

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

[www.peoplesworld.org](http://www.peoplesworld.org)

August 9, 2014

## Fast food workers plan civil disobedience



By Tony Pecinovsky

On the heels of what many are calling a historic convention of over 1,200 fast food workers held in the Chicago suburbs last weekend, the campaign for “\$15 and a union” won a major National Labor Relations Board decision that, if upheld, could have significant repercussions throughout the industry - and dramatically change the organizing landscape in favor of low-wage fast food workers.

The NLRB’s general council on Tuesday ruled that McDonald’s could be held “jointly accountable” for labor and wage violations by its franchise operators. Undoubtedly, other fast food chains are paying close attention, as they could potentially face similar rulings. Of the thousands of McDonald’s restaurants in the United States, roughly 90 percent are owned by franchise operators.

Jeanina Jenkins, a St. Louis McDonald’s employee, told People’s World, “McDonald’s can’t hide behind their franchises anymore.”

Jenkins, a member of the fast food workers national organizing committee, has worked at McDonald’s for 2 ½ years. She is currently making \$7.97 an-hour and is scheduled an average of 15 to 20 hours a week. “Hardly enough time or money to help take care of my family - my mother, sister and niece,” she said.

According to Julius Getman, a labor law pro-

fessor at the University of Texas, “Employers like McDonald’s seek to avoid recognizing the rights of their employees by claiming that they are not really their employer, despite exercising control over crucial aspects of the employment relationship.

The NLRB ruling came after its investigation of 181 claims spanning 20 months. The ruling couldn’t come at a worse time for the fast food behemoth, which brings in \$27 billion annually in revenue, as fast food workers at the recent

### T H I S   W E E K :

- **Fast food workers plan civil disobedience**
- **July unemployment rate down, suffering up**
- **Passaic River may receive \$1.7 billion cleanup**
- **Negociar una solución justa al conflicto en Gaza**
- **Cuba Caravanistas welcomed in Dallas**

READ MORE NEWS AND OPINION DAILY AT [WWW.PEOPLESWORLD.ORG](http://WWW.PEOPLESWORLD.ORG)

convention agreed to dramatically escalate their tactics and organize a wave of civil disobedience actions against fast food chains in the coming months - actions that will undoubtedly bring more attention to the industry’s poverty wages and poor working conditions.

**Companies will have a harder time blocking organizing efforts.**

“We will do anything, whatever it takes to get \$15 and a union,” Jenkins added. “Workers are very engaged and ready to do anything, even get arrested.” Jenkins said convention participants were “amped-up and excited,” ready to take on the fast food Goliath.

“We are all leaders. We’re going to keep building this movement and expand it until they pay us more and we get a union. This is our struggle. This is everybody’s struggle. We’re in this together. We’re going to win.” “The convention was the bomb,” Rasheen Aldridge, a St. Louis area strike leader, told peoplesworld.org. “It was great to see so many folks from so many different cities fired-up and ready to go. “It really showed our growth as a movement and helped us gear-up for the next round of strikes. We’re working together state by state, city by city, building solidarity.” In all, fast food workers from 30 cities attended the convention. They discussed tactics and where to go from here. And ultimately, agreed to embark on an unprecedented wave of civil disobedience. “We’re building an army of fast food workers,” Al-

dridge concluded. “We’re going to do whatever it takes to win.” Ultimately, the NLRB ruling will be taken to administrative law judges. If the judges uphold the ruling McDonald’s is likely to appeal to the five-member labor board in Washington, D.C. The case could potentially end up in the Supreme Court. Additionally, the favorable NLRB decision comes as the AFL-CIO executive council meets to discuss a number of issues critical to working people, including union organizing.

“Under President Obama the NLRB has been getting better and better at issuing rulings that help workers. Remember though that this is as it should be. The NLRB, under U.S labor law, is there to protect and extend collective bargaining rights. This ruling will go far to help do that,” said Bill Samuels the AFL-CIO’s legislative director.

Companies like McDonald’s will have a harder time avoiding responsibility for violating labor law and blocking union organizing efforts.



