



**Mumia Abu-Jamal speaks up for rights of lesbian reporter Sandy Nelson**

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**Rudy Acuña, Chicano rebel and scholar, recounts victory over Univ. of California**

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# The Freedom Socialist

*Voice of Revolutionary Feminism*

July-Sept. 1996

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## Parties without programs — no real alternative

BY LINDA AVERILL

In 1994, after an election that more than half of Chicago sat out, Newt Gingrich claimed a public mandate for his Republican Revolution.

"Finaglers, liars, jugglers and seat-holders," is how Lloyd Jackson, a Chicago welder, described that year's candidates to *The New York Times*. "At election time, tongues wag both ways."

**A longer menu, please.** Like many others, Jackson is disgusted with Democrats and Republicans alike. Today's polls show that at least 60 percent of voters want another option. "Angry white men" and middle-class swing voters get the most attention, but those most alienated are in fact working women, people of color, sexual minorities, youth, and unionists, whom both parties ignore.

In response to this mood, third parties that claim to be progressive are mushrooming — and, to strengthen their forces, many of them are attempting to ally with one another.

But more doesn't necessarily mean better. If voters are to have a true alternative, at least one of these parties or amalgams must be willing to do what



At left: Possible presidential candidate Ralph Nader, shown with scientist and activist Vandana Shiva at a 1995 teach-in. Above: Ross Perot and Lenora Fulani (formerly of the New Alliance Party), now combining forces in the Patriot Party.

the Democrats and Republicans won't — put forward a concrete program in the interests of workers and the poor.

On this score, socialist candidates win hands down, and we'll rate them next issue. But they appear on ballots in only a limited number of areas.

Voters' best hope for a mass vehicle would logically be an independent party originating in the labor movement. La-

bor Party Advocates might develop into this entity, but its leadership decided, regrettably, not to run candidates in 1996 (see related editorial on page six).

So this time, we investigate three of the most prominent "grassroots" third-party mobilizations. How serious are they about giving you a choice? Where do they stand on the issues, and how distinct are they from the Democrats

and Republicans?

**Nader and the Greens: an imperfect union.** In California, the Green Party persuaded Ralph Nader to grace their presidential ticket, and attempts to draft Nader are under way in 44 more states.

The consumer-rights crusader has won wide respect for his criticism of corporate welfare. However, he refuses to endorse key planks of the Green platform addressing such things as affirmative action and immigrant rights. And in response to being asked whether he endorses the legalization of same-sex marriage, he brusquely answered that he doesn't get involved with "gonadal politics."

All this hardly makes him an appealing alternative to Clinton and Dole.

Moreover, Nader is not actively campaigning; he's "permitting" his name to be used, he says, in order to move the U.S. in the direction of replacing two-party politics with a "strengthened democracy." His main intentions seem to be to gain left leverage within the Democratic Party and to punish Clinton for allowing the speed limit to be raised —

to page 5

## Coalitions mobilize to save affirmative action from "Civil Rights Initiative" in California

BY MONICA HILL

Rightwingers in California are promoting a deceitfully named Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI) that would destroy one of the most significant gains of the Civil Rights Movement: affirmative action, which opened up new educational and job horizons for millions of people of color and women.

And as California goes, the opportunity-bashers hope, so goes the nation. Similar legislation has been proposed on the federal level and in 22 states.

**Discrimination still thrives.** CCRI, on the ballot for November, would bar public agencies from using race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin to discriminate against anyone or give preference to anyone. Calculated to sound innocuous, CCRI would ban outreach programs, goals, and timetables designed to give people of color and women a boost in the job market and schools.

Governor Pete Wilson and the University of California regents have already passed measures against affirmative action. CCRI, however, as a proposed amendment to the state constitu-

tion, is an attempt to permanently and comprehensively wipe out affirmative action in the vast and influential public sector.

Those who seek to end affirmative action preach that it is no longer needed.

In 1990, however, people of color made up nearly half of California's population, yet held only a quarter of its managerial and professional positions. And in 1989, women nationally still occupied only a paltry 8.6 percent of jobs in the skilled trades.

Statistics like these prove that affirmative action should be strengthened, not dismantled.

**Fancy rhetoric, sleazy reality.** The high-placed backers of CCRI, like Governor Pete Wilson, a primary force behind anti-immigrant Proposition 187, will admit to only the purest of motives.

But just like Hitler's Nazis, these demagogues are playing on ordinary people's fears about the economy to build support for a program that is thoroughly anti-working class. They know that, CCRI or no CCRI, layoffs will continue to be epidemic while corporate profits continue to soar. Their point is to offer the masses scapegoats, not solutions.

**Educate to win.** The best antidote to divide-and-conquer poison is always a solid united front that reveals the power of workers and students when they unite across lines of race and gender.

The movement to stop CCRI is growing. Campuses are already engulfed in protest. Numerous groups are organizing to get out the vote against it. And in Southern California, the L.A. Affirmative Action Defense Coalition, made up of grassroots unionists and community activists, is planning a massive, broad-based rally on September 28. (To contact them, call 213-365-1792.)

For this effort to succeed where the campaign against Proposition 187 failed, some important lessons must be noted:

1. *The Democrats can't be relied on for help.* They are not even pretending to offer an unequivocal defense of affirmative action.

2. *Don't let our own camp be divided.* Some liberals pursue the strategy of selling affirmative action as a boon for women while downplaying the question of color. This is not only racist; it's stupid and self-defeating. It took a mass movement led by dark-skinned people to win affirmative action, and that's what it will take to keep it.

Oppressed people have had it with the back of the bus. In fact, they've had it with being passengers! With women and people of color in the drivers' seats, affirmative action can be saved. □

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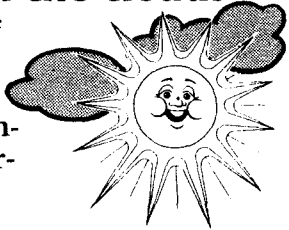
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U.S. workers desperately need a political voice of their own. Is it finally materializing? And if so, what will it stand for? Our editorial investigates.

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Mainstream analysts of social climate predict uninterrupted gloom and doom, but political weatherwoman Clara Fraser perceives the silver linings.



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### Upcoming FSP Convention

The Freedom Socialist Party will hold its 30-year anniversary convention January 3-6, 1997, in San Francisco. If you would like to attend, contact the FSP organizer in the branch nearest you or Henry Noble at the FSP National Office (please see directory on facing page).

## Freedom Socialist Credo

*The Freedom Socialist boldly confronts and makes sense of the dizzying events shaping today's revolutionary world.*



*We're Marxists, Leninists, Trotskyists, feminists, humanists...we believe that all today's gigantic upheavals are links in an enormous global effort to topple the tyranny of imperialism or Stalinist bureaucratism or racist arrogance.*

*We hail the decisive leadership role played by people of color and by sexual and national minorities in the worldwide class struggle.*

*We focus on women's non-stop fight for equality which, in the final analysis, challenges every single basis on which capitalism rests.*

*Our goal is to inject the socialist movement with the revitalizing ideas of Trotskyism and feminism in order to prepare it for victory in this crucial decade.*

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## WORLD BEAT

### MIDDLE EAST

#### U.S. supports and benefits from ongoing Israeli atrocities

U.S. defense contractors may turn out to be the prime beneficiaries of the merciless 16-day pounding that Israeli bombs rained on Lebanon in April, killing scores of people, including 105 refugees in a UN camp near the village of Qana.

The Clinton administration refused to join in the international outrage expressed after the cruel attacks, part of the

"collective punishment" that Israel routinely employs against Palestinian and Lebanese civilians to suppress opposition to its regional domination.

