

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## Ohioans brave severe cold to back oil strikers

By Bruce Bostick

This northwestern town shook with chants of “Safe refineries make safe communities,” and “one day longer - one day stronger,” as hundreds of striking refinery workers and their supporters endured bone-chilling cold weather to march in support of the workers and their families.

“For too long, these companies have gotten public support only to have them take advantage of the workers and their families, forcing overtime and unsafe staffing levels,” stated United Steelworkers (USW) District One director Dave McCall. “We’re all here to let them know that no matter how cold it gets, no matter what hardships we all face, we will be here as long as it takes to win this fight for safe workplaces for our people!”

Many of the workers were members of the Steelworkers from the Toledo refinery, which had just gone out. The union now has 6,500 workers, from 16 refineries, on strike, all out over issues of forced overtime and unsafe staffing levels.

“We’ve turned down seven company proposals so far,” said USW Local 10-1 president Jim Savage, who is representative on the National Oil Bargaining Policy Committee. “They all had wage increases, other things, but they didn’t have the safety standards our people need and we’re not going back until we go back safe!” His words were



greeted with cheers.

Ann Longworth-Orr delivered greetings from Sen. Sherrod Brown, Democrat of Ohio, speaking of the USW canary pin, given to him by steel workers in Lorain, Ohio, that he always wears in his lapel. It symbolizes where safety standards were for workers a hundred years ago, where a canary would be used to measure air quality; if it died, it was an indication that the air was bad. It’s a time that many corporations and conservative politi-

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cians would push us back to.

She delivered a prepared statement from Sen. Brown stating his “unwavering support for the worker’s struggle for safe working conditions, fair wages, and benefits. All won through collective bargaining.”

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The reception the strikers received put to bed stories from the corporate media of anti-union attitudes supposedly exhibited by local folks. In spite of minus-double-digit temperatures, people poured out of local restaurants to wave, give thumbs up, and pat strikers on the back as they marched down Findlay's main street, on the way to the Marathon headquarters.

Randie Pearson, who is the USW Women of Steel chair at the struck Toledo Refinery, said, "I'm so happy to be here, with everyone. But I had to be here, or I never could go home again. My grandfather worked at Toledo Refinery when it opened and helped bring the union in. My father and uncles have been, still are proud union members. It is a strong proud legacy for family that I'm on the picket line. I was able to go to college, my family has been raised on union wages. The union brought us everything we have. This struggle is the legacy that we give to our next generation!"

"This is probably the only thing that would get me out here," said Dave Bilski, vice president of Toledo Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR). "These folks are fighting for all

of us. They aren't out for money or benefits, it's safety. The only way we're safe is if they are, and it's our responsibility to stand up with them!"

Similar sentiments were expressed in a statement from Joe Uehlein, executive director of the Labor Network for Sustainability.

"Oil refinery workers are in the front line protecting our communities against the environmental hazards of the industry. Only their skill and expertise protects communities from devastating explosions & spills. The oil companies are creating conditions that make it impossible for the refinery workers to protect us."

"This strike is about creating conditions that are safe and healthy for workers and communities. The strikers deserve support from environmentalists and all concerned with rights of working people!"



**Bruce Bostick is a labor activist.**

## Lead Belly discography released

By Jim Lane

Folkways, the folks from the Smithsonian, releases a new five-disk collection of the songs recorded by Huddie William Ledbetter (1888-1949) during Black History Month. It comes with a beautiful coffee-table size book of 139 pages with excellent photos of that "hard man" throughout. Can any folk music aficionado resist?

At least one song, "Bellevue Hospital Blues," was previously unreleased. All the disks seem to have excellent sound quality, which is remarkable considering the various conditions under which they were recorded.

The facts about the life of Huddie Ledbetter, as well as they can be ascertained, are in the book. The Lead Belly legends are also explored. Did he really sing his way out of Southern prisons twice? Did he really travel and sing with the legendary Blind Lemon Jefferson?

Putting aside the background points, anybody with ears will enjoy these masterful performances of "Good Night Irene," "Bourgeois Blues,"

"Midnight Special," and the many other songs that Lead Belly made famous. His 12-string blues guitar and painfully strong baritone force reality into every line about the sufferings of African Americans in the South, whether they were merely in love or chained together in hot sweaty road gangs.

The book doesn't say a lot about Lead Belly's own politics, but he sang for working people and helped raise money for working peoples' causes. Friends of George Myers, longtime trade union leader of the Communist Party, know that Lead Belly performed in a Myers-organized fundraiser in the "bourgeois town" of Washington, D.C.

Lead Belly fans might also be surprised at the number of whimsical children's songs he wrote and sang. During his final years in New York City, his home on 10th Avenue was a favorite stop-off for young relatives and children of the area.

Lead Belly may be gone, and there will never be another like him, but Folkways has made it possible for us to continue benefiting from interacting with him through music and study.

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# The Howard Morgan victory for our movement

By Frank Chapman

**N**o social movement for justice and equality can be sustained if it ignores the lessons of history, and history has for us both positive and negative lessons. I believe we must apply this principle in assessing the historical importance of the victory setting Howard Morgan free.

First of all, let us sum up the background of the case. On the morning of February 21, 2005, Howard Morgan was pulled over while on his way home for an alleged traffic violation. After identifying himself as a police officer, Mr. Morgan was forced from his vehicle and shot 28 times by four white police officers. Twenty-one of those shots were to the back of his body.

