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El mundo dice no a guerra en Irak

El Presidente Bush ha argumentado que la invasión a Irak es justa e inevitable. Pero la opinión pública en casa y en el exterior cada día se vuelve más contra la guerra. Agrupaciones opuestas a la guerra planean marchas el 15 de Febrero en varias partes del mundo bajo el lema "El Mundo Dice No a la Guerra."

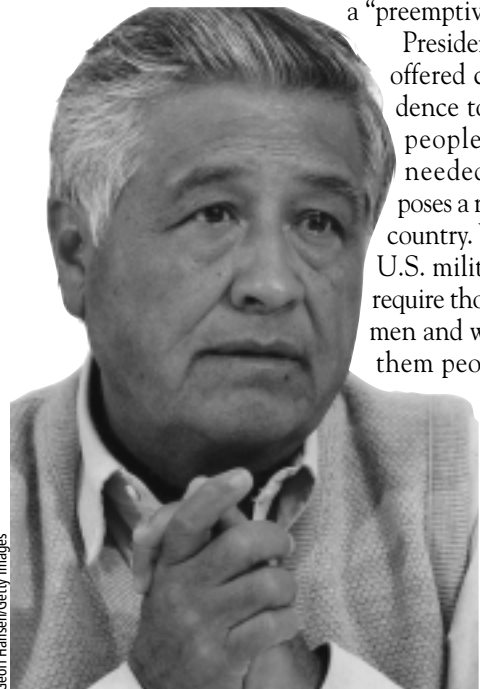
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Cesar Chavez's Legacy of Peace

BY ARTURO S. RODRIGUEZ

United Farm Workers President Arturo S. Rodriguez issued the following statement on Jan. 22, 2003, on behalf of the Cesar Chavez-founded union.

Cesar Chavez's legacy is all about peace and non-violent action. If there was ever a time for Cesar's legacy to come alive it is now. Basic principle demands that the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO joins national and global efforts in opposing the Bush administration's plans to mount a "preemptive" war in Iraq.



Geoff Hansen/Getty Images

President Bush has not offered convincing evidence to the American people that war is needed because Iraq poses a real threat to our country. Yet such a use of U.S. military force would require thousands of young men and women, many of them people of color, to fight overseas in the name of democracy. President Bush's war in Iraq would do lasting harm to our democracy here at home.

Congressional staff and think-tank experts estimate this war would cost as much as \$200 billion, requiring reductions in public spending on job creation, health care, welfare, the environment and other vital government programs. Little or no U.S. funds would be available to aid cash-strapped state governments such as California, Arizona, Texas and Washington state that could soon slash health and welfare programs for poor and minority residents, including farm workers. White House officials say reductions are needed to place the federal budget "on a war footing."

Increased military spending plus budget cuts would cause more despair for millions of impoverished working families, including farm workers, who are among the poorest and most abused workers in America. The latest U.S. Department of Labor figures show 90 percent of California farm workers earn less than \$10,000 a year and 90 percent have no health coverage.

With \$1.4 billion in federal funding needed to save the Los Angeles County health care system from collapse, the Bush administration wants to spend \$200 billion on the war in Iraq—and \$2 billion on just one B-2 bomber. ■

World Says No to Iraq War

Bush Threatens to Go It Alone

BY HANY KHALIL AND BOB WING

President Bush has long argued that a U.S. invasion of Iraq is urgent, just and inevitable. But instead of gaining support for an attack, Bush is fighting an uphill battle against public opinion increasingly opposed to war.

A recent Pew Research poll found that three-quarters of the U.S. public oppose unilateral war against Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of people have joined antiwar actions in more than 400 U.S. cities in all 50 states. International polls show overwhelming opposition to war on Iraq, even if the U.N. were to back an attack.

In an unprecedented move, antiwar groups from around the world are coordinating "World Says No to War" marches on Feb. 15.

Many governments have warned the U.S. against war with Iraq. On Jan. 29, 11 of the 15 countries on the U.N. Security Council defied the U.S. and said inspectors should be allowed to keep working until there is undeniable evidence that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction.

