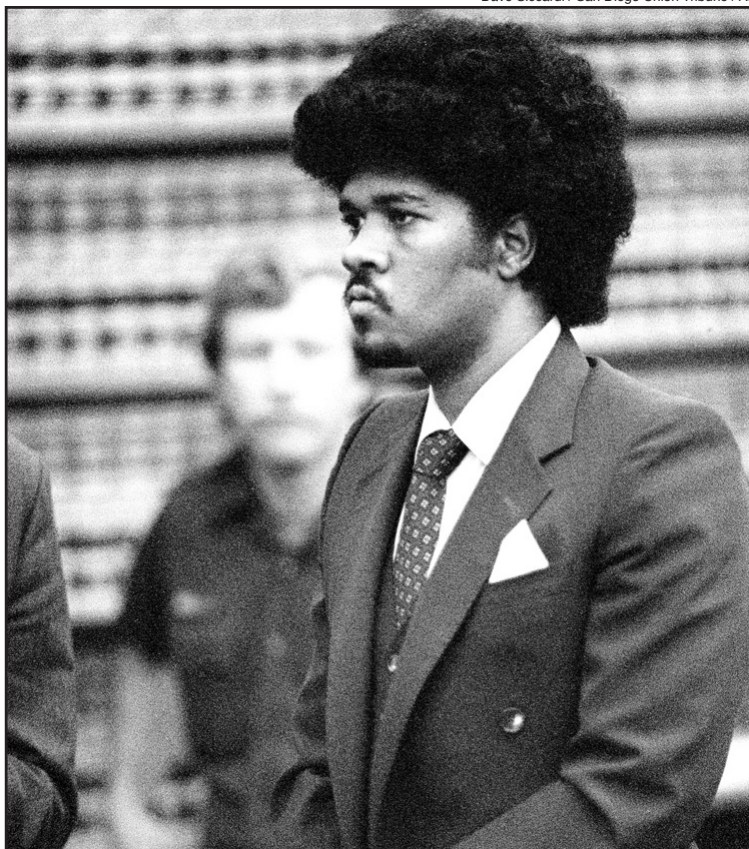
- Four days after the murders, another woman turned into the sheriff’s office bloody coveralls that her boyfriend, a convicted murderer, had left on the floor of her closet. The woman stated she had other information that implicated her boyfriend in the murders but wanted to be interviewed by homicide detectives. She would have told them that her boyfriend’s hatchet was missing and that he no longer had the tan T-shirt he wore the Saturday of the murders.

- The murders were committed with at least three, and probably four, weapons: a hatchet, an ice pick and one or two knives. The theory that one perpetrator could or would use three or four weapons was counterintuitive to the nth degree. At trial the prosecutor argued that Cooper was ambidextrous, which he is not.

Nor could one person control two able-bodied adults and three children running around the house, one of whom, Jessica, made it outside the house during the attack. The adult victims were each fit, 41-year-old chiropractors and both were mobile during the onslaught and fought hard for their lives, sustaining numerous defensive wounds to their hands and arms. Doug Ryen, a former MP in the United States Marine Corps, was 6 foot-one and 187 pounds. Peggy Ryen was 5 foot 9 and 145 pounds.

- The crime scene evidence, according to the medical examiner, showed that the mother was cradling the daughter before the mother died, which meant one of the attackers had brought Jessica back into the house. More than anything else, this meant there had to be more than one assailant because each parent kept a loaded gun in the master bedroom where the assault occurred.

- There was an uncommon viciousness to the attack



as though the killers meant not only to murder but to send a message of payback or retribution. The medical examiner counted 144 wounds on the four murder victims, including 28 fractures and two amputations. While Cooper’s trial was in progress, an inmate in a California prison told prison authorities and a San Bernardino County sheriff’s detective that his cellmate had confessed to the Chino Hills murders, stating it was an Aryan Brotherhood hit but the three killers had gone to the wrong house.

As for destroyed evidence:

- During Cooper’s preliminary hearing, the sheriff’s office destroyed the bloody coveralls. The sheriff’s office claimed it never conducted any tests of the coveralls and admitted it never sent homicide detectives around to interview the woman who had turned them in.

- The sheriff’s office also destroyed a bloody blue T-shirt discarded not far from the bar. Coupled with a tan T-shirt found the next day near the bar, the two bloody T-shirts were strong proof that at least two assailants had murdered the Ryens and Chris Hughes. Testing of the tan T-shirt showed the blood on it matched the blood profile of Doug Ryen and no one else.

Planting or fabricating evidence:

The prosecution’s evidentiary case against Cooper essentially consisted of three shoeprints; a tiny drop of blood collected at the Ryens’ house; a roll-your-own cigarette butt and some tobacco in the Ryens’ stolen station wagon.

- Pro-Keds Dude tennis shoes: At trial, the prosecution asserted that the footprints on a sheet from the Ryens’ master bedroom and on a Jacuzzi cover outside the master bedroom were made by a tennis shoe only available to institutions such as prisons and were not sold at retail. It did this despite Chino Prison Warden Midge Carroll’s informing one of the two lead detectives on the case that Pro-Keds Dude were not any sort of special-issued shoe and were available at retail outlets in California and through catalogue sales.

- A-41: The only serological link to Cooper at the crime scene was a small, single drop of blood at the far end of a hallway outside the Ryens’ master bedroom, near the living room, a few inches above the hallway carpeting. This isolated drop of blood was spotted by the acting head of the sheriff’s department crime lab who would be summarily dismissed—but not prosecuted—shortly after Cooper’s trial for stealing five pounds of heroin from the sheriff’s department property room to supply his own habit and to sell to drug dealers.

A criminologist in the crime lab admitted at trial he had to alter his initial reading of A-41 to get it to match Cooper’s blood characteristics and in doing the testing he exhausted the sample, thus denying the defense any independent testing of A-41.

