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Protesters to Obama: “400,000, not one more deportation”

By John Wojcik



Twelve undocumented Chicagoans were arrested May 29 as they blocked morning rush hour traffic to demand that President Obama stop deportations. They have all been subsequently released.

The 12 brought traffic on Michigan Ave. to a standstill as they sat down in the street around a banner with the number 400,000 painted onto it. That is the number of people scheduled for deportation this year, they noted, under White House quotas. The banner, which read “400,000, not one more deportation,” was spread out in the street in front of the Hilton Hotel, where the president spoke later in the day at a fundraiser.

That afternoon fundraiser drew scores of other immigrant protesters and more than 100 allies who rallied across the street from the hotel.

At the Hilton rally, as at the civil disobedience actions in the morning, demonstrators demanded an end to deportations which, they note, are proceeding at a record pace even as Congress wrestles with the issue of immigration reform.

“Plans and promises of immigration reform are not enough,” said Stephanie Camba, 22, one of the 12 arrested, as she sat in the street on Michigan Ave. “While Congress is talking about passing immigration reform, I’m scared that my own

parents will be one of the 1,100 who are deported every day. The president can’t be a bystander in reform when he could stop our suffering and stop deportations with the stroke of a pen.”

Camba was born in the Philippines in 1990. Her family left there in groups, starting with her grandparents, older sister and aunt and eventually all of them, including her parents, ended up in the United States.

She said that missing from the current debate

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on immigration is adequate discussion of what causes people to migrate from country to country in the first place. “We have to talk about the uneven economic opportunities across the world, many of which have been tied to U.S. foreign/economic policy. Immigration is a complex narrative

“We’re calling on the president to give our parents and everyone in our community the same relief he gave us.”

- Ileri Unzueta Carrasco

that cannot be boiled down to terms like ‘legal’ and ‘illegal.’”

At least one of the protesters arrested yesterday has already benefitted from one of Obama’s actions. Ileri Unzueta Carrasco, 26, is a recipient of the president’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). “It doesn’t make sense to keep deporting people that could qualify for immigration reform. We want our families to still be here when a path to citizenship opens. We’re calling on the president to give our parents and everyone in our community the same relief he gave us.”

Unzueta Carrasco was born in Mexico City and has lived in Chicago since she was 10 years old. She is the co-founder of the Immigrant Youth Justice League, one of the groups sponsoring yesterday’s demonstrations. In 2012 she graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago with a masters in Latin American and Latino Studies.

Speakers at the evening rally outside the Hilton highlighted the cases of two Chicago residents facing immediate deportation.

Lourdes Moreno Castro, one of the two, is a mother of four who was wrongfully arrested after another driver backed into her car. She is eligible

for prosecutorial discretion but instead ICE has issued her a deportation order for today, May 30.

The second case is that of Octavio Nava Cabrera who was pulled over in front of his house in Melrose Park for allegedly running a stop sign two blocks earlier. Those charges were later dropped but ICE agents surrounded his house three weeks later and took him to the Dodge County facility in Wisconsin where he has been detained for over a month.

The pain and anguish suffered by his family has been enormous, speakers at the rally said. They said his young son is a U.S. citizen and that his younger brothers need him too. The activists hope that public support for him could help convince ICE to return him to his home.

“Lourdes and Octavio are just two examples of the 1,100 deported every day while Congress debates,” said Camba. “We need the President to use his executive authority to expand the relief he granted some Dream-eligible youth to the rest of those who could potentially be included in reform.”



John Wojcik is co-editor of Peoplesworld.org

Congress Hotel strike ends

By PW Editorial

With the 10th anniversary of the Congress Hotel strike approaching, UNITE HERE Local 1, the union representing Chicago’s hospitality workers, announced the end of strike on May 29. It is widely recognized as the world’s longest strike and has received broad solidarity from the labor movement and community.

On June 15, 2003, Father’s Day that year, 130 members (100% of the workers) of UNITE HERE walked out on strike after the hotel unilaterally reduced their wages, froze their health care contributions, and demanded the right to subcontract out all the work to minimum wage subcontracted workers. The move by Congress hotel owners broke with the collective bargaining wage and benefit standards established for all the major downtown hotels between the union and hospitality industry. It was widely seen as a preemptive strike to break the union and force down wages and benefits.

The Congress Hotel picketline became a permanent feature on Michigan Avenue. Unions and

community organizations rallied with strikers, and marches often passed in solidarity. Prominent political leaders including U.S. Senator Barack Obama, Governor Pat Quinn, President of Cook County Toni Preckwinkle, and numerous others have walked the line in support of the workers.

“The decision to end the Congress strike was a hard one, but it is the right time for the Union and the strikers to move on. The boycott has effectively dramatically reduced the hotel’s business. The hotel treats their workers and customers equally poor and the community knows it. There is no more to do there. We don’t see getting a contract here, and we have many more battles to fight for economic justice,” said UNITE HERE Local 1 President Henry Tamarin.

The Union has found jobs for over 60 strikers over the years and is looking for more. It has made an unconditional offer to return to work on behalf of the strikers, but it is unclear whether any strikers will choose to. We salute their struggle and pledge our ongoing support.

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Monsanto protesters demand GMO labeling

By M. Djordjevic

More than 200 protesters participated in a march against biotechnology giant Monsanto here May 25. The march was part of an international effort that drew some 2 million people to similar marches held in 436 cities around the globe. The focus here was to draw attention to legislation passed that does not require food consisting of genetically modified organisms (GMO) to be labeled.

