



**NATIONAL
MOBILIZATION
AGAINST
SWEATSHOPS**

sweatshop nation

the official voice of National Mobilization Against Sweatshops

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march for our

HEALTH *march for our* LIVES



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Pataki's Police Brutality Can't Silence Injured Workers

The sun was shining in Albany on October 15th. A young South Asian woman gently pushed forward a wheel chair containing a smiling elderly Caribbean woman. They joined others walking slowly in the public street that goes past the Governor's Mansion. A carefully hand-painted banner, held aloft by a black teenager and a middle-aged Chinese guy blew in the breeze, proclaiming "Pataki: Hazardous to Workers Health." Bright red, yellow and orange signs bobbed as the crowd of injured workers--hurt on the job or by 9/11--chanted, strolling forward.

Suddenly, mayhem. Many did not even know what was happening. Police rode horses into the crowd, creating chaos and fear. Assaulting women, they knocked one woman to the ground, trampled the foot of another, and knocked another out of her wheelchair. The cops ignored the protesters' two permits to march and arrested four

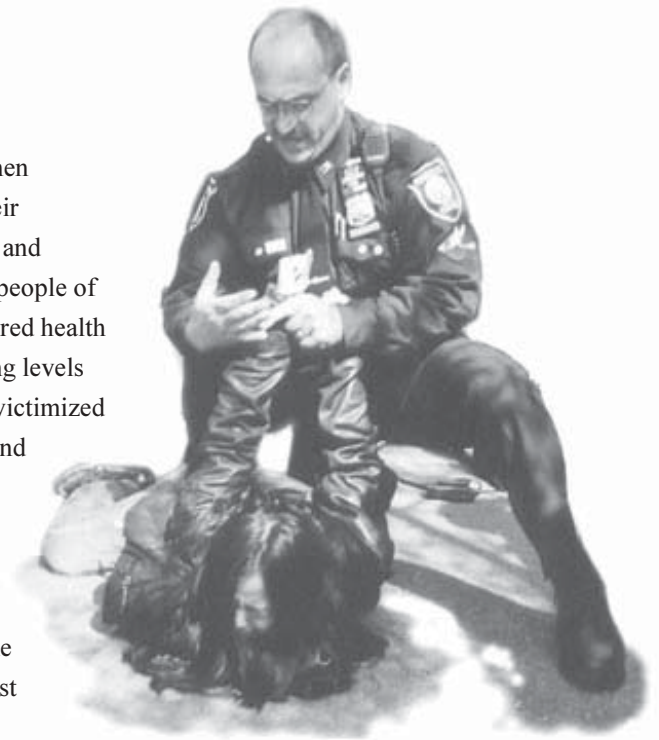
organizers. One officer slammed a young woman to the ground then thrust his knee into her back, using all his weight. Clearly, the police did not want injured workers and 9-11 victims to tell the truth about Pataki's dismal record on workers' health.

Pataki had just spent millions to paint himself as a friend of working people and Latinos, convincing many Democrats and unions to back his re-election. He wasn't about to let the truth come out – that working people faced a dramatic decline in health conditions during his first eight years as governor, working longer hours

on the job, getting injured, and then waiting for years at a time for their Workers' Compensation benefits and medical treatment. The working people of Lower Manhattan lost jobs, suffered health problems and experienced varying levels of trauma after 9-11. They were victimized again by Pataki's "feed the rich and rob the poor" response to that disaster.