France has threatened to veto any U.S. war proposal at the U.N. British public opinion has forced even Prime Minister Tony Blair, a staunch war hawk, to urge the U.S. to seek approval from the U.N. Pope John Paul II has denounced an Iraq war, calling war "a defeat for humanity."

The Washington Post reported that Bush aides confessed that they "could see their political mortality for the first time since Sept. 11, 2001."

NO CASE FOR WAR

Besieged by opposition, President Bush used his Jan. 28 State of the Union address to restate his case for invasion. But he stopped short of declaring war. Instead he said the U.S. would present new information to the U.N. starting Feb. 5.

"Bush's postponement of a war on Iraq so far is a victory for the global antiwar movement," said Reverend Graylan Hagler, a leader in Black Voices for Peace in Washington D.C. "But the danger is still grave. The peace movement has captured the imagination of diverse populations at home and abroad. A huge turnout in New York City and throughout the world on Feb. 15 will be key to stopping a slaughter in Iraq."

In January a U.N. study warned that



Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

Over 150,000 antiwar protestors packed into San Francisco's Civic Center Plaza on Jan. 18.

500,000 Iraqis could be injured in the early stages of a new U.S. invasion. And, because U.S. air attacks would likely destroy Iraq's infrastructure, up to three million more could face dire malnutrition because of the attacks.

of evidence linking Iraq to Al Qaeda or Sept. 11.

After a year of promises, Bush has failed to produce proof that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. Chief weapons inspectors Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei say they have found no such evidence after inspecting more than 400 Iraqi sites.

WHO THREATENS WORLD PEACE?

Bush claims that satellite photos reveal Iraq is rebuilding nuclear facilities. But inspectors found no evidence of prohibited activity at those sites. Bush accuses Iraq of trying to buy aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons. But inspectors concluded the tubes could only be used in conventional rockets, not nuclear ones.

Former chief U.N. arms inspector Richard Butler denounced Washington for promoting "shocking double standards" by treating Iraq differently than all other nuclear powers, including itself.

No to Iraq War: continued on page 2

PRO-WAR SUPPORT DROPS

U.S.	26%	(Pew Center)
Spain	7%	(Cadena Ser)
Australia	6%	(SBS)

ANTI-WAR OPINION RISES

France	77%	(NY Times)*
Germany	76%	(NY Times)*
Britain	81%	(Guardian)

*oppose war on Iraq even if U.N. backs it

Worse, the Los Angeles Times reported on Jan. 25 that it had uncovered Pentagon plans to unleash nuclear weapons upon Iraq. (See War Watch, p.2.)

In his State of the Union speech, Bush repeated that war is justified because Iraq threatens both its neighbors and the U.S.

with weapons of mass destruction. He argued that Iraq is linked to Sept. 11 terrorism. But former South African President Nelson Mandela, and many others, say that the real motivation for war is that "George Bush wants to get hold of the Iraqi oil"—the world's second largest reserve.

Iraq's neighbors consider the U.S.-backed Israeli occupation of Palestine to be the chief threat to peace in the region, not Iraq. And no one has produced a shred



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WAR WATCH

BY ELLEN KAISER

PENTAGON READIES NUCLEAR STRIKES ON IRAQ

The Bush administration is actively planning to use nuclear weapons to destroy underground bunkers and thwart the use of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Defense analyst William M. Arkin learned about this unprecedented integration of nuclear weapons into battlefield planning from confidential sources and leaked memos. On Jan. 26 he wrote in the L.A. Times that adding nuclear weapons to the "normal option ladder makes their use more likely—especially under a policy of preemption that says Washington alone will decide when to strike." This dangerous policy is likely to lead other nuclear powers to respond in kind.

GUNS NOT BUTTER

The 2004 budget the Bush administration proposed in February contains increased funding for domestic security and the military, but little else. Of \$30 billion in new spending, \$14 billion is for the military and \$5 billion is for domestic security. There is a meager \$1 billion increase in education spending, and only \$10 billion for the escalating needs brought on by an economic downturn and record-breaking state and city budget deficits. At the same time, Bush is pushing for a \$674 billion tax cut over the next 10 years, which will put additional wealth in the pockets of the rich.

