Kentucky (1986). In that case the court found that uphold a decision it made regarding Batson v. office.

Black jurors by the Philadelphia District Attorney's rejected the appeal of the conviction of Mumia Abu-

with diploma in-hand to the unemployment office, us who will graduate this spring will be walking

Yet, even with a college education, the millions of without college it is impossible to get a good job.

In the U.S. we can spend hundreds of thousands of dollars toward education. We are told that

in the U.S. criminal injustice system, where countless members of our generation are housed, are never in need of more funds. Youth who have never had the opportunity to see the world of books, professors and academic discourse, instead get to spend decades in the harsh and cruel world of barbed wire fences, brutal racist “corrections officers”, solitary confinement cells, involuntary labor, along with the horrors of torture and sexual abuse. (continued on page 3)

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

Update on Mumia’s case
By Larry Hales, NYC FIST

On April 6, 2009 the U.S. Supreme Court re-

ected the appeal of the conviction of Mumia Abu-

jamal. The appeal was based on the exclusion of Black jurors by the Philadelphia District Attorney's office.

In rejecting the appeal, the court refused to uphold a decision it made regarding Batson v. Kentucky (1986). In that case the court found that

any exclusion of a juror based on race is a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Before Batson, there was no effective way to challenge prosecutorial discrimination during jury selection. Batson paved the way for defendants to make a case for jury selection discrimination by showing that the prosecution struck a single juror because of race.

There exists ample evidence to show that not only were Black jurors excluded from Mumia’s trial, but Black jurors were excluded systematically and peremptorily.

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Assistant Philadelphia District Attorney Jack McMahon, in a training video for new prosecutors made in the mid-80s states, “The only way you are going to do your best is to get jurors that are as unfair and more likely to convict than anybody else in that room. Less face it, there are the Blacks from the Northside, low income areas are

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This edited interview with political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal was conducted in November 2009 by Larry Hales—a national organizer for F.I.S.T. and Left Hook writer.

**LH:** How old were you when you first became politically active?

**Mumia:** I was around 14 or 15, and my first overt political activity was attending, with 3 or 4 friends, a rally staged by presidential candidate and racist, George C. Wallace in 1968. I wrote about it in “Live from Death Row.” To go into a rightwing presidential rally for Wallace (even in Philly) was a bit mad. But, as it is public and had political objectives to protest the Wallace candidacy, it was about as politically active as you can get.

**LH:** What attracted you to the Black Panther Party?

**Mumia:** What attracted me was two things: an article in Ramparts magazine on the BPP; and meeting a young (tho’ older than I) sista who gave me a copy of The Black Panther newspaper. Both of these publications electrified me, and turned me on to the possibility of joining a real revolutionary movement.

**LH:** How did your family and friends react, were they supportive of your politics?

**Mumia:** Some were supportive; some were not. I remember coming home, and sitting with some older brothers, and one saw a book in my shirt pocket, pulled it out, and read aloud (mispronouncing), “The Quotations of Mao Zedong.” Whoa! This is communist! What you doin’ readin’ this, man?”

When I responded that we read and studied Mao and others for their insights and lessons, at least until the so-called Cold War and anti-communist hysteria forced much of the tenor underground. The dominant model had failed badly. The brilliant activist/scholar, Dr. Angela Y. Davis wrote, I think in her “Are Prisons Obsolete?”, that back in the 70s when there were several hundred thousand prisoners in the U.S. (about 300,000 or so); we thought that this was the oncoming tide of fascism. There was a prisoners’ movement then.

The idea that there would be nearly 3 million people in prisons today, increasingly female and juvenile, was almost unthinkable. In that sense, it is drastically different now than it was then.

**LH:** What is going on with your case?

**Mumia:** We are in the Supreme Court, with several petitions pending. The state is trying to still kill me.

**LH:** How did you come up with the idea to write your latest book, “Jailhouse Lawyers”?

**Mumia:** I had discussed with some activists from Britain, and I talked about jailhouse lawyers, and they looked at me like I was speaking Greek. One woman said, “Jailhouse lawyers? What is that?”

I was surprised that they hadn’t heard the term before. I talked about it for a few minutes, and one woman said, “Why don’t you write about it?” The rest is history.

**LH:** Do you have anything further you’d like to add?

**Mumia:** The nation faces challenges far more daunting than those of the 60s and 70s. Don’t look back to that period as the Golden Age. It wasn’t.

That said, it’s important to work now to change the situation that people face today—the economic crises, the corporate wars, unemployment, underemployment, mass incarceration, foreclosures and a dangerous educational system that kills souls and minds. The problems are mounting. But there are also opportunities to struggle against many of these problems and create real, lasting change. —

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Education and Jobs, Not Prisons (continued)

So many youth who deserve a decent education instead find themselves turning to crime in order to survive. They then find themselves locked away in a chamber of horrors called “correctional facility,” supposedly because they have made “bad choices.” What other choices does this system offer?

Increasingly, the prisons are even privatized, and capitalists get to make a handsome profit for every youth locked away, making it in the interests of profit for youth never to see the light of day, to grow old never walking free with basic human dignity. Countless studies have been conducted showing that youth of color are disproportionately sentenced, and as a result, make up the majority of prison inmates. This is a horrendous outrage, and throughout the country, youth are standing up in one voice to say “enough!” Every one of us was represented by the youth who greeted the University of California’s Board of Regents with rebellion and outrage when their tuition was increased. All of us found our voices heard when our fellow students in California took control of buildings, blocked vehicles, fought the police and resisted with all the strength they could muster against an effort to stifle the chains of the brutal capitalist system that bind us.

We need not look to politicians, administrators and other demagogues for the answer. We are the answer to the crisis. The future belongs to us, so we must fight for it.

Let us take inspiration from the students who stopped the military draft and demanded an end to the Vietnam War. Let us take inspiration from the youth of Los Angeles, Cincinnati and countless other cities who have grown tired of racist cops, and taken into the streets in rebellion against them. Let us take inspiration from the youth of Venezuela, Bolivia, Greece, Nepal, Colombia, Honduras and elsewhere who currently battle for socialism in their home countries, and seek to carve out a new socialist future for all humanity.