**Tony Pecinovsky is a co-editor of Peoplesworld.org.**

---

## July unemployment rate down, suffering up

By PAI

**T**he official July unemployment rate of 6.2 percent released last weekend by the Bureau of Labor Statistics greatly understates both the actual joblessness rate and the extent of suffering it is causing.

Just under a third (32.0 percent) have been jobless for more than half a year and have lost their unemployment benefits altogether. The benefits came to an end last Dec. 28 and have been blocked by Senate Republican filibusters ever since then. While 131,000 people found jobs last month, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics report, the number of unemployed people rose last month by 197,000 to 9.67 million.

While the official jobless rate is 6.2 percent, one of every eight workers (12.2 percent) are unemployed or toiling at part-time work even though they want full-time jobs. Then there are millions who are so discouraged they’ve dropped out of searching for jobs entirely and millions of others who have never had their first job.

Companies reported adding jobs, however, in both high-paying - construction and manufacturing - and low-paying economic sectors. Factories said they added 28,000 jobs in July, with half of those in cars and parts. Construction added 22,000, at the height of the construction season, and despite the problems facing road-building and bridge repairs due to lack of federal funds. Construction firms reported adding almost two-thirds of their jobs in specialty construction, with 6.041 million workers toiling in July. But that still left 666,000 construction workers, or 7.5 percent unemployed, BLS said. Construction union leaders say that understates the jobless rate in that sector, since a worker toiling even one day during the survey week is counted as employed for the whole month.

Factories now employ 12.16 million workers, leaving 825,000 (5.2 percent) jobless. Other than cars and parts, there were small gains and losses in all other factories.

**One of every eight workers are unemployed or toiling at part-time work.**

## Passaic River may receive \$1.7 billion cleanup

By Blake Deppe

New Jersey may soon be the center of one of the largest cleanups ever proposed by the EPA. The agency has proposed a \$1.7 billion dredging of the Passaic River, arguably one of the most polluted water sources in the state. The operation would seek to remove some four million cubic yards of sediment from the river bottom and undo decades' worth of toxicity, mostly caused by nearly a century of industrial activity, including illegal dumping.

Initially, only the lower eight miles of the river would be targeted - from the town of Belleville to the city of Newark - and that alone would be a cumbersome project. It's an area heavily contaminated by high concentrations of dioxin, PCBs (synthetic chemical compounds), and other pollutants, as well as the accumulation of various litter over the years. EPA officials said over 100 companies would likely be found responsible for the Passaic River's poisoning, and would be required under federal Superfund law to pay the cost of the cleanup. EPA regional administrator Judith Enck remarked, according to CBS, that in addition to dioxins and PCBs, "this river is heavily contaminated with heavy metals like lead and mercury, and pesticides. It is a witches' brew of chemicals, and unfortunately, some of them cause cancer." She attributed the contents to chemical corporations, noting, "Right here in Newark, a chemical company manufactured Agent Orange, which was used during the Vietnam War, and it was dumped on the land" afterward, whereupon it seeped into the river. "We've studied this for years," she said. "The river communities have suffered for long enough."

This undertaking would already be a reality - instead of just a proposal - if not for the various chemical companies that are seeking to delay



the effort, environmentalists say. Debbie Mans of ecological group NY/NJ Baykeeper, said such corporations "have been paying lobbyists and lawyers instead of paying for the cleanup." She referred to the various ongoing legal battles between the EPA and chemical companies blamed for the river contamination, all of which are fighting tooth and nail to shirk all responsibility for the disaster and refusing to pay damages. The Passaic River runs through many working-class Jersey towns, including Hawthorne, Elmwood Park, Garfield, Nutley, and Belleville, as well as the cities of Clifton, Newark, and Paterson; it flows northeast into the latter area, where it drops over the Great Falls of the Passaic River, a 77-foot-high waterfall that has been designated a national landmark by the National Park Service. The Passaic River is also home to various wildlife that have long felt its toxic effects. People have long been advised not to fish in the area, or to eat anything caught from the river. The Newark-based company to which Enck referred was Diamond Alkali, which operated there between 1951 and 1969 and acquired a reputation for producing low-quality products and having multiple industrial accidents. The company routinely dumped "bad batches" of its herbicides into the Passaic River.

