



# Metro Justice News

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Special Democratic Leadership Sell-Out Issue

June 2007

## Why is Our Oil Under Their Soil? ... *Connecting the Dots*

*Excerpted from articles by Matt Taibbi, Sara Flounders, and Salim Muwakkil*

Anyone who wants an example of why the areas in which the Democrats and Republicans are in agreement are more significant than the ones in which they differ need only look at the two parties' nearly unanimous endorsement of the "Benchmarks" the Iraqi government must meet, according to the supplemental. The key passage reads as follows:

"whether the Government of Iraq is making substantial progress in meeting its commitment to pursue reconciliation initiatives, including a hydro-carbon law..."

It is notable that the hydrocarbon law comes in first place in this clause, ahead of "legislation necessary for the conduct of provincial and local elections," reform of de-Baathification laws, amendments to the constitution and allocation of rev-



**Behind the veneer of disagreement, Democratic leadership agrees with the Bush White House on the importance of enforcing multinational access to oil in Iraq and elsewhere.**

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Metro Justice Garage Sale**  
**Saturday, June 16, 9am-4pm**  
**203 Vassar Street**  
(between Harvard & Canterbury)

Donated goods can be dropped off between June 12 – 15. Leave items near the garage. Please call 244-5459 if you need to drop off goods after 7pm.

No clothes, outdated computer equipment or damaged/broken items.

**Call 244-5459 to volunteer**

enues for reconstruction projects. For whether or not it really was "all about oil" at the beginning of the war, the fate of the occupation really does hinge almost entirely upon oil initiatives now, as the continued presence of U.S. troops in the region may depend on whether or not the Iraqi government bites the bullet and decides to eat the proposed hydro-carbon law in question.

The law, endorsed here by the Democrats, is an unusually vicious piece of legislation, an open blueprint for colonial

robbery of the Iraqi nation.

During the Saddam years, the Iraqi government racked up massive debts as Hussein stole outright much of the country's oil revenues and built himself elaborate palaces packed with gold leafing and Balinese prostitutes and whatever else dictators of that ilk use to furnish their garish pink mansions. Upon occupying the country, the United States agreed to forgive some of that debt in exchange for its acceptance of a "standard International Monetary Fund (Continued on page 9)

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Metro Justice is greater Rochester's leading progressive, multi-issue, citizen-action organization. We enable ordinary people to break through their isolation, join together, educate, agitate, and take non-violent action.

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Ciudad Hermana (Sister City) Task Force
Rochester Committee on Latin America, (ROCLA)
TV Dinner
Peace Action, and Education (PA&E)

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A Nicaragua trip in your future?



Nicaragua is a country of stark contrasts. Called "The Land of Lakes and Volcanoes", the contrasts do not end there. There is breathtaking beauty in the countryside, but much poverty in the cities, and in the small towns and villages. Unemployment runs over 60% in some places. The fortunate few who have jobs often earn less than \$2 U.S. per day.

Our journey to Nicaragua is NOT a tourist trip. As someone said, "it's not a vacation, it's an experience." That experience runs the gamut from learning about the social and political systems of the country and its revolutionary history, to its struggles to improve living conditions for its citizens, to its system of justice, to learning about and hopefully embracing

its hopes, dreams and aspirations. This may be the "ultimate" reality experience. You'll get a close-up look at what life is like in a developing country, in both urban and rural areas. We may visit school programs, farm co-ops, medical facilities, and meet with community leaders, and others working daily for dignity, peace and social justice. A service project will be included.

Knowing some Spanish would be helpful, but not necessary. We will be accompanied everywhere by one or more translators, and those wishing to practice their Spanish will have ample opportunities. This includes the possibility of a brief immersion experience, staying for a few days with a Spanish-speaking family in our "sister city", El Saucé.

Traveling conditions are adequate, usually by mini-bus. When not staying in the homes of Nicaraguans, we stay in small hotels that are clean and well maintained, but certainly not luxurious. The per-person cost of about \$1800 includes airfare, and nearly all other expenses: transportation, lodging, most meals, the services of a translator, etc. Gifts or souvenirs would be extra.

Although certain health precautions are advisable, no one has ever experienced a serious medical issue or injury while on a visit. Plus, Nicaragua is one of the safest countries in Central America. You'll find the people are warm, welcoming, and incredibly generous, even though they have so little themselves. A trip to Nicaragua as a member of a Rochester-area delegation will not only be a memorable one, it may well change your life. ■

WHAT YOU CAN DO

For more information, contact
Tim McMahon
mcmahong@frontiernet.net
or phone 585-243-2755
Dates: July 12 - July 23
Cost: \$1800

# Race and Worldview:

Remarks from the Citizen Action Leadership Summit, April 2007

By Richard Kirsch

Several years ago Citizen Action started down the road on our work for racial justice shortly after we started talking about what we call our worldview. Why, you might ask, did we just start talking about our worldview just a few years ago? Good question. The short answer is that we came to understand that it wasn't enough to talk about our issues. We needed to talk about and organize on the values and principles behind those issues, so that people see the world not through isolated issues but through a sense of how they relate to the world and understand their relationship to each other and to society.

One of the first things we did in figuring out our worldview was to look at what has become the dominant worldview during the past three decades, the right-wing worldview. And once we did that we saw that race is at the core of the right's worldview.

