

Hundreds protest racist, sexist atrocity in West Virginia

By Dante Strobino

In the biggest expression of anti-racist outrage since the Sept. 20 Jena 6 rally, nearly a thousand people from all over the country gathered in Charleston, W.Va., the state capital, on Nov. 3 to support Megan Williams, a 20-year-old Black woman who survived a vicious, racist gang raping, torture and week-long kidnapping.

The marchers were demanding U.S. Attorney Charles Miller and Logan County Prosecutor Brian Abraham add hate-crime charges to the sexual assault and kidnapping charges against three white men and three white women from the county.

The march was organized by the West Virginia chapter of Black Lawyers for Justice and was endorsed by hundreds of Black organizations from across the country, including the Millions More Movement, National Action Network, The Ordinary People Society (TOPS), Peoples Organization for Progress, New Black Panther Party, Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault, Southern Christian Leadership Council, ex-Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney and many others.

In a press release for the event, the organizers were very clear on the connection that this case has with other racist attacks, including rampant police killings and brutality all over the U.S. Besides the Jena 6 case in Louisiana, the press release raised cases involving noose hangings at the University of Maryland, College Park; in Pittsburgh targeting Black workers; in Long Island this past October; and in public schools all over North Carolina.

On Oct. 3 white students at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., reportedly held a Black student hostage for over an hour and repeatedly wrote "KKK" all over his body with markers.

Seen in this national context of racist attacks, the gruesome details of the Williams incident can hardly be imagined outside the legal framework of a "hate crime."

Prosecutors said, "Every time they stabbed her, they called her 'n—r.'" Carmen Williams told the Charleston Gazette regarding her daughter's ordeal, "She wakes up in the middle of the night screaming, 'Mommy.' What's really, really bad is, we don't know everything they did to her. She is crying all the time."

The suspects took turns beating, stabbing, choking and sexually abusing Williams, while continually threatening her



Megan Williams, survivor of racist torture and abuse, stands strong at rally between Malik Shabazz of Black Lawyers for Justice and her mother, Carmen Williams. Photo: Casandra Rice

with death, according to criminal complaints.

Many marchers not only made the connection between this case and other racist attacks, they also raised questions about the national scenario of women's oppression. In many rape cases, the survivors are so deeply traumatized that they never report the incident or come forward in public.

Megan Williams, however, even after her lawyers advised her and her family not to attend the march, proudly marched and rallied with her supporters. It was a stunning act of strength.

Given that only 3 percent of West Virginia residents are Black, this militant crowd was a sight for sore eyes. Marchers chanting "Black power!" and "Justice now!" proceeded down Kanawha Boulevard on their way to the Capitol building.

One marcher, Cassandra Rice, a student at Fairmont University in West Virginia, told Workers World, "As a white member of the West Virginia population, I had an obligation to be here to speak out against this type of hatred. [We have] to recognize everyday hatred that goes on in West Virginia that manifests in bigger events like what happened to Megan Williams. Everyday name-calling builds up to big events such as this."

More and more movements across the country are springing up to respond to these attacks. The people united will never be defeated!

Strobino is a member of the Raleigh chapter of the youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism-Stand Together). ■

Nepal revolutionaries call on mass support to end monarchy (continued from page 10)

its south. Only 10 percent of Nepal's population has access to electric power. More than 85 percent of the people live in rural areas without running water or basic sanitation.

Malnutrition is rampant among children and at least one-third of the population lives below the official poverty line. While literacy runs a little less than 50 percent, it is only 39 percent among women. Meanwhile, Nepal's infant mortality rate currently exceeds 63 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Nepal ranks among the 50 poorest countries in the world. The poor living conditions have fueled the militant consciousness of the masses and paved the way for revolutionary forces to enjoy a mass base of support for the armed struggle launched by the CPN-M in 1996.

In light of the accomplishments of the revolutionary forces in providing for the basic needs of Nepal's suffering people, it comes as no surprise that many in Nepal's ruling parties are hesitant to compete with the CPN-M at the polls on a level playing field.

Hoskins is a member of Fight Imperialism Stand Together (FIST) youth group in Washington, DC ■

Another slap in the face

By LeiLani Dowell

Yet another display of the attack on Black youth by the U.S. criminal injustice system occurred on Oct. 12, when eight former boot camp guards were acquitted in the death of a 14-year-old.

