

## Editorial continues

**Economic Crisis Shows Profits over People***Continued from Page 11*

for public sector workers is critical to empowering workers to challenge the shifting of funds and resources away from workers and human needs to bail out those who only want to make a profit. These struggles need to be united into a rank-and-file led workers alliance.

This crisis makes clear that trade unions must encourage and engage their members to use their organizations and resources to support the larger struggles of working people, to be active in struggles against oppression, to learn more about the economy and society and to be willing and prepared to challenge capitalism no matter what label the media, owned by the big capitalist corporations, give to those speaking out.

Barack Obama, who has made change the cornerstone of his campaign, must be challenged and supported to speak out against this crisis and to put forth real alternatives that empower working people, place major restrictions and regulations on the use of government funds to bail out banks and corporations, oppose these unjust wars that, in addition to killing for profits, take major resources

from the needs of working and poor people and communities in the US.

Unions that spend time making deals with the corporations and don't engage their members dis-empower the workers. UE150, while small with limited resources compared to most other unions, has an engaged rank-and-file membership trying to find creative ways to challenge injustice and give voice to the rank-and-file. It is not mainly a lobbying organization with consultants spending most of their time wining and dining legislators, framing out legislation they hope would be acceptable to those in power.

The "social justice trade unionism" of UE includes a history of standing up against the forces of capitalism. We must learn more about social justice unionism and the history of struggle of unions like the South West Workers Union and UE. We must and will continue this tradition as we build the NC Public Service Workers Union UE-local 150 widely throughout North Carolina and eventually throughout the South.

**Black Workers for Justice**

# JUSTICE SPEAKS

## BLACK WORKERS FOR JUSTICE

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50c

### *North Carolina People's Assembly puts forth plan of action!*

By Raleigh People's Assembly

On August 9, more than 75 African American workers and community activists converged in Raleigh, NC for a People's Assembly. Initiated by community activists and the Black Workers for Justice, these assemblies have been adopted as part of the Historic Thousands on Jones St (HKonJ) movement that brought more than 5,000 people to the streets in February 2007 and 2008 around a powerful 14-point People's Agenda. The People's Assemblies are an effort by some coalition partners to connect and to broaden participation by bringing life to the People's Agenda locally around the state and throughout the year. One goal of the people's day-to-day struggles and organizations must be engaging us in holding elected offi-

cially accountable to our needs as working peoples and to secure progressive policies and legislation that alters the balance of power in our interests, those of oppressed, poor and working people.

The 14-point People's Agenda features a broad range of issues affecting the African American community and workers, including police brutality, education, health care, the war, the economy, electoral reform, worker's rights, and collective bargaining rights for public sector workers.

One highlight of the People's Assembly was the large delegation of striking Moncure Plywood workers from International Association of Machinists local W-369 in Chatham County. The

strike began on July 20 after bosses offered a take-it-or-leave-it contract that mandated 60-hour work weeks; weakened seniority-clause protections against favoritism, discrimination and racism; increased health insurance premiums 300+ percent; reduced holidays off; and disregarded safety violations.

In remarks to the Assembly, IAM local W-369 President, Lewis Cameron expressed concern that community members may think they were striking just to get more money. Although wage increases are well deserved, he emphasized, "We are just trying to secure our rights to a decent job and to work with dignity." Workers are fighting for a strong health and safety committee,

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## JS COMMUNITY CALENDAR

### October

- 23<sup>rd</sup> International Workers Delegation RECEPTION and Forum Report Back with Wine & Cheese / Music / Social 6 pm and Forum 6:45-8pm at FOL World Cultural Center, 4200 Lake Ridge Dr., Raleigh
- 25<sup>th</sup> Trawick Downs Community Meeting, 11 am, FOL World Culture Center, 4200 Lake Ridge Dr. Raleigh; call Marilyn Dolby, 919/231-6820

### November

- 1<sup>st</sup> Noon THIRD PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY gathering will vote on people's platform after discussion and will plan to maximize the Get Out Vote effort! - at Fruit of Labor World Cultural Center, 4200 Lake Ridge Dr., Raleigh
- 4<sup>th</sup> People's Watch - Watch election history being made on the big screen at FOLWCC. Watch election returns, discussion, music, food; beginning at 9 pm; 4200 Lake Ridge Dr. Raleigh 27604

- 8<sup>th</sup> People of Faith Against the Death Penalty's 14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Awards Banquet; 6 pm at United Church of Chapel Hill
- Weekend before Thanksgiving - people across NC will attend annual vigil at School of Americas in Georgia; 20,000+ people are expected

### December

- 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Southern Human Rights Conference in Durham, NC; (Southern Labor Solidarity School participants will convene for planning another school or future activities.) Call Saladin, 800-815-4946 for information
- 28<sup>th</sup> Kwanzaa Community Celebration, 3 pm, FOL World Cultural Center 4200 Lake Ridge Drive, Raleigh 27604, 919/876-7187



Sunday September 28, 2008: Community Rally at small rural Town of Smithfield, Johnson County Court House in NC for immigrant and human rights - and for firing racist Sherriff Bizzel, who stated "Mexicans (were) criminals and breded like rabbits." Participants in the rally and vigil were confronted by motorcyclists wearing pro-Bizzel T-shirts who gunned their bike engines to drown out the vigil speakers. Among the rallyers were: Ilana (l), a Latino community activist and former director of El Vinculo Hispano in Chatham County, Salome (r), Outreach Coordinator at El Pueblo, and Shafeah M'Baliala, member of Black Workers For Justice.