The right has historically used race to divide Americans who share economic interests. We have seen this in many ways. There have been vicious anti-immigration movements, many with strong racial themes, since the 19th century. Slavery and Jim Crow laws have been used to

direct the anger and frustration of poor whites in the South against Blacks. In the 20th Century, the right used race in the South to convince poor and working class whites to oppose social insurance and anti-poverty programs because they would benefit blacks. We have seen this clearly in the modern conservative era, in which race is usually unsaid but widely understood in the right-wing worldview.

Racism is embedded in the right-wing worldview. The core of the right-wing worldview – you are on your own and your success is your responsibility alone

– blames anyone who doesn't make it. It assumes that success comes from hard work and good character and that failure is the individual's fault. If a group is falling behind, it must be because they have bad character and don't work hard. Those individuals who do make it are evidence that anyone can.

The right's view of government programs as wasteful is really about government social programs – they don't object to the military or farm supports or giveaways to energy companies. It's about spending on "those people," which means the undeserving blacks and



**Conservatives came to power by using coded references to race and appealing to white supremacists' fear. Busing, states rights, quotas, law and order, welfare queens and finally, Willie Horton, are really about more than the surface issue.**

browns who don't pay taxes and don't work hard and are leaching off the backs of "hard-working Americans".

When it specifically addresses race, the right says

that we are beyond race now. This is a trait that one social values measure has called "modern racism," – the denial that race is a factor. The idea is that since we've overcome racism we don't need to address it. We look around and see successful examples of African-Americans as TV anchors, corporate CEOs, now a Governor and even a candidate for President, and we are assured that race doesn't matter anymore. So affirmative action becomes reverse discrimination.

Because race is at the mostly unspoken center of much of right-wing views,

we can not change people's minds and move the political frame if we ignore what's really there. The opposite social value to "modern racism" is "acknowledgement of racism."

What about our worldview? When we look at our worldview we can see how the right-wing view is implicitly and sometimes explicitly rejected. At the center of our worldview is our common humanity, the view that we are all in this together, that we all do better when we all do better. That each of us has a divine spark and that role in life is to blow air into that spark in each and every one of us. That we are our brother's and sister's keepers.

Those core values allow us to put ourselves in other's shoes, and understand that success is not just an individual factor but a communal, societal factor. People are not born in the same starting place. Race is a key factor in both where people start, in how they are viewed, and what opportunities they are given.

When we say that our values lead us to work for a government that works for all of us, we are empowered to support government pro- (Continued on page 6)

# COMIDA's Shame (Sham)

*Tom Stephens, Metro Justice Member*

Our friends at the County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency (COMIDA) met last month to consider hundreds of thousands of dollars of tax breaks for a hotel in Brighton. The hotel would only be required to create one job.

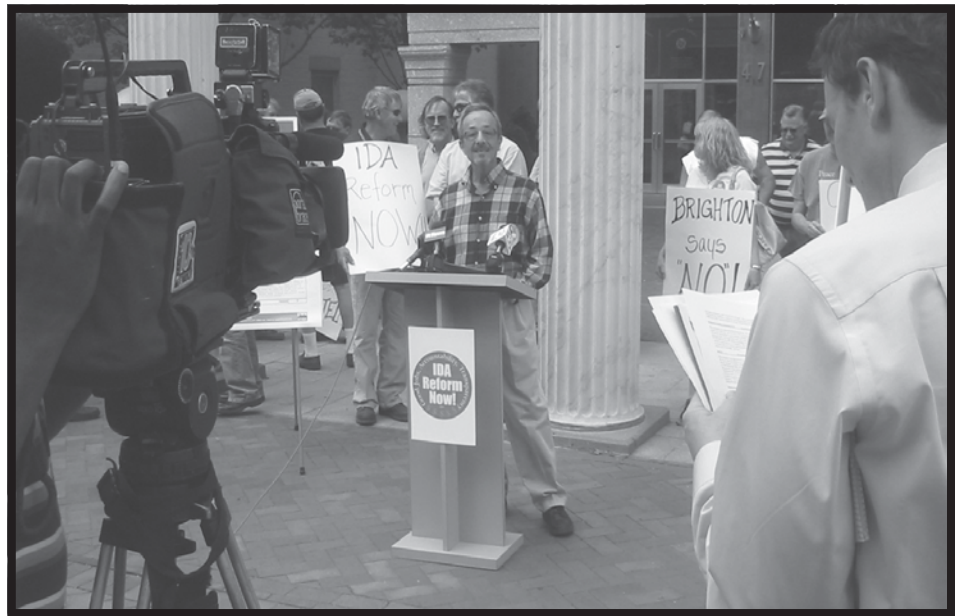
Usually retail and service operations are not eligible for tax breaks. Last time I checked, a hotel was in the service sector. But COMIDA deemed this hotel renovation project worthy of a "tourism exemption". The hotel is located across the street from the county jail.

At the COMIDA public hearing speaker after speaker spoke out against the tax break (only the hotel owner spoke in favor of it). No COMIDA board members attended the hearing. Apparently, because they are "volunteers" it would be a burden. The COMIDA staff dutifully took notes. Metro Justice videotaped the event and sent copies to all the COMIDA members. We didn't want them to miss anything.

The current law governing Industrial Development Agencies (IDA's) does not require IDA's to consult with the local municipalities which will be losing revenue to the subsidized projects. Nevertheless the Brighton Town Board made the news when they passed a resolution against the project.

The grassroots resistance caused Maggie Brooks to drop business as usual and recommend that COMIDA act with a bit more discretion in giving out corporate welfare.

