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“Unapologetic:” the Chicago Six in criminal court

By Blake Deppe



Six undocumented students known as the Chicago Six returned to court today, after having been arrested in August during a protest against U.S. immigration policy. As they soon learned, their case is not yet over.

Fanny Lopez-Martinez, Jorge Mena, Arianna Salgado, Ireri Unzueta, Carla Navoa, and Miguel Martinez are community organizers with the Immigrant Youth Justice League. After protesting the deeply flawed Secure Communities deportation program, they face charges of mob action and obstruction of traffic. Their previous court date was postponed, due to a missing police officer called as witness for the prosecution.

Though their last appearance was in Chicago's Circuit Court, this time they were brought into criminal court, located off the beaten path in the Western part of the city.

The unwelcome air in the court was hard to ignore, as was the arrogant behavior this reporter witnessed. When one of the Chicago Six passed through security, he forgot to remove something metal from his pocket, and was told by a police officer to walk back through the metal detector. When he did not immediately hear the officer, the officer bluntly asked if he understood English, with a nasty sneer.

It was sad to see this display of ignorance in

the face of an intelligent person fighting so hard to ensure justice.

The six defendants, surrounded in the court building lobby by persons charged with crimes ranging from drug dealing to assault, seemed out of place coming there to defend themselves for exercising their free speech rights.

“It's very intimidating,” said Navoa, 22, who came here from the Philippines as a child. “And I think that was their intention. It says a lot” about how the State of Illinois feels about our plight, she said, in that it seems as though they're making

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things difficult. They're sending a clear message by drawing this case out. We're hoping to be able to testify.”

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Asked how she felt about the outcome of the trial being up in the air, Navoa replied, "It's frustrating. We have to continue to put parts of our lives on hold. And with school and all, you know, keeping up with coursework is hard. And our parents constantly worry."

Meanwhile, 12 parents and students who were arrested in Montgomery, Ala. last November were brought into criminal court in Alabama on Feb. 27. Unzueta appeared today to support the Chicago Six, and explained what the verdict was in Alabama:

"We need to pay a \$300 fine for obstructing traffic, and that's it," he said. "DHS didn't want all that attention and involvement in politics."

Unzueta noted that more important than the act of civil disobedience, which led to their Alabama arrests, "are the youth themselves, and the national network of organizations they're involved with."

Navoa seemed to agree. "We need organization in every state. We need to network - to support each other. I'm trying to be there for everyone and provide support."

That resolution, however, did not come.

Judge Peggy Chiampas observed that once again, a police officer required to be present was, in fact, not there, as there was an apparent death in his family. Out of respect for this, Chiampas set a new court date for the Chicago Six: "Tuesday, March 20th," she said. "9 a.m. sharp."

She suggested, however, that the State had made a mess of a few things, as, due to lack of signed dates on documents - and the presence of a different judge during the last court date - there was some confusion as to what exactly the Chicago Six were being charged with. Whether this was disorganization on the part of the State, or deliberate causing of confusion, no one could tell.

Before the court was dismissed, however, Chiampas told the State's attorney to basically get its act together.

For the Chicago Six, meanwhile, their fight continues. But if the words emblazoned upon their shirts are any indication, they'll be keeping their heads - and hopes - up in the weeks to come: "Undocumented. Unafraid. Unapologetic."



Blake Deppe writes for the People's World.

No war on Iran

By PW Editorial Board

The rapid escalation of tensions between Iran on the one hand, and Israel, the United States and the United Kingdom on the other represents a threat to world peace. Republican politicians in the United States and people in the Israeli government talk openly of acts like strikes on Iranian facilities, which would certainly be acts of war. Assassinations of Iranian scientists on the streets of their own country are further provocations.

Progressives in Iran, while criticizing their own government, have explicitly opposed such outside intervention, including the kind of sanctions that are now being pushed by the United States and its allies, as hurting the Iranian people while playing into the hands of the regime.

Further, an accident or irresponsible move by either side could set off a military confrontation which would have a strong impact on the world economy and especially on the poorer countries that rely highly on Iranian oil for their own survival.

