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200 arrested at immigration rights rally

By Mark Gruenberg



For several years now, Lisa Bergmann of New Haven, Conn., has been anxious about many of her Spanish-speaking friends and neighbors.

The former Unite Here member was one of more than 20,000 people - including thousands of unionists -- who marched down the Washington, D.C., Mall on Oct. 8 to demand the U.S. House immediately pass comprehensive immigration reform. Bergmann says the danger to her friends is why she came to the protest.

"I'm a citizen. I don't have to worry," she said. "But I worry about a lot of my friends who are waiting to get their papers. And I have friends who are incarcerated" because they're undocumented.

"And some are afraid to drive" because police could stop them and demand proof of legality - which they lack - on pain of detention and deportation."

Concerns like that -- which would be alleviated, if not ended, by comprehensive immigration reform -- brought the thousands to the Mall. And 200, including 90 union leaders and union members and eight members of the House of Representatives were arrested when, in an act of civil disobedience, they blocked a street in front of the Capitol.

Arrestees included Bergmann, SEIU 1199 member Delphine Clyburn and activist Joelle Fishman, both also from Connecticut, Communications Workers Secretary-Treasurer Annie Hall and Political Director Yvette Herrera, The Newspaper Guild's president, Bernie Lunzer, and Paul Booth, the top assistant to AFSCME's president. Among the nation's top labor leaders also taken into custody were AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Tefere Gebre, AFT President Randi Wein-

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garten, Unite Here President D. Taylor and Maria Elena Durazo, executive secretary treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor.

Among the lawmakers arrested were Reps. Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.), John Lewis (D-Ga.), Keith Ellison (D-Minn.), Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.), Joe

The protest followed more than 160 rallies for immigration reform.

Crowley (D - N.Y.), Al Green (D-Texas), Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and Charlie Rangel (D-N.Y.).

"I'm not really worried about getting arrested," Hall said beforehand. "This reform is long overdue. And it's about people who are coming to this country to seek and find economic justice for themselves and their families."

Unions, led by contingents from the Service Employees and their Local 32BJ, the Laborers and Unite Here, contributed a large share of the demonstrators. Other unions represented included AFSCME, the Communications Workers/TNG, Labors Council for Latin American Advancement, AFT and the United Farm Workers.

The rally, which went on with National Park Service cooperation despite the federal government shutdown, was a sea of colorful banners, flags, T-shirts and signs, punctuated by strong pro-reform speeches and lively music.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., pledged to use every method available to get a comprehensive reform bill to a floor vote, where all 200 Democrats and several dozen Republicans would vote for it - over GOP leaders' opposition. "We have the votes to pass the bill," Pelosi de-

clared.

The massive protest followed more than 160 rallies for immigration reform held across the nation Saturday and came a week after House Democrats introduced their own immigration bill based on two pieces of bipartisan legislation: one from the Senate and one approved by the House Homeland Security Committee.

The demonstration occurred as a government shutdown and fight over raising the debt limit gripped the nation's capital and the rest of the country, with the GOP House leadership saying it will not hold a vote on the immigration bill or anything else, for that matter, that a majority of GOP members opposes.

Democrats said the protests show that supporters of immigration reform will not be deterred by Republican intransigence and that they are prepared to continue the battle until the House leadership puts the immigration bill up for a vote.

"Let them vote," hundreds chanted repeatedly during the demonstration.



Mark Gruenberg edits Press Associates Inc.

Embargo harms Cuban and U.S. people

By PW Editorial Board

For the 22nd consecutive year, Cuba has introduced a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly calling for the United States to end its 53-year economic war against the island nation. The ambassadors of more than 36 other countries have taken the floor to support the Cuban motion, which will be voted on shortly.

Information provided by Cuba shows that the United States government has not given up its main strategy, which is to do so much damage to the Cuban economy that the people will rise up to restore capitalist rule. That this plan has not worked in five decades does not daunt U.S. leaders.

The Cuban document states that as of now, the U.S. economic boycott has cost the Cuban people \$1,157,327,000, with at least \$39 million last year alone. In spite of early hopes that the Obama administration would at least soften the policy, the blockade is becoming more intense and oppressive as the U.S. Treasury Department's

Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has become more active in blocking Cuba related financial and banking transactions. The United States claims the right to go after third country (neither Cuban nor U.S.) persons, institutions and businesses that trade with Cuba if they are linked to U.S. businesses.

Given the increasing integration of the world's financial institutions in which United States financial entities play such a huge role, this means that OFAC can target and fine more and more U.S. affiliates for the business their parent companies do with Cuba. The Trading with the Enemy Act - extended by President Obama last year - the Torricelli Act and the Helms-Burton (Cuba Democracy) Act, plus the absurd listing of Cuba as a "state sponsor of terrorism" constitute the backbone of U.S. Cuba policy toward this nation of 11 million. Cuba is not a sponsor of terror.

The embargo must be ended now. In his last term, President Obama can do the right thing.

The embargo must end.

Calif. approves immigrant rights bills

By Marilyn Bechtel

As immigrant rights advocates marched in over 180 locations around the country Oct. 5, demanding that Congress take up comprehensive immigration reform, Gov. Jerry Brown, D.-Calif., announced he had signed eight bills giving new protections and rights to the state's undocumented immigrants.

"While Washington waffles on immigration, California's forging ahead," Brown said in announcing the signings. "I'm not waiting."

The most sweeping measure, Assembly Bill 4, the Trust Act, by assembly member Tom Ammiano, D-San Francisco, provides that only undocumented immigrants charged with or convicted of a serious crime could be placed on a 48-hour hold and transferred to federal immigration authorities for possible deportation.