- Cigarette butt: The initial two inventories deputies took of the interior of the Ryens’ stolen station wagon made no reference to the presence of a roll-your-own cigarette butt or loose tobacco in the car. A later inventory report—handwritten, undated, unsigned—would include both.

- Years later, in 2002, as Cooper was attempting to prove his innocence with DNA testing now afforded death-row inmates by the California legislature, his blood was now found on the tan T-shirt. To Cooper and his appeal attorneys, this showed rank tampering and

(Left) After a frame-up and botched trial, Kevin Cooper hears death sentence in a San Diego court, May 1985.

planting of evidence, a belief that was greatly reinforced when it was revealed in 2004 that the vial containing Cooper’s blood, taken from him when he was arrested and kept all those years in the crime lab, was discovered now to contain the DNA of at least one other person.

- The day before it was discovered that Cooper had hidden out in a vacant house below the Ryens’ house, two detectives searched every room in the vacant house at the request of one of the house’s owners. Nothing of evidentiary value was noted. The next day, a hatchet sheath and a bloody green button from a prison jacket were found in plain sight in the bedroom where Cooper had slept his last night. Under oath at Cooper’s trial, one of the detectives denied looking in the bedroom, but crime scene technicians lifted his fingerprints from the door of the closet where Cooper slept. It would be established at Cooper’s trial that when Cooper escaped he was wearing a brown jacket, not a green one.

Habeas corpus hearings

In 2004, Cooper came within hours of being executed before an extremely rare en banc ruling by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals stayed his execution and granted him a successive habeas corpus hearing in federal district court in San Diego. In particular, the Ninth ordered the district court to conduct DNA testing on the numerous blonde or light brown hairs found clutched in Jessica’s hand and other similar hairs deposited on other victims.

The Ninth also ordered EDTA testing to determine if Cooper’s blood had been planted on the tan T-shirt. EDTA is an anti-clotting substance used in blood labs to preserve blood in vials, to prevent it from coagulating and breaking down. If tests conducted showed high levels of EDTA on the blood attributed to Cooper on the T-shirt, it would establish tampering. If tampering were established, it would call into question all the forensic evidence the prosecution used to link Cooper to the crime scene. Cooper, after 19 years of asserting his innocence from death row, would be vindicated. At a minimum, the district court would have had to order a new trial or exonerate him outright.

Federal District Court Judge Marilyn Huff was not going to let that happen. She had turned down both of Cooper’s previous habeas appeals, finding evidence of his guilt “overwhelming.”

Over a period of a year, Judge Huff periodically held evidentiary hearings. As she did, she methodically thwarted Cooper’s attorneys at every turn, refusing to allow Cooper’s experts to participate in the EDTA testing. When the private lab the court had hired to test Cooper’s blood on the T-shirt found elevated levels of EDTA, Judge Huff allowed the lab to retract its findings three weeks later on the grounds the lab itself was contaminated with EDTA during the testing.

Judge Huff dispensed with any further EDTA testing by ruling that the testing of the tan T-shirt was not conclusive and that EDTA testing in general was an unproven science and of no value. She was wrong on both counts: both Cooper’s expert and the private lab found high levels of EDTA on the samples tested from the tan T-shirt, and EDTA testing is a proven science.

The extreme bias against Cooper that Judge Huff displayed with impunity throughout the evidentiary hearings was at its most obvious when it came to the DNA testing of the hair clutched in various victims’ hands ordered by the en banc Ninth Circuit. When a portion of those hairs had been tested in 2002, they were found to have no antigen roots, denoting that the hairs had fallen out rather than been yanked out during the assault. Those hairs, the tests showed, were either from the victims themselves or were dog hairs.

There could be no purpose in retesting those hairs. Over half or more of the hairs in the victims’ hands or adhered to their bodies had not been tested in 2002 and may well have contained antigen roots. If the mitochondrial testing of those hairs resulted in a DNA that excluded all the victims and Cooper, there would be proof positive that someone other than Cooper was a perpetrator. Judge Huff, incredibly, ordered testing only of the already tested hairs.

During the evidentiary hearings, Cooper’s lawyers inadvertently learned for the first time about the bloody blue T-shirt found not far from the bar. How could Judge Huff get around the implications of a bloody blue and a bloody tan T-shirt found one day apart near

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Some are already calling it the New *Liberal Democratic* Party. That's clearly premature. The New Democratic Party of Canada remains a working-class, labour-based, mass electoral party. One glance at the 4000-plus delegates at its March 23-24 convention in Toronto confirmed it. The insignia of labour unions, progressive causes, and social justice movements permeated the crowd.

But the election of Thomas Mulcair as NDP federal Leader, via a delay-plagued electronic poll, raises many white (not red) flags. Did the majority of those 60,000 "instant" and other New Democrats who e-voted for Leader surrender the party to the capitalist establishment, or did they just unwittingly grease the skids that way in a hasty bid for government in 2015?

(On May 2, 2011, the NDP made an historic breakthrough to capture 103 seats and become the Official Opposition, the second largest contingent in Parliament. The death of Leader Jack Layton last August necessitated the race to replace him.)

Mulcair, the Montreal MP who won the top post with 57.2 per cent of the votes cast, urged the party to move "to the center," but has ruled out an alliance with the big business Liberal Party—so far. Brian Topp, the veteran party strategist, placed second with 42.8 per cent on the final tally. Nathan Cullen, the British Columbia MP who promotes an electoral pact with the Liberals and Greens, disturbingly came third with 24.6 per cent on the third ballot.

So, if the consensus was to move more rapidly to the right, why did the election go four rounds? Because there is no such consensus. Because the party and labour bureaucracies were divided, chiefly between Topp, and the former CAW negotiator and current Toronto area MP Peggy Nash who garnered 16.8 per cent on the second ballot. The inability of the top brass to settle early on one candidate fragmented the old-line social democratic faction, much to the chagrin of party icon Ed Broadbent who publicly questioned Mulcair's commitment to "NDP values."