You may be asking yourself the question: How can someone identify themselves as a police officer and be shot 28 times by police officers? Howard Morgan is African American and the four officers who tried to murder him were white. They saw an armed Black man and panicked, that seems to be the most plausible explanation. This is the only explanation, unless they were intentional assassins.

Howard Morgan lived and in so doing he became the living voice for justice for the thousands unjustly killed by the police. But the criminal justice system as it is presently administered by police, prosecutors and judges did not indict and prosecute the



intended murderers of Howard Morgan. Instead, they let the police weave a web of lies that made the victim the assailant.

The first trial ended in an acquittal. Then in blatant violation of the 5th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which outlaws double jeopardy, a second trial based on the same lies was held and Morgan was wrongfully convicted and sentenced to 40 years in prison. A mass campaign involving tens of thousands prevailed upon former Governor Quinn to look at the case, and having looked, the Governor opted for justice and commuted the sentence of Howard Morgan to time served, after slightly less than three years incarceration.

Our movement led by the Campaign to Free Howard Morgan and the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression saw from the very beginning that we would have to build a mass protest movement to stop police crimes and to free Howard Morgan, and we did just that. The struggle to free Howard Morgan now moves to a broader arena: not only must Howard Morgan be granted a full and complete pardon with expungement, but ALL victims of police crimes - especially torture and perjury - must be granted executive clemency and released from prison immediately!

**Howard Morgan lived and in so doing he became the living voice for justice for the thousands unjustly killed by the police.**

## Sara Alchermes, 100: tireless fighter for peace and social justice

Special to Peoplesworld.org

**O**n February 7, 2015, the world lost a tireless crusader for world peace, social justice, and equality. Sara Alchermes passed away in Walnut Creek at the age of 100.

Sara was born in 1914 to Esther and Marx Blashko. A native of Seattle, she moved to the Bay Area to work at the Richmond shipyards during World War II as a burner constructing Victory ships. After the war, she remained in San Francisco, working on production lines at Best Foods and later at MJB coffee, where she met Ernest, her husband of 54 years. Everywhere she worked, she was a strong advocate for the rights of individuals in the workplace.

Throughout her life, Sara attended gatherings, joined picket lines, and wrote heartfelt letters to political leaders in an effort to make a positive and lasting change in the world. She was an active member of peace and justice groups throughout the Bay Area. Her tireless work inspired many around her to support important human rights causes.

She was a dedicated and enthusiastic supporter of the People's World. For years, she helped to distribute the print edition, and more recently worked to build support for peoplesworld.org.

Sara's passion for knowledge never waned, and she was especially well read in current events. Her absence is deeply felt by all who knew her.

Sara is predeceased by her husband, Ernest, and three siblings: Beccy, Leo, and Abe Blashko. She is survived by her daughter Adria Schwartz (Norman), and granddaughters Allison and Julia.

## La migración de niños centroamericanos

Cassandra Waters

**T**efere Gebre sabe lo que es ser forzado a separarse de sus seres queridos. Abandonó su tierra natal de Etiopía por la violencia que se vivía allí, y realizó un peligroso viaje para llegar como refugiado a Estados Unidos.

Ahora como vicepresidente ejecutivo de la AFL-CIO quiere hacer todo lo posible para evitar que más niños tengan que migrar y separarse de sus familias. Por eso viajó a Honduras junto con otros líderes sindicales y comunitarios en una delegación cuya misión fue la de evaluar la situación en que viven las familias trabajadoras hondureñas y tratar de encontrar las causas por las que más de 74,000 niños centroamericanos migraron a Estados Unidos en el verano pasado. Durante este viaje, la delegación se reunió con líderes sindicalistas hondureños, líderes comunitarios, familias afectadas, líderes del clero y funcionarios gubernamentales.

En una charla informativa ofrecida en el Congreso de EE.UU. Gebre se unió a Larry Cohen – presidente del Sindicato de Trabajadores de Comunicación de Estados Unidos, quien también viajó a Honduras – para presentar un reporte con los resultados de su viaje. Este informe analiza la intersección entre la crisis migratoria y las políticas de intercambio comercial de EE.UU. y propone soluciones.

“Lo que presenciamos fue que la intersección de nuestras políticas de intercambio comercial, que están dominadas por nuestras corporaciones, con un sistema de inmigración quebrantado, contribuye a un Estado que no apoya ni a los trabajadores y ni

a las familias y los fuerza a vivir con miedo”, señaló Gebre a los asistentes. “Los resultados son peligrosos y nos sirven como una advertencia sobre las políticas que no podremos permitir que continúen”.

Los dos líderes sindicales enfatizaron en la charla informativa que se debe enfrentar a las políticas de intercambio comercial fallidas, las cuales no han creado puestos de trabajo decente, ayudado a un desarrollo económico equitativo, o protegido a los trabajadores que quieran ejercitar sus derechos. Más bien, como explica este reporte, estos acuerdos de comercio les han quitado el sustento a los campesinos y han rebajado los salarios y los estándares laborales. También indica que una de las causas son los salarios de pobreza pagados por las corporaciones, las cuales operan en casi una completa impunidad. Según los mismos estimados del Ministerio de Trabajo de Honduras, casi un 70% de empleadores no paga a sus empleados el salario mínimo requerido por la ley. Los trabajadores que tratan de organizarse para obtener mejores condiciones laborales están sujetos a amenazas, acoso y a violencia física.

El reporte de la AFL-CIO provee una lista de recomendaciones para los gobiernos de EE.UU y Honduras, como también pasos que pueden tomar para remediar las fallas de estas políticas públicas, y enfocarlas en las necesidades de los trabajadores y sus familias.

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