

# JUSTICE SPEAKS

## BLACK WORKERS FOR JUSTICE

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MARCH-APRIL 2009

50c

HKonJ<sup>3</sup>

### Developing a Movement, not a Moment

The Third Historic Thousands on Jones Street (HKonJ) march and protest convened on the streets of downtown Raleigh, NC on February 14<sup>th</sup> 2009. Between four and five thousand people gathered in the Black community's Chavis Park before marching to the N.C. State Legislature. Hundreds of workers and their supporters wore yellow gags symbolizing the lack of voice in their workplace because of NC General Statute 95-98's ban on collective bargaining rights for city, county and state public service workers. This action was led by the NC Public Service Workers Union, UE local 150. In addition, members of the Black Student Movement and Student Action with Workers from UNC-Chapel Hill wore black shirts that read "We will Not Be Silent". Many other banners and signs listed the HKonJ 14 point agenda.

The HKonJ coalition was convened by NC's NAACP and includes over 80 NC organizations fighting for a statewide peoples agenda and new public policy direction in the state legislature. It includes: end the war in Iraq, living wage, collective bargaining rights for public sector workers, immigrant rights, health-care for all, quality education and more. The theme this year was don't balance the budget on the backs of the poor!

Two demands on the 14 point agenda have been realized since the movement's founding in 2007 – union recognition at Smithfield Foods pork processing plant and same day voter registration. NC is

now the only state allowing voters to register on election day. This hard fought and won progressive legislative reform is credited with changing the political landscape in NC and helping Barak Obama win the state in November 2008.

Some HKonJ marchers have been actively participating in People's Assemblies around the state organizing around workplace and community issues. The

People's Assemblies represent a new vision of the need for a people's agenda. They are forums for discussing our new challenges and old issues, connecting up the various struggles, and forums for learning, sharing and planning actions to respond to the growing crisis. Future assemblies will continue to build a people's united popular fightback movement while strengthening our capacity and ability to unite and move our issues forward.



Contact Rukiya Dillahunt  
rukuyad@mindspring.com

Saturday, April 4, 2009  
6 to 9 p.m.  
Raleigh, North Carolina

## Black Workers for Justice Editorial NC workers campaign continues Dr. King's Legacy

The electoral weakness of African Americans, workers, social justice unionists and Progressives is, in our view, largely due to the weaknesses of progressive, labor and left organizations, alignments and influences in the working class sectors of the mass struggles and social movements. In our view, movement activity cannot be separated from building a mass base organization. We believe they are organically linked.

We also see our struggle frustrated by the control of national, state and local government by reactionary forces and that undemocratic, boss-friendly "business unionists" hold sway within our labor movement. We "social justice unionists" know that a serious electoral strategy has to confront this issue. We are about waging serious political campaigns to influence social policy, such as the IWJC – the International Workers Justice Campaign. We are also about replacing reactionaries with progressives who are our allies in articulating and implementing these policies.

Regardless of landscape change and HOPE after the 2008 election, we may all recognize that "progressive political mandates tend to be scaled back" after success. Again, we view this as largely an outcome of the weaknesses of the left organizations, alignments and influence in the working class, in sectors of the mass struggles, and within social movements.

In North Carolina, we have concentrated on waging a struggle for collective bargaining rights for public sector workers in a state that bans this right by law. The NC Public Service Workers Union-UE150, a union whose members are mainly among the lowest paid and majority African-American ranks of the public sector, launched the International Worker Justice Campaign, the IWJC, in 2004, kicking off the campaign as a rank-and-file led movement. The IWJC has linked the fight for grievance rights and public services, and against budget cuts and race and gender discrimination to its demand for collective bargaining rights, placing it within an international context of global worker justice and democracy.

The IWJC held statewide public hearings in 2005, providing a platform for rank-and-file workers to raise their issues before panels that included elected officials, clergy, community, labor and student leaders. This process began shaping the demand for collective bargaining rights and popularizing it as a key democratic demand. Complaints and petitions were filed with the UN International Labor Organization and other international bodies, calling on North Carolina and the US to comply with international standards.

The IWJC emanates from a small, unaffiliated, poor trade union yet is critical to the struggle for democratic rights for working and oppressed people in NC. Collective bargaining rights have slowly become part of the progressive electoral agenda here. As it is taken up electorally, the IWJC seeks to keep the work grounded among the rank-and-file and their day-to-day struggles rather than hand it over to a labor bureaucracy that will scale it back in its deals with the Democratic Party.