The fluently bilingual Mulcair tried to shore up his labour credentials by having UFCW National President Wayne Hanley nominate him. But the ex-Liberal Quebec cabinet minister harvested support extensively from a wider pool of veterans and neophytes who see Mulcair as the political pro who can take on Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper and win.

That proposition hinges, of course, on retaining most of the NDP's 58 seats in Quebec. Yet Mulcair's tenuous grip on the French-speaking nation relies on the Quebecois' latest gamble on Canadian federalism. It is a spontaneous version of the electoral "beau risque" of 1984, which temporarily benefited the Conservatives under Brian Mulroney. The moment there is a swing in Quebec towards national liberation and sovereignty, the staunchly federalist Mulcair, who is considerably to the right of the (resurging) Bloc Quebecois on foreign policy (especially on Israeli apartheid), will sink with the NDP like a stone.

An early signal of Mulcair's inclination to follow a Tony Blair-like path was his stated intent to remove "democratic socialism" from the preamble to the party constitution. The federal NDP executive, over which Nash

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

Whither Mulcair and the NDP?



Tyler Anderson / National Post

(Left) New Democratic Party Leader Thomas Mulcair.

cialist Caucus to keep "socialism" in the party's constitution. She advocates the creation of a public corporation to provide generic medical drugs. She cited Manitoba's practice of no public funding for Catholic or any religious schools as a model for Canada.

Ashton has been willing to rock the boat. She challenged an NDP incumbent MP in 2005 who opposed equal marriage rights for same-sex couples. Niki won the nomination, and was elected MP in 2008, and again in 2011. The NDP Socialist Caucus endorsement of her can be seen at www.ndpsocialists.ca.

Sadly, Niki Ashton received only 5.7 per cent of the votes on the first ballot. How much better would she have done, indeed what impact would a properly funded So-

cialist Caucus candidate for Leader have had, if more of the radical left outside the party joined the struggle?

On the convention floor, where for the first time in CCF-NDP history there was no policy debate or discussion, it took a cyber attack that disrupted voting for hours to highlight a serious flaw in the One Member One Vote mechanism. It isolates voters and it invites e-mischief on a grand scale. Still, there is an even more compelling reason to dump OMOV. It is the need to raise the level of political discourse, and to give some substance to party membership and to meaningful participation in policy direction. That's why the Socialist Caucus campaigns for a return to delegated conventions, where delegates elected by active NDP members at riding association, youth club, or affiliated union meetings gather to debate resolutions proposed by grassroots organizations.

Less than 50 per cent of the current 131,000 members voted for a new Leader, and one can only guess at how many were *more* influenced by the commercial media in making their choice, rather than by any knowledge of, or commitment to working-class principles.

Undemocratic obstacles proliferated in the period preceding the vote. To run for Leader a candidate had to pay \$15,000 to register, plus turn over 40 per cent of all campaign contributions to party headquarters. No serious campaign could get off the ground for less than \$100,000. No group in the NDP could have a display booth at the convention without paying \$1500 for the privilege.

Any member who paid up to \$400 for a delegate's badge could attend the convention in Toronto—where there was no microphone, no policy debate, and no voting on issues on the floor. Not counting travel, housing and food, that's a rather pricey admission just to be able to wave a sign or bang a drum.

So, what is really needed, instead? Keep in mind that this is the fourth year of the global Great Recession. Crippling austerity measures, rising environmental havoc, and the growing threat of a widening war in the Middle East loom on the horizon. The NDP's current course, packed with band-aid solutions, is a prescription for disaster.

The need for a socialist alternative inside the NDP and the labour movement has never been more urgent. It will come, not with slick parliamentary maneuvers, but by winning more working people, youths, women, Quebecois, Acadians, aboriginal peoples, immigrants, LGBT folks, the poor, and the dispossessed to the party, and to socialist policies and action.

Solidarity knows no borders. So our fight for socialism must go beyond the polling booth, into the streets and workplaces. Socialists demand: Stop the capitalist austerity drive. No labour concessions. Organize the unorganized. For a massive public-works programme to provide jobs for all at union wages. Make big business pay for the crisis of their system. Nationalize the commanding heights of the economy under workers' and community control.

The NDP/NPD is still a labour party rooted in the working class. But it is under siege from the right. Its mass social base, anxious to get rid of Harper, is open to fighting capitalist austerity, and to considering a socialist alternative. To advance that alternative, class-struggle leadership is required.

Support for the Socialist Caucus at the NDP federal convention shows that a sharp turn to the left is possible. Even without the aid of a display table or a meeting room, SC activists distributed nearly 1600 copies of the SC magazine *Turn Left* to wide acclaim. They collected close to \$500 in donations to it. E-visits to the SC web-

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Toronto's 26th Annual Socialist May Day Celebration:

Fighting for the 99%

Speakers:

- Jorge Soberon Consul General of Cuba in Toronto.
- Magdalena Diaz activist with Occupy Toronto.
- John Clarke organizer for the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty.
- nchama miller Internat'l Council of Latin American and Caribbean Women of Canada - Latin@s .
- Farid Ayad National President of the Canadian Arab Federation.
- B.C. Holmes representing the Toronto Haiti Action Committee.
- Tyler Mackinnon chairperson, Youth for Socialist Action
- Barry Weisleder Federal Secretary, Socialist Action, and substitute teachers' organizer.
- M.C.: Elizabeth Bryce, federal Treasurer, NDP Socialist Caucus, and retired member of Toronto local, Canadian Union of Postal Workers

