

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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August 2, 2014

## Letter carriers: U.S. mail not for sale!



By Ben Sears

**T**oday, in two of the greatest cities in the U.S, two of our country's greatest unions stand together and protest the move toward privatization and the continuing attempts to degrade our postal service!"

These were the words of President Frederic Rolando of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) to several hundred of his members just before they headed out to march through the streets of downtown here to the nearest Staples store. He was referring to the solidarity being shown between his union and the American Postal Workers Union, which had its own demonstration in downtown Chicago. The two unions held their respective conventions this week in Philadelphia and Chicago.

The NALC has over 7,500 delegates attending its 125th anniversary convention here through July 25. They are representing the unions roughly 290,000 members. This morning, in a poignant moment as part of the union's health and safety campaign, the delegates honored several of its members who had been seriously injured on the job, usually while working the mail in dangerous traffic conditions.

Delegates, who often emphasized their pride in being part of the largest organized workforce in the nation, told [peoplesworld.org](http://peoplesworld.org) that they are

concerned not just about the privatization threat and the threat to eliminate Saturday delivery but about the possibility of attempts to end door-to-door delivery service altogether.

The action at the Staples store here was one of hundreds of protests that have been taking place all across the country, protests that were triggered by the announcement last fall of a "sweetheart" deal between Staples and the United States Postal Service. The deal resulted in the establishment of

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mini-post offices in 82 Staples stores.

As the spirited demonstrators moved through the crowded rush hour streets, chants of "The U.S. mail is not for sale!" and "Donahoe has got to go!" echoed from buildings along the route. The second chant referred to Postmaster General Pat-

**Unions are urging a boycott of Staples.**

rick Donahoe, who the unions see as pushing the Staples deal, a scheme they say that amounts to privatization of mail services.

Motorists stopped in traffic along the route frequently greeted the marchers by honking their horns in support and giving thumbs up signs.

Workers are demanding the firing of Donahoe because they see him using his position not to strengthen the U.S. Postal Service but, among other things, to privatize mail service by putting post offices in 82 Staples stores. These stores are staffed by Staples employees who often earn only the minimum wage, not by trained postal workers sworn to protect the mail. They also are angry about what they say is his refusal to fight service cuts, including attempts to end Saturday delivery of mail.

The announcement last fall of the no-bid "sweetheart" deal between Staples and the Postal Service triggered hundreds of demonstrations across the country at Staples stores that have continued right up to the national postal union conventions this week.

Many other national unions have gotten on board with the boycott. Delegates to the American Federation of Teachers convention in Los Angeles voted July 12 to join the boycott which has also been endorsed by the AFL-CIO, the Service Employees International Union, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and the International Association of Firefighters.

The joining of the boycott by the AFT is considered particularly important. There are estimates that a teacher boycott of Staples could cost the chain \$3.5 billion.

At the Staples store, Bill Lucini, the union's national business agent for the Philadelphia region (Region 12), delivered petitions with thousands of signatures stating that the union would continue to urge a boycott of Staples as long as the chain is in contract to perform any work that should be done by postal workers.



**Ben Sears is a contributor to Peoplesworld.org.**

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## **Protesters demand Apple treat security guards fairly**

By Henry Millstein

**H**ey hey, ho ho, union busting's got to go" rang out across the Apple "campus" here June 23. Union and community activists called on the iconic computer and smartphone manufacturer to push for fair treatment of security workers by subcontractor Security Industry Specialists (SIS), based in Culver City. Apple, along with Google, eBay, and other leading tech firms have contracted out their security services to SIS.

Apple is booming, but security guards working for SIS can barely make ends meet, especially here in Silicon Valley, which has some of the highest housing prices in the nation. Santa Clara County has one of the highest median income in the U.S. - \$91,000 - but one-third of the households here don't have enough income to meet basic needs. A typical security guard with SIS earns \$16 an hour and usually gets, at most, 30 hours of work a week, and no benefits - not nearly enough for basic living expenses in an area where average

rents for a small apartment range around \$2,000 a month.

While Apple, Google, and other high-tech giants boast record profits, the cost of basic necessities for a family of four in Silicon Valley rose by nearly 20 percent between 2008 and 2012 - while average workers' wages declined over the same period by three percent.

According to the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which already has 35,000 private security workers organized, SIS has responded with fear and intimidation to workers' efforts to form a union. At its last meeting, the South Bay Labor Council AFL-CIO gave strong support to the security workers' struggle. The solid turnout of unionists at the June 23 rally, especially from the California School Employees' Association (easily visible in their blue T-shirts), shows that labor is ready to take on the tech giants in Silicon Valley and the firms to which it contracts out.

**Apple is booming, but security guards can barely make ends meet.**

## Student interns organize on Tobacco Road

By Kenneth Quinnell

**A** FL-CIO Union Summer interns have joined members of the Farm Workers Organizing Committee (FLOC) in a drive to organize thousands of North Carolina tobacco farm workers as part of FLOC's "Respect, Recognition, Raise" campaign and fight for a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, respect in the workplace and union recognition.

Many farm workers who harvest and tend tobacco often live in labor camps with inadequate or nonfunctioning toilets and showers and other substandard conditions, suffer from illnesses resulting from nicotine poisoning and exposure to dangerous pesticides and work long hours for below-poverty wages.

Here are the stories of two Union Summer activists and the workers they met. Click on their names for more and click here for more from the "Respect, Recognition, Raise" blog.