For example, the IWJC raises the issue of the US South as a region that has historically weakened national democracy. All Southern states, to some degree, deny public sector workers collective bargaining rights, for example. Struggling against right-to-work laws is part of our struggle for economic justice and democracy. In this sense, it continues the struggle for economic justice that was part of transitioning the Southern civil rights movement into a struggle for power, including Black power.

This perspective has not been easy and faces many challenges within the broader NC labor-led coalition, which is dominated by a Big Money unionism approach to political action disconnected from the rank-and-file. We see the political climate and networks of people's organization created by the Obama campaign as

opportunities to strengthen working class and oppressed people's movements, to grow their ranks, and to consciously shape new democratic forms that help weaken the power and influence of capital over the US imperialist state. We see this as a strategic goal in responding to the capitalist crisis.

Unless we concentrate on and build rank-and-file movements at workplaces and with community bases, our electoral demands – and political class consciousness – will be shaped and promoted by compromises that scale back the demand.

The weak states of left organizations are obvious factors in working in various strategic arenas and in elaborating a program that promotes intersections of consciousness, organization and power of the masses in these places. Electoral work must be seen as an important and strategic arena of struggle. The mass political mandates, however, may not necessarily emerge out of the electoral arena but be elaborated and further shaped politically there.



## Rally in Raleigh for Employee Free Choice

Workers, local academics civil rights leaders and other community members spoke out on the importance of the Employee Free Choice Act and the freedom for workers to bargain for a better life. The gathering responded to attempts by Americans for Prosperity to spread misinformation about the Employee Free Choice Act.

The act is based on the notion that workers who want to form a union should be able to do so without running a gauntlet of employer threats, intimidation and illegal firings. Workers at UPS Freight, after years of setbacks and complications over secret ballot votes, were able to form a union through majority sign-up, a key element of the act. "Majority sign-up made things so much easier," remembered UPS Freight worker Fred Hargrove. "No more management stall tactics and intimidation. We were finally able to form a union through a true democratic majority. After joining a union, I've enjoyed better wages and access to health care for my family."

The act gives workers the choice to join unions through the secret ballot or majority sign-up, places harsher penalties on employers who break the law, and enables both employers and employees to seek the help of a mediator for the negotiation process.

The NAACP and over 80 community organizations favor the act because it strengthens civil rights and democracy in the workplace. Supporters of the Employee Free Choice Act believe the legislation is especially important in recessions. As



UPS Freight worker Fred Hargrove at press conference



one pointed out, "the worse the economy, the more we need a healthy, vibrant workforce, because workers are also consumers. The Employee Free Choice Act will give working families what they need to get this economy back on track."

## NY Post Newspaper Cartoon: A Racist Attack on Obama And Us

Our Black Community should be speaking out, calling on our unions, neighborhood organizations, houses of worship, faith leaders and people in general to speak out against the recent racist cartoon in the *New York Post* showing two cops shooting a monkey with the caption, "...who will write the next stimulus?"

Some argue that Obama's election does not mean the existence of a post-racist U.S. society, yet we as African-Americans fail to speak out against this racist propaganda. We must expose it, whenever it raises its ugly racist head...especially when racism aims at a highly visible target...the so-called highest elected representative of the US - a Black president. The silence represents a real failure to understand African Americans status as a nation systematically and racistly oppressed - and a giant missed opportunity to sharpen and expose the contradictions within this racist U.S. imperialist state.

No...Obama is not a Patrice Lumumba, Ella Baker, Winnie or Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X or a revolutionary. And in his role as US President, he's implementing aspects of US imperialist policies. However, we must organize our people and workers to shape the political climate and direction, knowing that he is prone to identify with actions from grassroots people's fightback. He responded to the plant occupation by the Chicago Republic Windows and Doors-UE Local 1110 union members, citizens and workers who took determined actions. Notice that Obama is reacting, although not enough, to the anti-foreclosure movement. We must be deeply involved in helping to organize our people, build their leadership capacity and promote PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLIES with actions and demands from grassroots people's fightbacks below. At the same time, through this work and our calls, demands and criticisms within it, we, the left and progressive forces, must directly challenge and move the Obama administration to address "our crisis" as working and oppressed people.