*(photo by Ajamu)*

## North Carolina Peoples Assembly Puts Forward Plan of Action!

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against the quadrupling of health insurance premiums for family coverage, against the loss of paid holidays to only four, and to prevent the institution of a mandatory 60-hour workweek! They were warmly supported by other People's Assembly delegates, who also voted to participate in an educational picket line marking the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech. Solidarity with the Moncure strikers is one way the People's Assembly will continue the legacy of Dr. King, who was in Memphis, Tenn., to stand with municipal workers organizing their union and struggling against racism and unfair labor conditions when he was assassinated.

Assembly delegates met in committees organized around political issues. The anti-war committee's Khalilah Sabra, of Muslim America Society Freedom Foundation, addressed the escalation of war on Iran and the need to divert the Pentagon budget to address the peoples' needs. Their committee report to the Assembly led to a long discussion about Israel's role in the Middle East. Many spoke to support the Palestinian right to self-determination and nationhood. During a discussion of counter-recruitment work, a retired UAW worker, Duane Adkinson, who had to flee the South to secure a union job and now lives in Raleigh again, commented that, "This is a class war... you never have any rich people enlisting in the Army."

Members of the workers rights committee discussed supporting the Raleigh City Workers chapter of NC Public Service Workers Union-UE local 150, which is struggling to get written policies by city

management encouraging all city councilors and the city manager, Russel Allen, to "meet-and-confer" with elected union officers. The committee also agreed to support the mental health care workers in UE local 150 struggling for a Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights, the campaign to assure a safe and just merger between two state psychiatric hospitals – Dorothea Dix and John Umstead – and for workers to be made whole since the new BEACON payroll system was rolled out in December, shorting hundreds of workers hundreds if not thousands of dollars. They also supported the need to repeal the denial of NC public service workers democratic right to Collective Bargaining! They stated that all workers should be able to exercise their right to organize, be respected and have a contract as a union. Unions have a protected international right in the United Nations charter that NC is violating, stated one woman, a state worker from the NC Dept. of Administration.

The Peoples' Assembly local elections committee made plans to work to assure that all people have access to the ballots and that voter suppression does not happen to people of color in North Carolina, avoiding a repeat of events in Florida in 2000 and Ohio in 2004.

The anti-racist committee brought forth many issues of police brutality and the criminal "justice" system in the African American community including the brutal murders by police of Antwan Tomlin in Wilson, NC on Feb 1, 2007 along with the unjust incarcerations of James Johnson and Amanda Council. A Johnston County NAACP activist stated that this must end.

When this committee was also asked to organize around justice for immigrant workers, a long, fiery dialogue ensued from the crowd. One union activist raised the myth of "they are stealing our jobs" and was met with many assembly delegates denouncing NAFTA and other free trade policies, the militarization of the border, racist media hysteria, and the raids at workplaces and communities. Rukiya Dillahunt, member of Black Workers for Justice added another interesting twist, commenting on the deterioration of the economy and joblessness. She stated, "You hear they are coming here to take our jobs...what jobs?"

Assembly-goers discussed the checkpoints being set up in their communities. ICE officials have a goal of arresting 3,000 non-documented residents by the end of August and roadblocks will take place throughout the month in North Carolina, particularly focusing on Alamance and Henderson counties.

Commenting on the economic downturn and the need for more jobs that has created divisions between Black and Latin@ workers, Khalilah Sabra stated, "Meanwhile, the US government is spending billions of dollars every day to finance Israel, the war on Iraq and now on Iran and building bombs...we need to stop fighting amongst ourselves for the crumbs off their table."

In a renewed spirit of unity, led by the Fruit of Labor cultural artists, assembly-goers closed the assembly by singing "We will not bow down to...exploitation... We will not bow down to... racism... We will not bow down to injustice... We are gonna stand!"

## Editorial

### Economic Crisis Shows Profits over People

"Layoffs" at their highest point in years . . . "Mortgage/Credit Crisis" with Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac failing one day... today Merrill-Lynch and Lehman Brothers failing...tomorrow which one next? All help to point out the interconnection of the financial crisis to all sectors of the global economy. The CORPORATE-OWNED MEDIA and their profit-driven news outlets refer to it as a "financial crisis" instead of an "economic crisis" to give the impression that it is mainly a problem involving the banking system and not the entire profit-driven capitalist system that impacts all working people, their families, and communities. They are hoping that we working, poor, and oppressed peoples sit by silently. . . .wait and see how things work themselves out.

It shows how "profits before people" capitalism, without saying it, is not in the best interests of the majority of the peoples of the world. Events now easily allow us to examine how greedy capitalism concentrates the control of the economy in the hands of a small rich ruling class made up of the owners of big banks, corporations and financial institutions. With this continuing CRISIS we clearly see that the US government is controlled by this small and powerful "capitalist ruling class" of owners using their political influence to direct the government (through its "paid-for representatives") to use money that should provide for healthcare, education, and jobs etc. to bail out the big powerful banks and corporations of the ruling class. They do this so that the capitalist system and profits for the super-rich are maintained at our expense as workers and oppressed people throughout the US and globally.