Brooks sent a memo to COMIDA recommending the board allow Brighton to opt out of tax breaks for lodging facilities. Brook's recommendation, however, was a procedural election year fig leaf which still allowed the hotel owners to feed at the public trough, albeit with some



**Metro Justice member Fred Schaeffer calling for statewide reform of the IDA system at the press conference before the COMIDA hearing. Momentum is building in Albany for reform. A recent *Jobs with Justice* report showed that two thirds of all businesses receiving IDA tax breaks failed to create the promised jobs. A third of the businesses receiving COMIDA tax breaks actually cut jobs after receiving the subsidies.**

restrictions. COMIDA then decided that Monroe County needs to provide other subsidies for the renovation of the hotel for the weary travelers who will descend (en-mass) on Brighton because as we all know that spectacular view of the County lock-up on East Henrietta is only surpassed by the grandeur of MCC and 390 gridlock at rush hour.

Say it isn't so Alice, but thanks to the forward thinking Maggie Brooks and Steve Minarik, Brighton Lodging Associates will add yet another hotel property to their portfolio in Monroe County, this flagship of tourism follows the other two COMIDA subsidized projects on Jefferson Road along with sizeable holdings throughout western NY (Visions Hotels is the parent company of the Brighton Lodging Associates who were represented by the Patels).

Oh, they forgot to mention that part on the application, as did they forget to mention the part about the two prior local labor violations of COMIDA regulations at the Jefferson Road project resulting in the loss, not once but twice, of taxpayer backed incentives (due to hiring of out of state workers).

Naturally Mr. Patel explained that this was all just a big misunderstanding and that when they hired a contractor from Georgia they just assumed he would hire local craftspeople to work on their project.

I guess they must have hired the same guy from Georgia to fill out the most recent application for incentives as it is inaccurate, incomplete and in one case concerning job creation, they simply crossed out a number and penciled in another one. When these issues were raised by elected officials at the so-called public hearing in Brighton on April 24, representatives from COMIDA explained that they had not reviewed the application and that it had not come before the Board.

Oops, COMIDA's lawyer forgot to mention the Board had already approved \$100,000 in sales tax exemption for the project (without public input)

"How could this happen?" you might ask. "Because they can" was the response.

This is just the latest of COMIDA's corporate welfare boondoggles and it proves that New York needs to overhaul the Industrial Development Agency system. COMIDA isn't going to reform itself. ■

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Call your state representative and tell them to support the Initiative for Development Accountability's 9 point plan for IDA reform.**

# New York Must Reform its Racist Drug Laws

By Gabriel Sayegh, AlterNet

This April, the New York State Assembly passed important legislation to reform the draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws. The bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Jeffrion Aubry, D-Queens, increases drug treatment alternatives to incarceration, expands judicial discretion to restore fairness in our courts and, critically, allows for people currently serving harsh prison terms for low-level drug offenses to seek much-needed relief.

The Assembly should be commended for passing smart reforms. But where are the governor and the state Senate on drug law reform?

While running for governor, Eliot Spitzer campaigned on a promise: “Day One, Everything Changes.” Spitzer made campaign statements in support of real reform of the laws. Lt. Gov. David Paterson was a long-time reform champion while Senate minority leader. Families and advocates working for repeal of the failed Rockefeller Drug Laws were cautiously optimistic about Spitzer’s promise. It seemed entirely possible that on Day One, the Rockefeller laws, after nearly 34 long, terrible years, might finally be repealed.

But in the first hundred days of the new administration, drug law reform went missing in action. Spitzer took on a variety of important issues, but the Rockefeller Drug Laws didn’t even make his priority list for the end of the legislative session.

Why is it so hard to win real reform, when everyone knows these laws are racist, ineffective, wasteful and unjust? So asks longtime advocate Cheri O’Donoghue, whose son, Ashley, is serving seven to 21 years for a first-time, nonviolent drug offense. Ashley is one of more than 14,000 people incarcerated under these harsh laws.

The answer to Cheri’s question is downright sinister, but it’s no secret. The reason the Rockefeller Drug Laws haven’t been done away with is because of a despicable trinity of racism, cash cows and the U.S. census, not to mention the people who rely on this trinity for their political survival. From 1817 to 1981, New York built 33 prisons. But

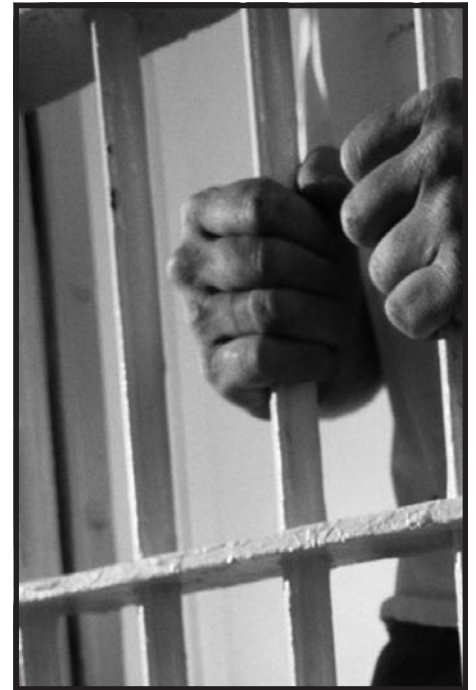
from 1982 to 2000, New York built 38 more prisons – all of them upstate. The unprecedented prison boom was largely an economic development plan meant to ameliorate the job loss upstate. Rural, white communities were clamoring to build and staff prisons. The Rockefeller Drug Laws delivered the bodies with harsh mandatory-minimum sentences for low-level drug offenses.