Instead, the administration volunteered to spend at least \$50 million to revive development of Nautilus laser weaponry, a rocket-repulsion system, for use against Islamic guerrillas fighting back against Israel's

15-year occupation of southern Lebanon.

The U.S. establishment will spend whatever it takes to prop up its client state. Israel is supported as a bulwark against revolution not only in the oil-rich Middle East, but also in turbulent Eastern Europe, where disappointment and anger over the comeback of capitalism is rising dangerously. □

### CHINA/TAIWAN

#### Island "independence" an illusion

As both mainland China and Taiwan undergo profound changes, the delicate equilibrium between these two separated parts of one nation cannot last.

China's growing openness to foreign exploitation threatens Taiwan's special relationship with imperialist sponsors like the U.S. The substantial profits that Taiwan now produces would be dwarfed by opportunities in China, population 1.3 billion, if capitalism were reimposed there. But this development is far from certain, and so the U.S. has adopted an attitude of "strategic ambiguity" toward China.

Taiwan, a former Japanese colony and the refuge for the U.S.-backed rulers of China de-



Lee Teng-hui backers celebrate in Taipei.

feated in the revolution, is home to just 21 million people. For it, "independence" is impossible, despite newly elected President Lee Teng-hui's apparent flirtation with this course. Taiwan must either reunite with the Chinese workers state, or remain a pawn for the largest capitalist nations — at a time when sharpening economic competition makes that role increasingly uncomfortable. □

### SOUTH AFRICA

#### Protests strengthen new constitution

On May 8, South Africa's parliament voted for a new constitution shaped by dramatic last-minute mobilizations against anti-labor and pro-apartheid provisions present in drafts.

A sweeping bill of rights enshrines the right to housing, food, water, education, and healthcare. It forbids discrimination based on race, sex, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy, or marital status. Workers' right to strike is guaranteed.

Not included was a clause giving bosses the right to lock workers out. A week before the vote, millions went on strike to demand its exclusion. Also left out was a hotly protested guarantee of state support for single-language education, sought to preserve white-only schools.

In the still-unfolding battle over South Africa's future, its historically most downtrodden citizens have made themselves heard once more. □

## Ebbs & Flows

**Died: MICHEL PABLO**, 85, Feb. 17, 1996, in Athens; born Mihalis Raptis in 1911. He advanced the theory that degenerated workers states would last for centuries, but lived long enough to see the monolithic Stalinist bloc wither away.

In Greece in the late 1920s, he was a student radical and labor supporter. In the 1930s, he joined the Left Opposition, the revolutionary current led by Leon Trotsky that aimed to free the USSR from the dictatorial, suicidal grip of Stalinism. Exiled to France, Pablo attended the 1938 founding conference of the Fourth International (FI), which brought together Trotskyist parties around the globe.

In the early 1950s, Pablo provoked the first division inside the FI. His newfound belief that Stalinism would dominate the entire workers' movement for hundreds of years caused him to urge Trotskyists to essentially dissolve themselves into Stalinist parties. The FI split into pieces over this policy, and although it was partially reconstituted in 1963, there has never since been a unified worldwide Trotskyist voice.

Pablo ended as a defender of Greek capitalism, praised by the likes of Serbian nationalist Gen-

eral Radko Mladic.

His long, remarkable career reflected the shifting pressures of his times, from his embrace of Marxism following the Russian Revolution to his capitulation to bourgeois nationalism in the post-Cold-War era. In his best days, however, he was no mere barometer of social forces, but a dedicated advocate for the liberation and solidarity of the international working class.

**Died: EDITH ZASLOW**, 83, on May 20, 1995, in Solana Beach, California; born March 6, 1912, in New York City.

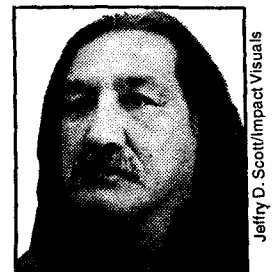
A highly energetic garment-worker organizer and Marxist, Zaslow joined the Socialist Workers Party in the 1930s.

During World War II, Zaslow played an important role in helping the SWP keep its political bearings during a faction fight led by Albert Goldman and Felix Morrow. She left the party a few years later, however, with supporters of Michel Pablo (please see above).

In 1977, she joined with the Freedom Socialist Party and others as a founder and brief member of the Committee for a Revolutionary Socialist Party, a Trotskyist regroupment effort

whose program emphasized the leadership of the most oppressed workers as a crucial component in global revolt.

**Denied parole: LEONARD PELTIER**, American Indian Movement leader framed in the deaths of two FBI agents killed during a police siege at Pine Ridge Reservation in 1975. The



Jeffrey D. Scott/Impact Visuals

FBI secured his conviction by fabricating evidence and using false testimony. He is serving two consecutive life terms.

In turning Peltier down, the Parole Commission ignored a contrary recommendation by its own officer. It said it would not grant a reconsideration hearing until December 2008.

Peltier's defense committee is demanding a retrial. To help, write LPDC, P.O. Box 583, Lawrence, KS 66044, or call (913)842-5774.

Dateline Canada

# Ontario strike shows bosses can be beaten

## Public workers protest privatization, layoffs, unionbusting, and cutbacks

BY BARRY WEISLEDER

The biggest strike in Ontario history produced an important victory for the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) and the whole workingclass movement. Tens of thousands of women and men, most first-time picketers, held the line through the bitterest winter in years. Countless unions, community groups and individuals extended solidarity at nearly 3,000 picket locations.

The key lesson of the five-week-long class conflict is that workers are ready to bolster their unions, stand up to the employers, and fight to bring down reactionary governments. All that's needed now is leadership, unity and mass strike action.

**Strength on the line.** The Conservative provincial government of Mike Harris thought that OPSEU, with its reputation for being weak and divided, and having won the right to strike only in 1994, would be a pushover.

But the Tories soon saw that the 66.6 percent vote to reject the government's last offer was no flash in the pan. OPSEU picket lines were strong and well-staffed. Of the 55,000 members legally eligible to strike, the overwhelming majority walked out and stayed out.

Although scabbing never approached serious proportions, it was important to strikers' morale to confront the scabs and limit access to struck work sites. This led to often creative picketing tactics, including invasions of "private" shopping malls, multi-use business complexes, and public transit tunnels.

The government tried to disrupt the strike by seeking numerous injunctions to limit or exclude pickets, and also attempted to force more workers into the ranks of those deemed "essential." They failed in almost every such attempt.

Then on March 18 the Tories called out the Ontario Public Provincial Police riot squad, replete with Star Wars helmets, menacing shields and batons. The OPP proceeded to pummel OPSEU members and allies blocking Tory ministers

seeking access to the Legislature and nearby Queen's Park buildings. Repeated TV broadcast of the police violence proved to be a strike turning point.

The Tories were forced by public opinion to soften their stance at the bargaining table. Yet even when central issues were finally resolved, the government still prolonged negotiation of back-to-work protocol for days, hoping to crack the Union's firm op-

portunities were obtained, and the strike privatized the government to withdraw concession demands such as: short-term layoffs; reduced callback, standby, and on-call rates; and changes to compressed work weeks. The strike won faster grievance handling, unreduced pensions for laid-off workers near early retirement age, limits on management rights, and enhanced dental coverage.

Clearly, the job security features in the new contract, ratified on March 31

bour movement. Mighty, mighty OPSEU has arrived.

**On to the general strike!** The OPSEU strike was both a shining example and a missed opportunity. It showed that working people are ready to fight. It also revealed a labour leadership that's, at best, hesitant; or, worse, just praying for salvation at the next election.