History reveals that the US and all capitalist governments will do anything to protect its system of profits for the super rich, including making wars for the control of oil and cheap labor markets. Or using the police and jails to protect businesses before rescuing people affected by disasters like Hurricanes Katrina. Or contaminating communities with disease-laden industrial dumping. Or fighting hard to stop workers from forming trade unions that unite and empower them to directly challenge the injustices of the corporations and government institutions that exploit working people and their communities. Just look at our long history as workers and oppressed people.

Workers are taught that this same capitalist system is the basis for freedom and prosperity. We all know from our history and direct experiences that the prosperity has not been for the working class whose income barely allows us

to exist...to pay expensive medical bills, rent or own a home, buy enough gas to get to work. A prosperity that doesn't even grant us workers, and retired or unemployed workers as well, a cost of living raise to keep up with rising living expenses. A prosperity which requires that we work longer hours and second jobs to have a relatively decent way of life but little time to enjoy it because we must always be thinking about how to get ahead and keep our heads above water.

When the government bails out these big capitalist institutions and their rich owners, it means that the resources and programs needed by the masses get cut. It means that workers are pitted against each other, competing for the scraps that are left, intensifying racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-immigration and religious intolerance to take attention away from the real source of the problem. Their tactics divide working people so that we cannot unite to challenge the rich capitalist power and control over governments and our lives.

Social movements of working and oppressed people fighting for quality education, decent jobs, affordable housing, universal healthcare, environmental justice, an end to unjust wars and for many other democratic and human rights must become stronger and more active as it involves more young people. Trade unions must contribute more to the broader social movements, seeing struggles at the workplace as a leading part of their larger struggles in society to build power for working people.

UE150 has an important role to play in building a fight-back workers movement against conditions, policies and powers that sacrifice decent working conditions, quality healthcare and public services, and denies worker and human rights on the job and throughout society. This movement must also struggle against unjust wars that continue the destruction of human life and countries and that divides the world's peoples. The Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights Campaign and the Workers Bill of Rights struggles in Raleigh and Charlotte cities are part of this fight-back movement that must be further developed throughout the state.

The strike of the Moncure workers in Sanford, the struggles of the, Freightliner, Smithfield and FLOC workers to build rank-and-file democratic unions must be developed and supported as part of this workers fight back movement. The struggle for collective bargaining rights

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**THANK YOU**

**For Being Active In The Movement For Public Employee Collective Bargaining This Year!**

Thanks to everyone who signed the letter to legislators, wrote a letter to the editor, emailed, called or visited their Representative or locally elected officials, attended a teach-in or public hearing, participated in lobby day, and talked to family, friends and co-workers about collective bargaining.

**Hear Our Public Employees Update**

The 2008 legislative session has ended and the HOPE Steering Committee is planning and taking stock of our accomplishments. Since January, the HOPE Coalition has gained more than 100 new supporting organizations across the state and thousands of new individual supporters, including mayors and other locally elected officials. Between February and April 150 students participated in collective bargaining teach-ins. In May, a professor and HOPE member issued a press release regarding recent public polls in which public support for the repeal was as high as 53.8%. In early June, Durham became the second city council to officially support repealing the bargaining ban.

On June 11, 100 HOPE members from more than 60 legislative districts participated in our lobby day, delivering to legislators our letter signed by 2,500 individuals and organizations. The press conference, featuring two mayors, several legislators and public employees from across the state and the spectrum of job titles, was too large for the legislative press room. (Video and media at [www.nchope.org](http://www.nchope.org).)

Five days later the Democratic Caucus discussed the bill, a sign they are taking our movement seriously. In late June, 28 community leaders, workers, and activists organized by the Chapel Hill Carrboro NAACP met with House Speaker Joe Hackney to press him to take leadership on securing collective bargaining.

Clearly the movement for public employee collective bargaining is stronger than ever. HOPE will continue to build momentum -visit [www.nchope.org](http://www.nchope.org) and the facebook group "Friends of HOPE" recently started by a HOPE supporter to stay involved!

**HOPE Coalition Core Members:** American Association of University Professors/NC, American Federation of Teachers/NC, International Union of Police Associations, NC Association of Educators, NC State AFL-CIO, National Association of Social Workers - NC Chapter, Professional Firefighters and Paramedics of NC, Service Employees International Union, State Employees Association of NC, Teamsters Local 391, UE Local 150 - NC Public Service Workers Union

**Hear Our Public Employees Coalition**

P.O. Box 12133, Raleigh, North Carolina 27605  
919.491.6939 [info@nchope.org](mailto:info@nchope.org)

**Durham Community Challenges Incumbents**

On September 17 at the City of Durham Southwest Branch Library, community members and activists from "Historic Thousands on Jones Street" partner organizations challenged incumbents Paul Luebke and Sean Haugh to be accountable to a Peoples' Agenda and Green Party challenges. The incumbents were speaking to the Durham community about their vision of serving us as North Carolina State Representatives in House District 30.

Candidates were given two minutes to introduce themselves. Then, they had three minutes to respond to each of the questions below. After the candidates responded to all five questions, the session ended with time for audience members and the media to ask questions.