Fight Imperialism Stand Together (FIST) is excited to endorse the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education in this same spirit of resistance. March 4 will be a day to demand a halt to tuition hikes and cuts in education funding. Together we can make March 4 a day of student protests, occupations and strikes. Stand with FIST and other organizers of March 4 and say: No to the cruel tuition hikes! No to the war on the poor! Education not incarceration! Jobs for all! Education is a right! □

Mumia Update (continued)

new sentencing hearing, otherwise the sentence of life would be automatic.

By appealing the Third Circuit decision, the prosecution has demonstrated again that it is out for blood. This appeal comes as the pro-cop, anti-Mumia film “The Barrel of a Gun” makes its rounds and Philadelphia District Attorney-elect Seth Williams vows to seek the death penalty for Mumia.

The prosecution’s appeal is on hold as the Supreme Court deliberates on the case of neo-nazi Frank Spisak. Spisak confessed to killing three people in Ohio and was initially sentenced to death. The sentence was vacated by the Sixth Circuit because of faulty jury instructions given by the original trial judge.

The jury instructions given during the sentencing phase of Mumia’s trial were similar to those given to Spisak’s jurors. Both juries were incorrectly led to believe that they had to reach a unanimous decision on the question of whether there were any mitigating circumstances that would warrant a lesser sentence of life in prison instead of execution.

The Supreme Court ruled in Mills v. Maryland (1988) that when a jury in a capital case is led to believe that it needs to unanimously agree on any mitigating circumstances, a new sentencing phase is warranted. Judge Yohn’s decision to vacate Mumia’s death sentence was largely based on Mills.

The decision of the Court regarding Frank Spisak, a confessed neo-Nazi and murderer with profound hatred for people of color, will affect Mumia’s case greatly. It is clear that for the Spisak case to weigh on Mumia’s is a further miscarriage of justice, as Mumia is an innocent man and a hero to millions around the world—a man who gave his life from the age of 15 to fight against oppression and repression.

This is perhaps the most precious time for Mumia, and the struggle to not only prevent the state of Pennsylvania from killing him, but to free him from prison must become even more vigilant and mount its most diligent campaign yet. □

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Twenty-eight years without constant touch.
Dignity does not come at an inexpensive cost.
While languishing is torturous, cutting deeper than the lash, the self transcends despite their repressive acts.
Dignity does not come at an inexpensive cost;
the young may be demoralized but all is not lost.
The self transcends despite their repressive acts.
Resolve may yet be tepid; struggle simmers still.
The young may be demoralized but all is not lost;
history surrenders not lessons, contradictions bubble.
Resolve may yet be tepid, struggle simmers still.
Some will wake quickly to a canary at their sill.

History surrenders not lessons, contradictions bubble; people may bend as do all things supple.
Some will wake quickly to a canary at their sill to trudge from depths, surprised to be so encumbered.
People may bend as do all things supple.
To break is counter to the traditions of the beset.
To trudge from depths, surprised to be so encumbered; a bitter shining sun awaits the throngs wary of plunder.

To break is counter to the traditions of the beset—
he speaks for the yoked while staring down death.
A bitter shining sun awaits the throngs wary of plunder; beware the day after if you dare touch Mumia.

- Larry Hales
The Fight to Free the Cuban Five

By Julie Fry, NYC FIST

When the U.S. government declared its “war on terror” against the peoples of the Middle East and Central Asia in 2001, it neglected to include the government’s own home-grown group of terrorists on the target list. Groups like Brothers to the Rescue and Comandos F4 are based in Miami and supported by the CIA and other U.S. agencies. These types of groups are responsible for terror campaigns against Cuba and other Latin American countries that have spanned the last fifty years. More than 3,000 Cuban people, among others, have died as a result of attacks from U.S-sponsored terror groups.

Cuba Acts to Defend its Citizens from Terror

In response to the long campaign of terror waged against the small island nation of socialist Cuba by U.S.-sponsored paramilitary style groups, the Cuban government sent some of its citizens to Miami to gather information about these terrorist organizations in the hope of preventing further violence. Among those Cubans were Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino, Fernando Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero and Rene Gonzalez. Today they are known throughout the world as the Cuban Five.

The information gathered by the Cuban Five about these U.S.-based terror groups was turned over to the U.S. government by the Cubans with the hope that the organizations would be shut down and the terrorists arrested. Instead, the U.S. government arrested the Cuban Five in 1998 and they have remained in prison ever since.

A Sham Trial in Miami

The Five were charged with conspiracy to commit espionage against the United States and other related charges. They were convicted in 2001 and sentenced to 75 years and four life sentences collectively.

No evidence has ever been produced indicating that any of the Five harmed anyone in the U.S. or possessed any weapons while they worked here. There is no evidence that the Five ever targeted their actions at any agency of the U.S. government.

Although defense attorneys for the Five made several motions before and during the trial for a change of venue, the Five were tried in Miami: the epicenter of anti-Cuba terrorism and propaganda in the U.S. The local media vilified the Five, and the prosecutors committed egregious acts of misconduct, sensationalizing the acts of the Five and trying to scare the jurors. For example, the prosecutor stated in his closing argument that the Five were “bent on destroying the United States” and that they were trying to execute what the prosecutor called “the final solution” against the anti-Cuba forces in Miami.

Legal experts and leaders around the world denounced the trial as unfair. The Executive Director of the National Lawyers Guild, Heidi Boghosian, has said, “anti-Cuba sentiment has tainted all possibility of a fair trial for the Five since their original arrest and confinement, which the UN Rapporteur on Torture described as violating the Convention Against Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.” Boghosian noted that “during the original trial, the Bush administration paid journalists to write unfavorable stories about Cuba. Anti-Cuban extremists tried to intimidate the jurors, and even prospective jurors admitted that they would be afraid to return not-guilty verdicts against the Five.”