The RAND Corp. and other think tanks have shown that drug use and abuse is roughly equal across all racial groups. But the Rockefeller Drug Laws always have been marked by severe racial bias. Today, 91 percent of the people incarcerated under these laws are black and Latino. It’s a scenario we’d expect to find in an apartheid state, not a democracy.

Once elected, Spitzer proposed the possibility of closing half-empty prisons in upstate New York, saving millions of dollars. Many groups applauded Spitzer, because New York’s prison population has dropped in recent years and its archaic prison-industrial complex needs an overhaul. The leading voices against studying closing prisons, though, were politically very powerful. The correction officers union and upstate politicians have parlayed the politics of imprisonment into lucrative businesses and political careers. The prospects for reform have at least dimmed, if they haven’t died altogether.

The plot thickens, though. More than 76 percent of the state’s prison inmates come from New York City. The U.S. Census Bureau counts them as residents of the upstate prisons in which they’re incarcerated, not as residents of the communities from which they came.

Why does this matter? According to the Prison Policy Initiative, if prisoners were not counted as “residents,” seven upstate Senate districts would be 5 percent short of their required population size, and thus have to be redrawn. This means that senators in those districts – all of them Republicans – would lose their seats, causing Republicans to lose their slim Senate majority. Unsurprisingly, Senate Republicans remain staunch



**Building more prisons to address crime is like building more graveyards to address a fatal disease. “The racially disproportionate nature of the drug war is not just devastating to black Americans. It contradicts faith in the principles of justice and equal protection of the laws that should be the bedrock of any constitutional democracy; it exposes and deepens the racial fault lines that continue to weaken the country and belies its promise as the land of equal opportunity; and it undermines faith among all races in the fairness and efficacy of the criminal justice system. Urgent action is needed, at both the state and federal level, to address this crisis for the American nation.” Punishment and Prejudice: Racial Disparities in the War on Drugs, Human Rights Watch (May 2000).**

opponents of repealing the Rockefeller Drug Laws.

Two vocal reform opponents – Sen. Dale Volker of suburban Buffalo and Sen. Michael Nozzolio of the Finger Lakes – have more than 17 percent of the state’s prisoners in their districts. Is it any wonder why they oppose reform?

Spitzer was elected on his record as a crusader against waste and corruption, no matter what powerful interests stood in his way. Advocates for drug law reform hoped the new governor would stand up to the corruption and racism blocking real reform of the Rockefeller Drug Laws. He now has that chance, with the legislation passed *(Continued on page 11)*

# Support High-Speed Internet Access for All!

*Speedmatters.org*

Imagine an America with no digital divide, where every home has high speed internet access. The first thing that comes to mind is entertainment – movies, live streaming webcasts and interactive games.

Yet the potential for high speed internet access goes far beyond entertainment. New telecommunications tools are emerging every day that make it easier to connect with one another using voice and video communications. For example, in public safety, high speed networks can quicken the response time of first responders, and in education, video conferencing enables teachers to expand their classroom beyond school walls.

The possibilities are endless. Currently, we have the technology to connect all individuals to high speed networks. Nevertheless our country still faces a digital

divide. The infrastructure required to connect all Americans is less reliable and inaccessible to many communities. But by building out our high speed networks to reach rural and urban areas alike, we can begin to address the digital divide that drives a wedge through our economy and our lives.

Currently there is a bill in the NYS Assembly and the Senate called the Telecommunications Reform Act of 2007 (Assembly Bill# 3980/Senate Bill# S.5124) that addresses these concerns. What this bill would do is set out an extensive reform of the state's telecommunications policy that will urge the development of universal broadband, increase competition in the cable television market and improve telephone service quality. By doing this we can ensure that broadband is available to all instead of just the affluent. We can improve the

quality of our telephone services and reduce our cable rates.

As we move to create an open internet, we can address inequities that cause that digital divide, and increase our capacity for innovation and participation. The internet allows people to connect, create, and educate themselves in a way that no other resource can. As we work to close the digital divide, and connect more people to high speed internet access, we will move towards a more integrated community, accessible government and an open internet.

Contact your State Assembly Member and Senator and tell them to support NYS consumers. Tell them to support Assembly Bill 3980 and Senate Bill S5124. Also, take a moment to test your internet speed at [www.speedmatters.org](http://www.speedmatters.org). It only takes a few minutes but will help to close the digital divide. What's your speed? ■

## Clean Money Clean Elections



Last month Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno said New Yorkers “don’t give two hoots” about campaign finance reform. Really? Tell that to the over 100 people who jammed into the Brighton Memorial Library meeting room for a public forum on campaign finance reform. Eleven elected representatives were invited to participate in the forum but only David Koon showed up. Koon expressed his support for full public financing of elections and the crowd erupted in cheers (pictured: Metro Justice members holding their brooms aloft in support of Clean Elections). A recent Siena College poll shows that by a margin of 51-37 percent, New York voters support public campaign financing. Overall, 53 percent of voters think Governor Spitzer’s campaign finance reform proposals would make elections fairer, seven percent think it would make elections less fair, and 28 percent think it would have no effect.