These questions were submitted to candidates a week ago:

1. What is your position on full democratic participation of independent political parties? Would you support ballot-access rules that require less than 20,000 signatures, which is comparable to many other states?
2. What is your position on a prepared-food tax for Durham County? Given the current education and health care needs, what are your thoughts on the current plan for prepared-food tax revenue to support cultural amenities instead of supporting the human needs of Durham County residents?
3. What is your position on the death penalty? Would you work to end the death penalty in NC?
4. Health care for all is a priority issue nationwide. Health Care for All NC has called for an amendment to the State Constitution guaranteeing the right to health care for all North Carolinians. Would you work for an amendment to the State Constitution guaranteeing the right to health care for all?
5. Do you support the full NAACP HK on J legislative agenda? What have you done and what will you do to make it happen?

Pick up the next issue of *Justice Speaks News* to read about the response to the Peoples Agenda at this important forum.

**Editorial**

**North Carolina and the Whole US Needs a Peoples Assembly Movement!**

We marched on the North Carolina General Assembly on February 9, 2008 as the HKOJ at a time when the crisis of US and global politics and moral commitment to human rights are at an all time low. The heads of government at all levels have made it crystal clear that the needs of working and poor people, especially people of color are no longer important.

The federal, state and local governments' racist and outrageous treatment of the working class and poor majority Black survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, including the criminalization of the Jena 6, shows where America really stands on the issues of democracy and human rights! [Wear a Green Ribbon and Show Support for the demands of the Survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita!](#)

The US government represented by both the Democratic and Republican Parties sacrifices the lives of these constituencies in unjust wars, unsafe workplaces and to killer cops. In the name of democracy the government denies living wages, healthcare for all, affordable housing and the right of return for those displaced from their communities and homelands in New Orleans and Palestine.

The US government's refusal to comply with standards set by the United Nations such as treating people displaced from their communities by natural or manmade disasters as Internally Displaced Persons, or rulings

stating that public employees should have collective bargaining rights, shows why many people throughout the world dislike the US.

It is clear that the US government will not change its course of war, racism, repression and corporate greed over human needs, without a struggle that mobilizes millions of people to change the course.

As presidential candidates are talking about uniting the country; the HJOK must be a call for a Peoples Assembly Movement; one that unites and propels a powerful movement of millions of working class people, especially Blacks, Latinos, people of color, women, immigrants, the young, gay and straight, with different cultures, languages and religions that this country works every day to divide and conquer.

The Peoples Assembly Movement while bringing demands to the legislature, must help to build power among the oppressed so that the people exercise power where they work, live, learn, vote and play. [Support HR 1583 for collective bargaining rights for public workers!](#)

Let's return to our communities and workplaces after the HJOK and organize our power and solidarity in the spirit of the Montgomery Alabama Bus Boycott and the Memphis Tennessee Sanitation Workers Strike that brought about important changes!

**Join the Black Workers For Justice**  
P.O. Box 1863 Rocky Mount, NC 27802

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## ***Urgent: Support Democracy in Bolivia and Latin America***

### ***Dear Supporter,***

We are writing with grave concern about an emerging conflict in South America's poorest nation, Bolivia and we need you to take immediate action. Bolivia is facing a critical moment in which the survival of a new era of hope is gravely threatened.

After suffering decades of military dictatorships followed by years of economic dictatorship, Bolivia heralded in a new moment of dignity with the election of its first indigenous president, Evo Morales. However, just one month after a recall referendum gave Morales 67% of the vote, Bolivia's secessionist movement has unleashed unprecedented violence throughout the country. After three days of riots, 8 people have died, several government institutions have been destroyed and Bolivia's gas pipeline has suffered millions of dollars in damage. OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza has called for the violent actions of opposition groups to end.

Citing involvement with the opposition movement, Bolivia's president Morales declared US Ambassador to Bolivia, Phillip Goldberg, persona non grata and asked him to leave the country. Among Ambassador Goldberg's closest friends are Croatian businessmen in the city of Santa Cruz who lead the city's powerful separatist movement. Washington responded by asking Bolivia's ambassador to return to his country.

South America's presidents have united their voices in declaring support for Bolivia's democracy and Evo Morales. Yesterday Venezuela in solidarity with Bolivia asked the US Ambassador to leave the country and recalled their ambassador from the United States. Venezuela is also citing US involvement in recent destabilization attempts in Venezuela. Unfortunately, as we know too well from our campaign to close the School of the Americas, the US has a long history of US intervention in the region.

Morales has called for restraint by the military, a markedly different response from that of Bolivia's military dictatorships. SOA Watch founder Fr. Roy Bourgeois was one of the many recipients of the torture and random detention which was commonplace under the dictatorship of General Hugo Banzer, an SOA graduate. Thousands of Bolivians were tortured and hundreds disappeared under the following Garcia Meza dictatorship leading military command were SOA graduates.

Last year President Morales announced his decision that Bolivian troops would no longer train at the School of the Americas. Venezuela was the first to make this announcement in 2004, and since then a total of 5 countries have followed step.

***We urge you to take immediate action.*** Please call the White House with the message, please stop interfering in Bolivia and other Latin American Democracies.