The Five had their first substantial legal victory in 2005 when a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned their convictions because of a lack of a fair venue. The judges found that there was no way that the Five could have received a fair trial in counter-revolutionary Miami. However, a later decision by the entire 11th Circuit Appellate Court overturned that ruling, so the Five did not receive their new trial. A later three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit overturned the sentences of three of the Five. In October of this year, Antonio Guerrero’s sentence was reduced from a life term to thirty years. And Fernando’s sentence was reduced from nineteen years to seventeen years and nine months.

International Solidarity to Free the Five

Even these small victories for the Cuban Five would not have been possible without the massive campaign of international solidarity. The Five are regarded as national heroes in Cuba. Their images are present everywhere in that country. Millions of Cubans have demonstrated in support of the Five because they recognize that the Five were trying to prevent violence against the Cuban people.

There are solidarity committees for the Cuban Five in dozens of countries around the world. Hundreds of demonstrations, petitions and other actions have been carried out by supporters.

Many believe that the U.S. government’s actions with respect to the Five highlight the hypocrisy of the so-called “war on terror.” For example, admitted terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, remains at liberty in the United States. Posada Carriles, by his own admission, is responsible for the bombing of a Cuban passenger jet which killed seventy-three people. Posada Carriles escaped from prison in Venezuela in 1985 where he was being charged with this crime, and has lived under the protection of the U.S. and CIA ever since. Today he lives freely in Miami. He is wanted for crimes in several other countries, including Cuba and Venezuela.

The difference in the treatment of the Five versus an admitted terrorist and murderer like Posada Carriles demonstrates that the U.S. is not interested in stopping terror at all. The real goal of the U.S. is to overthrow the Cuban Revolution. That is why they protect people like Posada Carriles and jail the Cuban Five.

The sustained and growing support that the Five have received from every corner of the world proves that the Cuban Revolution is stronger than any terror campaign. The Cuban people and those involved in the international struggle to free the Five are confident that, no matter what the decision of reactionary and arbitrary U.S. courts, the Five will eventually win their freedom through struggle.
Ballots and Bullets

By David Hoskins, NYC FIST

Ballots & Bullets is a regular column that provides field reports on workers movements and the fight for socialism around the world at the ballot box, on the streets, and in armed struggle.

Bolivia:
Evo Morales and the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party won a landslide re-election in Bolivia’s Dec. 6 elections. MAS won 63 percent of the vote in the closely watched election, giving the party two-thirds of the Senate and Legislative Assembly seats and soundly defeating Morales’ conservative rivals. Morales is Bolivia’s first president to win consecutive re-election since 1964. The solid margin of victory is expected to provide Morales and MAS with the support necessary to push through further pro-socialist reforms and advance the revolutionary process in that country.

Colombia:
The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) killed one police officer and wounded six others in separate attacks carried out in December in the southwestern provinces of Nariño and Cauca.

India:

The Communist Party of India-Maoist has announced a loan waiver for poor farmers in parts of West Bengal. Under the waiver any crop loans taken out over the past two years are forgiven. Agricultural cooperatives, banks and private money lenders are forbidden by the CPI-M from collecting on the loans or charging more than 2 percent interest on future loans. The standard interest on agricultural loans in India is 7 percent, with private lenders charging much more than the standard rate.

India’s Maoist revolutionaries now have a presence in 20 of the country’s 28 states and have been carrying out large- and small-scale attacks against state forces. In October they successfully ambushed a police patrol, eliminating more than 17 troops.

Nepal:
The Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist has announced the formation of 13 autonomous states in Nepal. The UCPN-M established these autonomous states outside of the Constituent Assembly, where they were driven from government office after winning the 2008 elections. In related news, UCPN-M affiliated unions of farmers and squatters have seized hundreds of acres of land belonging to former royals for redistribution to landless persons.

Philippines:
The New People’s Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, ambushed and killed four police officers of the PNP 509th Provincial Mobile Group on Nov. 9. The NPA seized three M16 rifles, two .45 caliber pistols and other military equipment.

Lenin: Prisons and the Capitalist State

By Vidya Sankar, Raleigh FIST

In order for a class society such as capitalism to exist, it requires a mechanism by which the ruling class can enforce its rule over the exploited class. The workings of this mechanism, the state, were described by Vladimir Lenin in “The State and Revolution.” Lenin wrote in 1917, Lenin’s analysis of the state still stands valid today. The state, which was first defined by Marx and Engels, was elaborated on by Lenin as encompassing all police, military, judicial and penal systems designed to protect the institutions of the capitalist class, such as private property and the bosses’ ownership of the means of production.

Lenin explains that, “According to Marx, the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of ‘order’, which legalizes and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the conflict between classes.” When people are forced to work for wages, are forced into a life of being exploited in order to survive, a form of natural anger arises. Mass discontent with living conditions arises within the working class and oppressed. This natural anger represents an immense threat to the ruling class which utilizes the state to defend and perpetuate its rule.

In “The State and Revolution”, Lenin explains, “Imperialism—the era of bank capital, the era of gigantic capitalist monopolies, of the development of monopoly capitalism into state-monopoly capitalism—has clearly shown an unprecedented growth in its bureaucratic and military apparatus in connection with the intensification of repressive measures against the proletariat both in the monarchical and in the freest, republican countries.”

In order for capitalism to flourish, there must be a way for the bosses to exploit efficiently and repress any resistance. As unemployment, poverty, hunger and homelessness impact workers and the poor, the state must be strengthened in order to protect the institutions of production and prevent the people from seizing power away from those who oppress them. Working class youth are subjected to an economic draft that forces them to join the military and fight for U.S. imperialism abroad because of the lack of jobs and educational opportunities in their communities. Millions are incarcerated either as the result of resorting to petty crime in order to survive or because of deliberate campaigns of fear and repression, such as those which the state has unleashed against undocumented workers and Black youth.

