

PEOPLE'S WORLD

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September 21, 2013

100 women arrested protesting immigration inaction

Special to the World



More than 100 women were arrested last week after blockading the intersection outside the House of Representatives to protest the House's inaction on comprehensive immigration reform that treats women and children fairly.

The act of civil disobedience included the largest number of undocumented immigrant women to willingly submit to arrest. The 104 women who were arrested came from 20 states across the country to draw attention to the fact that women and children constitute three-quarters of immigrants to the U.S. and disproportionately bear the burden of the failed immigration system. An additional 200 supporters stood witness for the group and called on the House to match their courage by passing fair and inclusive immigration reform.

"Each one of us here today understands what incredibly high stakes we are talking about-immigration reform is not just a piece of legislation but the ability for us to take care of our families," said Pramila Jayapal, co-chair of We Belong Together: Women for Common-Sense Immigration Campaign. "Women contribute every day to our families, our economy and our country. Immigration reform is about being able to live, breathe free, and remember the values that brought us all here in the first place: democracy, freedom, and

justice."

Prior to the act of civil disobedience, more than 300 women and children gathered for a press conference in front of the Capitol Building, where national leaders - including Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, ranking minority member on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security; Pramila Jayapal of We Belong Together; Bertha Lewis of the Black Institute; Terry O'Neill of NOW; Rocio Inclan of National Education Asso-

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ciation; and three undocumented women - spoke out about how women disproportionately bear the burden of the failed system, despite their considerable contributions to the wellbeing of their families, communities and the country.

Faith leaders led the entire group in taking

Children delivered “red hearts of courage” to the House leadership to embolden them to take action.

an Oath for a House United. Following the arrests, children delivered “red hearts of courage” to House leadership and key swing representatives to embolden them to take action for comprehensive immigration reform.

“Women have fought for centuries to be recognized, to have the right to vote, to work and be paid for it, to realize their full potential. We must continue to fight for millions of immigrant women to get that same recognition,” said Terry O’Neill, president of the National Organization for Women. “I am proud to stand with them and demand that the House pass immigration reform that treats women fairly.”

Women who participated in the civil disobedience are demanding that the House of Representatives shows courage in passing fair immigration reform that includes the priorities of women: a roadmap to citizenship for undocumented women, a strong family immigration system which remains the primary way that women obtain legal status, and strong protections for women workers and victims of violence.

Currently, 51 percent of undocumented im-

migrants are women, but less than one-third of employment visas are issued to immigrant women each year. Seventy percent of immigrant women therefore enter the U.S. through the family visa system, which is so backlogged that women and children can wait decades to be reunited with their families.

“I am 11 years old, and I am a U.S. citizen, but I cannot live my life because my father is in deportation proceedings, said Josie Molina Macaraeg, a leader with the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition. “To me, courage is all of the children who go to school every day wondering if their parents will still be there when they come home at the end of the day. And courage is also my mom, who is here risking arrest today so she can fight for my future, our family’s future, and the rights of all families to be together.” The civil disobedience action highlights the moral urgency of the call for House leadership to move forward a fair immigration reform bill.

This would follow on the Senate’s overwhelmingly bi-partisan passage of a comprehensive immigration bill in June of this year.

Labor opens house to all U.S. workers

By John Wojcik

Leaders of unions and some of their non-union allies emerged from the floor of the AFL-CIO convention Sept. 9 to talk about “Resolution 5,” a key resolution approved here that literally invites every American worker to join the labor movement.

“Union members are a minority among America’s workers as well as among voters in most elections, and that has been increasingly so for more than half a century,” Resolution 5 reads.

“The popular majority, of which union members are a key part, is fragmented in the face of global corporations and the 1 percent that controls a vast and increasing amount of wealth and threatens to seize control of our democracy.”

Larry Cohen, president of the Communications Workers of America, said the labor movement has been “confined” and “limited” by the government and employers when the reality is “all workers who want to take collective action to improve wages, hours and working conditions” make

up the labor movement.

Cohen also called on all unions to “innovate and experiment.” Echoing a call from AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, Cohen said, “It is our task to do nothing less than to create a new mass working class movement in this country.”

The resolution actually called upon everyone in the United States to join the labor movement. “The AFL-CIO hereby invites every worker in the United States to join the labor movement either through an affiliate or through Working America,” the resolution reads. To make the invitation meaningful the resolution called upon Working America and all the AFL-CIO affiliates and unions to “develop forms of workplace representation and advocacy that can benefit members outside collective bargaining agreements by educating them about their workplace rights, providing assistance when their rights are violated, and encouraging concerted action to redress workplace grievances.”

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Richmond takes a daring step for homeowners

By Marilyn Bechtel

After a tumultuous meeting drawing hundreds of residents and lasting into the wee hours, the Richmond City Council voted 4-3 this week to continue exploring a plan to rescue underwater mortgages by using the power of eminent domain.

Some 46 percent of home mortgages in the city, whose 100,000-plus population is largely black and Latino, are under water. That means the homeowner owes more than the current market value of the home. Many cities - especially those with many residents of color, who were heavily targeted for predatory loans - face similar problems.

If the plan, called Richmond CARES (Community Action to Restore Equity and Stability) moves forward, the city would be the first in the country to buy underwater mortgages for the current fair market value and let the homeowner refinance at the new amount.

