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Marchers pack capital for 50th anniversary march

By Tim Wheeler

I gave a little blood on that bridge in Selma, Alabama, for the right to vote and I'm not going to stand by and allow the Supreme Court to take the right to vote away from us."

With those ringing words, Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., drew a roaring cheer from the enormous crowd at the Lincoln Memorial on Saturday. The people assembled on the National Mall, on a sunny, breezy day, were celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Aug. 28, 1963, March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Lewis, then a leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was the youngest speaker at the 1963 march and rally. Later, Lewis was beaten bloody by Alabama state troopers while leading peaceful voting rights marchers in Selma. That brutal assault - and the mass outrage that followed - was key to the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

But the ultra-right majority of the Supreme Court recently gutted a key provision of the law. "The vote is precious," Lewis said on Saturday. "It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democratic society and we've got to use it ... We must say to Congress: Fix the Voting Rights Act."

Lewis also called on Congress to pass com-



prehensive immigration reform. "It doesn't make sense that millions of our people are living in the shadows," he said. "Bring them out into the light. Set them on the path to citizenship."

More than 30,000 members of the NAACP were in the crowd, many holding signs that proclaimed, "Protect the right to vote." Others held signs that said, "Comprehensive immigration reform NOW."

Dr. Roslyn Brock, NAACP national president,

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denounced the "racist onslaught on our right to vote." She added, "Our challenge today, my friends, is to vote in all elections, especially non-presidential elections."

Referring to the 2010 off-year elections in which tea party Republicans gained control of

Marchers were more diverse than in 1963 and raised broader demands.

the House of Representatives, she said “the consequences have been devastating” when the progressive majority stays home on Election Day.

Rep. Alicia Reece, who represents Cincinnati in the Ohio Legislature, called for a “Voters’ Bill of Rights,” a constitutional amendment to be put on the ballot across the nation beginning with Ohio.

Wade Henderson, president of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, told the People’s World that Reps. John Conyers, D-Mich., and Jim Sensenbrenner, R-Wis., are drafting a bill to restore the Voting Rights Act.

The first march in 1963 had a laser focus on ending racist segregation. By contrast, the rally this Saturday was far more diverse in both composition and the vital issues the marchers raised. There were many more women participating and more blasts against the Republican right for attacking women’s rights. Thousands carried signs demanding “Justice for Trayvon Martin,” the unarmed 17-year-old Black youth shot to death in Florida by George Zimmerman, who was acquitted of the slaying.

Sybrina Fulton, Trayvon Martin’s mother, told the crowd that the slain youth “was not just my son. He’s all of our sons and we have to fight

for our children.”

Dan Gross, speaking for the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence denounced the “cowardly Congress” that ignores the 90 gun fatalities each day in blocking legislation to end the firearm massacres. “We are here today because Trayvon Martin is dead,” Gross said. “A young Black male is 17 times more likely to die in a gun homicide ... and we are here to say ‘My voice matters.’”

Terry O’Neill, president of the National Organization for Women, said the Republican right is waging a “war on women” even though the women’s equality movement has “won the war of ideas.” She listed some of the demands of that movement: “union jobs at fair pay,” equal pay for work of equal value, no cuts in Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. She added, “We demand a constitutional amendment, a guarantee of the right to vote. Women will never go back!”

After the rally ended, participants marched to the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. overlooking the Tidal Basin.



Tim Wheeler writes for Peoplesworld.org.

Free Chelsea Manning and all political prisoners

By PW Editorial Board

For most Americans, the phrase “political prisoner” conjures up images of shady foreign governments plucking dissidents from their beds at night, never to be heard from again. As recent months have driven home, though, political imprisonment doesn’t just happen overseas - there are political prisoners here in the U.S., often convicted on the pretext of seemingly apolitical charges. The arrest, unconscionable treatment, and imprisonment of Private Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning represents the most public recent example of this type of political suppression.

Manning, who recently let the public know that she is a transgender woman, faces up to a decade or more in a military prison. She published documentary evidence of U.S. soldiers committing war crimes, revealing the footage through the website WikiLeaks, but to date none of the perpetrators of those crimes have been tried, or charged, or even detained. Neither the military nor the government has investigated the content of the leaked footage. Indeed, no national politi-

cian, military leader, or even major media outlet is on the record calling for such an investigation. According to President Obama, it was Manning who “broke the law.”

Given the government’s extraordinarily selective prosecution, the political motivations for targeting Manning seem undeniable. Chelsea Manning stands as the latest and most publicized in a long line of Americans. Other famous examples have included American Indian Movement activist Leonard Peltier, and, of course Angela Davis, whose arrest sparked an international movement to “Free Angela and All Political Prisoners.” Manning herself has perhaps put it best in her letter to President Obama: “If you deny my request for a pardon, I will serve my time knowing that sometimes you have to pay a heavy price to live in a free society.”

As the capitalist state keeps suppressing those who threaten the status quo, we must create nothing short of a mass movement to free her, free all political prisoners, and finally free all of humanity from oppression and exploitation.

We must create nothing short of a mass movement to free her and all political prisoners.

Coalition demands quality education for all

By Ben Sears

The crowd included students, parents, teachers, counselors, librarians, school nurses, classroom aides, union members and students from Philadelphia and from Baltimore and Boston who had come in support.

The rain and the thunder did not stop them.