But the police attack backfired. Albany's press swarmed to film and interview the marchers. The story was broadcast state-wide on Channel 13. Afterwards, the N.Y. Civil Liberties Union in Albany got involved. NMASS and the groups that were with us – the New York Unemployment Project, the Chinese Staff & Workers Association, and Workers Awaaz – planned to return to assert our First Amendment right to march and speak out. On October 30th, one group of injured workers and 9-11 victims and their families rallied again at the Governor's Mansion in

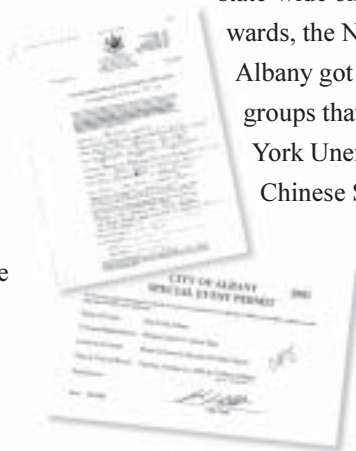
Albany while another group protested at his office in Manhattan at the same time. Civil rights activist Norman Siegel spoke at the Manhattan rally and organizations such as the Greens and Project Reach turned out as support. Four protestors were again arrested for marching in the street outside the Governor's Mansion. A day before the election, people returned to Albany a third time to protest a Federal Judge's denial of our right to march in Albany. The legal battle for our right to assemble and speak out about the concerns of injured workers continues. The seven



Pataki's police at work on Oct. 15

workers arrested – of which four are injured women workers – have declined a judge's offer to dismiss all charges if they agree not to do things like march in the streets of Albany. They have vowed, instead, to fight and take this to trial.

With the election over, now we must take our demands on Pataki and the State government to a new level. We are calling for the enactment of legislation like the Workers' Health & Safety Bill, introduced in 2001 in the State Assembly, which would overhaul the Workers' Compensation system and end mandatory overtime. We are also calling for expansion of the Family Health Plus Program and a medical program to study and treat victims of 9-11 affected by the toxic air.



Protestors had permits to march without restrictions.



Pataki Busters

The First International Hearing of Injured Workers: The U.S. Violates Our Human Rights

“I worked as a home attendant five days a week, 24 hours a day,” she said into the microphone, pausing for translation. Amapola Ochoa, a small but fiery Dominican woman with glasses and a shock of short hair, went on to describe how she was only allowed to contact her family on weekends. The long hours gradually destroyed her health so that when her client fell on her one day, the impact was permanent. “Now the Workers Compensation Board says there is not enough medical evidence when medical reports show that I am completely disabled. My life has been destroyed.” Hers was only one of hundreds of stories in the auditorium at Hunter College in New York on August 24th.

They came in wheel chairs or with canes. Some were immigrants speaking Polish, Spanish, Chinese and Hindi through translators. Others spoke English and were born in the United States of



Amapola Ochoa & Ruth Herrera

America. A number came from outside New York City and even outside New York State for the chance to speak and be heard. They were injured workers, testifying before officials from the Mexican government, representatives of human rights groups and the media. They came to call attention to the fact that workers are being slowly killed in this country by a sweatshop system that drains the life out of them, pulls their families apart, taking away what it means to be human.

At our “First International Hearing of Injured Workers: The U.S. violates Human Rights” for the first time some of the world’s leading human rights organizations — Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the Center for Economic and Social Rights — listened to people talk about human rights abuses committed by the U.S. government against injured workers. A three-hour hearing was

not enough time for everyone to testify. Many who have been isolated and denied the right to speak up at their Workers Comp Board hearings were overcome with emotion and took longer than the three-minute limit. One after the other, people explained how the New York State Workers’ Compensation system violated their human rights by forcing them to wait two, five, ten years or more for their Workers’ Comp benefits. They testified about injuries and occupational diseases caused mainly by long working hours — sometimes as long as 80 hours a week. They spoke of the lack of protection for workers who want to decline overtime, and the denial of compensation or medical benefits when injured on the job. These are not only human rights violations, they are violations of even the minimal labor protections that are part of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Back in February, injured workers and young people began making thousands of phone calls, writing letters and invitations to politicians and organizations, attending outreach meetings, and flying in churches and shelters. NMASS members were flying in front of the Workers Compensation Board in Brooklyn four days a week and at the Manhattan Workers Comp Board two days a week.