The city is offering to buy over 600 underwater or at-risk mortgages from the owners and servicers of the loans. All are "private label securities" that have been bundled and sold to private investors, making them hard to modify.

If investors reject Richmond's proposal, the city would use eminent domain to take over and buy the loans.

At a press conference shortly before the Sept. 10 council meeting, Mayor Gayle McLaughlin called the impact of the foreclosure crisis on the city "monumental." She warned that many more foreclosures are to come, causing homeowners much pain and suffering and greatly damaging the city's ability to provide quality-of-life services.



With home values plunging nearly 60 percent since 2007, she said, "we've lost millions in property tax revenue, we've seen a reduction in city funds that leads to cuts in services, and a significant reduction in the number of our municipal employees."

McLaughlin pledged that Richmond will "stand up to Wall St." against intense pressures including a suit by Wells Fargo and Deutsche Bank and predictions that the city's credit costs will increase if eminent domain is used - a threat the mayor said amounts to "redlining."

A coalition of fair housing and civil rights groups has filed an amicus brief in federal court, supporting Richmond's opposition to the banks' efforts to stop the program from proceeding.

Now the city will work with other local governments interested in the plan, while city staff and Mortgage Resolution Partners, a community advisory firm helping stabilize local housing markets, will seek to resolve legal issues. A supermajority of the council must vote to seize mortgages by eminent domain - a level not achieved in this week's vote.

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Salt of the Earth Labor College is 20!

By Joe Bernick

When Tucson activists launched Salt of the Earth Labor College in 1993 they didn't know exactly what to expect. Twenty years later they are amazed with the results.

The workers' school celebrated its 20th anniversary with a party on Aug. 31, and kicked off its 21st year with a showing of the classic labor movie "Salt of the Earth," for which it was named. Anita Torrez, a veteran of both the film and the 1950 strike it depicts, led the discussion following the showing. Anita and her late husband Lorenzo Torrez, who also appeared in the film, were two of the founders. In the short video below, Anita Torrez gives unique background information about the making of the historic film, showing the legacy that the Salt of the Earth Labor College carries forward.

The school has become a special community space for meetings and social gatherings as well as a venue for two semesters a year of lectures, discussions and films. Fall 2013, for a typical example, will include:

* a presentation on Social Security;

* a program titled "Chicano Culture of Resistance"

* a panel on the new direction of labor which will include Rebekah Friend, executive director of the Arizona AFL-CIO;

* a panel on "Saving Public Education"

Over the years classes have grown from an average of 20 attendees to an average of 45 the last three years.

El futuro de la información

Por Roberto Miguel Torres Barbán

Integración, cultura e identidad en la radio y la televisión públicas fue el tema del panel inaugural de las sesiones teóricas del Festival de Radio y Televisión Cuba 2013. El reconocido intelectual francés Salim Lamrani resaltó cómo la censura doctrinal de la prensa hegemónica de occidente impide al mundo conocer la verdadera realidad de Cuba.

El profesor e investigador explicó que el papel de las transnacionales de la información no es proporcional, ni va en paralelo a la verdad, pues solo defienden el orden preestablecido, enseñan el respeto a las jerarquías sociales e intereses económicos, "pero a pesar de ello, les resulta imposible engañar eternamente a los pueblos".

En tal sentido, destacó el papel de la radio y la televisión públicas, las que, dijo, enfrentan el enorme reto de ampliar sus espacios dedicados al debate crítico, lo que sin duda les fortalecerá y creará mayor prestigio y credibilidad en las audiencias.

El gran ausente en este panel inaugural fue Ghassan Ben Jeddou, presidente de Al Mayadeen TV, televisión pública del Líbano, conocida universalmente por ser la competencia alternativa, en el mundo árabe, a la cadena qatarí, Al Jazeera TV.

Ben Jeddou no pudo asistir a la cita de La Habana, porque como él mismo afirmó en video-mensaje transmitido durante la apertura del encuentro, debió permanecer en la

institución que dirige, desde donde hace frente a la desinformación globalizada y omnipotente, en escenarios convulsos como el que vive ahora Siria.

En sus palabras a los organizadores de la cita, a sus más de 300 delegados e igual cantidad de invitados, el directivo convidó a crear una red informativa internacional para combatir el silencio que las grandes cadenas televisivas imponen a algunos temas, como la realidad de lo que sucede en territorio sirio.

Al Festival de Radio y Televisión Cuba 2013, dijo, envió una parte importante del equipo de Al Mayadeen TV, entre ellos, su director de producción, Rashid Kanj, y Hind Khaled, directora de promoción, quien explicó a Granma que esa cadena cuenta con más de 40 oficinas y corresponsales, un servicio diario de 11 boletines informativos y 15 crónicas breves, en todos ellos —acotó— se hace énfasis durante las 24 horas en la convulsa realidad de los países de la región árabe.

Khaled destacó las semejanzas que existen entre las agendas de la televisión cubana y Al Mayadeen TV, pues ambas están comprometidas con el combate a lo que ocultan o tergiversan los grandes consorcios de la prensa mundial, y resaltó las magníficas relaciones de trabajo que existen entre ambas televisiones, que este jueves concertarán nuevos mecanismos de cooperación, anunció.

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