*(Race from page 3)*

grams that provide real opportunity for all of us, that acknowledge and work to tear down the barriers created by history and by ongoing, daily racism.

In our worldview we talk about “opportunity for all.” Research shows that when we talk about opportunity for all, people hear race in that.

What we are talking about this weekend is justice and power. And developing our leadership, united through our worldview, to organize and build power in white communities and communities of color throughout New York.

So our meeting this weekend is the next step of a process that we started several years ago, when we began to take a fresh look at our organizing strategy through worldview. In 2005 the theme of our Annual Conference was worldview, because we felt that it was essential that our leadership be able to understand and articulate our worldview.

As part of this process we also started to work explicitly on issues of racial justice. ■



## Paid Family Leave

# Americans are Sick and Tired with No Time Off

By the Center for American Progress

**All Work, No Play:** “The United States is the only advanced economy in the world that does not guarantee its workers paid vacation,” according to a new study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research. Approximately 28 million Americans receive no paid vacation or holiday leave. Lower-wage workers “are less likely to have any paid vacation (69 percent) than higher-wage workers are (88 percent). The same is true for part-timers, who are far less likely to have paid vacations (36 percent) than are full-timers (90 percent).” Even the national average – nine paid days of vacation and six paid days of holiday – is “less than the minimum legal standard” set in almost all the world’s rich economies.

As summer approaches, many Ameri-

cans are thinking about vacation plans. But unfortunately, nearly one in four Americans receive no paid vacation or holiday time. Even worse, nearly “half of all full-time private sector workers in the U.S. get no paid sick days,” with low-income workers, parents, and people with chronic illnesses hit the hardest. Businesses also

suffer in productivity and other workers face health risks when sick employees are forced to go to work. The American public over-

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Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) have introduced the Healthy Families Act (HFA), which would guarantee that workers receive at least seven paid sick days each year.

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whelmingly agrees that all workers deserve days off from work; 95 percent of workers believe it is “unacceptable” for employers to deny sick days. Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) have introduced the Healthy Families Act (HFA), which would guarantee that workers receive at least seven paid sick days each year.



**Damaging Public Health:** For many Americans, getting sick may mean getting fired. “At least 145 countries have paid sick days,” notes Public Welfare Foundation president Debra Leff. “The United States is the only industrialized country lacking such a policy.” The situation is the worst for the nation’s lowest wage earners, 80 percent of whom receive no sick days. Food service workers, who are in constant contact with the public, are also among the least likely to receive paid sick days. *New York Times* columnist Bob Herbert wrote recently, “Eighty-six percent get no sick days at all. They show up in the restaurants coughing and sneezing and feverish, and they start preparing and serving meals. You won’t see many of them wearing masks.” Similarly, 55 percent of retail workers and 29 percent of health care and social assistance workers receive no paid sick days. Additionally, workers “who do not have paid sick days for doctors’ visits do not have the opportunity to get important preventive care, such as flu shots and vaccinations.” A study by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research finds that 40 percent of workers “report having contracted the flu from a colleague.” “The lack of paid sick days isn’t just a family issue – it’s also a public health issue,” Kennedy said. “When sick people go to work or sick children go to school, they infect their coworkers or fellow students and the public as well.”

**Neglecting Children’s Health:** Children also suffer when employers do not provide paid sick leave. Just one in three workers receive paid sick days to care for a child, meaning parents are forced (Continued on page 11)



Peace Action & Education (PA&E) held its Anti-War Crisis Center storefront Grand Opening on May 11, a standing-room-only event with luminaries from the Rochester School Board, City Council, County Legislature, State Assembly and Congress all there to cut the ribbon!! Visit the MJ website for details.

PA&E needs YOU (or your organization) to keep the storefront open through the rest of the year. Become a Storefront SPONSOR by pledging a monthly tax-deductible contribution toward rent and expenses. Please contact Doug Noble 585-442-3383 or jaria9295@aol.com.

# Women and Children First... In Bush's Crosshairs

*Excerpted from articles by Andrew Buncombe and Katha Pollitt*

Katha Pollitt recently reported a gruesome marriage of twenty-first-century technology and medieval barbarity: a video on the Internet of a young girl in a red track-suit jacket beaten, kicked and stoned to death by a mob of excited, shouting men. Her crime? The 17-year-old member of the Kurdish Yazidi religious minority, a non-Muslim sect, had fallen in love with a Sunni boy and possibly converted to Islam. For this "crime" against family and community, she was murdered in a small village near Mosul, in a collective act of woman hatred, led by her brothers



## 18th Annual Cuba Friendshipment Caravan

On or about July 7 (call 271-8723 for details) The Friendshipment Caravan will visit 120 cities in the U.S. and Canada picking up medicines, medical and educational supplies.

If you have a donation of material goods or know of a potential source of such goods or wish to volunteer to help packing and loading, please contact Vic Vinkey at 271-8723. Monetary donations may be mailed to the Metro Justice office, attention ROCLA. Checks should be made out to Metro Justice/ROCLA with Friendshipment in the note space. (Please do not use the word Cuba! Banks don't like it.)

and uncles, as local policemen looked on.