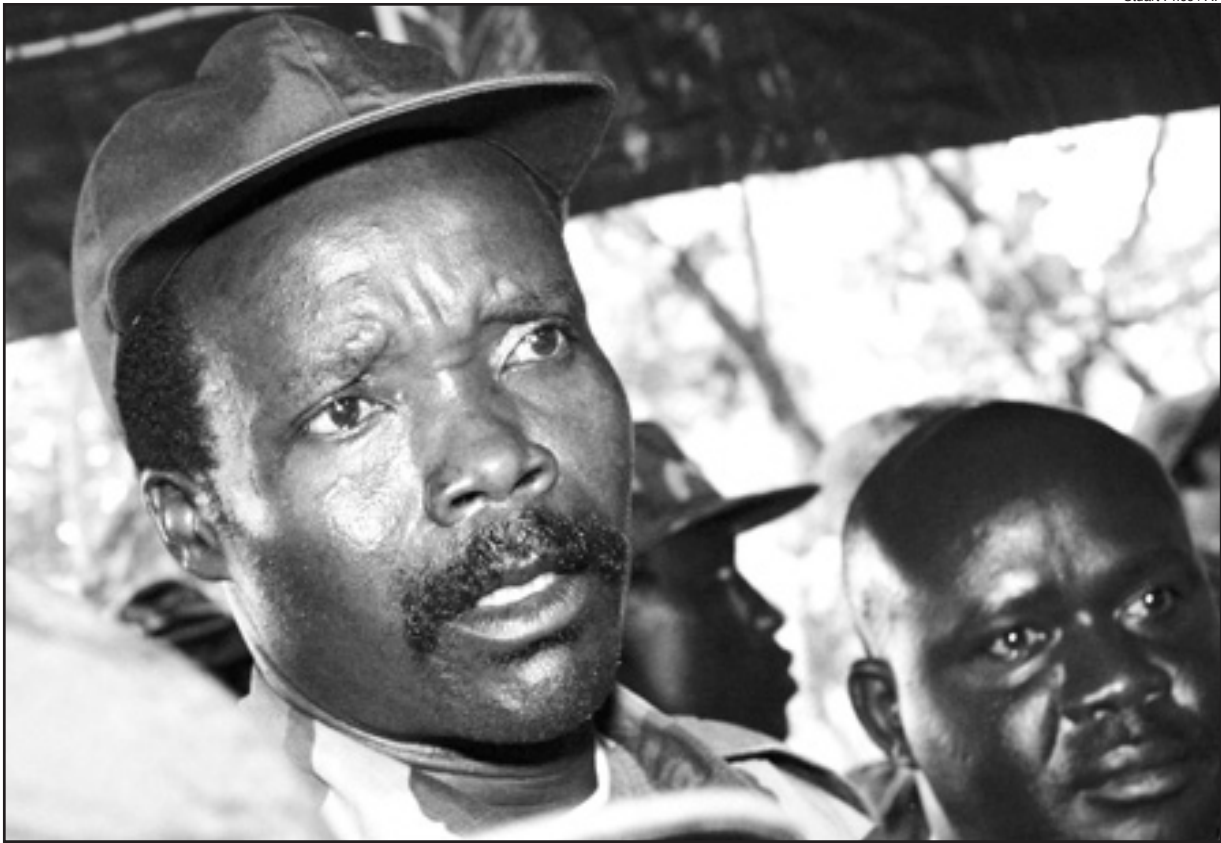
Celebrate with entertainers: Robin Banks, international jazz and blues recording artist; Robert Priest, poet, songwriter, and novelist; Steve-Paul & Maya, actor musicians; Glen Hornblast, folk singer on the social justice scene with a new CD titled "Once in a Blue Moon"; and Bill Heffernan, activist, teacher and song smith. Enjoy delicious food from the menu and drinks from the bar. For details, call the Free Times Cafe at 416-967-1078. At the event there will also be a literature and CDs display, a raffle, and surprises.

Saturday, April 28, 7 p.m.

Free Times Cafe, 320 College St., Toronto. Admission: \$10 waged, \$5 non-waged or PWYC
For more information, go to: www.socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com
E-mail: barryaw@rogers.com Phone: (416) 535-8779

sponsored by Socialist Action (Fourth Internationalists in the Canadian state)

Event endorsed by: Toronto Local - Canadian Union of Postal Workers, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, Toronto Haiti Action Committee, NDP Socialist Caucus, International Council of Latin American and Caribbean Women of Canada - Latin@s , Youth for Socialist Action, Toronto Forum on Cuba, Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association, Workers' Solidarity and Union Democracy Coalition, and the Canadian Arab Federation.



(Left) Joseph Kony, head of the Lord's Resistance Army, meets the press in 2006 in Southern Sudan.

'Kony 2012' provides cover for U.S. imperialism in Africa

By CHRISTOPHER TOWNE

Chances are that you have seen the film, "Kony 2012." Last month, the viral video attracted an unprecedented amount of attention in only a few days.

The subject of the film, The Lord's Resistance Army, is a central African guerrilla movement with a fanatic religious character and a personality cult surrounding the figure of Joseph Kony. The group brutalizes those who do not join the LRA, and the centerpiece of the video is the LRA's practice of conscripting child soldiers. The guerrillas also use girls as sex slaves, and children have been killed for attempting to escape. The horrifying realities of the LRA make this campaign seem, on the surface, very palatable.

Desiring an end to the violence, the film advocates a strategy to stop Kony by making him famous, claiming that the leader is virtually unknown. Kony is obviously well known in Uganda and the neighboring countries where his guerrilla forces have operated, so what are the filmmakers talking about?

The problem is that he is not well known amongst the "right people"—Americans. The goal, then, is to build up public support for U.S. intervention in central Africa. We are asked to willingly be naïve and pretend that we can't see the repercussions of U.S. interventions in South Asia and the Middle East.

In a letter to Obama, the charity behind the film, Invisible Children, calls for the president to be more active in the central African conflict and to help the terrible regimes in Uganda and its neighbors fight the LRA: "Your decision to deploy U.S. military advisors to the region in October of 2011 was a welcome measure. ... We implore you to engage directly with the Presidents of each of the four countries—in partnership with the African Union—to enhance regional cooperation, increase the numbers and capabilities of troops

deployed to LRA-affected areas."