***Please call*** the capital switch board and ask for your Senators and House Members and ask them to immediately investigate if the White House is trying to destabilize the democracies of Bolivia and Venezuela.

White House to reach the President, (202) 456-1414

Capitol Switchboard, to reach your Senate or House Member, (202) 224-3121

In Hope,

*April, Mike, Pablo, Pam, Hendrik, Roy, Lisa and Eric*

SOA Watch

<http://www.soaw.org/>

## ***Union Workers Struggle to Fix Sub-Contractor's BEACON Pay System***

Our union's BEACON Pay System Survey Forms are updated to make sure that folks do not get bogged down documenting how this new sub-contracted service is cheating workers out of their timely pay. Please encourage folks to fill the surveys out promptly, working with them to get as much info as possible, including documentation, as we need the feedback quickly. The top part of the Survey Form is the most important.

Ongoing organizing by Dorothea Dix chapter members led to a rally on Dix campus to speak out and bring pressure around payroll issues, the Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights, and keeping Dix open through a safe transition. Because BEACON is such a major issue, with reports of payroll problems from workers at Broughton, Caswell Center, Central Regional, Black Mountain, Cherry, and other places, Dix workers invited union members from every UE 150 chapter in DHHS to participate, bringing their pay stubs, time sheets, late fee records, and other documentation.

Reminders – UE 150 DHHS Council holds a conference call every 11 a.m. Be in touch with Larsene for information on joining this conference call, including the phone number.

Build the Union!

## ***Union Begins to Build Community Coalition to Win Workers Rights***

UE local 150 members at Dix Hospital have a growing effort to build the *Coalition for a One-Year Moratorium on Downsizing Dix*.

Folks from Community United Church of Christ, National Alliance on Mental Illness-Wake County, NC State University Student Worker Alliance, Black Workers for Justice, NC Justice Center, Dix 306

campaign, and activist Rev. Pickett with five youth group members, attended meetings and workers' rallies.

We have been reaching out to Raleigh homeless shelters, churches and other organizations. There is now a Community Outreach committee at Dix. Meetings have included discussions of the Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights and Collective Bargaining campaigns among union workers. These allies could be long-term supporters of our union's International Workers Justice Campaign and the NC Public Service Workers' Union - UE local 150's Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights.

## ***Workers Protest BEACON Pay System***

At a September 17 rally and vigil at the School for the Deaf in Wison, in eastern North Carolina, workers protested the "contracted out services" of the State BEACON pay system. Workers are missing hundreds, sometimes thousands of dollars, over time causing difficult problems with unpaid bills. The dozen School for the Deaf workers wore red, made their own signs, and spoke to One TV and local news coverage. Chants included "Bail out the workers, Not the banks!" and "Ha Ha, Ho Ho, the BEACON System's got to go." At least one new worker joined the union on the spot and another took two union forms for her co-workers.

Workers are now pushing out for wider community support by circulating a taxpayer's petition calling on NC Governor Easley to declare a state of emergency to bail out workers losing leases, cars or homes because they are lacking their pay for hours worked. They have developed "talking points" and distributing them to others to study and use when explaining the vigil.

Our Union will need to use the petition statewide, promoting the call for a state of emergency as part of a Workers' Bill of Rights Campaign. This is an important slogan at this time when government funds are being used to bail out insurance and mortgage companies and banks. Workers at the rally thought this was im-

portant and talked some about the system's favoritism toward big shots.

## ***UNION Wins Joanne Evans-Davis Petersburg City Job Back***

To demonstrate solidarity and to share information about work in both locals, NC's UE local 150's Municipal Council invited VA's UE local 160's municipal leader Joanne Evans-Davis to its state-wide Municipal Council Meeting. This solidarity in action provided insights into repression in our workplaces and how to fightback.

UE local 160 members were successful in getting Joanne **back to work** when, at the third meeting in the third step of the grievance procedure, the city agreed to the proposal that Joanne be reinstated to a comparable position of employment, given the attacks and stress she's endured in the Accounting department **since December 2007!**

Joanne, who held one of the higher pay grades in the city, will now work at essentially equivalent pay as Customer Service Representative in the city water department. In addition, we were able to get Joanne paid for the "time on the books/leave time" she had earned while in Accounting and to get all her sick leave reinstated.

Accounting department managers had placed Joanne on "extended probation" and then began establishing a paper trail of non-grievable, BAD performance evaluations of her work. Finally, they attempted to shield their actions from challenge by asserting they all fell under the interpretation. The successful strategy unfolded over the course of the meetings: first we were able to get the organizer into the meetings as her representative; next we were able to get the negative write-ups defined as "Unfair Discipline," according to the grievance procedure; and finally, her bosses' actions since December have been characterized as "Anti-Union Animus" (in violation of Virginia state code).

## Mental Health Workers Campaign Across the State

Workers in the Department of Health and Human Services, members of UE local 150, the North Carolina Public Service Workers Union across North Carolina have been pushing out their campaign for a Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights by speaking out and holding rallies at their workplaces.

On September 24, UE local 150 members at Dorothea Dix hospital in Raleigh, Cherry hospital in Goldsboro, and Eastern NC School of the Deaf in Wilson held simultaneous rallies demanding Governor Easley declare a state of emergency caused by BEACON payroll problems, drawing attention to the rushed move from Dix to Central Regional hospital, and supporting a Mental Health Workers Bill of Rights.