This is the new Iraq, where women were going to be free and equal – no more "rape rooms," no more psychopathic Uday Hussein summoning young virgins to the palace for his pleasure. In the early days of the occupation, we heard a lot about building schools, starting women's health programs, funding women's microenterprises. Well, scratch that. Iraq today is even worse for women: more repressive, more violent, more lawless. As if car bombs and suicide bombers weren't horrific enough, criminal gangs, religious militias and death squads kidnap, rape and kill with impunity, with special attention to women professionals, students and rights activists. According to the United Nations' most recent quarterly report on human rights in Iraq, domestic violence and "honor" killings are on the rise. Kurdistan, often described as comparatively peaceful and orderly, saw more than forty such killings between January and March of this year; in the province of Erbil, rapes quadrupled between 2003 and 2006. Women who'd worn Western clothes and moved about freely all their lives have been terrorized into wearing the abaya and staying inside unless accompanied by male relatives. In Sadr City and elsewhere, Shariah courts mete out misogynist "justice."

"The political climate in Iraq is such that anyone can carry out crimes against women," without any protection from the



**According to the United Nations, domestic violence and "honor" killings are on the rise in Iraq. Rapes quadrupled between 2003 and 2006.**

U.S., says Kurdish feminist, labor activist Houzan Mahmoud and UK representative of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI). "You can come upon women's bodies anywhere." Far from promoting women's rights and security, "the occupation has strengthened the tribes, political Islam and reactionary bourgeois parties – all of which are anti-woman." Indeed, the United States is part of the problem. Think of the 14-year-old girl raped and then murdered with her family by U.S. soldiers in Mahmoudiya in March of last year. Think of the women imprisoned at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere, sometimes only for being the wife or sister of a man U.S. forces were looking for. Think of women terrorized by soldiers who break into their homes and hold them at gunpoint.

Like other women's groups there, OWFI now carries out its work in secret. It runs shelters for battered women in four Iraqi cities and an "underground railroad" to

*(Continued on page 9)*

(Women and Children from page 8)



**Iraq's child mortality rate has more than doubled during the U.S. occupation.**

conduct women at risk of murder to safe havens. Such is the horrific condition of Iraqi women under occupation.

Meanwhile, two wars and a decade of sanctions have led to a huge rise in the mortality rate among young children in Iraq, leaving statistics that were once the envy of the Arab world now comparable with those of sub-Saharan Africa. A new report shows that in the years since 1990, Iraq has seen its child mortality rate soar by 125 per cent, the highest increase of any country in the world.

Figures collated by Save the Children show that in 1990 Iraq's mortality rate for under-fives was 50 per 1,000 live births. In 2005 it was 125. While many other countries have higher rates, the increase in Iraq is higher than elsewhere.

Sanctions against Saddam Hussein's regime were imposed by the UN in 1990 after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and remained in place until after the coalition invasion in 2003. The sanctions, encouraged by the U.S. as a means to topple Saddam, were some of the most comprehensive ever put in place and had a devastating effect on Iraq's infrastructure and health services. As Denis Halliday, who resigned as the UN's humanitarian coordinator in protest at the sanctions, said in 1999, "We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that. It is illegal and immoral." And it has only worsened since the U.S. invasion and occupation, with children paying the heaviest price.

Women and children, always the most grievous victims of war and occupation. ■

(Oil from page 1)

program," which among other things included the liberalization of the economy, and the opening up of the oil industry to foreign interests.

The proposed Hydrocarbon law is a result of pressure from the American government on the Iraqis to draft an oil policy that would adhere to the IMF guidelines. It allows foreign companies to take advantage of Iraqi oil fields by allowing regions to pair up with foreigners using what are known as "production-sharing agreements" or PSAs, which guarantee investing companies large shares of the profits for decades into the future. The law also makes it impossible for the Iraqi state to regulate levels of oil production (seriously undermining OPEC), allows oil companies to repatriate profits, and would also allow companies to hire foreign workers to staff facilities. Add all the measures up and the Hydrocarbon law not only takes control of the oil industry away from the Iraqi state, but virtually guarantees that the state will profit less from future oil exploitation.

The Democratic Party can wash their hands of this war as much as they want publicly, but their endorsement of this crude neocolonial exploitation plan makes them accomplices in the occupation, and further legitimizes the insurgency. It is hard to argue with the logic of armed resistance to U.S.

forces in Iraq when both American parties, representing the vast majority of the American voting public, endorse the same draconian plan to rob the country's riches.

Which brings us to why Iran is increasingly a target of U.S. threats.

The significance of oil production and oil reserves in Iran is well known. Every news article, analysis or politician's threat makes mention of Iran's oil. But the impact of Iran's nationalization of its oil resources is not well known, nor is the

U.S. goal of plundering Iran's oil treasure next after Iraq.

The corporate owners in the U.S. want to keep these secret from the people here. They use all the power of their media to demonize the Iranian leadership and caricature and ridicule the entire population, their culture and religion. The focus of media coverage here is to describe Iran as medieval, backward and feudal while somehow becoming a nuclear power.

But the nationalized oil industry of Iran is the real target, which has fueled Iran's little-known but dramatic social gains. It is never mentioned that more



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the nationalized oil industry of Iran is the real target.

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than half the university students in Iran are women, or that more than a third of the doctors, 60 percent of civil servants and 80 percent of all teachers in Iran are women. At the time of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, 90 percent of rural women were illiterate; in towns the figure was over 45 percent. Also ignored is the stunning achievement

of full literacy for Iranian youth. Even the World Bank in its development report on countries

admits that Iran has exceeded the social gains of other countries in the Middle East. According to that report, Iran has made the most progress in eliminating gender disparities in education. Large numbers of increasingly well-educated women have entered the work force.