The group has also called for Kony, and other LRA members under investigation, to be brought before the International Criminal Court (ICC). Interestingly, every single case being investigated or prosecuted by the ICC is focused on Africa. One wonders whether the ICC has heard of the sanctions in Iraq, which killed 1.5 million children, or the invasion and occupation that followed, which killed over 100,000 more. Both were initiated by the United States.

In the film, there is a moment, filled with hugs and cheering, when the campaign declares victory, having heard that Obama was going to supply Uganda's Museveni regime with 100 military advisors. Yoweri Museveni, who sealed his latest presidential victory in February 2011 after a campaign of bribery and voter intimidation, has ruled Uganda since 1986. His government invaded the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the 1990s, involving the military in the devastating Second Congo War, which killed 5.4 million people. Currently, there are around 5000 Ugandan troops propping up the phony, U.S.-friendly, Somali government.

Also—the minimum age of service in the Ugandan military is 13. The government that Invisible Children and the Obama administration entrust to rid Uganda of child soldiers has a military that is itself comprised of child soldiers. And it is, like the LRA, accused of using rape as a weapon. Why does this charity, along with the Obama administration, deride one but not the other?

The timing of the campaign by Invisible Children and the U.S. government is very odd. The vast majority of Ugandans believe that, for the last few years, they have been living through a relative period of peace. The conflict has subsided, and it is likely that Kony has left Uganda. Why does the U.S. feel the need to militarily

intervene now? And why are charities ostensibly committed to "peace" pushing for military intervention?

The whole scene is reminiscent of the Save Darfur campaign, which stepped into the picture once the violence had subsided and the worst of the Sudanese military and "janjaweed" paramilitary killings had already passed. Choosing to ignore what U.S. invasions looked like in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Save Darfur campaign pushed for imperialist intervention in western Sudan. Rallies were held, with banners demanding, "Out of Iraq, Into Darfur!" The Save Darfur website included videos of presidential hopefuls, who all took the chance to criticize China's role in Africa as a major contributor to the violence.

If we go back even further we can see how this is eerily reminiscent of an even older "humanitarian" campaign. King Leopold's colonization of the Congo was preceded by an international propaganda project telling the world that Belgium would save the Congolese from Arab slave-traders. In subsequent years, and under cover of this propaganda, the Belgians killed perhaps 13 million people and enslaved a huge portion of the population. (This story is eloquently told by Adam Hothschild in his book, "King Leopold's Ghost.")

Yesterday we were asked to accept the narrative that the West was saving Africa from the Arabs. Today we have an equally absurd narrative to justify neocolonialism: the West has to rescue Africa from the Chinese!

In April 2011, shortly after the latest sham election of Yoweri Museveni, Ugandan workers and students took to the streets. While the president spent the Ugandan people's money on military equipment and celebrations for his inauguration, the price of fuel had risen dramatically and, with it, the price of basic household necessities like rice and cooking oil. The people were demanding that the government intervene, and take some of this burden off of them. Yes, this is the very radical notion that has been so popular lately—that the government's job is not to preserve the extreme luxury of a small minority but to act in the interests of the 99%.

The protests grew to be massive, with many speculating that Uganda would be the next Tunisia or Egypt. And though Museveni is still in power, we have already seen how quickly this can change.

Central Africa is the source of many rare earth metals necessary for the high-tech and electronics industries. Importantly, the DRC has a majority of the world's coltan, used for energy storage in cell phones, tablets, computers, and video game consoles. The coltan reserves in DRC have yet to be fully developed, a point of great interest for international capital.

The Obama administration wants to prevent one of two scenarios: China can continue to benefit from Africa's resources at the expense of U.S. claims, or worse, an independent movement could arise in an African country that overthrows capitalism and institutes workers' control over those resources.

Groups like Invisible Children are vital in providing cover to U.S. imperialism in Africa. When our friends and fellow activists talk about "Kony 2012," we have to counter the propaganda. There is no such thing as "humanitarian" imperialism! A simple glance at the disasters in Haiti and Libya should be enough to prove this.

A U.S. military presence in Africa, through the expansion of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), is the greatest threat to the hopes and dreams of all African people. The Ugandan people need our solidarity in the face of this growing threat, so that when they rise up again, Museveni won't be aided by the might of the U.S. military. U.S. hands off of Africa! ■

... UNAC Action Plan

(continued from page 4)

- End all wars, interventions, targeted assassinations and occupations! U.S. out of NATO and all other interventionist military alliances!

- No to targeted assassinations around the world and no to violent attacks in countries where the U.S. is waging undeclared wars!

- Bring all the troops, mercenaries, war contractors, death squads, and military advisors home from Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Pakistan, Colombia, Haiti, Cuba/Guantanamo, and Korea!

- U.S. troops out of the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe!

- No to the U.S.-backed military coup in Honduras! No to the 1000 U.S. military bases around the world! End U.S. aid to Israel!

- End all threats of war and interven-

tion against Iran and Syria! No to sanctions, blockades, and embargoes!

Who are our allies? Who will help us build such a movement? The Action Plan presumes that we can win the vast majority to such a movement. That we can win the 99% to understand and mobilize against these wars by allying with the fight of the 99% for economic equality and championing the call to Bring the War Dollars Home for housing, education, health, and jobs.

By standing with the unions, and when the U.S. Coast Guard is used to try to bust their strikes—as was done against the Longview longshoremen. By allying with the fight of the Black, Latino, Native American, and immigrant communities in their struggle against racist attacks like the one that killed Trayvon Martin.

With the struggle against the policy of

criminalizing the African American community through the practice of mass incarceration and stop and frisk. By standing with our immigrant brothers and sisters when they are victimized by ICE and Homeland Security. The Action Plan says that we must integrate the fight against the wars abroad with the wars at home on the 99%, and with special attention to the most victimized among them.