LABOR ORGANIZES AGAINST WAR

Over 100 representatives of central labor councils, ad-hoc labor committees against the war, and local unions from across the country attended the "National Meeting of Labor Organizations and Officials Opposed to U.S. War in Iraq" on Jan. 11 in Chicago. The group adopted a founding resolution, chose U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW) as its name, and agreed that the most important next step was to get more labor organizations on board. USLAW believes it can win

200 unions and principal officers to back its antiwar resolution and to bring labor's muscle to the antiwar movement at this crucial time. Contact G8751@erols.com.

U.N. PREDICTS CRISIS IN IRAQ WAR

U.N. agencies say that 500,000 Iraqis would be injured in the early stage of a war, even if nuclear weapons were not detonated. They also predict that up to 9.5 million Iraqis would immediately become dependent on aid agencies for food. Less than half the population would have access to clean water. The U.N. document, titled "Likely Humanitarian Scenarios," also predicts "The outbreak of diseases in epidemic if not pandemic proportions is very likely."

INTERNATIONALS IN IRAQ

Voices in the Wilderness has sent more than 60 delegations to Iraq with supplies since 1996. As war looms, VitW delegations are participating in the Iraq Peace Team. Peace Team delegations travel to Baghdad and other Iraqi cities and return home "to bring awareness of the reality of Iraqi life, a reality that is not available on most media outlets." www.non-violence.org/vitw.

Others are heading for Iraq with the intent of acting as human shields at potential bombing targets. The "We the People" campaign, organized by a 1991 Gulf War veteran, has gathered volunteers from the U.S., Britain, Ireland, Switzerland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and Denmark. www.humanshields.org.

BOOKS NOT BOMBS

The National Youth and Student Peace Coalition is organizing a one-day student strike March 5 under the banner "Books Not Bombs! Stop The War Against Iraq!" www.nyspc.net. In another effort, student activists representing 79 college and high school antiwar committees around the country met on Jan. 17 in Washington, D.C. and

San Francisco to form the Campus Antiwar Network. www.antiwarnetwork.org

ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION

The U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to counsel and a fair trial. Yet two U.S. citizens, Yasser Hamdi and Jose Padilla, are held in military jails as "enemy combatants" without being charged with crimes and without access to lawyers. Hundreds of people detained after Sept. 11 were also denied their right to counsel. Most recently the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals denied Hamdi access to a lawyer and sided with the Bush administration's claim of "absolute authority in a time of war."

FREE MARWAN BARGHOUTI

On Jan. 19 an Israeli court ruled that popular Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti must stand trial on April 6. Because he is a member of the Palestinian legislature and Israel is a foreign power, Barghouti argues, "The state of Israel doesn't have the right to try me or accuse me. I am fighting for the rights of my people against the cruel occupation." Barghouti maintains he is innocent of charges that he participated in attacks that left 26 Israelis dead.

Former South African President Nelson Mandela says, "What is happening to Barghouti is exactly the same as what happened to me. The government tried to de-legitimize the African National Congress and its armed struggle by putting me on trial." www.freebarghouti.org. ■

No to Iraq War From page 1

President Bush has adopted a new, offensive military doctrine that calls for preemptive strikes. This strategy includes the first use of nuclear weapons. He has endorsed "regime change"—forcibly replacing "unfriendly" governments, even if democratically elected, like that of Venezuela.