**The project would remove some four million cubic yards of sediment from the river bottom.**

## Cuba Caravanistas welcomed in Dallas

By Jim Lane

**L**isa Valantes is on her 25th Caravan to Cuba with Pastors for Peace. Pastors for Peace is a special ministry of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, and was created in 1988 to pioneer the delivery of humanitarian aid to Latin America and the Caribbean.

The US/Cuba Friendship Caravan each year has the caravanistas originate from different parts of the U.S., then make their way through Texas to the Mexican border on their way to Cuba. Valantes started this trip in Pittsburgh!

At every stop, they gather volunteers and material supplies to break the blockade of Cuba. Their donated cars, buses and trucks stay with the Cuban people.

Valantes told the Dallas supporters, "Don't just think about Cuba, think about what Cuba has done for the world!" Many of the audience members at the Pan African Connection in Dallas were especially appreciative of Cuba's total conquest of internal racism and the military help they gave in resisting the old apartheid South African regime.

The caravanistas have 100 U.S. citizens and Canadians, Europeans and Mexicans taking part this year. They traveled 13 routes through the U.S.

Participants explained why they are going: "To deliver humanitarian aid to our brothers and sisters in Cuba as a direct challenge to the U.S. government's economic blockade. And to assert our right to travel."

## Negociar una solución justa en Gaza

Por Partido Comunista de EE.UU

**D**eclaraciones incendiarias, irresponsables de "venganza" e incitaciones racistas de líderes israelíes de extrema derecha —entre ellos el primer ministro Benjamin Netanyahu, el ministro de Relaciones Exteriores Avigdor Lieberman y el ministro de Economía Naftali Bennett— no sólo en la crisis actual, sino año tras año, han exacerbado la crisis. Y sus acciones son mucho peores que sus declaraciones. A la luz de pruebas débiles de que los asesinos de los tres jóvenes israelíes tenían alguna conexión con Hamas, las autoridades israelíes reaccionaron con un asalto violento contra el pueblo de Cisjordania, y ahora un bombardeo feroz de Gaza, en el que hasta la fecha más de 1700 personas han sido asesinadas, incluyendo familias enteras y niños pequeños. Tal castigo colectivo a la población civil es una violación del derecho internacional. Muchos han señalado que la venganza como motivo para una acción militar también viola el derecho internacional, pero esos llamados no han sido escuchados.

Durante muchos años, un enfoque viable ampliamente aceptado para la paz, que garantice la seguridad de Israel y dé a los palestinos su largamente aspirada condición de Estado, ha estado languideciendo mientras que Israel sigue construyendo asentamientos en tierras que serían esenciales para un Estado palestino viable. La dirección de la OLP ha re-

spaldado este enfoque, y el liderazgo de Hamas en Gaza no ha estado trabajando activamente en los últimos años para socavarlo. Un importante paso adelante fue la reciente formación de un gobierno de unidad palestino. Sin embargo, todo esto ha sido saboteado por la construcción de asentamientos, y ahora por el intento del gobierno de Israel de utilizar el asesinato de los tres jóvenes israelíes para tratar de destruir los esfuerzos de unidad palestinos y bombardear a los palestinos hasta someterlos. Es importante señalar que el gobierno de Netanyahu es capaz de actuar como lo hace porque cuenta con el apoyo incondicional significativo de los Estados Unidos. Así que nuestro dinero de los impuestos no se utiliza para promover la paz, sino que para permitir un estancamiento perpetuo con frecuentes estallidos de violencia macabra.

El Partido Comunista de EE.UU. condena los asesinatos de los jóvenes israelíes y palestinos, y pide que los autores de todos estos actos atroces sean llevados ante la justicia. Pero también denunciamos la incitación racista de odio para conseguir la "venganza" y la respuesta militar violenta por parte de Israel tanto en Cisjordania y Gaza, así como los ataques con cohetes contra ciudades y pueblos israelíes que emanan de Gaza. Hacemos un llamamiento a un alto el fuego inmediato, el fin de los esfuerzos para desestabilizar el proceso de paz, y el retorno a negociaciones serias y expeditas.

### NATIONAL CONTACT

Editorial: (773) 446-9920 Business: (212) 924-2523  
3339 S. Halsted Chicago, IL 60625  
Email: contact@peoplesworld.org