Videotape footage showed Martin Lee Anderson being punched and kicked by guards at the Florida juvenile detention center. According to the Associated Press, "Aside from hitting Anderson, the guards dragged him around the military-style camp's exercise yard and forced him to inhale ammonia capsules in what they said was an attempt to revive him. The nurse stood by watching." (Oct. 12)

The defense argued that the guards thought that Anderson was faking illness to avoid exercise. It turns out he had undiagnosed sickle cell trait, which can prevent blood cells from carrying oxygen during physical duress.

Former guard and defendant Henry Dickens claimed that the youth "wasn't beaten. Those techniques were taught to us and used for a purpose." (AP, Oct. 12)

Those "techniques" are taught along with a mentality that Black youth are always criminals; that what most would automatically perceive as a medical emergency—a person collapsing while running laps—is an instance of "faking."

After an initial autopsy alleged that Anderson died of natural causes, a second

one was ordered which found that Anderson had been suffocated by the use of the ammonia tablets and the guards' covering his mouth.

An all-white jury took just 90 minutes to decide that the guards were "not guilty." The doctor who conducted the first autopsy, Charles Steibert, told AP he was going to celebrate with some of the guards that night. (Oct. 12)

The defendants had faced at most 30 years in prison for aggravated child manslaughter. Compare this to the 15 years that the African-American Jena Six still face for a fight in which no bones were broken, where their white opponent went out and parted after the fight.

Outside the courthouse, the lawyer of Anderson's mother, Benjamin Crump, summed it up: "You kill a dog, you go to jail. You kill a little Black boy and nothing happens." (AP, Oct. 12)

The criminal injustice system, which is packed with bigoted district attorneys and judges, seems to think it can keep getting away with instances like these, throwing them in the face of those who are coming out in increasing numbers to protest. And, indeed, 150 students from Florida A&M protested after the verdict. The establishment would do well to remember the many rebellions that have occurred throughout the U.S. in the face of police brutality and repression. ■

Hip Hop and the Cuban Revolution (continued)

One need only look at the source of the criticism. Pitbull also wrote a song called, "Ya Se Acabó," joining in the clamor with other right-wing Miami Cubans and U.S. politicians when Castro had to undergo surgery and then stepped down because of his illness.

Pitbull is part of the ignominiously named "Guerilla Radio: The Hip Hop Struggle Under Castro," a documentary made by filmmakers associated with CNN and Mountain View Group Ltd. According to its web site, Mountain View has "created award-winning corporate communications campaigns, educational programs, TV commercials and sales tools for over 200 clients, including Fortune 500 companies."

One of the filmmakers who worked for CNN, Tom Nybo, was "embedded" with the occupation forces in Iraq. A report from the School of Journalism at the University of Montana said that before Nybo went to Iraq in 2003, "he received two weeks of military training—one organized by CNN and the other by the Pentagon."

In Cuba, culture flourishes and the

Miami Police Kill Unarmed Haitian

By Mike Martinez

Less than 20 yards from his door, Gracia Beaugris was stopped and then shot to death by Miami Dade County police officer Christopher Villano on Oct. 26.

Beaugris, 19, was coming home from a laundromat with friends when Officer Villano stopped and then frisked them. Beaugris, who had emigrated from Haiti six years earlier, tried to question Villano about being stopped.

At this point, according to the other youth, the officer shouted profanity at Beaugris, who was already spread-eagled against a wall. The cop shoved him and eventually put him in a chokehold. Beaugris was shot in the arm and fell. Then the Miami Dade cop fired two more shots into him while on the ground. One was in the back of the head above the ear; another entered his shoulder.

Villano's version, reported in the Miami Herald, was that he had believed the victim was going for the officer's gun. Beaugris was unarmed.

"He didn't do anything to get shot down," said one of the teens who was on the scene but asked not to be identified. Beaugris' aunts and father all say that "BG" was a good kid. They say that when he was shot, he was returning from the laundromat after washing his father's work clothes.

Some in the community here are calling it murder. Others are just as disturbed over how the shooting occurred and say it was unjustified. Tensions clearly exist in the community. Local police have harassed young people who created a memorial for the dead teen.

A full investigation into the case has not been completed. ■

Cuban Rap Agency will see that it is not used by outside forces to try to destabilize the revolution, but rather is used to deepen the consciousness of youth on the island in the service of deepening the revolution.

As Belafonte said, "What I think was important is how open the leadership was to this thing called hip-hop, whereas in the United States we do so much to demonize the culture, and we don't even have a Ministry of Culture in this country. But here we have Cuba, with a new form of music that came from another place, from the United States of America, and they were open to giving it assistance, to help develop hip-hop music in Cuba."

The writer is a leader of FIST--Fight Imperialism, Stand Together--youth group and was a member of its delegation that traveled to Cuba in July. ■