Many of the workers wore red shirts and made their own signs and chanted "Bail out the workers, Not the banks," "Ha Ha, Ho Ho, the BEACON System got to go." UE 150 members have been circulating a Workers and Tax Payers Petition to push out for wider support calling for the governor to declare a state of emergency to grant relief to workers.

This is an important slogan at this time when government funds are being used to bail out the insurance and mortgage companies and banks. Workers at the rally identified with this and had some discussion about how the system favors the big shots. "I feel it is important that workers be considered before the banks...because when we are ignored after having dealt with situation like BEACON we are in turmoil trying to pay our bills or make it every day ...people are losing vehicles, behind on registration and paying our rent, meanwhile the bankers are getting paid," stated Jeffery Neal, UE 150 member at Eastern NC School of the Deaf.

Workers are told they must come to work or face discipline for being late or absent even though we lack money for gas and transportation, for childcare and other needs that require money. In August, workers at the Eastern NC School of the Deaf received a letter from hospital direc-

tor Reginald Redding stating that they cannot protest or take actions to demand that their issues be addressed. There was no letter stating how and when they will pay the workers!

Workers are also calling on Barack Obama to support their struggle, because we need a change in the way public workers are treated. Workers need the right to collective bargaining that gives public employees the power to have input into decisions and to respond to other crises facing workers.

Since 2000, UE Local 150, has brought a statewide workers voice to NC DHHS. The failed reform plan, which did not respect input from frontline workers, is one of the clearest reasons workers need a Bill of Rights. Workers input and power should be the key focus in proposing any new plan.

So far, the campaign has focused on bringing to the public workers' voices about the poor and unsafe conditions for workers and patients throughout the mental health system. We have petitioned the DHHS Secretary requesting specific immediate changes in the grievance procedure and meet-and-confer, removal of all write ups, and making workers whole for discipline received for problems that could have been caused by understaffing, mandatory overtime, unsafe conditions, or poor grievance procedures.

We have succeeded in winning several important improvements but we must establish core standards for providing quality care. Understaffing, forced overtime, faulty equipment, and lack of training make conditions unsafe for workers and patients. Workers are committed to working with people with special needs and behaviors.

The workers will be circulating ballots to conduct a referendum on the need for a Bill of Rights, no confidence in the administration, and an entirely new reform plan. The vote will be a chance for thousands of mental health workers statewide to speak in a collective voice. After the

balloting, we will organize workers to use all administrative, legislative, constitutional, legal, and community action means to fight for accountability to these core standards.

Speaking to other workers after a rally at Dorothea Dix hospital, Health Care Technician, UE 150 member James Johnson stated, "We front-line workers deserve some basic dignity. Without our Bill of Rights, the administration will continue to put us in harms' way, continue to make our lives stressful, and make it impossible for us to provide quality services to our patients."

### Union UNC-CH Workers Get Raise!

CHAPEL HILL - About 290 UNC-Chapel Hill University employees will soon be getting a raise. After months of organizing, building our NC Public Service Workers UNION -UE local 150, and challenging the university with the demand for workers fairness and a voice by workers, the school is raising its minimum wage level to \$25,000 for full-time front-line employees – an increase of \$4,888 from the current state minimum for public employees.

Effective Nov. 21, 2008, full-time workers will get a much needed "cost of living adjustment." Part-time employees will receive an equivalent, pro-rated pay raise as well. The raise is "because we are committed to doing all we can to keep your compensation competitive with salaries in Orange County and the surrounding Triangle area," Chancellor Holden Thorp wrote by e-mail to employees who will get the increase.

OUR union knows that management sees and hears the growing voice and union organizing movement of public service workers here!

## Gang Pushes for Peace and Black-Brown Unity

By Angaza Samora Mayo-Laughinghouse

Jorge Cornell, the state-wide leader of one of North Carolina's street gangs, has called for peace. In July, Cornell held a press conference at Faith Community Church in Greensboro, calling for unity among gangs across the state.

Cornell, also known as King Cornell, is the leader of the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation. He stated his goal to unite black and brown street gangs and bring peace to the streets. The Latin King and Queen Nation has reached out to gangs to come to the table to discuss a peaceful future. So far Bloods and Crips, along with Black Keystones and Nietas, have agreed to help with the peace-building process. We need peace with justice, quality jobs and peoples' power to provide a better life for all. Cornell says they will continue to reach out to gangs across the state.

Cornell was joined at the press conference by Rev. Nelson Johnson of the Beloved Community Center and Rev. Gregory Headon. Cornell approached Rev. Johnson for spiritual advice after hearing he was wanted by the police. Rev. Johnson accompanied him to the Guilford County Sheriff's office only to learn that there were no warrants for his arrest. Cornell and others believe the police began harassing him to discourage peacemaking efforts. We must reach out to all our youth without stereotypes and unite with them in their struggle for quality education and an understanding of our true glorious historical identity and roots. Our real struggle is for "real power so that we have ownership of our community, productive good paying jobs with health/retirement, and self-determination," stated one youth.

Both gang and community members agree that the response to the new movement has been socially productive for our unified community. Many individuals and organizations share Cornell's vision of black and brown unity.