During the strike many Union members wanted the Executive Board to meet and deal with pressing issues, like the proposal to raise strike pay. But Board meetings were suspended; two telephone conferences were a poor substitute; decision-making was centralized in the hands of the President and non-elected staff. Members deserve a more democratic and responsive leadership.

In terms of policy, the Union explained that the strike was not about money; it was about defending fairness to all. But alongside this message was the position that layoffs are unavoidable; that our real mission is to ensure "a soft landing" for its victims. This mixed message undercut our commitment to fight the attack on public services. Worse, it conceded ideological ground to Harris' Common Sense Revolution.

The truth is, there's no need or justification for cuts and layoffs. Public services should be expanded, not cut back.

The rank and file have the right idea, inspired by the example of the workers of France last Fall: "Hey Mike, hey Harris, we'll shut you down like Paris."

With the infamous three-year Social Contract now at an end, the agreements of nearly a million public workers are up for renewal. No one should fight alone. Together we can win big.

The clarion call should go out that an all-out, all-sector, province-wide general strike to bring down the Tories is Labour's next step. □

**Barry Weisleder, a leader of Socialist Action in Canada, is on the Executive Board of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union. A longer version of this article first appeared in the Canadian Socialist Action.**



Feb. 24, Hamilton, Ontario: 100,000 demonstrators protest funding cuts.

position to reprisals against strikers.

Again, to no avail, as OPSEU held tight to the end.

**Measurements of Union victory.** There's little doubt that OPSEU's expenditure of over \$22 million on the strike was money well spent.

The first measurement of that is the new collective agreement itself. Without the strike it would have been impossible to improve on the severance, bumping rights and retraining provisions in the employer's February 6 final offer. Without the strike there would be no greater protection for pensions, job classifications, and wages, and no new rights for unclassified (casual) employees.

Some protection for workers facing

by a 95 percent margin, do not stop the Tories from eliminating thousands of positions. The contract will, nonetheless, slow down the process.

Similarly, genuine successor rights (where privatized jobs retain union and contract protection) were not achieved. It would have taken sympathy strike action by other unions to force the Tory government to back down on successor rights and job cuts altogether.

The fundamental measure of success, however, is the post-strike strength of the workers on the job and in society. OPSEU members returned to their work locations on April 1 with newfound skills, pride and confidence.

Through the strike the new OPSEU won widespread respect across the la-

## ...Aborigines

from page 8

Australians" as a strategy to head off a collision between two irreconcilable foes: the Aboriginal movement and big business. The policy proved to be long on catchwords and short on results.

This January, 200 rallied in Brisbane against the sham reconciliation. When officials wouldn't meet with them, protesters splattered police and buildings with bags of red dye symbolising the blood of those who have died in lockup. Among their demands was a call for a new enquiry into deaths in custody — this time, conducted by Aborigines.

Marshall Bell, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Legal Services Secretariat coordinator, told rally-goers: "Everything we talk about — deaths in custody, social issues — comes back to land and the fact that we don't have any."

Court battles for territory rights led to the 1993 Native Title Act, an unprecedented legal recognition of Aboriginal claims. In the recent national elections, the Liberal/National Party Coalition promised to legislate these rights out of existence. Backed solidly by business, they won, and new Prime Minister John Howard immediately launched an attack on key Aboriginal organisations.

Under the coalition's rule, Barbara Nicholson foresees an explosion of racist abuse. By denouncing affirmative

action as "special treatment" and sneering at anti-discrimination laws as "political correctness," Howard is encouraging white working people to blame Aborigines and immigrants for unemployment and falling wages.

**With one fist.** But the battles of workers and Aborigines for a better life are not antagonistic, but interdependent, as Nicholson makes clear:

"The connection of Aboriginal struggle to the class struggle goes back to January 26, 1788 — the day of invasion. Australia was set up as a penal colony, and those workingclass white men and women didn't want to be here. Historical documents record how Aboriginal people were absolutely appalled by the treatment of these people by the colonial authorities — the public hangings and floggings of the convicts."

And today, says Ray Jackson, another leader in the NSW Watch Committee, "All of us who are abused by the Establishment — unionists, Aboriginal people, national minorities and all working people — have to eradicate what divides us, like racism and sexism."

"We have to speak with one voice and strike with one fist." □

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# Coaliciones se movilizan para salvar la acción afirmativa de la "Iniciativa de Derechos Civiles"

*La mejor defensa contra el veneno en los procesos electorales es un frente unido*

POR MONICA HILL

Los derechistas de California están promoviendo una engañosa Iniciativa de Derechos Civiles (CCRI, por sus siglas en inglés) que destruiría uno de los logros más importantes del movimiento de derechos civiles: la acción afirmativa, la cual abrió nuevos horizontes educativos y laborales para millones de personas de color y mujeres.

De la misma manera que se pierde California, esperan los destructores de oportunidades, se perderá toda la nación. Principios legislativos similares se han propuesto a nivel federal y en 22 estados.

## La discriminación crece aún.

La CCRI, que formará parte de la boleta de noviembre, prohibiría a las agencias públicas usar la raza, el sexo, el color, la etnicidad o el origen nacional para discriminar en contra de o para dar preferencia a cualquier persona.

Diseñada con la apariencia de ser inofensiva, la CCRI prohibiría los programas de reclutamiento público, las metas y los calendarios diseñados para dar un impulso a la gente de color y a las mujeres en el mercado de trabajo y las escuelas.

El Gobernador Pete Wilson y los regentes de la Universidad de California ya han aprobado medidas en contra de la acción afirmativa. Sin embargo la CCRI, la cual es una enmienda a la constitución del estado, es un intento de erradicar permanente y totalmente la acción afirmativa del vasto e influyente sec-

tor público.

Aquéllos que quieren acabar con la acción afirmativa proclaman que ya no es necesaria.

Sin embargo, en 1990 la gente de color formaba casi la mitad de la población de California a pesar de ocupar sólo una cuarta parte de sus puestos gerenciales y profesionales. Además, en 1989, a nivel nacional las mujeres sólo ocupaban un mi-

admite tener sólo los motivos más nobles.

Sin embargo, igual que los Nazis de Hitler, estos demagogos se están aprovechando de los temores de la gente común acerca de la economía para obtener apoyo para un programa que va completamente en contra de los trabajadores.

Ellos saben que, exista o no la CCRI, continuará la epidemia de los

CCRI está creciendo. Las universidades se encuentran ya inmersas en protestas. Numerosos grupos se están organizando para exhortar votos en contra de ella.

Además, en California del Sur, la Coalición en Defensa de la Acción Afirmativa de Los Angeles, integrada por sindicalistas y activistas comunitarios a nivel de bases, está planeando una manifestación masiva y general para el 28 de septiembre. (Para contactarlos, llame al 213-365-1792.)

Para que esta empresa tenga éxito donde falló la campaña contra la Proposición 187, se deben hacer notar algunas puntos:

1. *No podemos depender de los demócratas para que nos auxilien.* Ellos ni siquiera tienen la intención de ofrecer una defensa absoluta a la acción afirmativa.

2. *No dejemos que se divida nuestro propio equipo.* Algunas liberales utilizan la estrategia de vender la acción afirmativa como un favor para las mujeres restándole importancia a la cuestión del color.

Esto no sólo es racista, sino también estúpido; es un fracaso autoimpuesto.

Fue necesario un movimiento masivo dirigido por gente de piel oscura para lograr la acción afirmativa, y es eso lo que será necesario para preservarla.