This racist cartoon promotes "killer cops" using a monkey as a racist caricature! We oppose killer cops! It is a reminder of Amadou Diallo, Oscar Grant and so many others, victims of racist national oppression. For our Black Community and justice-minded people to be silent on this shows serious weakness in our political understanding of where we stand today.

WAKE UP...STAND UP...FIGHTBACK...RESIST!

BE LIKE DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

Let's make this April 4, 2009 BWFJ 26th ANNUAL ML KING SUPPORT FOR LABOR BANQUET at 6 p.m. in Raleigh.

Let's make this a rallying point for renewing the watershed of energy that was unleashed on Election Day 2008!



## New Owners to Reopen Republic Window Plant, Chicago Sit-In Site

Republic Windows and Doors, the bankrupt Chicago plant taken over by 250 UE members in December, has been purchased by a California company eyeing the federal stimulus package. Expected spending on greening federal buildings and weatherization assistance encouraged Serious Materials to expand. Officials have promised UE Local 1110 it will re-hire all laid-off workers at their same pay. Some operations at the shuttered factory will begin soon; all workers will not be back on the job for several months.

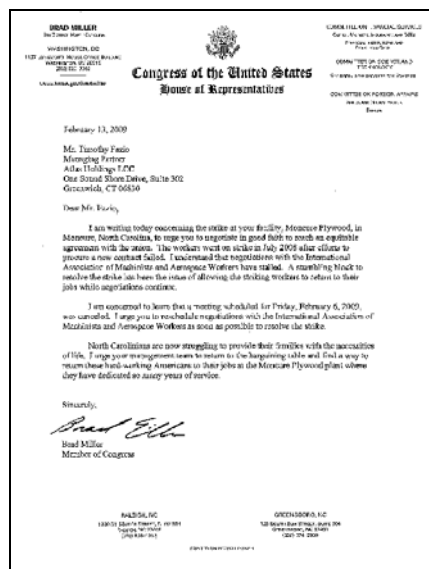
For Armando Robles, a father of five who lost his health insurance in January, the reopening is “a dream come true.” Melvin Maclin, a at Republic Windows, said his bitter emotions turned to joy, after learning that he would soon be back at work, cutting designs into glass windows at the plant. “When I got the phone call, I woke up my wife, and we did a little victory dance,” Maclin said. “This is not only a victory for the Republic workers, but for laborers and unions everywhere.”

Former Republic Windows’ owner Rich Gillman has ceased operations at the non-union window plant in Iowa that he had opened late last year after abruptly shuttering the union facility in Chicago.



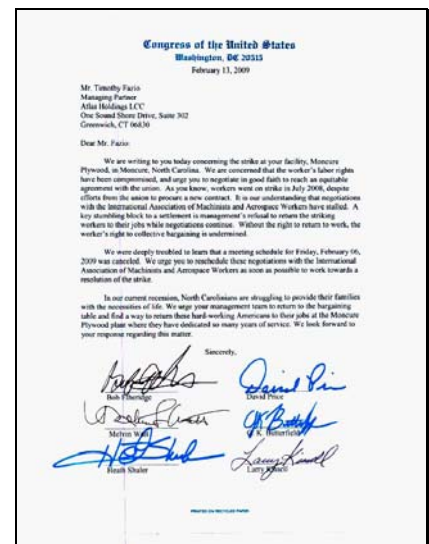
Amanda Rivkin for The New York Times

Armando Robles, left, and Melvin Maclin, workers at the window factory who are to be rehired.



## Moncure Mobilization, Pressure Brings Results

Continual organizing around the Moncure Plywood strike brought support from US legislators (see letters). The company, like most US corporations, relies on public funds, providing pressure points Moncure allies used to gain congressional aid.