Bush has publicly threatened to attack 60 countries that

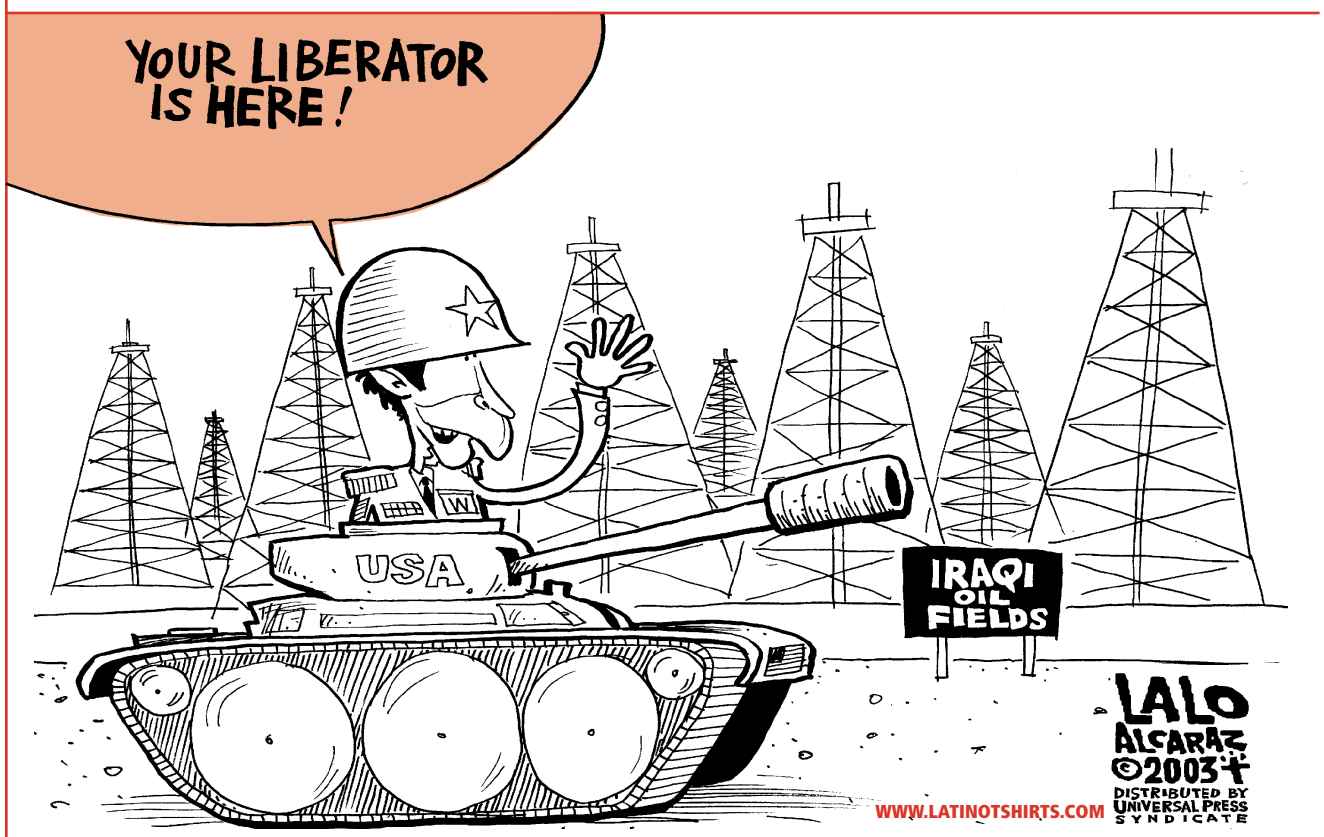
'George Bush wants to get hold of the Iraqi oil.'

—Nelson Mandela
former President of South Africa

he claims promote terrorism, starting with Iraq. As of Jan. 29, 86 percent of more than 314,000 voters in an ongoing Time on-line poll said that the U.S.—not Iraq or North Korea—poses the "greatest threat to world peace in 2003."

People around the world believe that Washington is preparing to spill much blood for control of Iraq's tremendous oil reserves. They fear that Bush dreams of empire building. The vast majority opposes these plans as immoral, dangerous, illegal, unnecessary or impossible. They are making their voices heard. ■

Hany Khalil coordinates Racial Justice 9/11, a national network of people of color against the war, and works with War Times in New York City. Bob Wing is managing editor of War Times.



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World Opposes Bush's Aggression

Large majorities in every country polled except Israel oppose the Bush administration's drive for war in Iraq. Washington's militaristic foreign policy incites resentment and resistance on every continent. Bush's attempt to bully the rest of the world is dramatically increasing the threat of nuclear warfare and terrorism.