Iran's comprehensive social protection system includes the highest level of pensions, disability insurance, job training programs, unemployment insurance and disaster-relief programs. National subsidies make basic food, (Continued on page 10)

(Oil from page 9)

housing and energy affordable to all.

An extensive national network going from primary health and preventive care to sophisticated hospital care covers the entire population, both urban and rural. More than 16,000 “health houses” are the cornerstone of the health care system. Using simple technology, they provide vaccines, preventive care, care for respiratory infections, diarrheal diseases, family planning and contraceptive information, and pre-natal care. And they monitor children’s nutrition and general health. Since 1990, Iran nearly halved the infant mortality rate and increased life expectancy by 10 years.

Iran also sets a record in family planning. A national family planning program, delivered through the primary health care facilities and accompanied by a dramatic increase in contraceptive use, which is approved by Islamic law, has led to a world record demographic change in family size and maternal and child health. All forms of contraception are now available for free. These social programs, which cover the entire population of almost 70 million people, should be compared to conditions in countries in the region that remain under U.S. military and economic domination.

The Iranian Revolution was not a socialist revolution. Citizen’s rights to own businesses, land, wealth and inheritance are still protected by law and by the state apparatus. But the greatest

source of wealth – Iran’s oil and gas – was nationalized. Nationalization means the transfer of privately owned assets and operations into public ownership. The exploration, drilling, maintenance, transport, refining and shipping of oil and gas became the national property of the Iranian people. Formerly this entire process was controlled at every step by U.S. and British corporations. U.S. interests are eager to turn back the clock, as they have succeeded in doing to Iraq.

And coming up down the road: the planned U.S. plunder of African oil.

The United States launched a deadly air attack against Somalia last February, using the war on terror as a pretext. The bombings, which killed scores of civilians, were in support of an Ethiopian invasion to oust a Somali regime composed of “Islamic militants” considered hostile to Ethiopia and reportedly sought by the United States.

A convergence of Ethiopian and American interests provoked the air attack that helped rout this leadership, the so-called Islamic Courts movement, and endangered thousands of Somali lives. But it failed to turn up the targeted Islamic militants, even continuing attempts to flush them out has produced what some critics have called an “African Guantánamo.” What’s really going on?

The U.S. military presence in Africa has been increasing for many years but wasn’t officially acknowledged until Feb. 7, when President George W. Bush announced a new Pentagon command for the entire continent called AFRICOM (modeled after its CENTCOM for the Middle East). The new command, scheduled to start operation by October 2008, “will

strengthen our security cooperation with Africa and create new opportunities to bolster the capabilities of our partners in Africa,” Bush said.

AFRICOM eventually will encompass the entire continent – except Egypt – and include the islands of Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe (in the Gulf of Guinea, where the United States is building another large base). This region will become increasingly

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“The U.S., the world’s biggest energy consumer, also hopes the Gulf of Guinea region in West Africa will provide up to a quarter of its oil imports within a decade.” From press reports on the AFRICOM proposal.

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important to the United States for reasons made clear in press reports on the AFRICOM proposal: “The U.S., the world’s biggest energy consumer, also hopes the Gulf of Guinea region in West Africa will provide up to a quarter of its oil imports within a decade.”

West Africa has about 60 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, and its oil is the low sulfur, sweet crude that petroleum refiners prize. Experts predict that one in every five new barrels of oil entering the global economy in the latter half of this decade will come from the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria already supplies the U.S. with 10 percent of its imported oil and Angola 4 percent.

The buildup of U.S. forces is often justified as necessary, both to fight the threat of terrorism and to counter growing instability in the continent’s resource-rich regions – to guard against so-called “failed states.” China’s growing influence in Africa is another reason the United States is anxious to assert a military presence. The burgeoning economic growth of the world’s largest nation has produced a desperate need for Africa’s natural resources and a vigorous rivalry with the West for influence.

America’s new Africa initiatives are driven by the same concerns as the imperialism of the past: unrestricted access to the continent’s resources, especially oil, and geopolitical advantage over perceived enemies. Today it might be characterized as globalism with combat boots, though it’s the same old story with the well-worn plot of Western hegemony.

The U.S. claims the enemy is Terrorism. But the real enemy, just as with Iraq and Iran, is an independent Africa, with nationalized oil industries, in control of its own resources. ■



## Stop Dem Sell-Out on Free Trade!

At a recent economic summit in Butte Montana, corporate leaders gathered to expound on the benefits of "free trade." McGraw-Hill's CEO, Harold McGraw III, attacked those pushing for basic labor, human rights and environmental protections in trade pacts as "protectionists" and "isolationists." When it came time for questions, David Sirota asked McGraw a simple one: As a critic of "protections" in trade deals, does he oppose the intellectual property protections in trade deals that his company lobbies for, and on the flip side, if he supports such "protections" does he support similar protections for labor, human rights and the environment? He seemed utterly stunned, and stuttered through a truly incoherent 3 minute answer that telegraphed to the entire audience that he didn't want to deal with the question.

That's their defense of the current corporate-controlled "free trade" regime. Three minutes of incoherence.

Elected leaders like Senator Sherrod Brown are coming out strong against corporate-controlled trade deals, saying "Years of job killing trade agreements are taking their toll on workers and small business owners." But Speaker Pelosi and

New York's own Charlie Rangel are talking about moving ahead with a "compromise" with the Bush White House on NAFTA-style "free trade" agreements. The deal adds labor standards, but fails to excise all of the outrageous NAFTA-style foreign investor, procurement and other rules that are destroying our middle class.