La gente oprimida ya está harta de estar en la parte trasera del autobús. De hecho, ¡ya están hartos de ser pasajeros! La acción afirmativa se puede salvar con las mujeres y la gente de color en el asiento del conductor. □

**A la derecha: Protesta del 26 de febrero en contra de la CCRI en la Universidad de California en Los Angeles. At right: February 26 protest against CCRI at the University of California, Los Angeles.**



Carolina Kroon/Impact Visuals



**A la izquierda: "Marcha contra la derecha" patrocinada por la Organización Nacional para Mujeres el 14 de abril. At left: "March Against the Right" sponsored by the National Organization for Women, April 14.**

serable 8.6 por ciento de los trabajos en el ámbito de profesionistas calificados.

Estadísticas como éstas comprueban que la acción afirmativa debería fortalecerse y no desmembrarse.

**Bonita como retórica, sórdido en la realidad.** Los partidarios de alto rango de la CCRI, como el Gobernador Pete Wilson, quien es una fuerza fundamental detrás de la proposición 187 antiinmigrantes,

despidos mientras las ganancias corporativas sigan aumentando. Su intención es ofrecer chivos expiatorios a las masas y no soluciones.

**Educa y ganarás.** El mejor antidoto contra el veneno de "divide y vencerás" será siempre un sólido frente unido que exhiba el poder de los trabajadores y estudiantes cuando se unen sin importar las divisiones de raza y género.

El movimiento para detener la

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**Rodolfo Acuña** is an activist, teacher, historian, and author, most recently of *Anything But Mexican: Chicanos in Contemporary Los Angeles*. He is also a founder and leading light of Chicano Studies.

Acuña applied in 1990 for a position in the Chicano Studies Department of the University of California, Santa Barbara. Despite his impressive credentials, he was turned down. Members of the department, who had voted to hire him, were overruled by a review committee whose membership UCSB kept secret.

The panel found Acuña's "fiery brand of advocacy" inappropriate and his pioneering scholarship "weak."

Acuña sued the University of California Regents in 1992. On October 30, 1995, he won a milestone victory when a multiracial jury in Los Angeles agreed that he had been discriminated against.

In December, however, Judge Audrey Collins refused to compel UCSB to appoint Acuña to the position in dispute. Instead, she granted him a \$325,000 award. Acuña continues to fight for the job he was unfairly denied.

Like Acuña, interviewer **Yolanda Alaniz** of Los Angeles is an organizer, theoretician, and writer. As co-author of *The Chicano Struggle: A Racial or National Movement?*, she relied heavily on the research and analysis Acuña presented in his seminal work *Occupied America*.

**Alaniz: What are the main issues of your case and what is its current status?**

**Acuña:** When we brought the case originally, it was for political, race, and age discrimination. However, the political causes of actions were thrown out on technicalities, and the federal judge, Judge Collins, threw out the race discrimination [charge]. But we went down to the wire on what we had.

We realized that Capital can always whittle you down; they have resources and can pick at you on technicalities. I saw numerous lawyers who did not want to take up the case — not because we did not have a good case, but they thought it would cost too much money. You can not let them get away with this.

We won our verdict. We had a workingclass jury and they found in our favor. UC spent four million dollars and their attorneys were much more seasoned, but we proved they could be beaten.

However, to get the remedy is another thing. UC has been spending an enormous amount of money trying to take attorneys' fees away from my attorneys, trying to take whatever victory we have.

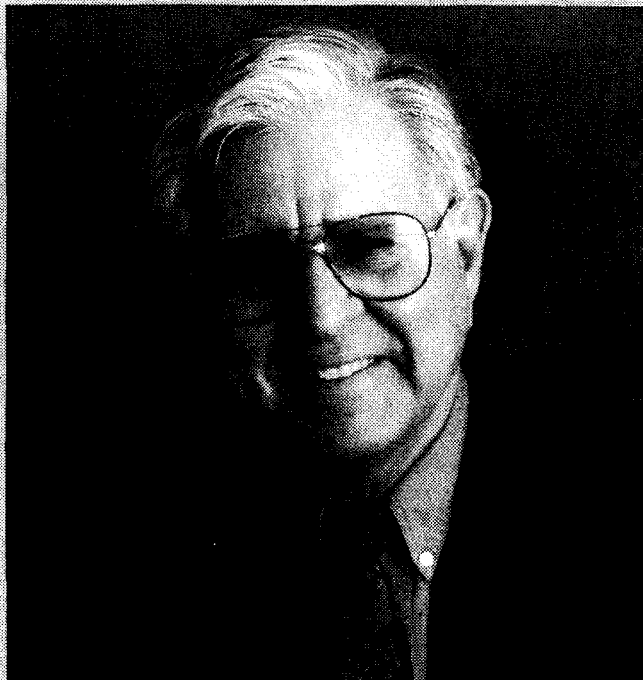
And the judge has denied me reinstatement, saying I created a "hostile environment" because I called UC Santa Barbara a racist institution. She is denying me my free speech rights. According to her logic, they could not have integrated the schools in the South, because Martin Luther King was creating a "hostile environment."

We are probably going to appeal [the judge's decision] on First Amendment grounds. However, we are running out of resources.

It would be easy to take the

**Voices of Color**

# Rudy Acuña



**Against the Odds**

\$325,000. But my feeling is that you cannot take money [for yourself]; it sets a bad example. If we are forced to take money instead of the job, we will start a foundation and use their money to sue them again.

**Alaniz: What is the political importance of your case?**

**Acuña:** The main function of a so-called intellectual, because that person has an awful lot of luxury to think and write and do things that other people cannot do, is to cultivate skepticism. Because without skepticism, you will not have any change, because you will not have any questions.

The American university has been so mystified that people believe it is honestly objective and that it strives for the truth. [But] the knowledge that we gain [from my] case shows that the university serves the superstructure because it creates ideas that support it.

The political importance of the case is that UC had to show us their secret documents. We found out how the university did things. We exposed any illusion of objectivity.

For example, UCSB tried to appoint Otis Graham as the chair of the secret ad-hoc committee. He is a founder of the Federation for American Immigration Reform [a rightwing anti-immigrant group]. UCSB put Wallace Chafe, a former member of the CIA, on the committee. The most gullible person would ask why.

I was punished for political reasons; if they could have beat me down or beat me in court, I think it

would have silenced most Chicano academics.

**Alaniz: What kind of tactics did UC use?**

**Acuña:** They launched a campaign to assassinate my character. They made me take a mental examination. They asked me about my political work and sexual preference. They got an order to photocopy my notes. They harassed my wife. They called Chicano scholars throughout the country asking them to testify against me.

We responded by fighting tooth and nail.

**Alaniz: What advice do you have for others who face this kind of discrimination?**

**Acuña:** Take them on! Talk to me and my lawyers. Develop a plan.

You have to take it on as a political case. If you don't, you are deluding yourself. The law is made to protect the rich, not the people.

If you win, that is the icing on the cake. Any materials that you develop, put into archives so other people can use them.

**Alaniz: What are the challenges facing Chicanas and Chicanos on campuses?**

**Acuña:** The biggest is the faculty government process. It sounds very democratic that the faculty govern the universities. But these same people make the choices of who will attend universities, [by making choices about matters such as] whether to support tuition hikes — which they usually do because their salary goes up.

Latinos will be 67 percent of the population of Los Angeles in the year 2050. But of the people who are being trained right now in the UC doctorate program, less than one percent are Chicanos. So by 2050, when we will be probably 50 percent of university students, we will only make up five percent of the faculty.

**Alaniz: What is the future for Chicano Studies?**

**Acuña:** It is going to be a hard road. There are no real Chicano Studies programs right now; the only full-fledged department is at Northridge [Calif. State University]. Chicano Studies always depended more on barrio kids — the first generation to attend college. It will be more difficult to meet this goal in the future.