GMOs are a plant or meat product which has had its DNA artificially altered. GMOs are altered as well to have an internal generated pesticide and are engineered to tolerate Roundup, a weed killer manufactured by Monsanto. The seed can also contain traces of antibiotics, transferable to humans. Also produced are seeds coined “terminator” seeds. These seeds are sterile grain seeds, which are unable to germinate. The rationale being that farmers must buy new seed yearly rather than reusing seed the next year. Instead, a contract is formed between farmer and given entity that the farmer will purchase new seed each year.

As of 2011, GMOs were found in 80 percent of all packed foods in the United States. Crops include alfalfa to canola to cotton as well as meat products and milk. The AAEM (American Academy of Environmental Medicine) links the consumption of GMO products with health hazards such as infertility, immune problems, accelerated aging and faulty insulin regulation. Other known



to major organs and gastrointestinal system. The Federal Drug Administration has previously warned that children should not consume any GMO food.

Alex Arnold, 59, of Occupy Jacksonville, felt the issue was of a global concern. When asked of his group’s involvement in the march, he pointed out the Occupy Garden concept, which is an encouragement for all to stop buying produce at the store and cultivate their own crops.

“Monsanto puts profit over humanity and the environment we live in...we seek to put an end to their unethical practices,” said Betty Jackson, a registered nurse. Jackson said her main concern about GMOs is they are found in baby formula. She cited a study done of GMO soy versus organic soy. The lab mice that were fed the genetically altered soy had tumors and lesions, while the mice that were feed organic soy remained healthy. Jackson expressed her anxiety about low-income households, as those who receive WIC have no choice other than GMO-laced baby formula.

“I am a humanist. And this is a human problem,” another marcher said.

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Walmart workers' caravan heads for firm's headquarters

By Press Associates

A group of more than 100 Walmart workers from stores in Northern California, Miami, Boston, Denver and elsewhere started an extended strike on Memorial Day against the retail mega-monster. And they formed a caravan of upset workers who descended on company headquarters and its annual meeting in Arkansas on June 1.

In a telephone press conference, three leaders of the group explained they had to step up to the longer strike after the retailer - known for its low prices, low wages, lousy benefits and virulent anti-worker stands - brushed off prior 1-day walkouts.

The group of 100 includes leaders of Our Walmart, which is working for change in the stores from the inside. Their allies include American Rights at Work, Jobs With Justice and Wake Up Walmart, a union-backed organization dedicated to educating consumers about the retail monster's abuses.

Walmart is retaliating not just by firing workers illegally but also by filing anti-trespassing suits against the firm's community group and individual supporters in Washington state, California, Florida and Arkansas. Workers nationwide filed more than 30 labor law breaking claims (formally called unfair labor practices) against Walmart last week with regional offices of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

¡Se unen estudiantes y trabajadores de pizzerías!

Por Joseph Zimmermann Traducido por Jacques LaPere

Hace tiempo que la Universidad de Wisconsin en Madison se ha encontrado en medio de una disputa entre los activistas para los derechos de los trabajadores y Palermo, una compañía productora de pizza congelada. La Universidad tiene un acuerdo de licencia con dicha compañía productora, con sede en Milwaukee, el cual le permite a Palermo emplear el logotipo famoso de la UW, "Bucky Badger".

La única dificultad es el récord alarmante de Palermo en cuanto a relaciones laborales. Es un récord tan deplorable—y dirigido específicamente a los inmigrantes—que claramente viola las reglas del código de comportamiento de la misma Universidad con respecto a licencias, y tanto es así que el Comité de Licencias Laborales (Labor-Licensing Committee) de la misma Universidad lo ha denunciado. La compañía Palermo ha estado enmarañada en una serie de quejas desde que los trabajadores allí buscaban organizar un sindicato para proteger sus derechos en el lugar del empleo y sus salarios. La compañía productora de pizza despidió de golpe a los que encabezaban los esfuerzos por organizar, mientras que a otros que eran inmigrantes, la compañía los amenazó por su condición migratoria de una manera que el Consejo Nacional de Relaciones Laborales (National Labor Relations Board, NLRB) denunció por su ilegalidad.

Debido a todo ello, las familias

de trabajadores junto con la facultad ha pedido que se termine la relación entre Palermo y la Universidad. En la última reunión de la facultad, le preguntaron directamente al Sr. Ward, Canciller interino de la facultad, por qué no se ha terminado todavía dicha relación de licencia. El Sr. Ward respondió que él iba a esperar hasta que el NLRB emitiera su fallo definitivo antes de tomar medidas sobre la situación. Luego, cuando la compañía salió triunfante, el Sr. Ward dio por resuelto el asunto.

Entonces, sin poder contar ni con los burócratas de Washington, D.C. ni con los administradores de su propia universidad para hacer lo debido, los estudiantes activistas se agruparon y entraron en la oficina del Sr. Ward a fin de obligarle a encararse con el asunto. Como consecuencia de esto, se formó una "ocupación" espontáneo de la oficina del Canciller.

El mes que entra, el Sr. Ward, actual Canciller interino, será reemplazado por la Sra. Rebecca Blank, quien más recientemente ha servido como Secretaria de Comercio bajo el Presidente Obama. Sin duda, estos estudiantes otra vez van a levantar su voz en apoyo de la justicia y el buen juicio cuando se trata de prestar el nombre de su Universidad a esa índole de patrones que se aprovechan ilegalmente de los inmigrantes y frustran los esfuerzos de los trabajadores que buscan asegurar el derecho más fundamental de la negociación de los convenios laborales.

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