## 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, women and physically challenged workers
- ✗ **AGAINST** unemployment, plant closings, and “runaway shops”

**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.**

- ✓ **FOR** health and safety on the job and in the community
- ✓ **AGAINST** wars and military spending to make the rich richer

- ✓ **FOR** jobs, income, training for the unemployed, affirmative action for Blacks, oppressed nationalities, the elderly, physically challenged and poor
- ✓ **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** political powerlessness of all working people and against racist national oppression of Blacks and all oppressed nationalities



Moncure Plywood workers, members of IAM LW369 have been striking for six months. Allies are shown, clockwise, beginning left:

Visited by trade unionists from Colombia, Nicaragua and Detroit, a trip organized by the US/Cuba Labor Exchange

Angaza Laughinghouse, President of UE local 150, speaking to Moncure Plywood workers and supporters in Pittsboro, NC

Visited by Mexican and Indian unionists in visits organized by the UE

At rally with community supporters in Pittsboro

## Moncure workers, allies build support

The Orange/Chatham Solidarity Committee for the Moncure IAM LW369 Workers organized a day of activities to provide everyone with the opportunity to participate. The Solidarity Day concluded with a rally at the Pittsboro court house followed by a county commissioners meeting. Seven North Carolina U.S. Congress members have sent a letter and will continue to pressure Atlas Holdings to return to the bargaining table and conclude a just contract with IAM Local W369.



The International Association of Machinists with the support of the NC NAACP and other civil rights organizations has filed a federal civil rights complaint against Moncure Plywood for allowing a noose to be hung on the plant grounds. The union is taking the struggle to the Connecticut offices of Atlas Holdings. Connecticut Senator Christopher Dodd has joined with the union in support of the strikers. (See letters on page 4.)

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Moncure is a member of the Sustainable Furniture Council. Members commit themselves to environmentally sustainable practices, including the ethical treatment of their employees. The company's violation of these principles has been documented and disseminated to all SFC members and on the SFC web site.



For more information, call Lori Hoyt at (919) 968-1888 or Miriam Thompson at (919) 370-4114.



## After the storms – help Gulf Coast residents



by Katrina Information Network  
[www.katrinaaction.org](http://www.katrinaaction.org)

*Trouble the Water* was nominated for Best Feature Documentary at the recent Oscars. Three and a half years after the storms, the film powerfully reminds us that the recovery is far from over for the people of the Gulf Coast.

The recently signed American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, known as the stimulus bill, will deliver welcome relief to poor working Americans, residents of the Gulf Coast continue to wait for dedicated funds to support a just recovery in the region.

You may help by asking Congress to support the reintroduction of the **Gulf Coast Civic Works Act**, which was introduced in the 110th Congress but never called for a vote. The act would rebuild and repair vital infrastructure; rebuild natural flood protection; provide green jobs and job training; appoint an Executive-branch recovery coordinator to move residents home; and fill funding gaps in residential repair and rebuilding.

Please stand up for the people and communities in the Gulf Coast by learning more about reaching out to your congressional representatives at <http://www.troublethewaterfilm.com/page/speakout/congress>.

**Join Black Workers For Justice**  
 Saturday, April 4,  
 6 to 9 p.m. in Raleigh, NC  
**26th Annual**  
**MLK Support**  
**for Labor Banquet**

[rukiya@mindspring.com](mailto:rukiya@mindspring.com) for more info

## Rocked by layoffs, Nash County workers fight on

Cummins Rocky Mount Engine joined other North Carolina employers and laid off 390 workers, about a quarter of its workforce. Workers were not surprised by the move as the company had already slashed work hours and offered permanent employees buyouts. People with more than two decades seniority and nearing retirement were among those let go.

Unemployment in North Carolina is higher than it's been in more than 25 years and Rocky Mount – the area around the engine plant – has the state's highest official jobless rate at 11.7%. Cummins workers, community members and UE Local 150 have campaigned against the layoffs, a story followed closely by the *Rocky Mount Telegram*. Excerpts of articles by Mike Hixenbaugh and John Henderson follow.

Armed officers greeted Chuck Yoak at work Tuesday morning. “What a way to be let go,” said Yoak, brushing his hand through his beard as cars rushed past him on U.S. 301. “Talk about going out with dignity.” After accepting a pay cut to take the job more than 20 years ago, Yoak said, he wishes his employer would have at least offered him an explanation of how management determined who was to be let go.

“They wouldn’t say,” Yoak said. “And I understand things are tight; sales are down. I get all that. But I don’t understand why guys with more than 10, 15, 20 years of time with the company are being treated like a piece of disposable property.”

Yoak and other ex-employees stood last week in front of the Cummins plant, waving signs and distributing fliers in protest of the company’s handling of the job cuts. Yoak and others hope to organize workers and pressure officials to, if nothing else, grant terminated employees “recall rights” – the promise to rehire them if the economy improves within a certain amount of time.