There are all sorts of games and intrigues going on that shape the current crisis. Iranian President Ahmadinejad is under attack by other reactionary elements in his own country, as legislative elections approach. The Israeli government is under sharp criticism from many of its citizens

because of failed economic policies that have widened the gap between rich and poor. There is a bitter feud going on between Iran and Saudi Arabia. And of course we have our own election campaigns in this country, with the usual push by the Republicans to portray the Obama administration as "soft" on the country's enemies. All of these dynamics heighten the danger of a drift toward war.

We need an end to the intrigues and provocations coming out of the Israeli, British and US governments and political factions. We denounce the push for armed strikes against Iran by Israel, which is the only nuclear-armed state in the region. We denounce the killings of Iranian scientists as criminal acts of terrorism. We reiterate that only the Iranian people have the right to decide what sort of government their country will have, and we oppose activities by outside parties aimed at "regime change". Iran, as a sovereign independent country, has every right to develop its own nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. As for the elimination of the danger of nuclear weapons, we demand work toward nuclear disarmament across the board, including by the United States. We call for continued negotiations as the only viable way to relieve tensions in the Gulf region.

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After “slut” diatribe, can Limbaugh show survive, and should it?

By Susan Webb

Is a woman who uses birth control a “slut”? Is she a “prostitute” who “wants to be paid to have sex”?

Is it OK for a major radio host, Rush Limbaugh, to use the public airwaves for that kind of character assassination?

His target is 30-year-old Georgetown University law student Sandra Fluke, who has spoken out against Republican efforts to deny women access to birth control at no cost.

“She’s having so much sex she can’t afford the contraception. She wants you and me and the taxpayers to pay her to have sex,” Limbaugh luridly declared on his show last week. He suggested she make videos of her sexual relations and make them available for people like him to watch.

As of today eight companies have suspended their sponsorship of the Limbaugh show over his “inappropriate” commentary. These include AOL, ProFlowers, Quicken Loans (owned by Cleveland Cavaliers owner Dan Gilbert), Sleep Train, Sleep Number, Citrix Systems Inc., Carbonite, LegalZoom and Sears.

“No one with daughters the age of Sandra Fluke, and I have two, could possibly abide the insult and abuse heaped upon this courageous and well-intentioned young lady,” Carbonite CEO David Friend said.

Others want Limbaugh’s show pulled from the air altogether.

Limbaugh “apologized” for two of his “word choices,” but not for the misogynistic ideas he expressed. Fluke said the “apology” did not change the situation, especially since it came after sponsors starting pulling out of the show.

Rick Santorum dismissed Limbaugh as “absurd” and “just an entertainer,” while an aide to Mitt Romney, along with birth-control witch-hunter Rep. Darryl Issa, said it was just an example of extremism on all sides.

On the other hand, President Obama phoned



Fluke to express support for her courage in speaking out on women’s rights.

Pentagon press secretary George Little told CNN today that the Defense Department had no plans to stop broadcasting Limbaugh’s show to service members on the American Forces Network. The show is part of the Defense Department’s policy to broadcast shows that “reflect a wide range” of opinion, Little said.

But VoteVets.org, a veterans advocacy group, released a statement from three women Iraq war veterans calling on the American Forces Network to stop broadcasting “The Rush Limbaugh Show.”

Miranda Norman (a VoteVets.org Senior Advisor), Kayla Williams, and Robin Eckstein, all Iraq War veterans, and Katherine Scheirman, former chief of medical operations for the U.S. Air Forces in Europe at Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany, said:

“Rush Limbaugh has a freedom of speech and can say what he wants, but in light of his horribly misogynistic comments, American Forces Radio should no longer give him a platform. Our entire military depends on troops respecting each other.”

“The Rush Limbaugh Show” is run on Premiere Networks, which is owned by Clear Channel Communications.

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Calif. students rally to save higher education

By Juan Lopez

Over 10,000 college and university students and their supporters from throughout the state, carrying signs proclaiming, "Save our university!" "Cut fees now, save public education!" and "Millionaires tax of 2012," marched from Southside Park to the state Capitol steps Mar. 5 to kick off a "Fund Our Future" day of action.

Students from all three public education systems - community colleges, the California State University System, and the University of California - joined forces in the protest. Along their route, the air rang with their chant, "Students united will never be divided!"