Popular Upsurges in Latin America

Opposition to U.S. policy has fueled powerful new popular movements for social justice in Latin America. After a decade of increased debt, poverty and crisis, these movements have reached a new crescendo in response to President Bush's turn to militarism and the U.S.-backed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

Even conservative leaders like Vicente Fox of Mexico are publicly

In October 2002, Brazil, Latin America's most populous and powerful country, elected Luiz da Silva ("Lula"), a socialist trade unionist, as its newest president. After years of pro-U.S. presidents, da Silva is taking the lead in blazing a more independent path for Brazil and Latin America.

At the World Social Forum this January, da Silva exclaimed, "The world doesn't need a war. It needs understanding. It is not possible to continue with a world in which a few eat up to five times a day and many do not eat for five days."

The whole Andean region—Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and

Latin American voters are choosing leftist, populist and indigenous leaders over pro-U.S. candidates.

seeking to block U.S. aggression in Iraq. As a member of the United Nations Security Council, Mexico was instrumental in defeating the U.S. demand that the U.N. endorse the use of military force against Iraq.

In Venezuela more than 300,000 mostly poor people took to the streets on Jan. 23 to support embattled President Hugo Chavez against an opposition strike. Greg Palast, reporting for BBC said, "Venezuela is actually the second front in the Bush war against Iraq. In order to continue its control over oil supply and price during an invasion of Iraq, the Bush

Bolivia—is turning against U.S. policies that, they say, have increased debt and poverty. In November 2002 Ecuadorans elected populist Lucio Gutierrez as their first ever president representing indigenous people. Gutierrez triumphed over U.S.-backed billionaire Alvaro Noboa.

In June 2002, Evo Morales, an indigenous leader and spokesman for the Movement Toward Socialism, nearly won the Bolivian election. Denounced by the U.S. press as a "coca chewing Aymara Indian leader who would nationalize Bolivia's industries, [and] stop pay-



More than 50,000 South Koreans joined a Dec. 14, 2002 protest of U.S. military presence in Korea and the proposed Iraq war. Chung Sung-Jun/Getty Images

Nuclear Crisis in Korea

The current nuclear face-off between the U.S. and North Korea—and the mass anti-U.S. movement in South Korea—shows the extreme dangers and limits of the Bush administration's aggressive foreign policy.

In recent months, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

to immediately back down, the U.S. was willing to attack Iraq and North Korea simultaneously. It sought to unite its Asian allies—Japan, China and South Korea—behind this hard-line approach, but they refused.

The U.S. has long posed itself as South Korea's protector against socialist China and North Korea.

North Korea says it will halt its nuclear programs if the U.S. agrees to a mutual non-aggression pact.

(DPRK)—the official name of North Korea—has ejected international weapons inspectors and withdrawn from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty. It threatened to restart nuclear weapons production "as an act of self-defense" unless the U.S. agreed to a mutual non-aggression pact.

These defiant acts followed more than a year of threatening moves by the Bush administration.

In January 2002, Bush tagged the DPRK as part of an "Axis of Evil" along with Iraq and Iran. Then Bush listed it as one of the targets for a possible preemptive nuclear strike. More recently Washington violated the previous U.S.-DPRK nuclear agreement by conducting mock nuclear strike exercises in South Korea.

The New York Times reports that Bush's policies give countries like the DPRK few options. "The Bush administration seems only willing to confront regimes that are militarily weak. The incentives for North Korea are clear. There's no point in playing nice—it will bring neither aid nor security. The best self-preservation strategy for [North Korea] is to be dangerous."

Nonetheless, Washington angrily declared that if North Korea failed

More than 37,000 U.S. troops and numerous nuclear weapons are stationed there. Now anti-American sentiment is sweeping the South. In December, tens of thousands demonstrated against the U.S. military after one of its vehicles killed two Korean schoolgirls.

That same month South Korean voters rejected a pro-U.S. conservative presidential candidate in favor of liberal Roh Moo Hyun. Roh campaigned for open and positive relations with the North. The Los Angeles Times reports that many South Koreans believe the U.S. poses a greater danger than North Korea.