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Workers Hurt by 9-11 Need YOU — To Fight the U.S. Government for Our Right to Health

Instead of providing for the health needs of those hardest hit by September 11th, the government has chosen to support the rich corporations, landlords and high-income tenants, channeling most of its \$21 billion towards such efforts. Meanwhile, it has lied to the public about the toxic air and discriminated against low-income people around Ground Zero and beyond — especially immigrants and people of color, denying them medical treatment and compensation for disaster-related health costs and other benefits.

After September 11th, NMASS organized its members — most of them people who had themselves been injured on the job — to reach out and survey people living or working on the Lower East Side (LES). They discovered that many working class people had become injured by the toxic air. People, especially women, senior citizens and children, were

developing new respiratory problems or suffered worsened conditions. Menstrual problems, headaches, stomach aches, vision problems and other ailments were common. Many low-income Latino and African American workers who live in Lower Manhattan joined NMASS to stand up for their health and to form Beyond Ground Zero (BGZ), a network of organizations. A group of injured and low-income Latina women in NMASS took the lead in exposing the government’s cover-up of the toxic air and the increased displacement of working people.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was brought in to lead the government’s disaster-relief efforts. FEMA offers no program to adequately address the health needs of

working people. Its main program addresses loss of income, leaving out thousands of working people who suffered health problems because of 9-11 but were on fixed income, and thousands more who lost their jobs but whose salary loss did not add up to a 25% loss in their household’s income. For six

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Nancy Eng speaks out to the press about WCRP sweatshop conditions

NMASS Takes on... *White-Collar, Non-Profit Sweatshops?!*

“Aren’t you just being a spoiled brat?” the Fox 5 reporter asked the young woman worker, shoving a microphone into her face.

“You’re just airing dirty laundry,” admonished the head of one prominent non-profit women’s organization. “What you’re doing is wrong.”

These are two examples of people’s responses to our efforts to expose white-collar and non-profit sweatshops.

How can college-educated, cushion-sitting, white-collar workers have anything in common with sweatshop workers? And how dare workers complain about conditions at a liberal non-profit, especially when the country is lurching so far to the right? NMASS has always stood for the idea that the worst sweatshop conditions will never be eradicated unless we expose how they are creeping into *all* of our lives, stealing away our time, destroying our bodies and lives. Look at the facts and decide for yourself.

In June 2002, a young woman worker, Nancy Eng, was fired from her post as Program Associate in the Women’s Program at the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), a world-renowned non-profit. She had been organizing with her co-workers to ask for an end to what she felt were unfair conditions -- long hours at comparatively lower pay. At times Nancy was denied the right to take any breaks even for meals. When she and others spoke to manage-

ment about these conditions WCRP imposed a new policy that required her to be “available at all times” — essentially on-call around the clock. The firing came after she spoke out further against this policy.

Long hours. Low pay. No time for meal breaks. On call 24 hours a day. Fired for exercising her basic right to ask for changes in the workplace. Does the fact that people were working with phones, faxes, and computers instead of sewing machines make these conditions any less intolerable or demeaning?

Surely these white-collar employers are nicer, more reasonable than factory bosses, right? When Nancy decided she wanted to fight back NMASS wrote a letter on her behalf to Dr. William Vendley, the Secretary-General and head of WCRP. He wrote a reply denying that any intimidation or punishment had occurred. He merely stated that he chose “to decline to discuss this matter further.”

Since then NMASS has held two

demonstrations calling for Nancy’s immediate reinstatement and for an end to abusive conditions. Recently Nancy also filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board which is investigating the WCRP for unjustly harassing and retaliating against Nancy for organizing. So far, the non-profit corporation has not budged.

Garment workers, injured workers, and service workers from NMASS came to the rallies. So did a lot of white collar workers. They made signs depicting acres of prison-like office cubicles with slogans like, “WCRP: White-Collar Retaliation and Punishment.”