## Justice For Moncure Plywood Workers Community Support Needed to Win Justice

Workers at the Moncure Plywood factory in Chatham County are under attack by their bosses and were forced out on strike. Now they need our support.

Workers voted overwhelmingly to strike after bosses gave a take-it-or-leave-it final contract offer that would mandate 60-hour work weeks, weaken the seniority clause in a way that could lend itself to favoritism, discrimination and racism, increase health insurance premiums by over 300 percent, and give fewer holidays off. Workers also raised concerns about unfair labor practices and safety violations.

The striking Moncure Plywood workers in Chatham County are organized in the union IAM local W369. "With a 60-hour mandatory clause, they could work people seven consecutive days for weeks without a day off," said Melvin Montford, IAMAW business representative, to a News & Observer reporter, "Even the slaves got off on Sunday."

IAM local W369 President Lewis Cameron expressed concern that community members may think they were striking for well-deserved more money alone, "We are trying to secure our rights to a decent job and to work with dignity."

### Unsafe Work Conditions

Last year the company was fined \$37,000 for safety violations. Some wood-cutting machines had no guards, causing a worker to lose his thumb. There were holes in the concrete and water on the floor around dangerous machines. The plant was also found to have too much dust; a similar condition contributed to the death of 25 workers in a fire at Imperial Chicken plant in Hamlet, NC in 1991.

There have been seven serious injuries in the past year and two workers are out of work for operations from repetitive motion injuries. Many workers are also forced to work when they are sick.

### Bosses use Racism to Divide

In a plant that was 60% African American and 30% Latin@ before the strike, there was only one African American supervisor. Three African American supervisors were fired two years ago with little reason.

Bosses had told Latin@ workers that if they joined the union, they would be fired. The first time the bosses published any literature in Spanish, was just before the strike to tell lies about the union.

Since the strike, bosses have stated that they would not hire any more Black workers. In an atmosphere of anti-immigrant hysteria whipped up to demonize immigrant workers and increased raids by armed Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers on work sites hiring many Latin@ workers, it is easy for bosses to intimidate immigrant workers and make them fearful of joining the union. Bosses are using this to hold back all workers – Black, Latin@ and white! We must unite to overcome this racist attack.

### Solidarity and Support Needed

Now is the time for showing our solidarity with union members at Moncure Plywood. Local Lodge W369 is asking for our help, including water, food, and supporters to walk the picket line. The plant is located at 306 Corinth Rd, Moncure, NC in Chatham County - about 30-minute southwest of Raleigh.

### CALL TO ACTION:

Call Moncure Plywood CEO Today to Demand he Negotiate a Fair Contract! Richard Yarbrough, CEO at 360-432-5004

More information: Melvin Montford, (901) 619-1967, [mfmontford@earthlink.net](mailto:mfmontford@earthlink.net) or Lewis Cameron, IAM W369 President, (919) 770-5836.

## Support for Developing a UE 150 Municipal

The UE 150 Municipal Council has voted to develop a Municipal Workers Bill of Rights. This document will include the rights as well as basic principles and standards for how municipal workers across the state should be treated. A resolution supporting this was adopted at the Statewide UE 150 5<sup>th</sup> Convention in July 2008.

Over the past two years the Municipal Workers Council (MWC) continued its work bringing together city workers from Charlotte, Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh and Rocky Mount and making real the connection between city employees. We realize that what happens to municipal workers in one city affects what happens to city workers throughout North Carolina and that we must work together to build chapter strength in all our workplaces. With this in mind that we've tried to establish regular Municipal Council conference calls and one or two meetings a year.

Since the last statewide convention, we've continued to look at various cities' policies, their disciplinary and grievance procedures, how their management deals with city workers' right to representation, employee benefits, the municipal budget process, meet and confer agreements and worker's health and safety. We continue to compare how cities address these issues and to develop strategies to fight statewide for the improvement of municipal employees' working conditions.

Municipal chapters advanced in sharing information and policies as well as assisting in developing action plans around their workplace issues. For instance, Raleigh chapter members have attended Charlotte chapter meetings to help and share lessons. They succeeded in getting Raleigh Mayor Charles

Meeker to Charlotte Mayor McCrory about providing direct dues "check-off" payments/deductions from Charlotte city workers' paychecks. The Durham City chapter has shared wage information with the Raleigh chapter to assist them in their budget campaign. This year members from four municipal chapters were involved in active budget campaigns.

Municipal Council chapter members have been involved in meetings with Gov. Mike Easley's office around UE's state budget proposal. We met with legislators during the June 4 Lobby Day and, with the Hear Our Public Employee Coalition, June 11 to push for passage of House Bill 1583, which will provide collective bargaining rights for all public employees in NC. MWC members also participated on panels and attended International Workers Justice Campaign Teach-Ins in Chapel Hill, Durham and Raleigh.

While we have progressed on these goals, we still have a long way to go. Our members have had trainings on budget preparation and grievance handling. Members attended a workshop in Charlotte on producing effective flyers, pamphlets and newsletters. At our June 28 meeting, chapter representatives voted to immediately focus more workshops on hands-on computer training on producing flyers and newsletters. The Southside Community Center (through Durham chapter retiree member Ray Eurquhart) agreed to allow our council use of its computer lab for membership training sessions. A similar offer has come from supporting community organizations in Charlotte. We are re-committing ourselves to be creative in finding ways to accomplish more of these goals between now and the sixth statewide convention in 2010!