Laws are instituted and enforced by the police in order to protect the profits of the bosses, not human life and needs. For example, a starving person can be incarcerated for taking the food which he needs to survive because he consumed the bread without yielding a profit to a boss. However, a police officer who kills a youth of color is not incarcerated because he does not represent a threat to the bosses’ profits.

Bossses can get away with killing millions in the form of racist wars and executions while workers are incarcerated for taking lifelong bread. As suffering and exploitation increase, the repressive instruments of the capitalist state grow in order to protect the ruling class from any potential backlash. The Leninist explanation of the state demonstrates that without the existence of the state, all means of production could be seized and capitalism would not long survive as a system.

The ruling class uses repressive forces such as the police, military, courts and prisons to maintain its system of exploitation in part by detaining and eliminating those who refuse to submit to the capitalist order. The ruling class sees the state as a means to remove the most revolutionary elements from society.

Fred Hampton was murdered because he represented a threat to the capitalists. Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered because he represented a threat to the capitalists. Mumia was imprisoned because he represents a threat to the ruling class. We must fight to free all political prisoners and to destroy the prison-industrial complex. We must organize to smash the state.

Meeting organized by Raleigh FIST in Walnut Terrace to build for struggle for public jobs program.
Prison-Industrial Complex

By Joshua Ramirez, Detroit FIST

We have all heard of it. The words have slipped over our tongues and crossed our lips before, yet I wonder how many people in our generation understand the utter brutality of the Prison Industrial Complex. As conscious beings, we all understand there is something fundamentally wrong with our society when over one out of every 100 eligible persons in the united states (u.s.) is currently incarcerated.

The ’Spreadsheets’ being the financial profit/loss records of corporations. The ‘Dow’, or Dow Jones Industrial Average as it is properly titled, is an average of the corporate and industrial publicly traded companies. Yes, we are talking about stocks traded on the market. Prisons are a commodity to be bought and sold for a profit. The corporations involved with the prison system, and corporate owned prisons themselves, are booming.

We used to have massive cattle farms in the u.s. Currently the majority of our cattle farming is done in countries south of the u.s. border. The jobs were outsourced, like everything else, to maximize for the Rich Ruling Class. While cattle can only be sold once, a prisoner can be resold over and over again every year until they are released from the system entirely. This makes the human cattle confined in prison a valuable “commodity”.

Prisons generate profits from many sources. Support industries profit in the millions of dollars from the use of healthcare services, waste removal, sewage, water and electricity contracts to local municipalities. In the u.s., profit is king. If there were no profit in the prison system there is absolutely no way we would currently have more people in the prison system than any other country in the world.

We do have a large country, bigger in land mass than most other countries. However, our population is only roughly 308 million with more than 230 million of adult age. Even 230 million is insufficient to satiate the capitalist greed of prison profiteers and so witness the barbaric expansion of sentences to include children as young as 12 years old. Prisoners are a commodity—a source of profit. Currently more than one out of every 100 adults in the u.s. is in jail or prison. With over six billion people on this planet, we have less than five percent of the world population, yet we incarcerate more people than any other country in the world. So it is difficult to understand what really is driving the most massive documented incarceration rate in the world?

The new cattle farms of this country are prisons, and the new cattle are human beings. The old south order (i.e. slavery), has been renewed with coerced prison labor and knows no boundary at the Mason-Dixon Line. Here in Michigan we have an industrial manufacturing corporation called Michigan State Industries. MSI manufactures office furniture, mattresses, license plates and prison issue clothes. The prisoners who work in these industries do so under the coercion of perpetual lockdown if they refuse to work. This lockdown, imposed on them for refusing slave labor, is a twenty-two-hour day confinement to their cell.

The perfect illustration of the rich profiting off the incarceration and slavery of humans is a juvenile prison in western Michigan. This prison was run by the Wackenhut Corrections Corporation. The prison was a nightmare in every aspect, except for the stockholders. So much so that the state of MI was forced to stop sending their juveniles to the horror of concrete and razor wire that was carved out of the beautiful woodland area on the west side of the state.

A lot of the information on the prison is virtually impossible to access because of the fact that the place is a private corporation and not subject to public scrutiny. Wackenhut is not subject to public information request laws. This corporation further hampers any form of transparency by hiding behind the methodology of corporations; it does not suit them to report information detrimental to their bottom line. The most compelling argument against the privatization of the prison system in general is the level of brutality the juveniles faced at the hands of prison guards.

I can attest on a personal level to the brutality I faced in the Wayne and Oakland county jails as well as in the Michigan Department of Corrections. I was beaten for minor offences, thrown in solitary confinement for periods of six months, 10 months, without any due process. I knew prisoners who were driven insane from extended stays in solitary. My friend Samuel Dunham-Bey did over 15 years in one stint in solitary confinement. I was held in a maximum security prison for over four-and-a-half years. For two-and-a-half of those years, I was held there because I was running an anti-racial profiling campaign to fight the racist labeling of left leaning Hispanics to be gang leaders. I was released from prison 15 months ago at the age of 30. I never saw a day of my twenties out in the streets because of the greed and brutality of this aspect of the capitalist system. I’ve heard comrades talk about the Prison Industrial Complex here and there. Perhaps you have as well. The only thing that saved me was years of studying Socialism. This fostered the hope that one day I can stand as an equal amongst my peers in a Socialist society, and see all the people who are locked up be given a fair tribunal, and all the people who imposed the brutality, who profited off of the slavery, who became enriched because they sucked at the teat of the warehousing of human beings pay for their crimes.

Why does this matter, why does it matter if I was sentenced to three years, yet robbed of over eleven-and-a-half years? It illustrates the reality of Prison as an Industry. I was worth money to the state (and other prison profiteers) as a maximum security prisoner. All prisoners held in MI in solitary confinement are also worth money. I was denied parole seven consecutive times because they slap on an additional 11 years. This never-before-compiled information offers a factual vista on the trajectory of progress of the Cuban Revolution. It’s a must read to understand the revolutionary process required to uproot prejudice. Order at www.LeftBooks.com
Youth Rally to Demand Jobs, Not War
By Dante Strobino, Raleigh, NC FIST

Are you looking for a revolutionary organization of youth and students? Do you want to be in the streets organizing for jobs and education? Then fight with FIST. For more information about organizing with FIST, see page 2 of this edition of Left Hook for your local chapter's contact information. This article was first published for Workers World newspaper on Dec. 20, 2009.