At the heart of the Action Plan is the recognition that the carrying out of unpopular wars requires the powers that be to rush to suppress civil liberties on every front. We will not be able to build an effective movement unless we are in the forefront of the fight for civil liberties for all. We cannot sit by while our Muslim brothers and sisters are the target of special mass surveillance and harassment programs, while they are swept up through entrapment, frame-ups, and lies into special prisons based on the perverse policy of preemptive prosecution.

We must fight the growing militariza-

tion of our cities, the massive police assaults on the Occupy movement, the use of grand juries to silence antiwar and solidarity activists. In Chicago, we must win the struggle to reassert our right to protest war and austerity. With such a program we can help bring together natural allies to build a stronger and more effective movement to end U.S. wars.

Part II of the Action Program prioritizes the upcoming actions to which UNAC as a broad antiwar coalition should throw its support.

Foremost among the actions at the center of our conference this weekend are the May 20 permitted march against the NATO summit in Chicago, a people's summit held May 12-13 to build that march, and the ongoing and critical struggle to establish our right to protest war and austerity without fear of repression. There are a number of other actions proposed in this section, and I urge you to consider them before our voting plenary begins this afternoon. ■

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

“Coriolanus,” directed by Ralph Fiennes, from William Shakespeare’s play, screenplay by John Logan. Starring Ralph Fiennes, Vanessa Redgrave, and Gerard Butler.

Ralph Fiennes’s “Coriolanus,” often billed as Shakespeare’s political tragedy, is set in contemporary times. Though Shakespeare wrote the play over 400 years ago, its themes of military and state power, familial loyalty, and betrayal resonate today. The film was shot in Belgrade, Serbia, and in Montenegro using hand-held cameras on the desolate exterior scenes, in bleak greys and blues.

It was necessary for screenwriter John Logan to edit some of the speeches, but he did it judiciously. He did not alter Shakespeare’s blank verse in iambic pentameter, which the Bard had perfected in later plays such as “Coriolanus.” Once Shakespeare had mastered traditional blank verse, he began to vary its flow—a technique that released the new power and flexibility of the poetry heard in this film.

Thus Logan’s script gave the actors lines with startling impact, so that they sounded modern, as when one character accuses another of “breaking his oath and resolution like/A twist of rotten silk.” These exchanges come off as if they were written for an incisively worked, contemporary thriller.

The film was so intense and gripping that it didn’t feel like it was almost two-hours long.

The film opens with a close-up of a knife being sharpened on a whetstone—a hint that it will be employed later on to make a statement, and we are not disappointed. Coriolanus (Ralph Fiennes) is the name given to Roman war hero Caius Martius in honor of the city he and his troops conquered from the Volcians. His military rivals were headed by his equal and nemesis, Tullus Audi-



us, masterfully played by Gerard Butler. (Butler had suffered a run of disastrous films and romantic comedies; this role redeems him.)

During the battle, Coriolanus ends up with a Volcian soldier’s blood streaking down his shaved head. He continues slashing his enemies, the blood now serving as the mark of a warrior.

Coriolanus is a complex character who shies away from public accolades. Upon his victorious return to Rome, the cunning politician Menenius (noted Shakespearean actor Brian Cox) had arranged a hero’s welcome. Coriolanus disdains giving a speech, much to the dismay of his mother, Volumnia, played to perfection by the great actor and political activist, Vanessa Redgrave, and his wife, Virgilia (Jessica Chastain), who has little to do but stand by her man.

His pre-adolescent son, Young Martius (Harry Fenn), is his father’s clone down to the smart military uniform and wooden sword.

(From left) John Kani, Vanessa Redgrave, Ralph Fiennes, Jessica Chastain, and Henry Fenn in Shakespeare’s “Coriolanus.”

Not everyone is thrilled by his return. He has to face members of his own council who don’t agree with his tyrannical methods as well as mobs of citizen protesters led by Tamara (Lubna Azabal) and Cassius (Ashraf Barhom) who call him out for freezing their grain allocations and cutting back public services. These scenes could have come directly from any of today’s Occupy Movements or Arab Spring protests.

The patrician establishment insists that Coriolanus accept the role of head of state, while his political detractors vehemently oppose him. Reluctantly, Coriolanus accepts the post. The power of the people is such, however, that they succeed in shouting him down, demanding he leave—banished from Rome. Would that such measures could

happen here, rather than officials arresting and imprisoning people for expressing their First Amendment rights!

Scenes show the banished Coriolanus as a wandering back-pack-wearing homeless person; his only companion is a walking stick. He goes unshaven and grows his hair long, trekking through bleak, wintry villages, seemingly unoccupied except for roaming packs of dogs.

Planning his revenge on Rome and its people, he shows up in Aufidius’s compound. He quickly convinces the Volcian commander to take him on, despite the fact that they are sworn enemies, so together they can conquer the people of the city that banished him.

But the scheme falls apart because Coriolanus is, after all, his mother’s son. He does what she wants: save her people from suffering the horrors of war. That Aufidius has been betrayed doesn’t fare well for Coriolanus. The knife we saw in the opening scene is put to use.

Coriolanus is not one of Shakespeare’s sympathetic heroes. One literary critic refers to him as “an astonishingly cheerless snob, a schoolboy crazed with a particular notion of privilege and possessed of a demented ideal of authority.” He could have been referring to any one of our U.S. presidents and the influential rich and powerful in and out of the military; certainly the arrogant Dick Cheney comes to mind. Especially since Sept. 11, 2001, White House administrations—including the current one—have ramped up their imperialistic goals with little heed to the disastrous effects. But they, like Coriolanus, must confront an increasingly enraged people. ■



... Protests, hunger strikes

(continued from page 3)

ment in the country against dictatorship and discrimination against its Shia citizens.

Al-Khawaja has suffered prolonged torture while in detention, and had his jaw broken in four places when police and masked men burst into his daughter’s home and seized him.