Cosmetic changes to NAFTA deals with Peru and Panama are not going to have any impact on our \$800 billion deficit. If more Bush trade agreements are passed – even with these new labor and environmental standards – we are going to continue to lose jobs, our wages are going to continue to stagnate, and the country is going to continue on its downward slide.

Incredibly, the Pelosi/Rangel deal allows for the continuation of provisions in the Peru "Free Trade" Agreement that would allow Citibank or other U.S. investors providing "private retirement accounts" to sue Peruvian taxpayers if Peru tries to reverse its failed Social Security privatization.

We elected a new Congress last November and expected there to be a big change in America's trade policy

Go to Public Citizen online to take action [www.citizen.org](http://www.citizen.org) ■

*(Sick and Tired from page 7)*

to choose between losing a day's pay or sending a sick child to school. Just as viruses rapidly spread in workplaces, the same happens in schools. Even though child-care centers require sick children to remain home, "when parents cannot get off work to stay home with them, many sick children do end up in care." An even bigger threat to children's health occurs when parents are unable to take time off to ensure that their children receive needed preventive care, such as immunizations and well-child visits. Failure to ensure that all children receive timely preventive care has long-term implications for not only their health, but our national health care spending.

**The Remedy:** Kennedy and DeLauro's HFA mandating that employers with 15 or more employees provide at least seven paid sick days would benefit 66 million Americans: "46 million would gain access to paid sick days; 19 million would gain paid sick days for leave for doctors' visits and family care; and 1 million Americans would gain additional paid sick days." "Paid sick leave is a basic right of people in the workplace and the price paid for denying employees paid sick leave is felt by all of us," said DeLauro. Currently, California is the only state mandating comprehensive paid family leave. The law "provides most Californians with six weeks of partial pay when they take leave from work" to care for a family member. Rutgers University's Eileen Appelbaum and the UCLA's Ruth Milkman note that while the Family Medical Leave Act guarantees "12 weeks of unpaid family leave to eligible employees at large companies, many working families cannot afford to take the time off work without pay," making clear why the HFA is necessary. ■



**Metro Justice members travelled to Albany on May 1 to lobby for equal marriage for same-sex couples. On May 24, Assemblymember Daniel O'Donnell introduced Governor Spitzer's Marriage Equality bill with a record 53 cosponsors. Senator Thomas Duane has carried the marriage equality bill in the Senate in the past and is expected to do so again this year. New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), SEIU Local 32BJ and Retail, Wholesale,**

**Department Stores Union/United Food and Commercial Workers (RWDSU/UFCW) have publicly announced their support for the marriage equality bill.**



**Thank you to everyone who helped make our Annual Dinner a great success!**

*(Drug Laws from page 5)*

by the Assembly and sent to the Senate. But the Senate, under Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, will block those reforms unless the governor gets more directly involved.

For the sake of justice, and families like the O'Donoghues, let's demand that the governor makes a priority of drug law reform.

Because if nothing changes, nothing changes. ■

*Gabriel Sayegh is a project director at the Drug Policy Alliance in New York City.*

**Metro Justice of Rochester, Inc.**  
167 Flanders Street  
Rochester, New York 14619

## MJ Calendar

**Monday, June 11, noon**, Rally to Launch *Democracy Now!* WROC 950am, 70 Commercial Street (off of State Street, right behind WXXI, next to High Falls). (See ad below.)

**Metro Justice  
Annual Garage Sale  
Saturday, June 16**

**Saturday, June 16, 9am-4pm**, Metro Justice Annual Garage Sale. 203 Vassar Street, between Harvard & Canterbury. Donated goods can be dropped off between June 12 and 15. Volunteers needed. Call 244-5459. (See "What you can do" box on page 1.)

**On or about Saturday, July 7**, Pastors for Peace Friendship to Cuba. Contact Vic Vinkey at 271-8723. (See short article, page 8.)

**Thursday, July 12 - July 23**, Ciudad Hermana trip to Nicaragua. For more information, contact Tim McMahon [mcmahong@frontiernet.net](mailto:mcmahong@frontiernet.net) or phone 585-243-2755. (See article, page 2.)

### Continuing

**Sundays, noon - 1pm**, Peace Action & Education (PA&E) now holds a weekly antiwar vigil, every Sunday at East Avenue and Goodman Street. Please join us in standing against the occupation of Iraq and demanding U.S. troops return home now.

**First Wednesday, 7pm**, Rochester Committee on Latin America, (ROCLA) Downtown United Presbyterian Church, 121 North Fitzhugh St.

**Third Monday, 7:15pm**, Metro Justice Council Meeting, 167 Flanders Street. If you would like to address the Council, please contact Tanya at [tanya\\_metroj@frontiernet.net](mailto:tanya_metroj@frontiernet.net) or at 325-2560 to get on the agenda.

**Second and Fourth Tuesdays, 7pm**, Indy-media/TV Dinner meeting, Hungerford Building, 1115 E. Main Street, Room 368. Call 305-1594.

**Fourth Thursday, 7pm**, Ciudad Hermana Task Force, St. Anne Church, 1600 Mt. Hope Avenue



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## LET'S CELEBRATE OUR VICTORY!



**Rally to Launch *Democracy Now!*  
Monday, June 11, Noon  
WROC**

70 Commercial St. (off of State St., right behind WXXI, next to High Falls)