Several dozen unemployed youth rallied here on Dec. 4 at the Employment Security Commission headquarters, demanding “A jobs program at a living wage, not war and prisons!”

Organized by FIST and Black Workers for Justice, the protest was calling for the state government to put pressure on Washington to create a comprehensive jobs program that would directly employ youth.

The demands centered around jobs that could help young workers acquire new skills, rather than prepare them for dead-end jobs at fast-food restaurants or elsewhere in the service industry. For many of the youth, it was their first time at any political rally.

“Many youth in the area have a great deal of potential, but due to a lack of resources, the potential becomes internalized and unused potential,” said Alicia Sidney, a single mother living in Walnut Terrace public housing in Raleigh. “This is why I am so grateful for the FIST organization, because it allowed me to be a part of something positive that brings hope for the future. There is no doubt that our youth are advancing beyond the four seasons laid out so many years ago and the time has come for our society to make accommodations to nurture our growing potential.”

Angelica Horton, who graduated from Athens High School last year and is currently working less than 10 hours per week at Dairy Queen for minimum wage, said, “It was my first rally and I think it is important for young people to stand up and fight for our futures, for better jobs, because protesting shows and tells the truth.”

Earlier that morning the latest unemployment statistics were released indicating that jobs continue to be lost. Jobs have been lost for 22 months in a row, the longest streak since the government started keeping these statistics in 1939. In North Carolina, the county-by-county unemployment figures show that the number of people out of work has gone up in every county, with some rural counties topping 15 percent. For youth of color, the numbers can be three times higher and an alarming number end up in prison.

Outrage at the rally also focused on the recent troop surge in Afghanistan, which will cost an additional $50 billion, at the same time that the quality of education is declining.

“Young people we’ve talked to are excited to organize and fight for jobs, to fight for their futures, for a real jobs program which gives us opportunities to grow and develop,” stated FIST organizer Vidya Sanka. “We definitely made it very clear that we won’t allow the bosses and warmongers to destroy our generation and that we will fight!”

Youth resist, organize in Honduras
By LeiLani Dowell, NYC FIST

Youth and students are an important sector participating in the struggle against the illegal coup d’etat in Honduras. Video after video of the resistance actions that have taken place since the July 28 coup have shown youth in the streets and facing repression as well.

The U.S. Delegation of Labor, Community and Clergy in Solidarity with the Honduran Resistance was able to meet with several student organizers on Oct. 9 and 10. However, as a result of the repression, the delegation was not able to meet with as many youth as expected.

On Oct. 9, two men attempted to kidnap one of the student leaders; while the young woman was able to escape with a fractured hand, it prevented her organization from meeting with the U.S. delegation. Instead, they needed to meet collectively to discuss security measures and tactics.

Digna Rodríguez is a student at the pedagogical university, which has become the meeting point for many of the daily marches and rallies taking place in Tegucigalpa. She reported that the entire university has been militarized and used as a detention center by the police, who torture their detainees on the campus grounds. The school administration has threatened students with academic discipline for participating in resistance activities and has denied permission for activities on campus. Meanwhile, teachers in the resistance have also faced harassment from the administration.

A member of the U.S. delegation from the youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together—described the use of massive amounts of tear gas and long-range acoustic devices in Pittsburgh to attack the mostly young protesters at the G-20 summit in September. These same weapons have been used against youth in Honduras.

Ian Díaz, leader of the youth group Los Necios, is a student at the National University, the largest university in the country with some 70,000 students. Díaz told the delegation that the resistance movement at the university includes teachers, students and workers. While the university itself has attempted to hold itself apart from the political situation within Honduras, resistance members on campus work hard to raise the political consciousness of those attending and working at the college. He said that with the extreme violence occurring throughout the country, more students are now able to relate the political situation in the country to their everyday lives.

Díaz explained: “Before, people weren’t aware of theory, of what it meant to belong to a class. Now workers see it very clearly. [President Manuel] Zelaya took politics that had been neglected for a while and pushed for change that affected the biggest sector of society—stopping privatization, raising the minimum wage.

“Over the past three years, people saw that these things were negatively affecting some, and benefiting others. They realized that there were marked differences; that the workers benefited while the businesspeople, the owners of the means of production, were affected adversely. This gave the people their class consciousness—it’s very noticeable who the coup is for. There’s no better way to learn something than through action. You can also see which students are at the marches.” The two are members of a broader Youth Front against the Military Coup, which is a part of the larger National Resistance Front against the coup and includes students as well as youth from the rural, peasant and Indigenous populations of the country, the majority of whom cannot afford to attend college.

On Oct. 10, the delegation was able to briefly attend a class on revolutionary studies that is organized and held every Saturday afternoon by Los Necios. A class of about 30 youth listened raptly and took notes on Marxist theory. Los Necios (whose name roughly translates to “the troublemakers”) identifies as a socialist organization, taking its ideology from a combination of revolutionsaries from Marx and Lenin to Trotsky, Mao and others.

When asked what their message to youth in the U.S. and worldwide would be, a member of Los Necios answered: “Our message would be that youth need to get involved politically. As young people, we are obliged to get involved. Being a revolutionary is a moral obligation.”

Dowell represented the youth group FIST on the U.S. delegation. An interview with her about the delegation’s experiences in Honduras can be found at www.blogtalkradio.com/FIST-Youth.