A little more than a month after his hunger strike began, hundreds of thousands of protesters marched in Bahrain against the regime. In a country of one and a quarter million, this may have been the greatest per capita turnout of any rally in the world’s history.

Bahrain is home to the U.S. Fifth Naval Fleet, the base for all naval forces positioned to be ready for action against any country in the Middle East and East Africa. The fleet is also responsible for patrolling the Strait of Hormuz, and its commanders have repeatedly threatened Iran should the latter close the straits in retaliation for a possible attack by the U.S. and/or Israel.

A rally in solidarity with Al-Khawaja was held in Bahrain on March 31, but shortly before its scheduled starting time authorities arrested Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, the country’s foremost anti-repression organization.

As has been the case in each protest—which have been occurring every week, often more frequently, since the uprising began a year ago—security forces attacked marchers with tear gas, rubber bullets, sound grenades, lead pellet shotguns, and live ammunition. A Bahraini journalist was killed.

Supporters of the opposition are asking for calls to be made on behalf of Mr. Al-Khawaja and other victims of repression. See http://www.bahrainhrd.org/act_now.html for ways to participate. ■

(Photo) An Indian Shiite child at Mumbai protest against repression of demonstrations in Bahrain, March 25, 2011.

... Scapegoat

(continued from page 8)

the bar? In addition, the prosecution’s not disclosing the blue T-shirt to the defense was a major *Brady* violation that was so exculpatory to Cooper on its own that it mandated a new trial.

Judge Huff’s way around this inconvenient hurdle was to find that the blue T-shirt was in reality the tan T-shirt, even though the blue shirt was found the day before the tan shirt in a different location from the bar and the woman who found the bloody blue shirt testified at the hearing that the shirt she found was blue.

Judge Huff’s handling of Cooper’s habeas proceedings led Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge William Fletcher to write, “There’s no way to say this politely. The district court failed to provide Cooper a fair hearing and flouted our direction to perform the two tests.”

At Gonzaga University School of Law on April 12, 2010, Judge Fletcher delivered a

lecture on the subject of the death penalty, holding that the problems with the administration of it are widespread and endemic rather than merely regional or local. To illustrate he cited the Kevin Cooper case, stating, “The case I am about to describe is horrible in many ways. The murders were horrible. Kevin Cooper, the man now sitting on death row, may well be—and in my view probably is—innocent. And he is on death row because the San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department framed him.”

Judge Fletcher, a Rhodes Scholar who attended Oxford University with Bill Clinton, said what happened in the Cooper case “is a familiar story. It is by no means the usual story. But it happens often enough to be familiar. The police are under heavy pressure to solve a high profile crime. They know, or think they know, who did the crime. And they plant evidence to help their case along.”

As a result, Kevin Cooper has now spent half of his life on death row for a crime he had nothing to do with. He is, in a word, a scapegoat. ■

... Mulcair

(continued from page 9)

site increased ten-fold in the week leading up to the convention—so much so that the electronic band width of the site had to be increased. Scores of NDPers joined the SC via the internet and at the convention. News media covered and carried the SC message to millions. Additionally, supporters of Socialist Action received nearly \$200 in sales of SA newspapers and buttons.

Without winning a majority of the 4.5 million who voted NDP/NPD on May 2, 2011, there will be no socialism, and all the past labour, social, and environmental gains of the past may be lost. Winning that majority is the goal to which

the NDP Socialist Caucus is dedicated.

With the accelerated shift to the right at its summit, the battle for the future of the NDP and its allied unions is ever more pressing. Mulcair will enjoy a grace period, but it won’t last forever.

The last time New Democrats elected a liberal as party leader, it was Bob Rae in Ontario in 1982. The 1990-95 Rae government nearly gutted the Ontario NDP. Today, there’s more at stake, and the rulers have less room for maneuver given the depth of the global capitalist crisis. The size and strength of the NDP socialist left will be critical in preventing a similar outcome at the federal level.

The struggle for a Workers’ Agenda in the unions and the NDP, where it matters most, continues. If you want to win, sooner than later, join us now. ■

JUSTICE NOW FOR TRAYVON MARTIN!



Haraz N. Ghanbari / AP



Julie Fletcher / AP

By JOHN LESLIE

Outrage at the murder of Trayvon Martin has sparked a wave of protests. Demonstrations numbering in the tens of thousands have been held in New York; 8,000 marched in Philadelphia, 3,000 in Seattle, and more in Chicago, Washington, DC, and Los Angeles. Demonstrations as large as 25,000 have been held in Sanford, Fla., where the crime took place. Miami high school students walked out of class. Hundreds of churches encouraged their congregations to wear hoodies to Sunday services.

The majority of the demonstrators have been young African Americans, many wearing “hoodie” sweatshirts and demanding “Justice for Trayvon!” The chant “I am Trayvon Martin!” is heard everywhere.

Protests have forced the Sanford police chief to “temporarily” step down and have impelled state and federal authorities to announce an investigation. President Obama, previously silent, made a statement of sympathy with Trayvon’s parents and said that if he had a son, he would “look like Trayvon.”

On Feb. 26, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old Black man, was confronted by an armed “town watch” vigilante, George Zimmerman. Trayvon was walking back to his father’s home from a nearby convenience store with an iced tea and a bag of Skittles. He had gone there during halftime of the NBA All-Star game.

Zimmerman, speaking on the phone with a 911 operator, reported seeing a “suspicious” person walking through the neighborhood. Ignoring instructions of the 911 operator to not approach Trayvon, Zimmerman continued to follow. Moments before fatally shooting Trayvon, according to witnesses, Zimmerman uttered the racist epithet, “fucking coons.” Witnesses heard Trayvon’s cries for help followed by gunshots.