So instead of a U.S.-led alliance against the DPRK, Washington faces the possibility of an alliance between North and South against the U.S. Washington has therefore been forced to retreat from its hard-line approach and to seek a negotiated settlement to the Korean crisis.

The Korean crisis also suggests that the U.S. drive for war with Iraq is not just about nuclear weapons. Instead, Iraq's vast oil reserves and its inability to defend itself against the U.S. may explain why Bush is so eager to attack.

—Jung Hee Choi

Afghanistan's Agony

Even Bush's "victory" in Afghanistan seems to have increased the misery of the people. The bloody battle that broke out on Jan. 28 shows the instability of the regime. Frida Berrigan of the World Policy Institute reports:

"There has been a ten-fold increase in opium production in the last year, and the drug lords are Northern Alliance leaders and U.S. allies who helped oust the Taliban. The government of President Hamid Karzai is so shaky that he counts on three separate security details—his own, U.S. Special Forces and personnel from a private military company called DynCorp.

According to the United Nations, half of all Afghan children suffer from chronic malnutrition and one out of every four children dies before the age of five. There are almost 4 million Afghan refugees, mostly women and children. An estimated 16,000 women are dying

The U.N. says one out of every four Afghan children dies before the age of five.

each year from pregnancy-related causes; this is the second highest maternal mortality rate in the world.

Human Rights Watch asserts that U.S. military forces are actively backing Ismail Khan, a warlord in western Afghanistan with a disastrous human rights record. U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld met with Khan and described him as "an appealing person." Human Rights Watch documents widespread abuses by officials under Khan's command, including arbitrary and politically motivated arrests, intimidation, extortion and torture." ■



Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (left).

administration is pushing hard to get rid of the non-compliant, elected government of Hugo Chavez."

Most dramatically, Latin American voters have rejected pro-U.S. candidates in favor of a variety of leftist, populist and indigenous leaders over the last year.

ment of its foreign debt," Morales lost the election by a mere two points.

In Uruguay, Tabare Vasquez of the leftist Broad Front is widely favored to win the March presidential election.

—Bob Wing and Elizabeth Martinez

THE WAR ON IMMIGRANTS HEATS UP

National Day of Protest Scheduled

BY ELIZABETH (BETITA) MARTÍNEZ

Targeting immigrants as potential terrorists took a giant leap just minutes after the first plane hit the Twin Towers in New York, when a Sikh man ran for his life as four men chased him yelling “terrorist.” Since then, persons presumed to be Arab or Muslim have been threatened, imprisoned indefinitely, beaten and even murdered.

Last Dec. 6, the Dept. of Justice announced that men aged 16 to 25 from certain largely Muslim countries—now 25 in number—and who had arrived in the U.S. before Sept. 30, 2001, had to register with the INS.

Almost 24,000 had registered by mid January, of whom more than 1,200 were detained. Another 2,477 had been issued “notices to appear,” the first step in the deportation process.

This program is a new Catch-22: If you obey the law and register, you could be detained or deported and the same could happen if you don’t.

Thousands of men and their families live in fear, uncertain about whether to register, since discovery of any minor violation could mean deportation, denial of pending permanent resident status or detention. Some have fled the U.S. to seek refugee status in Canada.

In New York, when a group of 25-30 men showed up on time at the INS office, they were told it was closed and they should come back the next day. But the next day was past the INS deadline inviting detention. Only strong protest to the director prevented that.

A young Arab woman commented, “Not every nationality understands the others’ experiences as being the same, as coming from the same place. An Iranian who suffers from INS abuse of refugee rights may not see the connections between that and how the Border Patrol treats Mexicans right away. But people are learning.”

Public opposition must have played a role in Senator Ted Kennedy’s successful move to delete the registration program from an appropriations bill on Jan. 23. The issue comes before the House of Representatives soon.

New protests are already planned. Activists have chosen Feb. 20 as a National Day of Solidarity with Arab, Muslim and South Asian immigrants. Remembering their own experience of detention in the World War II internment camps, Japanese Americans will hold a Day of Remembrance on



Don Murray/Getty Images

Philadelphians protest detentions and the “Special Registration” program of the Immigration and Naturalization Service on Jan. 10.