Ammiano noted that nearly 100,000 immigrants, most of whom were not serious offenders, had been deported under the federal Secure Communities program, intended for deportation of dangerous criminals.

"With the Trust Act," Ammiano said, "Gov. Brown is recognizing the importance of immigrants to the economy, culture, and vitality of the entire state."

An earlier version was vetoed by Brown last year, to the great dismay of immigrant rights advocates. He pledged then to work with the legislature to craft a law he could sign in the future.

In several California locations, including Los Angeles, San Francisco and Santa Clara Counties, law enforcement officials already follow such practices. Late last year, the Obama administration said it would no longer seek to deport undoc-



ocumented immigrants arrested for minor crimes.

During its travels from the state Assembly to the governor's desk, the Trust Act received much local and national attention. A letter signed by 28 California Democratic lawmakers, including U.S. House of Representatives Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, called on Brown to sign the bill, while demonstrators' actions included a sit-in at Brown's office in September.

Under Senate Bill 666, introduced by state Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, employers who retaliate against workers on the basis of citizenship and immigration status could lose their business licenses and be liable for a fine of as much as \$10,000 per violation.

AB 1024, by Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego, allows undocumented attorneys to practice law. The bill was inspired by the case of Sergio Garcia, brought to California when he was 17 months old by his farmworker parents, and later earned a law degree and passed the bar exam, but could not obtain a license to practice law in the state.

Only those charged with or convicted of a serious crime could be placed on a 48-hour hold and transferred to immigration authorities.

Wendy Davis enters governor's race

By Jim Lane

State Senator Wendy Davis announced her candidacy for the Democratic Party nomination for governor of Texas on Oct. 3. Even while newsmen are giving her the most positive of possible coverage, they include estimates from political pundits and statisticians who predict, based on past election performances, that she will lose to her Republican opponent by at least 7 percentage points, and possibly as many as 17.

Progressive-learning Democrats don't agree. Over 2,000 of them, a majority female, packed into the coliseum to hear her long-awaited announcement. They had been hoping she'd run since she took national headlines with her stirring last-minute filibuster of an anti-women bill in the last state legislature. Davis' announcement was delayed by the long illness and eventual death of her father in Fort Worth.

Davis has a wonderful backstory. She told her supporters that she was a single mother living in a trailer park when someone suggested she start community college. Eventually, she took her law degree from Harvard, and then launched her political career as a Fort Worth city councilwoman.

In the state legislature, she won the hearts of women and progressive men with her uphill fights for education and women's health care.

Within hours of Davis' announcement, the Texas affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers announced their endorsement and the Texas AFL-CIO sent out a quick list of her legislative stances favoring labor.

El caso extraño de Alberto Patishtán Gómez

Por Emile Schepers

El ideal de una educación libre, universal y secular es un triunfo de la Revolución Mexicana del 1910 - 1920.

Durante las "Guerras Cristeros" del 1920, muchos jóvenes idealistas fueron fusilados o ahorcados por bandas armadas que consideraban la educación secular como "comunista". en muchas comunidades rurales, incluyendo a ellos de la mayoría que no hablan español en la casa. Los maestros gubernamentales le han dado el papel de liderato social y político porque son los únicos educados y bilingües que no son parte de las claque gobernantes.

Hay sospecha que los planes del gobierno de "mejorar" la profesión de la enseñanza puede tener una agenda escondida para a esos maestros que han estado activo en las luchas del pueblo. Esto puede explicar el caso extraño de Alberto Patishtán Gómez, que por virtud de una decisión judicial la semana pasada, espera servir 47 años de prisión por un crimen que casi nadie cree que cometió.

Patishtán es miembro del grupo étnico Tzotzil Maya, y viene del pequeño pueblo El Bosque en las alturas de Chiapas, donde era maestro. Después de la insurrección Zapatista del 1 de enero 1994, Patishtán estaba activo en la lucha contra el alcalde de El Bosque, quien fue acusado de practicas corruptas. En 2000 hubo una emboscada en El Bosque cerca de Simojovel, donde siete policías fueron asesinados por asaltantes desconoci-

dos. Un policía y el chófer sobrevivieron. El chófer, que por casualidad, es hijo del alcalde a quien Patishtán había hecho acusaciones, clamó haber escuchado la voz de Patishtán entre los asaltantes; aunque no le había visto. Numerosa gente de El Bosque dijo que vieron a Patishtán en el pueblo millas de lejos dando clases en la escuela como de costumbre. Pero Patishtán fue condenado y sentenciado a 60 años de prisión. Él se ha convertido en líder de los prisioneros y un mártir prominente de la causa por la justicia social del pueblo indígena en México. A causa de sus esfuerzos, números de prisioneros han obtenido sus libertades, pero no él.

Los que apoyan a Patishtán no se han rendido. Basándose en la "presunción de inocencia" ellos llevaron el caso a la Corte Suprema, pero se le negó en marzo de este año. Después llevaron el caso a una corte de apelación en Tuxtla Gutierrez, capital de Chiapas, pero la semana pasada perdieron el caso en esa corte, basándose en que ellos no presentaron nueva evidencia adecuada, aunque todo el problema es que no existe para empezar, ninguna evidencia presentada contra Patishtán.

Ahora la libertad de Patishtán depende de una campana de presión en México e internacionalmente. Amnistía Internacional ha tomado la causa, también figuras publicas como Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas, fundador del Partido Democrático Revolucionario, de la izquierda del centro.

NATIONAL CONTACT

Editorial: (773) 446-9920 Business: (212) 924-2523
Email: contact@peoplesworld.org