When Sanford cops arrived they found Trayvon lying dead on the ground; Zimmerman claimed to have shot him in self-defense. No forensic evidence was gathered and no attempt was made to identify Trayvon, who was initially labeled a “John Doe.” Trayvon’s body was tested for alcohol and drugs, while Zimmerman was not similarly tested. Trayvon’s father made repeated calls to police about his missing son for 24 hours before he found out about the murder. The Sanford police were previously criticized for racial incidents; including the failure to arrest a police lieutenant’s son—for almost one month—for beating a Black homeless man.

Zimmerman was released shortly after the killing and has yet to be charged for any crime. His claim of self-defense was based on the so-called “Castle Doctrine,” which has expanded the definition of self-defense in a number of states. Previously, self-defense statutes required a person to attempt to retreat from a situation before using deadly force. Now, the law states that someone can “stand their ground” against an assailant.

The capitalist media have embarked on a campaign to vilify or discredit the image of Trayvon as a “good kid.” The purpose seems to be to take the wind out of the growing movement and to discourage possible white allies. They ask if Trayvon attacked Zimmerman and highlight Zimmerman’s claim that Trayvon broke his nose before he shot the teen.

The notion that Trayvon—outweighed by Zimmerman by more than 100 pounds and “armed” with a bag of Skit-

FIGHT BACK AGAINST RACIST LYNCHINGS!

les—posed a threat to the shooter is ridiculous.

What about Zimmerman’s claim that his nose was broken? Anyone with a broken nose would have swelling and bruises, yet none are present in any photograph. It is also significant that the funeral director who prepared Trayvon’s body for burial released a statement that “we could see no physical signs like there had been a scuffle [or] there had been a fight. ... The hands ... I didn’t see any knuckles, bruises or what have you. And that is something we would have covered up if it would have been there.”

The media also attempt to smear Trayvon by pointing to the possibility that he might have smoked pot. Never mind that millions of people, white and Black, smoke pot without displaying so-called anti-social behavior! Possibly the worst slander is the picture posted on the ultra-right *Drudge Report* purporting to show Trayvon flashing gang signs and allegedly taken from the young man’s Facebook page. The picture is not of Trayvon; it’s a complete fabrication.

Clearly, the life of a young Black or Latino is not worth much in this racist society. The extrajudicial murder of young Blacks or Latinos by cops and vigilantes is routine and hardly deemed worthy of comment by the capitalist media. These killings echo the lynchings of the Jim Crow South and serve the same purpose—to keep “up-pity” Blacks and the oppressed in line and under control.

Racist curfew laws, “stop and frisk” programs, and the “war on drugs” are all designed to demonize and criminalize young people of color. The mass incarceration of Black and Latin youth is another symptom of this oppressive set-up. Millions are imprisoned, mostly for non-violent offenses. In fact, more Black people are in prison, jail, or on probation or parole, than were enslaved in the 1850s.

The racist functioning of the criminal “justice” system helps reinforce the reactionary narrative that young Blacks are criminal by nature and ignores the fact that institutional racism ensures that oppressed nationalities have fewer opportunities for a good education or well-paying jobs. Young Blacks are disproportionately more likely to be unemployed or to drop out of school. Death rows across the U.S. house Blacks and Latino/as in excessive proportions.

This does not illustrate the “inherent” criminality of the oppressed and exploited but rather the systemic, institutionalized racism that is a prop to the U.S. capitalist system. The fact that cops failed to charge Zimmerman, while an outrage, is no surprise. For cops, the death of a young Black man is routine.

Racist violence is not used against only Black youth. Over the weekend of March 24, an Iraqi immigrant woman, Shaima Alawadi, was brutally beaten to death in California by someone who left a note referring to this inno-

(Above) Many thousands join protest in Sanford, Fla., on March 22.

(Left) Washington, DC, rally for Trayvon, March 24.

cent woman as a “terrorist.” People building on the Trayvon Martin mobilizations have started a Million Hijabis for Shaima Alawadi campaign. Organizers in the Muslim community are making common cause with the Trayvon Martin movement as well as with campaigns against stop and frisk programs.

Moreover, violent vigilante groups along the U.S.-Mexico border, like the far-right Minutemen, target immigrants from Latin America daily. Politicians of both parties aim their rhetoric at the undocumented.

These crimes are abetted by government policies of surveillance and entrapment of Muslims, curfews, and stop and frisk programs aimed at young Blacks, and the increased scapegoating of undocumented workers. All of these measures create an atmosphere of paranoia and hate, widening divisions within the working class and hampering the building of a united movement against our oppressors.

Obama’s crocodile tears for Trayvon should not fool anyone. The first Black president has done little or nothing to address the social and economic crisis of Black America. Nothing has been done to address the mass incarceration of Black youth or the mass unemployment in the community.

Obama has done nothing to revitalize the education system. Instead, he has slashed budgets, which has resulted in thousands of laid-off teachers, and endorsed privatization schemes that will only damage public education. Obama remained silent when the state of Georgia executed Troy Davis, an innocent man. His “Justice” Department has done nothing to deal with the unjust and unconstitutional treatment of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Obama’s statement of sympathy was a cynical ploy to win Black votes in the election and had nothing to do with winning real justice. Like his predecessor, Obama cares little for the lives and needs of Black workers and youth and serves the interests of the richest one percent.

How do we win justice for Trayvon?

It is critical that mass mobilizations in the streets continue to put pressure on the system to arrest and try Zimmerman for this murder. We cannot have illusions that Obama, the Democratic Party, and Obama apologists like Al Sharpton are real allies in this struggle. Their rhetoric is aimed to defuse the situation and channel popular anger into safe, legal channels.

Nor can we put our faith in capitalist courts, cops, or the so-called justice system. The oppressed and exploited have in their hands the power to make real change; to do that, they need to mobilize independently of the parties and organizations of the ruling class.

Socialist Action says: Justice for Trayvon Martin! Arrest the murderer Zimmerman now! Repeal all reactionary Castle Doctrine laws now! Fire the incompetent racist cops who failed to investigate this crime! Stop the mass incarceration of Black and Latino/a youth! Jobs at living wages; free education and health care for all! ■