This article was originally published on Oct. 23, 2009 for Workers World newspaper.
Write to Political Prisoners on their Birthdays:

January
WILLIAM PHILLIPS AFRICA AM4974 / Folleis Road, Drawer K Dallas, PA 15614 SCI Dallas
January 1, 1956
OSCAR LOPEZ RIVERA 86751-024 P.O. Box 12015
Terre Haute, IN 47801
January 6, 1943
SUNDIATA ACOLI (C. SQUARE) 39794-066 / Box 3000
White Deer, PA 17887 USP Allenwood
January 14, 1937

February
HUGO L.A. PINELL JAA8401
SHH D3-221 PO Box 7000
Crescent City, California 95531-7500
March 10, 1945
JAAN K. LAAMAN W41154/1 Box 100
South Whidbey, MA 20311
March 21, 1948

March
BYRON SHANE CHUBBUCK February 19, 1947
Louisiana State Prison CCR Upper B Cell 13

April
CHUCK SIMS AFRICA AM9473 / Box 244 Gratsdale, PA 19426-2044 SCI Gratsdale
April 7, 1956

May
MURNA ABU-JAMAL AM-8335 175 Progress Drive
Waynesburg, PA 15370-8090
April 23, 1946

June
LUIS MEDINA J68734-004 Box 262060
Beaumont, TX 77270-6035
U.S.P. Beaumont June 9, 1963

July
GERARDO HERNANDEZ J68739-004 / U.S. Penitentiary PO Box 5500
Adelanto, CA 92301 July 4, 1965

August
ALEX SANCHEZ J68546-112 Metro Detention Center Los Angeles, CA 90053
August 5, 1971

September
Herman Wallace and Albert Woodfox of the Angola 3

October
JAMAL ABDULLAH AL-AMIN J99974-555 USP Florence ADX
PO Box 8500 Florence, CO 81226
October 4, 1943

November
ED POINDEXTER III 10403 P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, NE 68502 November 1, 1944

December
BAHAR HAMEED (J.YORK) B2A3631 / Box 31 Comstock, New York 12821
Great Meadow Correctional Facility December 1, 1990

Jonathan Paul i08767-085 FCI Phoenix
37910 N 45th Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85068
January 31

JACOB CONROY 93501-011 USP Lewisburg
1401 State School Rd-Terrace Gatesville, TX 76599-0001
July 6, 1938

ZOLO AGONA AZANIA 5701 8th St. Camp Parks
Dublin, CA 94568
August 26, 1943

AUGUST

Herman Bell of the San Francisco 8
American Indian Movement Leader Fights for his Freedom

By Julie Fry, NYC FIST

On June 26, 1975, two FBI agents were killed during a shoot-out at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. A sniper’s bullet also claimed the life of a young indigenous man, Joe Stuntz, during the shooting, but his death has never been investigated. The shooting took place in the context of years of racist abuse, brutality and betrayal of the indigenous nations within the United States by the U.S. government. During this period in particular, the U.S. and specifically the FBI, were targeting a relatively new, but extremely dynamic and militant political organization called the American Indian Movement (AIM).

Like the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords, AIM fought for the empowerment of their own community and organized to defend themselves against state terrorism. Leonard Peltier was a young leader of AIM in 1975 when the Pine Ridge shootings occurred. Although there were no witnesses who pointed to Peltier as the shooter, he immediately became the central target of the investigation because of his influence in AIM. In a trial before an all-white jury in 1976, with very little evidence and with witnesses threatened by the FBI, Peltier was convicted and sentenced to two life terms. The government even admitted during one of the appeals that they could not prove Peltier was the shooter.

Peltier has been in prison since 1976. He was denied parole in 2009 and he won’t be eligible for parole again until 2024 when he will be 79 years old. He has always maintained his innocence, even though he has been told that admitting guilt might make it easier for him to be granted parole.

Peltier is an international symbol of the U.S. government’s refusal to accept the sovereignty of indigenous nations and its complete brutality toward their communities. Despite his long imprisonment, Peltier remains in good spirits and his supporters still continue the fight for his freedom. The Leonard Peltier Defense Committee issued a statement after his parole was denied last year explaining that “Currently we are in the process of finalizing plans for efforts around exercising our right to challenge this decision, advocating for intervention by President Barack Obama, and succeeding in getting both proper medical attention for Leonard and a transfer to a federal prison closer to home. We will be issuing directives within the near future.”

For more information on Peltier’s case and the struggle to free him, visit www.whoisleonardpeltier.info.

Cards and letters may be sent to:
Leonard Peltier
#89637-I32
USP-Lewisburg
P.O. Box 1000
Lewisburg, PA 17837

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Lewisburg, PA 17837
Immigrant Detention Centers and the Economic Crisis
By Ivan Rangel, Denver FIST

Why has the state’s attitude toward immigration been very severe in some periods and more lenient in others?

When the big corporations are in dire need of a cheap and massive labor pool they lobby for more lenient border policies, and the state is more lax in enforcing immigration rules. These corporations view their workers as cheap labor, and immigrant labor is as cheap as it comes in the United States.

When the economy falters the attitudes of the state and the corporations it serves can change. The U.S. economy is currently in the midst of a dire crisis as the real unemployment rate continues to grow. As a result, steps have been taken to remove those undocumented immigrants who came here to work in jobs that no longer exist. This explains the new drive to expel unwanted, superfluous immigrant labor.

This will not actually fix the economy. The only effect will be on the families split up by the detentions and deportations and the children that will suffer even more as they see agents armed to the teeth raiding their homes and kidnapping their parents whose sole crime was to labor to provide for their family.

As the economy continues to show the true nature of capitalism—that of a deteriorating barbaric system—those responsible for the current economic crisis continue to look for someone to point the finger at and blame. The Republican Party—the party of unabashed racism, Christian chauvinism, and hypocrisy—and its propaganda pundits (Lou Dobbs and Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity of The Fox News Channel), and henchmen (Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, Arizona who was a guest on Lou Dobbs live and said he was “honored to be compared to the Ku Klux Klan”) are on a mission to redefine the word immigrant so that it is synonymous with criminal.