Irate former [Cummins] employees met at the Bloomer Hill Community Center in Whitakers to vent their concerns to union members. Terry Richardson said a week’s worth of final pay was not direct deposited to her account on Friday as expected. She said calls to the company’s human resources office went unanswered. “We need our money,” she said. Denna Harris also vented her frustration. “It’s just like they laid us off and tossed us out the door,” she said.

The controversy over the final paycheck comes at a time when union members at the plant are trying to convince enough coworkers to join so the plant can become a union shop. They also are circulating a petition that will be distributed to local elected officials asking that the plant give those who were laid off “recall rights” that would force the company to rehire them if business picks up in 30 months.

Plant union members point out that these recall rights were granted to employees who recently were laid off at a [unionized] Cummins plant in Indiana. There is no such agreement in Rocky Mount because it isn’t a union plant. Today, several hundred Cummins employees are Local 150 members, according to officials. A majority of the 1,100 workers would have to join to make it a union shop.

Jim Wrenn, who heads up the union group, said if the Cummins plant were a unionized shop, union officials could step in on behalf of the employees over issues such as final paychecks. “A union facilitates getting these things resolved,” he said. “Collective action gets results.”

## Unions end 44-day general strike in Guadeloupe

Union leaders on the predominately Black French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe agreed to end a 44-day-old general strike after most demands were met. The LKP collective signed a deal with officials and business owners to raise worker pay and lower the cost of basic goods. Negotiations continue in nearby Martinique.

The strikes have crippled the French overseas departments and occasionally erupted into violence. Some residents allege a wealthy, white elite controls imports and prices. Union leader Jacques Bino was shot dead by rioting youths at a barricade in Guadeloupe's main city, Pointe-a-Pitre. France deployed hundreds of police and gendarmes to restore order. Dozens of protesters have been arrested.

While the agreement covers issues ranging from bread prices to teacher hires, the most important provisions supplement wages of lowest-paid workers with a monthly payment around \$250.

Prices on Guadeloupe and Martinique are generally higher while wages are lower. Unemployment – more than 20% -- is three times as high. Talks on other union demands – including lowering prices on 54 basic goods – are continuing.

Guadeloupe Prefect Nicolas Desforges, the highest representative of the French state, said. "[Guadeloupe] must get back to work from tomorrow. It must make up the delay."

"It must work twice as hard because, in order to be paid an additional 200 euros, there must be companies to pay that sum, and for them to pay it, they must prosper, and for them to prosper, they must work."

An LKP leader warned unions would resume the strike if the government or businesses reneged on promises, saying, "This means work will resume, but we'll remain mobilized over the coming days and weeks."



FSM 2002 - Porto Alegre  
Marche mondiale des femmes / World March of Women / Marcha mundial de las mujeres

## Around the World, Women are Marching

The World March of Women organizes women and their allies through forums, symposiums, marches, and other events. A 2002 Porto Alegre celebration is pictured left.

## Women Celebrate, Struggle, Make History

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

Around the world, the annual calendar of common global struggle by social movements was launched through events organized by and with the World March of Women March 8.



(Hear the Women's Global Charter for Humanity read by women from all over the world in French, English or Spanish at <http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/multimedia/cmifolder.2006-04-07.0333926286/en/> )

In the spirit of the Declaration of the Women's Assembly held during the World Social Forum held in Belém, demonstrations will strongly denounce the capitalist model of development responsible for the crisis affecting the whole planet, and which has the oppression of women as a support pillars. Also slated for critical analysis – the superficial responses to the crisis, responses that have only concentrated wealth even more and continued reproduction of the patriarchal capitalist global system.

The women in the streets will be reaffirming the world they want to build, one based on feminism, freedom from exploitation, inequality and discrimination; a world without violence and racism. They will demand true equality, and an end to the criminalization of women struggling for bodily and sexual autonomy. Faced with wars that maintain and deepen world inequality, the March 8 also signals defence of peace and people's sovereignty, and the expression of solidarity to all women living in conflict regions, such as Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo and, especially, Palestine.