We need to get into the barrio and tell our youth that it is their right to get a higher education.

**Alaniz: So how do we organize to meet this challenge?**

**Acuña:** We have to create skepticism. A questioning of truths.

We have to confront this system. Marx said that polemics was the engine of struggle. And struggle is the most important part of history. □

**How you can help:** Donations to cover legal expenses may be made out to "For Acuña" and sent to P.O. Box 33523, Granada Hills, CA 91394. Letters urging UCSB to hire Acuña, expand its Chicano Studies faculty, and create a Ph.D. program in Chicano Studies may be sent to UC President Richard Atkinson, Office of the President, 300 Lakeside Drive, Oakland, CA 94612.



Yolanda Alaniz

Jim Coley

## ...Elections

from the cover

the concern that he says pushed him into the arena.

The well-intentioned Greens eager for a Nader candidacy would be better served by fielding someone who will actually stand up for their politics.

**New Party: new road to the Dems.** Launched in 1992, the goal of the New Party is to "break the stranglehold that corporate money and corporate media have over our political process."

The New Party recently won the overturn of Minnesota's ban on multi-party fusion — the right of one party to cross-endorse another party's candidate or of two parties to nominate the same candidate. This is an important gain, because this type of ban is part of a web of restrictive laws used across the country to keep challengers to the twin parties off the ballot.

Unfortunately, the New Party is most interested in using this victory to endorse Democrats they consider worthy.

NP wants to do from the outside what Jesse Jackson failed to do from the inside — change the nature of the pro-corporate Democrats. But all they are

really doing is dissipating third-party energy.

**Patriot Party Frankenstein.** Combining rhetoric from the Left and right, the Patriot Party is the newest project of Lenora Fulani and Fred Newman (formerly of the fake-left New Alliance Party). Four years ago these two gave lip service to "empowering" the oppressed. Now, as Patriot Party leaders, they have formed an alliance with millionaire Ross Perot and his America-First-type Reform Party. This is an example of fusion-mania at its worst.

Electoral coalitions are not by nature bad. On the contrary, united slates allow smaller parties to combine resources and make a more significant splash. But if not grounded in a clear, shared program, they're not worth much.

The Patriot-Reform hookup is simply opportunistic. Two parties with hodgepodge, appeal-to-everybody messages (but politics that are fundamentally pro-capitalist) have merged in a bid purely to become more powerful players. Willing to shack up with anyone who might increase their following, no matter how reactionary, we may find them in bed with the Nazis one day soon.

**Out of the starting gate.** Because Democrats and Republicans serve the small, wealthy class, but rely on the

votes of the working majority, they have to lie or obfuscate about their intentions. Third parties that rely on get-rich-quick schemes instead of programmatic integrity are merely aping these bankrupt mainstream politics.

Their refusal to adopt an explicitly workingclass agenda stems from their belief that the votes of the much-ballyhooed middle class are where it's at. But real improvement in the lot of small-business owners, self-employed professionals, and family farmers will only come with the kind of fundamental changes that will also lift up workers and the poor. By fudging on this question and pandering to the real or perceived prejudices and conservatism of the "moderate middle," aspiring third parties only manage to dig all of us into a deeper hole.

The huge numbers of people who are well and truly fed up with politics as usual will not be daunted by a few misfires and false first steps, however. The desire for a party that honestly represents working people is a train that's definitely left the station, and it's only a matter of time before it finds the right track. □

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## The Chicano Struggle:

### A racial or a national movement?

by Yolanda Alaniz and Megan Cornish

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## Editorials

### Riverside County cops do the dirty work for racist establishment

**THE BRUTAL BEATINGS** of two defenseless Mexicanos at South El Monte, California, isn't about two rogue cops out of control. It's about a racist system out of control.

From America's earliest days, the rich have built their empires on the backs of immigrants like Alicia Sotero Vásquez and Enrique Funes Flores. In the old days, newcomers were indentured and ruthlessly exploited in factories and fields. Nowadays they are also "illegal" and hunted by *la migrá*, the Immigration and Naturalization Service. On top of all of this, the bosses demonize them, so that they are divided from other workers. The ultimate aim? A super-cheap source of labor. Undaunted, however, immigrants are building the most dynamic unions we have seen in decades.

**NOW, IN A BIPARTISAN EFFORT**, Congress is fashioning anti-immigrant legislation that will set the stage for more violence of the type videotaped at South El Monte. Among other things, the proposed package denies emergency medical care to undocumented workers and, at President Clinton's request, nearly doubles the number of police deployed along the U.S.-Mexico border.

General Motors and The Gap will still be able to travel freely to Mexico to open sweatshops. But Mexicanos like Vásquez, a single mother of two, will be punished even more heavily for crossing the border in search of a living wage.

A system that forces people to flee their homeland in order to feed their families is the real criminal, not the immigrants attacked by its batons. Many Californians are fiercely protesting the racist, xenophobic climate the Democrats and Republicans are promoting. To succeed, they must be joined by tens of thousands more across the country.

*Ningún ser humano es ilegal*; no human being is illegal. Open the borders now! □

### U.S. Labor Party effort at a decisive crossroads

**HURRAH! LET'S HEAR IT FOR** delegates to the Labor Party Advocates convention. In June (just after we go to press), they will converge on Cleveland from around the U.S. to establish a workers' party. If all goes well, they could be proud participants in one of labor's most liberating moves — its conclusive break with the Democrats.

The timing couldn't be more opportune. In the post-NAFTA era, Pat Buchanan can pass himself off as the champion of the toiling, tax-paying masses — because he has no competition from either of the twin parties for the title.

Meanwhile, labor's ranks are fighting in the trenches to maintain social and on-the-job gains won over two centuries of painstaking effort. They're holding on, but they desperately need backup — an organization to pursue labor's cause in the *political* arena. A Labor Party fielding its own candidates would make all the difference when workers go up against the bosses and their pals in office.

**THERE'S NERVOUSNESS** among LPA leaders about walking their talk, however, when it comes to true independence for the workers' party. Some fear that LPA will get cold-shouldered by the AFL-CIO if it actually challenges Democrats in elections.

But it took bold, defiant rebels to build the house of labor in the first place. They fought for what was needed, not what would get official sanction. The first unionists were jailed for conspiracy. And the founders of the Congress of Industrial Organizations were ejected from the American Federation of Labor for daring to insist that unions organize industrially, rather than along narrow craft lines.

Another source of anxiety for some LPA organizers: affirmative action, abortion, and gay rights. If LPA endorses these issues, they warn, it will divide the constituency.

But the Labor Party is not being born in a bubble-dome. Racist thrashings, woman-trashing, and gay-bashing — of both the physical and political varieties — are on the rise. And those who are most under siege are those who most need a party to fight for them — and for which *they* will fight with all their might.

**WILL THE FORMATION** of an independent, multi-issue party come to pass? In large measure, it's up to the June delegates. Only they can guarantee a convention — and an organization — with accountable leadership, democratic discussion and decision-making, and respectful treatment of the views of all, including radicals.

Workers have long dreamed of building a world of shared abundance. By launching a Labor Party serious about its mission, LPA convention-goers can create an historic vehicle for starting to make this dream come true. □



### Perry Watkins: a soldier whose weapon was the truth

BY SU DOCEKAL

**P**erry Watkins became a hero of mine the day he spoke at Seattle's 1983 gay-pride rally about his battle to stay in the military. He was the antithesis of those flag-waving, white-bread homo-patriots trotted out for *Newsweek*. Perry proceeded to ream Uncle Sam, who drafted him during the Vietnam War *despite* his openness about being gay — and then tried to dump him 15 years later, just short of pension eligibility. He figured the government never expected his Black, drag-queen self to make it home alive.