In order to accomplish this task the right-wing section of the ruling class has utilized its power and its efforts to fight terrorism. The case was puff up the appearance of Bush’s Justice Department and even torture.

The state tool of anti-immigrant persecution and repression is U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Immigrant detention centers are the notorious physical premises of this agency where the term “human rights” is optional. ICE works as a modern day Gestapo, a version of Pinochet’s fascist henchmen, as it seeks to criminalize human beings and detain them for an indeterminate period of time for no other reason than immigration status.

There are currently dozens of immigrant detention centers throughout the U.S., with more of them being concentrated within the Southwest. Each center could easily produce its own series of horror stories of inhumane treatment and even torture.

Take for instance the recent incident from Maricopa County, AZ. Undocumented worker Alma Chacon, a native of Durango, Mexico, was arrested while 9 months pregnant. She went into labor and was rushed to the local hospital by Sheriff Arpaio’s officers, who then forced her to give birth while shackled to the bed the same way African slaves were treated during the height of the U.S. slave trade.

After giving birth under such inhumane circumstances, the officers refused to allow the new mother the right to hold her newborn baby. She was told she could not see her child, and if no one claimed the child within 72 hours the state would take away all custodial rights. The very state that forced her to give birth like a chained animal threatened to steal her child. Arpaio’s henchmen are even reported to have refused a request by the nurse to unshackle the woman from the bed so that a urine test could be performed in the bathroom.

What explains such acts of inhumanity? The only liable answer is racism, fueled by the night vision camera footage of immigrants attempting to cross the border, of hateful slander being spouted by those yearning for the “good old days” when people of color were legally recognized as less than human. It is obvious that the racist newscasters and racist sheriffs must be removed from their posts, as they serve as apologists for those who are attempting to create an extreme right-wing movement, including among the youth.

The corporate media and “maverick lawyers” must not be allowed to create an atmosphere of hate and strike fear in the hearts and minds of the immigrant community. The movement must take a stand to defend the defenseless, to let it be known that this persecution of immigrants will not be tolerated. A few voices alone will not get it done. Only the people unitcd can get accomplish this task.

Free Lynne Stewart: “The People’s Lawyer”

On a rainy November night, almost 300 people gathered outside the court at 500 Pearl Street and waited for Lynne Stewart, fondly known as “the people’s lawyer,” to arrive. The crowd was a mix of journalists, public defenders, teachers, artists, city council members and all kinds of political activists—people specializing in housing rights and anti-displacement, anti-racism, economic justice, workers’ rights, anti-imperialism, and the list goes on. When it comes to poor and working people and their allies, Lynne is well-loved as a brave and reliable lawyer and friend; many share stories of knocking at her door in the middle of the night with urgent matters, knowing they could trust her to help and stand by them.

On that particular night in November, however, Lynne’s friends and allies were gathered to support her in her time of need. It was Thursday Nov. 19, the day that Judge John G. Koeltl ordered Lynne to turn herself in and begin serving a prison sentence for Conspiracy and Aiding and Abetting Terrorism, of which she was convicted in 2005. Lynne was originally arrested on April 9, 2002, in the midst of 9/11 “homeland security” hysteria under the Patriot Act. Her so-called “crime,” was committed back in 2000.

Lynne was representing Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, also known as the “Blind Sheikh.” She, along with Ramsey Clark and Abdeen Jabara, represented him in court in 1995. The Sheikh was convicted in September of 1995 and sentenced to life in prison. Lynne and the other lawyers continued to visit him in prison, as more and more restrictions were placed on him. Eventually he was barely even allowed to communicate with his family, and his lawyers were his main contact with the outside world.

Lynne visited Abdel-Rahman in 2000 and agreed to his request that she make a press release for him. Contrary to reports in the corporate media, Lynne was never involved in transferring any secret information or conspiring in any sort of “terrorist plot.”

The government saw no need to prosecute Lynne, who was only performing her duties toward her client, until after 9/11. Lynne was indicted, along with her paralegal and interpreter for the case. In April of 2002, John Ashcroft came to New York and announced the indictment as part of greater scheme to puff up the appearance of Bush’s Justice Department and its efforts to fight terrorism. The case was then tried in 2005, and all three were convicted. Lynne was allowed to remain at liberty while she fought her conviction through an appeal. However, in November, an appellate court issued a decision upholding Lynne’s conviction and revoking her bail.

This past November, at 500 Pearl Street, Lynne’s supporters waited for her relentlessly until the crowd began to notice a circle of people and flashing cameras slowly moving toward them from across the street. People started to wave their signs in the air, yelling “Free Lynne Stewart!” and “We love you Lynne!” As people started to notice a circle of people and flashing cameras slowly moving toward them from across the street. People started to wave their signs in the air, yelling “Free Lynne Stewart!” and “We love you Lynne!” As people slowly moving toward them from across the street. People started to wave their signs in the air, yelling “Free Lynne Stewart!” and “We love you Lynne!” As people slowly moving toward them from across the street. People started to wave their signs in the air, yelling “Free Lynne Stewart!” and “We love you Lynne!” As people slowly moving toward them from across the street. People started to wave their signs in the air, yelling “Free Lynne Stewart!” and “We love you Lynne!” As people slowly moving toward them from across the street. People started to wave their signs in the air, yelling “Free Lynne Stewart!” and “We love you Lynne!” As
Organize to smash tuition hikes and budget cuts!

Join March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education

Fight Imperialism Stand Together (FIST) calls on all students, teachers, faculty and staff to help organize for the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education.

This March 4 is an opportunity to mobilize against the ruling class' coordinated assault on students and education workers, including:

• Tuition hikes
• Budget cuts
• Privatization of K-12 schools
• Cuts in student transportation assistance
• Layoffs and furloughs of education workers

Education in the U.S. is under attack. Students and workers are organizing to fight back.

Enough is enough. Students and teachers in California know that, and they made a stand this past Fall with actions around the state. California students took bold action and occupied a number of universities, including the University of California Berkeley and San Francisco State University.