Anna Vilches: "I have had some very good days with my team and some days that have not been so awesome. Already we have met so many workers who are demanding change. As we speak to them, we begin to understand that most of them know just how bad they are being treated and that they are workers who deserve dignity, respect and recognition for the hard work they do every day. The most common demand that workers ask for are higher wages. In North Carolina, minimum wage is \$7.25, which is what undocumented workers and workers without a H-2A visa usually make. Those who do come with a H-2A contract should be making a minimum of \$9.87 an hour. Yet, the workers we have spoken to agree that these wages are not appropriate for the amount of work they do.

"There have been other problems that have been mentioned. For example, at one of the camps



we recently visited, the workers said they do not have access to bathrooms out in the fields while they work. I'm sure if more people knew about these conditions they would be shocked to find out that this is the way workers are treated in this country, particularly workers who help put food on our tables.

Briosha Sanders: "I'd seen third world poverty before when I worked with a nonprofit organization in Honduras in the summer of 2012, but I still felt shocked when I went out to the camps of the *trabajadores* with whom FLOC organizers work to build community power. It was shocking, I think, because for the first time I was faced with the harsh realization that there is a widespread human trafficking operation of cheap labor thriving in my back yard.

"One of the ugliest things I've seen in the fields confronted me this past Tuesday night when my *companeros y yo* visited a worker camp in North Carolina that was surrounded by barbwire fence. For me, it looked like a prison. It made me think of a cage where the workers are contained until they are needed to work in the fields. There were approximately 60 people living in five to six trailers with worn out mattresses backed into a small space, allowing hardly enough room for people to move around."

**Management is proposing cuts ranging from 25 to 38 percent.**

## Kellogg's lockout headed for court

By Mark Gruenberg

**K**ellogg's long lockout of 226 workers at its Memphis, Tenn., cereal plant is headed for federal court.

That's because U.S. District Judge Samuel Mays in Memphis refused on July 16 to throw out the National Labor Relations Board's suit against the giant cereal maker. That left the way open for a full-scale trial in federal circuit court in New Orleans.

The board seeks a court injunction ordering Kellogg's to take the workers back and bargain in good faith with their union, the Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM). Kellogg's locked the workers out Oct. 22, 2013 after the workers refused to accept its contract demands for pay cuts and huge health care premium rises.

"The unnecessary suffering imposed by Kellogg on these 226 families has occurred for one reason and one reason alone: Kellogg's insatiable thirst for profit even if it means destroying the very lives of its employees and their families to achieve it," said BCTGM President David Durkee.

The lockout has attracted nationwide notice, since most of the Memphis workforce is African-American or Hispanic-named. The NAACP has alerted its chapters to the struggle and other civil rights groups have joined the coalition backing the workers.

The workers also took their cause to Kellogg's shareholders' meeting with a resolution ordering the firm to provide a public "human rights risk assessment" showing if company actions help or hurt its brand.

## Las mujeres también juegan el deporte rey

Por Ann Marie Hager

**C**on toda la emoción del final del Mundial, ¿sabía que lo que llamamos el Mundial es verdaderamente el Mundial de los hombres y que las mujeres tendrán su Mundial en Canadá el año próximo? Como fan del fútbol, jugadora y mujer, no me di cuenta del otro Mundial hasta empecé pensar en mis jugadoras favoritas y que era raro verlas en competiciones internacionales. Si yo, así, no me di cuenta de que existe un Mundial femenino, supongo que el resto del mundo no se ha dado cuenta tampoco.

El fútbol femenino en los EE.UU. no conoció la popularidad hasta el siglo XX porque las normas sociales en aquel entonces prohibieron ejercicios afuera de los colegios y universidades. Es más, en 1922 cuando un equipo femenino británico vino a los Estados Unidos para hacer una excursión, no existía equipos para jugar en contra de ellas y por eso tuvieron que jugar en contra de los hombres profesionales y semi-profesionales. ¿Es difícil creer que un deporte con 29 millones de jugadores hoy en día fuera casi prohibida hace menos de 100 años?

El interés por el fútbol femenino creció durante el siglo XX y ganó popularidad en el inicio de los años noventa. El primer Mundial para las mujeres fue en 1991 y desde entonces el Equipo Nacional Femenino ha logrado ser al menos tercero en cada

Mundial. Igual sucede en los Juegos Olímpicos. El fútbol femenino fue deporte olímpico por primera vez en 1996 y las estadounidenses de nuevo ganaron el primer primer premio.

En el mundo del fútbol femenino, las estadounidenses cuentan sin duda con las mejores, como las japonesas, las chinas, las alemanas, las suecas, las noruegas, las coreanas, las brasileñas, etc. Sería fácil decir que las estadounidenses son las mejores del mundo. La FIFA está de acuerdo, colocándolas en el primer lugar por meses y meses. Además, el Equipo Nacional Femenino ha visto algunas de las mejores jugadoras en la historia del fútbol femenino, como Abby Wambach. Ella superó el récord internacional de 160 goles con 160 en contra de la República de Corea el 21 de junio. Anteriormente Mía Hamm, también de los EE.UU., había logrado 158 goles. Ahora la FIFA ha nombrado a Abby Wambach como "la mejor goleadora del mundo".

Por otro lado, nadie llama al Equipo Nacional Masculino de los EE.UU. el mejor del mundo, a pesar de los atajadas fenomenales de Tim Howard en contra de Bélgica el primer de julio. La mayoría de la gente cree que el Equipo es mediocre, (aunque ha calificado para cada Mundial desde 1990), mientras el Equipo Nacional Femenino es constantemente el mejor.

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