The crowd of 3,000 roared approvingly as Perry vowed to fight all the way to the Supreme Court. His scathing humor, flagrant irreverence, and sassy optimism cheered us and gave us courage those 13 years ago, as we grappled with the rise of Reaganism and an unidentified killer virus.

**No resting on his laurels.** Sergeant Watkins did reach the Supreme Court, and he won. But when he died of AIDS in March at the age of 47, he was far from satisfied. The anti-gay military ban remained; but even worse, in Perry's estimation, was the betrayal by national gay leaders who sold their souls for the ridiculous "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

"It's blatant racism," said Perry, when these same gay insiders disinvented him from testifying at 1993 Congressional hearings on the policy — even though he was the only openly gay service person to go to the top of the court system and emerge victorious!

In 1989, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Watkins should be admitted back into the army. The Bush administra-

tion appealed, but the Supreme Court let the decision stand, forcing the army to offer Perry reinstatement with full honors.

But by then Perry had himself a new career as a fulltime activist and public speaker, always rooting for the underdog.

He was one of the earliest defenders of lesbian journalist Sandy Nelson (see page eight), a socialist fighting for her free-

class is against war," he said, "but the politicians vote their pocketbooks." He urged the new generation to stand up and tell the truth about the system "at the top of your lungs"; his own fierce sense of honesty, he credited to his mother, as he often did in speeches.

Shortly afterward, he threw his support behind two Freedom Socialist Party candidates for Seattle City Council, endorsing their anti-war, pro-labor, pro-civil-rights platform. Clinton's election cemented Perry's belief that we *must* have an alternative to traditional Democrat-Republican politics if we are ever to achieve progress on human rights.

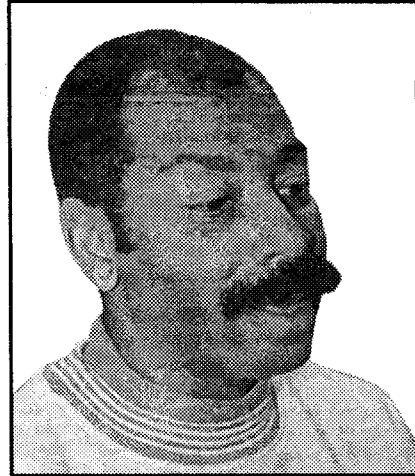
**He knew where we come from.** As Gay Pride Week rolls around, I really miss Perry. Eighty thousand people attend Seattle's annual celebration now, but the huge political potential it represents is

squandered. This year's rally platform has been turned over to a passel of lackluster Democratic politicians who will urge us to hold our noses and vote for Clinton. And, for the first time, participants who might offend the "family values" set are being purged from the parade lineup.

If Perry were here, he'd strut up to the microphone in his tight leather pants and remind the petty bureaucrats that it was disreputable drag queens and bulldykes who launched our movement at the Stonewall Inn in 1969.

The lesbian and gay movement is in sore need of the bold, funny, and radical vision that Perry always brought to it. We've lost a brilliant, complicated, and courageous leader.

Sergeant First Class Watkins, it was an honor to serve with you in the fight for freedom. □



Perry Watkins

speech rights in his own city of Tacoma, Wash.

In 1988, he championed gay political prisoner Steven Farmer, whom AIDS-agency careerists threw to the wolves when prosecutors turned run-of-the-mill prostitution charges against Farmer into a test case for forced HIV screening.

**Antiwar warrior.** In 1991, I heard Perry speak out against the Gulf War at a Black History Month forum called "Our Fight Is Here!"

The irrepressible Mr. Watkins brought down the house with his story of being drafted at 19 despite declaring that he was gay. When the army interviewer grilled him as to whether he could kill a man, Perry replied, "Well... it might take a while!"

Then Perry turned serious. "The majority of the working

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## Letters to the Editor

### CUBA LIBRE

#### Protest grand-jury witch-hunt of movement

Activists from the National Network on Cuba (NNOC) met in New York City on May 18-19 to map out a response to heightened U.S. hostilities against both the Cuban revolution and the U.S. movement against the blockade.

The government has targeted Pastors for Peace, organizer of the popular and effective aid caravans to Cuba and now the subject of an upcoming grand jury investigation/fishing expedition. Pastors has pledged not to cooperate.

In addition to sponsoring October teach-ins on aggression against Cuba, NNOC members pledged to defend Pastors with demonstrations and civil disobedience.

On May 24, Pastors won a major victory. After international pressure and a 94-day "Fast for Life" by caravanistas, the government released 339 computers bound for medical centers that it had seized from a caravan at San Diego. The computers will now go to Cuba.

To join in solidarity actions, call Pastors at (612)870-7121.

**Stephen Durham**  
New York City

### HARASSED BY THE SYSTEM

#### A revolutionary always

I was impressed by Sandy Nelson's stand on free speech. The Bill of Rights doesn't state anything about public nor private. I had a similar experience as Nelson did in distributing a handbill in Minneapolis about 20 years ago.

The leaflet [asked people] to brown bag their lunch to support the organized workers at the General Mills Cafeteria employing over 200 workers, mostly family women. The workers were being harassed by management daily. At the time, I had over 25 years experience in organizing in the old CIO days. I was an Executive Board member of the hotel and restaurant workers' union.

As [a colleague] and I handed out leaflets, along came a man who claimed he was sent down from "Mr. So & So" from the "Industrial Relations Department" and informed us we were violating their property rights.

I told him that I was a WWII vet with over 68 months of military training and I was never told that there was a boundary line between the property of General Mills and the United States.

He was dumbfounded. I further told the flunkie that the Supreme Court ruled that handbilling was an expression of free speech and association.

Then a police officer approached and stated he wanted to talk to me, as I was the instigator. I explained to him what happened; he in turn told us how the police were hounded by local politicians and how, with their vote for union representation, they prevailed. I [asked him,] how come

public bus lines use General Mills "private" roads to transport workers to the office? The officer looked at me, laughed, said "See you all later" with a big smile, and took off.

Labor unions had political clout then. Where did it go?

I was one of the very few unionists who always denounced the Democratic and Republican parties as defenders of capitalism, and was called by some a "Commie." My background goes back to the Sacco-Vanzetti case in the 1920s.

I'm 78 years old and handicapped. I've seen enough of corruption within the capitalist system as well as corrupt union leadership. Whenever I see your paper, I always read it.

**Joe Travascio**  
Minneapolis

#### Support an innocent man

On January 30, 1996, George Skatzes was sentenced to death



for the murders of two prisoners during the 11-day uprising in April 1993 at the maximum security Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville.

During the uprising George acted as a peacekeeper and spokesman for prisoners. Many prisoners credit George with saving their lives during the riot. Former hostage guard Jeffrey Ratcliff asked the jurors to spare George's life, stating under oath that George helped protect two guards and even released a third guard who was badly injured. Ratcliff went on to say that he wouldn't be alive today if not for George. Surely the death toll from the uprising would have been much, much higher if not for George.

He's been sentenced to death because he refused to cooperate (snitch) with prison officials, who promised not to prosecute him if he would "cooperate." George became the target of the investigation because he had the courage to come forward and help negotiate a peaceful end to the uprising. As a spokesman, he became a *symbol* and a target.

George is 49 years old and sitting on death row waiting for his appeals to run out and an execution date to be set.

The truth has to come out. We can't allow George to die as a symbol to send the other inmates a "message." I have known him for many years, and he's a good solid convict who's always willing to help someone else.