California activists issued a call for statewide actions on March 4, 2010 coming out of an October conference of students, faculty and teachers. Since that time organizers in California and around the country have expanded the call to include a nationwide day of actions.

Actions will be taking place around the country. FIST will be helping to organize in many of those cities from New York to Raleigh to Miami.

Fight Imperialism Stand Together will mobilize in full force for the March 4 effort to fight back against the attacks on education. Will you join us?

Whether you organize for March 4 with FIST, another organization or on your own--the most important thing is to organize.

For more information on organizing for March 4 with FIST check out the website at www.fistyouth.org or contact a national FIST organizer directly:

Larry Hales: Larry@fistyouth.org 720-979-9491
David Hoskins: David@fistyouth.org 202-957-3387

Could just barely be seen in the middle of it all, smiling and appearing calm through all the mayhem. At seventy years old, Lynne is still energetic and optimistic about life, even after everything she has seen during her long time in the struggle.

Lynne and the mob surrounding her stopped in front of the courthouse and she turned around to face the crowd of supporters. “Okay, we’re going to prison, folks!” she called, “I want to remind you all that today was the day that Joe Hill was executed. And you know what he said? Don’t mourn me, organize!” Joe Hill was a union organizer and activist who was unjustly executed in 1915. Lynne’s mention of him and his moving words spurred cheers and shouts from the crowd and brought more than one person to tears.

Though many see Lynne’s incarceration as a defeat, she will surely still be a powerful political force even behind bars. Her struggle for justice has inspired many, even after she was disbarred immediately after her conviction. Many believe her case is intended to send a message to other lawyers like her who take on clients that are seen as a threat to the U.S. government.

Michael Tigar, one of Lynne’s attorneys, spoke to this in relation to the upcoming Guantanamo Bay detainees’ trials in New York when he was interviewed in 2005 about Lynne’s case on the “Democracy Now!” program. He said, “this case really is a threat to all the lawyers who are out there attempting to represent people that face these terrible consequences...The only way that we will ever get to the bottom of the American concentration camp abuses at Gitmo and Abu Ghraib is that if the lawyers for these prisoners are permitted to tell their stories to the world. If the government can shut off that communication, which they have attempted to do over and over and over again, these activities will continue in secret.”

In many ways Lynne Stewart is a very unlikely political prisoner. She is a seventy year old grandmother and has experienced many health problems in recent years. She is a recovering breast cancer survivor, has very high blood pressure, and at the time of her conviction, was scheduled to undergo this operation in the prison hospital.

In the meantime, Lynne reported in a letter from prison that she is being treated very well, and that her fellow prisoners treat her with a great amount of respect, as many of them know of her work. She also speaks to how “deplorable” conditions are in Manhattan Correctional Center, where she is being held. She ends her open letter this way: “Organize – Agitate, Agitate, Agitate! And write to me and others locked down by the Evil Empire.”

Letters may be sent to:
Lynne Stewart #053504-054
MCC-NY, 150 Park Row
New York, NY 10007
En los países socialistas de Cuba y la República Popular Democrática de Corea la educación se considera un derecho básico. Incluso en los países capitalistas, como Canadá, Francia, Gran Bretaña y Alemania, los estudiantes han ganado el derecho a asistir a la universidad gratuitamente. Después de la graduación no tienen deudas estudiantiles. No hay llamadas telefónicas de las compañías de préstamos exigiendo más dinero.

Los graduados universitarios no pasan años con el fantasma de las deudas estudiantiles colgando por encima de ellos, exigiendo otra de pago. Salen de la universidad y comienzan sus trabajos libres de deuda, bien educados y listos para usar sus nuevas habilidades para mantenerse y a sus familias.

Pero este no es el caso en los Estados Unidos. En los EE.UU. se puede pagar cientos de miles de dólares hacia la educación. Se nos dice que sin la universidad, es imposible conseguir un buen trabajo. Sin embargo, incluso con una educación universitaria, millones de nosotros que se graduarán esta primavera, caminarán con un diploma en la mano a la oficina de desempleo, la línea del banco de alimentos, a vivir en casa de nuestros padres, a la prisión para sobrevivir. Se encuentran encerrados en una cámara de horrores llamado “centro correccional”, porque supuestamente han elegido por “malas opciones”. ¿Pero qué otras opciones ofrece este sistema? Cada vez más las prisiones son privatizadas, y los capitalistas para obtener buenas ganancias por cada joven encerrado, hacen en interés de sus ganancias que muchos jóvenes nunca vean la luz del día, que lleguen a envejecer sin nunca poder caminar en libertad con la dignidad humana más básica.

Incontables estudiantes se han realizado demostrando que los jóvenes de color son desproporcionadamente condenados, y como consecuencia son la mayoría de los reclusos. Esto es un escándalo terrible, y en todo el país, los jóvenes están de pie junto en una sola voz para decir “¡basta!” Cada uno de nosotros estábamos representados por los jóvenes que recibieron a la Junta de Regentes de la Universidad de California con rebelión e indignación cuando su matrícula fue aumentada. Todos encontramos nuestras voces cuando nuestros compañeros estudiantes en California tomaron el control de edificios, bloquearon vehículos, lucharon contra la policía y resistieron con toda la fuerza que pudieron agrupar en contra de un esfuerzo para apretar las cadenas del brutal sistema capitalista que nos mantiene atados.

No debemos de confiar en los políticos, administradores, y otros demagogos que pudieron agrupar en contra de un esfuerzo para apretar las cadenas del brutal sistema capitalista que nos mantiene atados. Tantos jóvenes que merecen una educación decente en lugar se encuentran atrapados por la delincuencia de la calle, porque supuestamente tienen la oportunidad de ver el mundo que pudieron agrupar en contra de un esfuerzo para apretar las cadenas del brutal sistema capitalista que nos mantiene atados. Tomemos inspiración de los estudiantes que pudieron agrupar en contra de un esfuerzo para apretar las cadenas del brutal sistema capitalista que nos mantiene atados.

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