A NEW UNITY

On Jan. 10, protests of the registration program took place outside INS offices in major cities. In San Francisco Arabs, Muslims and South Asians were joined by

Discovery of any minor violation could mean deportation or detention.

Latinos, Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese, whites and African Americans. Many saw connections between their experience and that of other communities.

Together they expressed an electrifying, unifying militance more powerful than at many larger demonstrations. Renee Saucedo of La Raza Centro Legal captured the feeling: “When you lie to one of us, you lie to all of us. When you detain one of us, you detain all of us. When you terrorize some of us, you terrorize all of us!”

Feb. 22, linking past and present. In March, organizations of color are planning civil disobedience actions.

Detainees are also getting organized. On Jan. 14, seven men held since the post-Sept. 11 roundup, and not charged with any crimes, went on a hunger strike in New Jersey’s Passaic County Jail, demanding decent food, medical care and other guaranteed rights. A new spirit of defiance by immigrants is rising in the land. ■

Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez is an editor of *War Times* and the author of six books on social justice struggles in the Americas.

African Americans Fight for Peace

BY GERALD LENOIR

Black ministers and activists drew inspiration from the anti-Vietnam War stance of Martin Luther King Jr. and celebrated his birthday in January by organizing protests against the impending war with Iraq.

Black Voices for Peace, a Washington, D.C.-based group, sponsored an antiwar conference and training at Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ on Jan. 20. A multiracial, but largely black audience of over 3,000 people jammed into the church. They sang, rallied and attended workshops

N.Y., hosted antiwar rallies in November and January attended by overflow crowds. “I’m working to translate the opposition in the black community into participation in the peace movement,” Daughtry said.

The peace movement draws prestige and visibility from such black leaders as

Only 19.2% of blacks support a war with Iraq.

on subjects like Iraq and U.S. aid for the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Former Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney, civil rights veteran James Forman, Green Party leader Ralph Nader and others delivered rousing speeches. “Our peace event was well attended by blacks and reflects the fact that there is a strong antiwar sentiment in the black community,” said veteran activist and Black Voices leader Damu Smith.

A recent national poll conducted by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, an African American research and public policy organization, found only 19.2 percent of blacks support a war with Iraq.

BLACK CHURCHES ORGANIZE

Rev. Graylan Hagler, senior minister at Plymouth Congregational and a leader in Black Voices, said, “A war with Iraq will mean that disproportionately people of color will fight and will be killed. We cannot wait for the first bullets to start flying. It’s time to act and to mobilize.”

Black churches around the country held events celebrating Dr. King’s opposition to war and racism. Rev. Herbert Daughtry, pastor of House of the Lord Church in Brooklyn,

Alice Walker, Jesse Jackson, Harry Belafonte, Rep. Barbara Lee, Danny Glover and Aaron McGruder. National black organizations and religious denominations have also taken up the antiwar banner, including the NAACP, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, the Black Radical Congress and TransAfrica Forum. Many local black and multiracial grassroots groups are also organizing against the war in their communities.

Young black activists across the country, like Erica Thomas of the Southeast Regional Economic Justice Network, are working with student groups to protest an attack on Iraq. Thomas, a member of Racial Justice 9-11, a national antiwar network of racial justice organizations, is organizing peace rallies at North Carolina Central University, a black college in Durham.

“I realized how important it is to connect our economic justice work to the antiwar movement because the war is an overarching issue. We’re fighting a war at home,” Thomas said.

Black Voices’s immediate priority is to mobilize blacks to



Veteran civil rights activist James Forman addresses an overflow crowd in Washington, D.C. on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

the national antiwar march organized by the United for Peace and Justice Coalition in New York City on Feb. 15. Black Voices is also sponsoring a regional concert and rally for peace in April in Washington, D.C. and a similar national event in October. The group is also seeking to form additional local chapters.

“We need strong community-based efforts coordinated at the national level to insure that the antiwar sentiment within the black community is demonstrated through a visible outpouring of opposition,” Smith stated.

Black Voices for Peace can be contacted at (202) 232-5690 or www.bvfp.org. ■

Gerald Lenoir is a *War Times* editor and art director.