Everyone who knows George agrees that he's innocent of these charges.

Anyone interested in making a financial contribution to his defense fund, or who would

like to help organize support for George or wants more information, contact Mrs. Jackie Bowers, P.O. Box 1591, Marion, Ohio 43301-1591.

**Dan Cahill**  
Marion, Ohio

#### Parents' rights violated

There are a lot of parents who get their children taken away, for no good reason. A parent is not always innocent, but some women get their children taken away for a dirty house, or mouthing back at a cop, or disciplining their kids.

The juvenile court is different than the criminal court. The courtroom is closed, and there is no jury. The judge decides whether you are guilty.

The social worker brings up your past and present criminal record and adds issues under the Welfare and Institution Code. You are asked to follow the Reunification Plan to get your kids back, so most parents submit to the plan.

Once they do, all the allegations [facing them are accepted as] true, and they have waived the right to a trial.

But if a parent is not guilty in the criminal court, then there is no reason to withhold children from parents in the juvenile court.

If you are a victim or know someone who is, please call (510)451-7379 or write to: Mother's Friend, Women's Economic Agenda Project, 518 17th Street Suite 200, Oakland, CA 94612.

**Mother's Friend, W.E.A.P.**  
Oakland, California

### LABOR PARTY DEBATE

#### Workers need to own the means of production

A "Labor Party" works upon the false premise that you beat the capitalists through a *political struggle in a capitalist context!* You don't! You convince workers to stop the economic theft by *taking over the workplaces...*

Russia was *never* socialist. It never had a socialist industrial democracy with workers controlling their workplaces. The elite always had the option of countermanding the soviets.

Also the country was not a developed industrial nation that had eliminated scarcity at the time of the 1917 revolution. The large majority of Russians were agrarian...

The *main* focus of socialists must be to get that workplace in workers' hands and have an international democracy that unites all labor!

P.S. Your Australian writer is great!

**Charles Bateman**  
West Sacramento, Calif.

Readers are encouraged to submit letters, news stories, commentary, cartoons, graphics, photographs, and resource information. Letters may be edited for length. Please write to 5018 Rainier Ave. S., Seattle, WA 98118, or e-mail us at: [freedomosc@igc.apc.org](mailto:freedomosc@igc.apc.org).



**Clara Fraser**

## Socialism for Skeptics VIII: The rebellious nature of human nature

**IS IT APOCALYPSE NOW?** Entire societies are crashing. Disasters — natural and political, public and personal — ravage pitiful humanity from Chechnya to Liberia. The daily news is unwatchable, unreadable, unthinkable.

So, what is to be done?

Why, *nada*, according to many people. Like cancer-stricken Timothy Leary, the narcotics guru of the '60s who is preparing to make his adieu via cyberspace, the end-is-nigh crowd thinks all we can do is get on line and scream into the existential void as that good night envelops us in nothingness.

Sorry, cynics, I do not concur.

**YOU SEE, ALL YE WHO DESPAIR,** I know a secret. The universal cry for freedom and a more comfortable, easier life is *genetic*. It's hard-wired into our species. And the current plague of scarcity and powerlessness for the multitudes is *against human nature*. Hence it follows as the day the night that uninterrupted revolt against repression, is inevitable.

Nor are we stuck in an endless groove of fighting back, because we learn from our mistakes and successes, we *progress*. Revolutions happen. Reforms are won. And socialism, sooner than you think, will overtake world capitalism, just as surely as capitalism in its young heyday overturned feudalism.

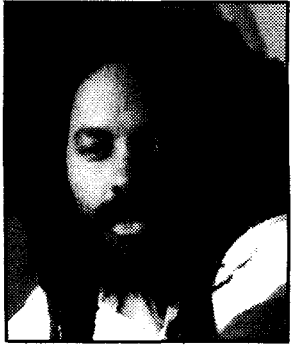
And there's gratification to be had today as well as *mañana*. Herewith my Top 20 List of inspiring recent events:

1. A split-off section from the British Labor Party reclaims that body's original, explicitly socialist principles.
2. Tumult amongst Gallic unionists and students holds out the prospect of another and greater French Revolution.
3. Public workers in Ontario, Canada, strike for five weeks, serving notice that austerity will not be swallowed easily.
4. The same message is driven home in the USA via walk-outs and other labor actions by machinists, nurses, auto-workers, garment-sweatshoppers, and more.
5. Plans are being hatched for a Labor Party right here in the heartland of international Capital.
6. A mobilization in Mexico, sparked by the indigenous rebels of Chiapas, says "*¡Basta!*" to NAFTA.
7. The women workers in the maquiladora export mills of Latin America brave employer violence to form unions.
8. The U.N. Women's Conference in Beijing and its non-governmental counterpart bring together activists from all over the globe, who protest daily about critical issues ranging from nuclear testing to the U.S. blockade against Cuba.
9. The birth-control pill for men!
10. Despite the obnoxious agenda of Million Man March orchestrator Louis Farrakhan, the tremendous response to his call bespeaks the eagerness of African Americans to *do something* about racism.
11. A grassroots movement gains a stay of execution for radical Black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal, framed for the murder of a Philadelphia cop.
12. No more waiting to exhale for African American women. Breaking out of the traditional ghettos of sports and entertainment, they are registering prominently in politics, law, academia and literature.
13. Not to disparage athletes and performers; the returns of Monica Seles to tennis and Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson to basketball — for however long — testify eloquently to the irrepressibility of human striving.
14. Hawaii's nuptially minded lesbians and gays are on the way to securing the state's blessing. You may well cast a jaundiced eye on the creaky and hypocritical institution of marriage, but this still is a civil-rights issue whose time has come.
15. And in Melbourne, Australia, men and women of alternative sexualities throng to the city's first gay pride march.
16. Dispelling the absurdity that evolution means blood-thirsty competition of each against all, scientists explain how sociability and cooperation became intrinsic to Homo sapiens.
17. After decades of Cold War space-program rivalry, the U.S. and Russia are now cooperating celestially.
18. A worldwide surge of sympathy for the Arab cause follows Israel's ghastly bombings of civilians in Lebanon.
19. U.S. voters show they are not ready to embrace reactionaries Patrick Buchanan and California Governor Pete Wilson as presidential candidates.
20. Leftist candidates enjoy a renaissance in places as disparate as Italy, Benin, Nepal, Eastern Europe and Russia. Sure, many of these politicians are just recycled Stalinists or social democrats promising a "kinder, gentler" subjection to free-market. Nevertheless, their popularity proves that the rumors of the demise of Marxism have been greatly exaggerated.

**SO FEAR AND TREMBLE NOT.** The battle is not only not over — it's barely been joined. And the momentum of history, like the logic of science, is on our side. □

## Guest Column

## The silencing of Sandy Nelson



BY  
MUMIA  
ABU-JAMAL

SPECIAL TO THE FREEDOM SOCIALIST

**S**andy Nelson, as an award-winning journalist, owes her profession to the fidelity of the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment, that oft-praised "protection" of the right to freedom of speech.

It is a right saluted in theory, but damned in practice, as Sandy learned when the honchos at *The News Tribune* of Tacoma took her off the education beat and, in her words, "sentenced" her to the copy desk, for her off-duty political activities on behalf of a local gay rights organization. This "internal exile" occurred when Nelson refused orders of TNT bigwigs to cease and desist her organizing efforts.

Imagine the irony: someone working in a field sworn to protect the First Amendment, forced to be silent about political and social matters on her "free" time.

Where's the freedom of speech?

Editorial and corporate suits exclaim that Nelson's transfer to the copy desk was no response to the nature of her activity, i.e. gay rights advocacy, but an effort to protect the "credibility of the paper." Central to this theme is the cry for "objectivity" — that mythical substance that all "good" reporters supposedly possess, that lifts the craft as a priest lifts a chalice.