They came to deliver a message to the School Reform Commission (SRC), the mayor and governor: “Restore funding for Philadelphia schools!”

Before reaching school district headquarters on north Broad Street, the large crowd of demonstrators had gathered at the Comcast downtown corporate headquarters a few blocks away.

The march started there to highlight their claim that Comcast, in its recently completed corporate skyscraper, is not paying its fair share of taxes and is a major player in causing the schools’ funding shortfall.

At the rally, speakers representing the wide range of groups and organizations participating praised the marchers for the high level of unity and determination that the developing coalition had achieved as the school’s crisis intensifies.

With the opening of school less than three weeks away, the situation in the district continues to be confused and unclear. Although a few have been recalled, over 3,000 school employees including nurses, counselors, teachers and support staff are still facing layoffs.

City and state officials have engaged in a complex game of political maneuvering in attempts to



crisis, but Philadelphia Mayor Nutter is not escaping the anger of school activists.

Dave Morgan, vice president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) told the crowd that he wanted to “report a robbery; Governor Corbett and other officials have stolen our children’s education.” He continued, “ In this crowd I see the people of Philadelphia, but I don’t see a government that cares about them. When you cut \$1 billion from the education budget to build more prisons, we know what message you are sending us. We are not going to stop until the funding is restored and the schools are back in the hands of the people.”

Speaker after speaker echoed Morgan’s words. The message was, as Philadelphia student and member of Youth United For Change (YUC) Krista Rivers said, “We don’t just want band aid funds; we have come together to get decent learning conditions for students and decent working conditions for teachers.”

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Santa Clara council backs Hyatt workers

By Heny Millstein

Dozens of Hyatt workers and community supporters packed the City Council chambers recently to speak in favor of a resolution calling on the management of Santa Clara Hyatt to grant its workers the terms agreed on in a national agreement reached July 1 between the Hyatt Hotels corporation and Unite Here, the union representing hospitality workers.

Pending worker approval, the contracts will provide retroactive wage increases and maintain quality health care and pension benefits. The proposed new contracts would cover workers until 2018.

A key provision of the agreement establishes a fair process, which includes a mechanism for employees at a number of Hyatt hotels to vote on whether they wish to be represented by Unite Here. As part of the accord, upon ratification of the union contracts, Unite Here will end its global boycott of Hyatt.

At issue in Santa Clara is whether the agreement will cover the Hyatt facility there. Hyatt manages but does not own its hotels, and the agreement requires that the local owners of Hyatt facilities consent to the agreement's terms for it to take effect.

Workers and community members, including several local clergy, filing up to speak, thanked the Council for considering this resolution. In response, councilperson Teresa O'Neil acknowledged the thanks but added that the city owed thanks to the workers for their service in welcoming visitors to the city.

Huelga del salario mínimo

Por Alberto Ampuero

Las protestas por conseguir salarios más altos se extienden por Estados Unidos. Unas veces son protagonizadas por los empleados de Walmart. Otra por los trabajadores de McDonald's, Burger King y Wendy's, anunciando una nueva huelga nacional el 29 de agosto: "porque ya no pueden seguir manteniendo a sus familias con los salarios que reciben en la industria de comida rápida".

Piden un salario mínimo de 15 dólares por hora, más del doble de los actuales 7.25 que se pagan en la mayoría de las tiendas de comida rápida.

Son las voces de un problema que arrastra la mayor economía del mundo.

La situación no se debe a la actual recesión económica sino a una tendencia que se ha ido acentuando desde los últimos treinta años.

"Nuestras familias, comunidades y economía dependen de que los trabajadores ganen un salario justo", dice Nancy Salgado, que ha trabajado en un restaurante McDonald's en Chicago por diez años y gana el salario mínimo estatal en Illinois, que es de 8.25 dólares la hora, sin beneficios médicos ni de seguridad social.

Jonathan Westin, director de la asociación Fast Food Forward, que en julio pasado lanzó la huelga en Nueva York, dijo que los trabajadores también están luchando por el derecho a formar un sindicato que los represen-

te sin que haya represalias.

La iniciativa Fast Food Forward está encabezada por una amplia coalición de organizaciones comunitarias, de derechos civiles y sindicatos en Nueva York, donde se lanzó el esfuerzo más ambicioso hasta ahora para sindicalizar a trabajadores del sector de "comida rápida" en el país.

La iniciativa busca sindicalizar a trabajadores de Taco Bell, Burger King, McDonald's, Domino's Pizza y más en esta ciudad. Se calcula que unos 50 mil trabajadores están empleados en esa industria en Nueva York.

A la vez, la iniciativa afirma formar parte de la lucha a nivel nacional por trabajadores de salarios bajos en varios sectores, como los de Walmart, el mayor empleador privado del país.

El movimiento Fast Food Forward, que comenzó con una campaña local en Nueva York, ya se ha ampliado a otras partes del país.

Trabajadores de restaurantes de comida rápida como McDonald's, Burger King y Wendy's de Chicago, Nueva York, Saint Louis, Detroit, Milwaukee y Seattle, entre otras ciudades, irán a la huelga el 29 de agosto, a la que se espera se puedan sumar los empleados de tiendas como Macy's, Sears y Dollar Tree, que trabajan por el salario mínimo.

"Será una de las acciones de empleo más grandes", aseguran.

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