MAPPING THE U.S. ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

The peace movement is everywhere, from Wall Street to Main Street. Hundreds of thousands have joined antiwar actions in 400+ U.S. cities in all 50 states. Protests have been organized in at least 52 countries.



Research: Global Exchange. Photos: Arnoldo Garcia. Design: Guillermo Prado

PEACE ACTIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Argentina • Austria • Bahrain • Belgium • Brazil • Canada • Chile • China • Denmark • Ecuador • Egypt • Estonia • Finland • France • Germany • Greece • Guatemala • Hungary • Iceland • India • Indonesia • Iraq • Ireland • Italy • Japan • Jordan • Macedonia • Mexico • Morocco • Netherlands • New Zealand • North Korea • Norway • Pakistan • Palestine • Peru • Philippines • Poland • Puerto Rico • Russia • Scotland • South Africa • South Korea • Spain • Switzerland • Syria • Thailand • Turkey • United Kingdom • United States • Venezuela

School District Sponsors Iraq Teach-In

BY CLAUDIA DELARIOS

Educators and parents in Oakland, Calif. recently persuaded their school board that students should learn what is at stake in the proposed war with Iraq. A pioneering resolution, backed by the Oakland Education Association, called for a voluntary, district-wide day of education on the issues.

Although not explicitly antiwar, this decision resulted in the education of thousands of K-12 students. Dan Siegel, school board member and author of the resolution, stated, "We have enough integrity and respect for the students to provide them with the information and let them make up their own minds."

The teach-in took place on Jan. 14, coinciding with Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday and the antiwar demonstration on Jan. 18 in San Francisco.

Teachers worked with scholars and activists to create more than 100 programs for K-12. Parents were also invited. The common theme was critical thinking. Activities included class presentations, assemblies, panel discussions, films, debates, lunchtime hip hop concerts, art projects and after-school meetings.

Elementary school teacher Manny Lopez said, "My second graders benefited tremendously. Today was truly one of the greatest days in my teaching career."

DEBATING MILITARY RECRUITMENT

A fifth grader wrote a letter to President Bush stating, "When you go to war, you are setting a bad example for all kids in the U.S.A. Wars and fights are not right, and bombing beautiful things is not right either."

OAKLAND 5TH GRADER TO PRESIDENT BUSH: "WHEN YOU GO TO WAR, YOU ARE SETTING A BAD EXAMPLE FOR ALL KIDS."

Knowledgeable speakers led class discussions on topics ranging from the current crisis in the context of U.S. history to the effects of depleted uranium on the human body. Members of organizations like the Women of Color Resource Center and Racial Justice 9-11 worked with students to debunk stereotypes about Islam and Arab people. By the second half of that workshop students were busy brainstorming ways to stop attacks on scapegoated communities.

Sessions that focused on military recruitment and service provided for some of the liveliest discussions. Students gained invaluable information by talking with medical personnel from the front lines of the war in Afghanistan, and members of the Veterans' Speakers Alliance.

After a class brainstorm about the \$200 billion it may cost to wage war on Iraq, one Fremont High sophomore said, "They don't care about us having good schools or jobs or enough food or money to pay the rent or feel safe in our neighborhoods. But then when they want to go to war they want to use us out there on the battlefield. I ain't going to war, man, not for these fools."

Imrul Mazid, a community presenter, reflected: "The students thought critically and made all the connections themselves—racism and war, repression at home, slashed education budgets and military recruiting in

schools and communities of color. They are the true leaders of our world."

Jonah Zern, a teach-in organizer, captured the moment: "Amazing things happened throughout our district today. I think many of us remembered why we became teachers." Plans are already in the works for another

teach-in, and individual classroom presentations are ongoing. People from all over the country have contacted the organizers about how to get their city councils, school boards and unions not only to pass antiwar resolutions, but also to take positive action to help educate their constituencies.

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Claudia DeLarios coordinates the peer development program known as POSSE at Fremont High School in Oakland, Calif.



Students, parents and teachers from Oakland's Melrose Elementary School at the Jan. 18 antiwar protest in San Francisco.