In truth, all honest reporters admit their subjectivities, the taints of time and circumstance that color one's work, and even choose the work one does.

When publishers silence any reporter, they silence that reporter's civic and political self, and by extension,

work to weaken, nullify and neutralize the group objectives that the reporter supports.

If Nelson sought to do PTA work, or served as a volunteer for the zoo, would she be consigned to journalistic oblivion?

I think the answer is clear.

The journalistic enterprise is not a priesthood. It is an art, a craft, a learned skill.

It is a craft that assumes the rightness of the dominant social order, thus it protects the status quo. Where's the "objectivity" in that?

For the better part of this nation's history, papers in the main served as apologists of American slavery and supporters of American apartheid.

The main dailies, North and South, featured lynchings as de facto advertisements, with articles which did everything supportive of the acts except add, "A good time was had by all."

It was the work of the radical and abolitionist press that spoke against sheer evils, not the "regular" press.

Truth be told, there ain't no such thing as "freedom of speech," for if there were, why would Sandy Nelson have to sue to "get" it? She is suing against un-freedom, is she not?

Freedom means freedom — period.

Nelson was silenced by her paper, and I was silenced by the prison — both for daring to make the First Amendment a reality.

Ultimately, people like you, rather

than courts, will decide if "freedom of speech" is more than a lofty promise.

If you believe in it, fight for it — or just forget it.

The state and corporations will be glad you did. □

© Mumia Abu-Jamal

**Mumia Abu-Jamal** is a radical journalist and former Black Panther sentenced to death after being framed in 1982 for the murder of a Philadelphia cop.

The Committee to Save Mumia Abu-Jamal is pressing for a retrial to get him off death row and out of prison. To help, write them at 163 Amsterdam Ave., No. 115, New York, NY 10023-5001.

## Reporter takes fight to top state court

BY ANGELA BENNETT STARK

**W**hen Sandy Nelson appears before the Washington state Supreme Court on June 11 (after this issue of the *FS* goes to press), she will be buoyed by the support of powerhouses such as international AFSCME, the largest union of public employees in the U.S.; and Norman Solomon, cowriter of the syndicated column "Media Beat."

Lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union will represent the intrepid Tacoma journalist, who was stripped of reporting duties in 1990 by *The News Tribune* because of her political involvements.

They are seeking the overturn of decisions against Nelson by Pierce County Superior Court Judge Vicki Hogan, who ruled that freedom of the press exempts newspaper publishers from state laws and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination against activist employees.

*Seattle Times* columnist Terry Tang answered this argument in an incisive May column on Nelson's case, writing:

"While the First Amendment does indeed grant broad protections from

government intrusion into the editorial decisions of a newspaper, it doesn't place newspapers beyond the reach of the law.

"So, for example, newspapers must comply with minimum-wage laws even though publishers have argued that minimum-wage laws negatively affect their ability to produce newspapers. Similarly, newspapers cannot use the First Amendment as a shield against employment laws in general."

The international Newspaper Guild, Washington State Labor Council, and Northwest Women's Law Center have together submitted a friend-of-the-court brief that eloquently explains the high stakes at issue: "The right the employer seeks to take from Ms. Nelson is her fundamental right to participate in the political process. This ... is nothing less than her right to self-defense — her right to use the political process, on an equal footing with other citizens, to protect her interests as a woman, a lesbian, and a

working person."

The National Lawyers Guild has also filed a hard-hitting amicus brief. Among the most recent of its 74 co-signers are AFSCME; Ben Bagdikian, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at University of California, Berkeley, and former assistant managing editor at the *Washington Post*; Austin,

Texas reporter Juan Palomo, founding member of the National Lesbian/Gay Journalists Association; the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance of Seattle; and Puyallup tribal activist Ramona Bennett.

The Sandy Nelson Defense Committee is making sure the courtroom is full when this landmark case is heard. The team is organizing car caravans to Olympia, the state capital.

Volunteers, donations, and endorsements are needed urgently to ensure a solid victory affirming the free-speech rights of all workers. To contribute, write to SNDC, P.O. Box 5847, Tacoma, WA 98415, or call (206)756-9971. □



Sandy Nelson

## Dateline Australia

## Aborigines demand indigenous-led investigation into rising deaths in custody

BY DEBBIE BRENNAN

**I**n April, a headline in a leading daily read: "Jail death rate at crisis point as Aborigine found hanged." This tragedy brought to 91 the number of indigenous Australians who have died while incarcerated during the last seven years. While Aborigines make up just 1.3 percent of the population, they make up 24 percent of fatalities in detention.

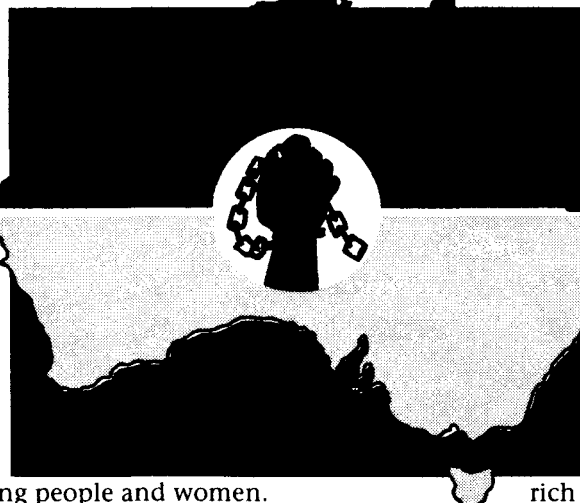
In 1987, public outrage forced the government to create a commission to investigate the extreme mortality rate of indigenous people in custody. The enquiry focused on the 99 Aborigines who died between 1981 and 1989.

Although some of the victims were murdered by cops or jailers, the commission did not recommend that charges be brought against a single official. Moreover, Australian governments have mostly ignored the 339 recommendations that the enquiry did make, which included advising the imprisonment of Aboriginal people only as a last resort.

But death and imprisonment figures remain high. Incarceration statistics have almost doubled since 1991.

Cops routinely pick up Aborigines for vagrancy and other trivial "public order offences." Their prime targets are young people and women.

Nationally, the arrest rate for Aboriginal women is twenty times higher than for other women. In Western Australia, more than 20 percent of indigenous children and teenagers between 10 and 14 years of age end up convicted in court each year; 91 percent of them have been arrested before.



**Robbed of homes and caged.** Behind the statistics are two centuries of dispossession, attempted cultural annihilation, and racism. Capitalism used these tools in Australia, as around the world, to capture resource-

rich lands, conquer their indigenous inhabitants, and firmly implant a regime of economic pillage.

Of the 99 people whose deaths were scrutinized by the commission, it was found that 43 had been taken as children from their families. The government practice of kidnapping "half-caste" children was purportedly de-

signed to assimilate them into white society. Many, however, ended up as slave labour for miners, pastoralists, and well-heeled families.

Every one of the other 1981-1989 victims had spent long periods in orphanages or juvenile detention.

Barbara Nicholson, a Wadi Wadi elder and president of the New South Wales (NSW) Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Watch Committee, put it this way: "The invaders and their descendants have inherited our wealth, namely our land. We've inherited their poverty."

**Open racism growing.** In 1988, official bicentenary celebrations of the British invasion were answered by a resurgence in Aboriginal struggle for land rights and sovereignty. As indigenous militancy rose, so did the blood pressure of corporate capital.

Labor Party Prime Minister Bob Hawke therefore trumpeted a new era of "reconciliation between Black and white

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