Claudia Magaña, president of the UC Student Association, told the rally at the Capitol, "We are being forced to pay for a crisis we did not create! Shame!" The crowd roared back, "Shame!"

Magaña cited three ballot measures for which signatures are now being gathered, a "millionaires' tax," a tax on oil extracted in California, and a measure that would temporarily raise sales taxes and taxes on the wealthiest Californians, all of which would benefit education.

From the West Steps of the Capitol Building, Kevin Feliciano, president of the statewide Student Senate for Community Colleges, called on rally participants to tell the legislature to "fund our futures" for higher education.

Mehran Khodabandeh, president of Associated Students, Inc. at California State University, Stanislaus, challenged legislators, "Hear us out or we'll vote you out!"

UC Berkeley student Senator Sydney Hai Fang voiced a universal concern: "When I see my tuition go up 130 percent, enough is enough! Today we stand united as students, as workers, and as community."

Exitosa marcha en East Haven en contra del perfilamiento racial

Por Wilmer Barzallo

El día sábado 25 de febrero a las doce del mediodía con el auspicio de la Comunidad de Inmigrantes de East Haven, Unidad Latina en Acción, The People's Center y el Representante Estatal de New Haven Juan Candelaria, centenares de ciudadanos conjuntamente con varias organizaciones comunitarias se hicieron presente en la Gran Marcha en Contra del Perfilamiento Racial.

En un colorido, pacífico y fervoroso ambiente más de quinientos participantes de múltiples nacionalidades hicieron el recorrido desde el Main Street hasta la alcaldía de East Haven expresando su condena a las violaciones de los derechos humanos, nativismo y perfilamiento racial que involucran al Departamento de Policía y al alcalde Joseph Maturo. Con armoniosos cánticos y pintorescas pancartas que leían "Fin al Perfilamiento Racial", "No somos Terroristas ni Criminales", "Unidos en la Lucha", "Todos somos Inmigrantes", etc. los manifestantes hicieron realidad lo que el Representante estatal Juan Candelaria había anunciado sería "una marcha de multitudes en que en las calles de East Haven harían ruido hasta escucharse en la alcaldía y que Joseph Maturo supiera que tiene una comunidad unida".

East Haven ha sido últimamente el foco de la atención nacional e internacional desde que en diciembre del último año el Departamento de Justicia reportó que perfilamiento racial y arbitrarias prácticas se llevaban en efecto en el Departamento de Policía. Como consecuencia de esta "conspiración para deprivar a hispanos y a otros miembros de grupos minoritarios de sus derechos", cuatro oficiales de policía fueron arrestados

con los cargos de "hostigamiento e intimidación a miembros de grupos minoritarios". Subsiguientemente el 3 de febrero el jefe de policía Leonard Gallo quien es citado por el Departamento de Justicia como "Co-Cospirador 1" renunció a su cargo.

Sin embargo, las ocurrencias de xenofobia no sólo involucran al Departamento de Policía sino también al alcalde Joseph Maturo quien es percibido por la comunidad como insensible. Maturo devolvió el cargo de jefe de policía a Leonard Gallo a pesar de que éste se encontraba en retiro y bajo investigación federal. Posteriormente Maturo recibió una verdadera tormenta de criticismo por haber respondido en frente de cámaras que "comería tacos" como respuesta a las necesidades de los latinos.

El abuso, hostigamiento, intimidación y violencia física en contra de la comunidad latina habían alcanzado niveles alarmantes según los vecinos del lugar. La comunidad vivía en completa zozobra. Guillermo Estrella, residente de East Haven y víctima de violencia policial afirma que "el acoso y opresión de la policía estaba dirigido prácticamente a todo latino", según Estrella, los patrulleros se estacionaban al frente de los negocios para "cazar" y "hostigar" a individuos en base del perfilamiento racial.

Con la finalidad de poner fin a estas prácticas ilegales e anticonstitucionales los organizadores de la marcha se habían planteado como exigencias principales la depuración del Departamento de Policía de East Haven y la renuncia del alcalde Joseph Maturo. Herman Zúñiga, presidente de la Comunidad de Inmigrantes de East Haven manifestó: "El perfilamiento racial no puede ser tolerado."

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