There are World March of Women committees in many countries organizing actions. Events have occurred or are scheduled in:

Belgium ★ Benin ★ Brazil ★ Burkina Faso ★ Burundi  
Chile ★ Cuba ★ Democratic Republic of Congo ★ Galicia  
Guatemala ★ Ivory Coast ★ Kenya ★ Laos ★ Pakistan  
Portugal ★ Quebec ★ Sweden

## JS COMMUNITY CALENDAR

April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Friday 5-7 pm - Wine and Cheese Social at the FOLWCC then from 7-10 all musicians, poets, singers are invited to step up to the mic at our 1<sup>st</sup> Friday's Justice Jams. This month's theme: Environmental Justice! \$5 donation requested for the jams. Everyone is invited. Call Nathanette at 919-876-7187 for more info or e-mail [Fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com](mailto:Fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com).

April 4<sup>th</sup>, Saturday 5pm - The Black Workers for Justice's 26th Annual Martin Luther King Support for Labor Banquet. Keynote Speaker: Jaribu Hill, Executive Director, Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights. Fruit of Labor Singing Ensemble and friends perform. Awards, Cultural Presentations, Solidarity Statements. Location: North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) Building 700 S. Salisbury Street Raleigh, NC: \$30 Adults, \$15 youth under 10. Contact: Rukiya Dillahunt at [rukuyad@mindspring.com](mailto:rukuyad@mindspring.com) for more info.

April 11<sup>th</sup>, Saturday noon-1pm - Community Legal Clinic at Wilson Chapel Baptist Church. Attorney Darryl G. Smith will discuss various legal rights and obligations and public policies. Come with questions about the legal system, how to select a lawyer, or dealing with consumer, criminal justice, employment, family, housing, personal injury, or other issues. Every second Saturday of the month at Wilson Chapel Baptist Church.

April 19<sup>th</sup>, Sunday 3pm - Celebrate Earth Day at the FOLWCC. Film, food & fun! Call Nathanette at 919-876-7187 for more info or e-mail [Fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com](mailto:Fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com) May 1<sup>st</sup>, Friday 5-7pm - Celebrate International Workers Day at the FOLWCC! Wine and Cheese Social at the FOLWCC then from 7-10 all musicians, poets, singers and filmmakers are invited to step up to the mic or present on the big screen at our 1<sup>st</sup> Friday's Justice Jams. This month's themes: Worker's Power! & Amandla - all Power to the People! \$5 donation requested for the jams. Everyone is invited. Call Nathanette at 919-876-7187 for more info or e-mail [Fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com](mailto:Fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com).

June 5<sup>th</sup>, Friday 5-7pm - FOLWCC! Wine and Cheese Social at the FOLWCC then from 7-10 all musicians, poets, singers and filmmakers are invited to step up to the mic or present on the big screen at our 1<sup>st</sup> Friday's Justice Jams. This month's theme: Juneteenth - Are We Free? \$5 donation requested for the jams. Everyone is invited. Call Nathanette at 919-876-7187 for more info or e-mail [Fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com](mailto:Fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com).

June 14<sup>th</sup>, Sunday 3-6pm - 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Spoons of Justice Cook-off & "Gettin' Ready for Juneteenth" Celebration. Challengers are lining up to take on last year's winner - Angaza Lauginghouse and his Timbuktu Chicken! Can you take the heat in the kitchen? If not, bring your friends, neighbors, co-workers to be the official judges. That's right - you taste the "chefs" dishes and your votes determine the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 1<sup>st</sup> place Spoons of Justice champions! Lots of fun, music, Juneteenth trivia, and prizes. \$5 donation requested. Call Nathanette at 919-876-7187 for more info or e-mail [Fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com](mailto:Fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com) for an application to enter the cook-off.

### The 26th Annual MLK Support for Labor Banquet

★ Awards ★ Cultural Presentations ★  
★ Solidarity Statements ★

with Keynote Speaker

Jaribu Hill ★ Executive Director

Mississippi Workers Center for Human Rights

Saturday, April 4, 2009 ★ 6 to 9 p.m. in Raleigh, NC

North Carolina Association Educators/NCAE Building  
700 S. Salisbury Street ★ Raleigh, NC

Contact Rukiya Dillahunt ★ [rukuyad@mindspring.com](mailto:rukuyad@mindspring.com)

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Phone (252) 977-8162, Fax (252) 446-8163  
[fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com](mailto:fruitoflaborwcc@netscape.com)