### Chapter Updates

Although we are working in NC...an environment where the right for public

service workers to collectively bargain is denied...we are making advances!

### Charlotte

**Accomplishments:** Charlotte city workers, with the leadership of Pres. Al Locklear and Vice-Pres. Rayvone Motley, are continuing to fight for a fair and timely grievance procedure, adequate wages and dues check-off. The chapter has had some success in building community alliances, particularly with the Millions More Movement organization. At these community meetings, Charlotte chapter representatives give regular updates on city workers' issues. Members of these organizations have been mobilized by the chapter to attend meetings, call council members, and show support for chapter issues. Charlotte chapter members regularly attend city council meetings and have regular communications with supportive city council members. Charlotte members also showed great solidarity when they delivered a letter to managers and participated in pickets at a plant owned by Mitsubishi in Charlotte. This solidarity helped push the company to finally negotiate with a sister UE local!

### Chapel Hill

**Accomplishments:** Chapel Hill town workers, through sisters Annie Sharpe and Barbara Gear, are working on health and safety issues. They are pushing town safety personnel to study and limit the amount of time bus drivers operate the extra large articulated buses to no more than four hours a day and rotating drivers to stay within this limit. This will help prevent injuries to driver's shoulders, arms and necks. Because this affects many workers, the plan is to use this as the initial issue to begin to rebuild the chapter membership.

### Durham

**Accomplishments:** The Durham city workers chapter, with the leadership of Pres. Max Davis, Nathanette Mayo, Donald Quick and retiree volunteer Ray Eurquhart, is working to get city

## Workers Bill of Rights is Building

council members to formalize quarterly meet and confer sessions between the city manager and our UE150 chapter representatives as well as representatives of other employee organizations. The Durham City Council passed a resolution in June to support HB 1583. The union is also fighting to change a regressive city policy that suspends workers for one week without pay if they pay their city taxes late. Chapter stewards continue to be very active in representing and guiding workers through the city's grievance process. In addition, UE150 is pushing the City to expand its policy of free rides on the Durham Area Transit Authority buses for current employees and retirees to also include the regional Triangle Transit Authority buses. This is a great benefit for retirees and the environment.

### Raleigh

**Accomplishments:** Raleigh sanitation

and public works workers have been regularly meeting and developing their chapter. Since the 2006 convention, Mayor Charles Meeker. Lead by Pres. Jerry Ledbedder, Vice. Pres. John Cutler, Lonnie Habuda, Eddie Edgerton and James Brooker, III, city workers have maintained regular meet and confer sessions with Mayor Meeker and City Council members Roger Koopman and James West. With the help of community supporters, they are pushing the City Council to establish a formal, written meet and confer policy or resolution that would require the city manager and department representatives to meet with union representatives around working conditions. Health and safety concerns, bad policies, unfair discipline, lack of training opportunities, unequal treatment, management harassment and intimidation, and the need for improved wages and benefits are potential topics. Chapter members

recently won their fight to post union information on city bulletin boards. Solid waste members are working to get the City to establish a shortened/alterd workday policy for outdoor work when temperatures exceed 90°F and to establish a holiday work policy. Another victory was celebrated July 15 when the judge approved/signed off on the solid waste members' back-overtime-wages settlement.

### Rocky Mount

**Accomplishments:** Brothers Richard Petway and Dale Jackson continue to lead Rocky Mount city workers in organizing around poor wages and benefits; lack of training and promotional opportunities; unfair policies; and unequal treatment, discrimination, intimidation, and harassment on the job. Chapter members made formal presentations to the Rocky Mount City Council during budget hearings.



**3<sup>rd</sup> People's Assembly**  
**Saturday, November 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**12:00 pm at the**  
**Fruit of Labor**  
**World Cultural Center**  
**4200 Lake Ridge Dr.**  
**Raleigh, NC**  
**919-876-7187**

E-mail:  
[FruitofLaborWCC@netscape.com](mailto:FruitofLaborWCC@netscape.com)

## WHERE WE STAND

- ◆ FOR workers control of the wealth from their labor and for fighting, democratic unions of rank and file workers
- ◆ AGAINST the exploitation of all workers
- ◆ FOR democratic rights and equality of all races, nationalities and sexes
- ◆ AGAINST racism, white supremacy, homophobia and sexism

- ◆ FOR social programs for working people, youth, the elderly, physically challenged and poor
- ◆ AGAINST wars and military spending to make the rich richer
- ◆ FOR jobs, income, training for the unemployed, affirmative action for

- ◆ Blacks, oppressed nationalities, women and physically challenged workers
- ◆ AGAINST unemployment, plant closings, and "runaway shops"
- ◆ FOR health and safety on the job and in the community

- ◆ AGAINST dangerous conditions and "killer shops"
- ◆ FOR the political empowerment of all working people, and the freedom and national liberation of Blacks and oppressed nationalities
- ◆ AGAINST the political powerlessness of all working people and against racist national oppression of Blacks and all oppressed nationalities

**Black Workers For Justice is an organization of Black Workers organizing to build the African American workers' movement as a central force in the struggle for Black Liberation and Worker Power.**