At the second rally, Karen, who works for another non-profit in Manhattan, told the crowd, “My co-workers might be willing to accept the ‘non-profit lifestyle,’ where you have to make sacrifices, such as relatively lower pay and overtime work. But non-profits just want to engrain in you that since you’re working for the good of the world, it’s okay to give up your needs.” According to Karen, “It’s time for office workers to stand up and take back what office employers are taking from us. I’m not going to accept these little crumbs. I’m not going to settle just because people say it’s better than nothing.”

This case is not about one person. Many white-collar workers in our organization have voiced concerns about lengthening hours, downsizing, and stressful conditions that wear down their health. As Nancy puts it, “I am a human being. I deserve to have some control of my time. I have the right to be treated with respect and dignity. When you have no say in how you spend the majority of your waking hours, that’s sweatshop conditions. When your most basic right to get together with others to ask for changes is violated, that’s sweatshop conditions. And employers are telling young white collar workers that in today’s economy we have no choice but to accept this -- that’s also sweatshop conditions too. We deserve better.”





Members Voices: Fear Itself

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself,” said Franklin

Delano Roosevelt, President during the Great Depression. Today “fear itself” is our main enemy again.

Last month I had lunch with a friend who was laid off after September 11th. His unemployment benefits are about to end. Each week he combs the *New York Times* want ads. Recently, he found the weekly section was only 4 pages long, instead of the usual 10 pages. “I don’t know what I’m going to do when my benefits run out,” he said.

Over the last year I’ve also talked to dozens of former Marriott workers who were laid off after September 11th. They and tens of thousands of others are in the same boat, with no viable plan of what to do when their unemployment benefits end. Some are trying to retrain. If they do find work, they may feel compelled to settle for harsh conditions.

People who have had the same job for years are also downsizing their expectations. Take a woman I know who has been working as a paralegal for several years. She’s always on call and works until 1 or 2 am a couple times a week. She used to always talk about organizing to change things or about finding something else. Lately, though, she seems focused on clinging on to what she has.

Sometimes the fear gets into me as well. What if I don’t do a good enough job at the high school where I work? What if I end up unemployed and lose my benefits? What if I get ill and have major medical expenses? Will I lose what I

have?

But in NMASS, I see many people standing up. Why aren’t they scared? I decided to try to find out by talking to some of them.

Guo Chang Liang is one of the New Silver Palace restaurant workers. He and others continue to fight publicly after five years facing threats and blacklisting in Chinatown (see p. 6). When the courts forced management to rehire them they went back, working daily under people who hated them. Here is what he has to say about fear: “When I first started coming out to the picket I worried about people who know me, that they will not understand and say, ‘Why are you causing trouble?’ But after I explained to people over and over again that it was the employer who was wrong, that it was the employer who put the workers on the street, I overcame my fears. When I come out I know it will affect other people who are afraid. If they see me coming out, then they will be less afraid to come out.”

Another person I talked to, Cornetta McNeil, is an injured home care worker who is fighting for medical treatment and compensation and to overhaul Workers Comp. She told me that until she got together with others in NMASS, “I was kind of a weak person. I got so depressed.” I asked her if there was a turning point for her. She said, “getting together at NMASS, over and over, made me start getting stronger. Hearing other people’s problems about being injured and workers comp. Going to demonstrations, going to workers comp and talking to the people and letting them know what’s going on. Speaking out. That’s what started lifting me out.”

Cornetta also wrote me this note: “They are not going to scare me. I am angry, not scared. I am angry with the workers’ comp judge that closed my case for no reason whatsoever. I am angry with George Pataki and those people in Albany. I am not afraid of them. They better be afraid of me, believe it or not. I am not playing.” An elderly Carriibbean woman, Cornetta was one of the workers who returned to Albany on October 30th to defy Pataki’s police and to get arrested for

speaking out on workers’ health. (see p. 2).

Finally, I spoke to Nancy Eng, who stood up to demand changes at her office job. By confronting her boss, wasn’t she creating a blot on her resume, ruining her chances to get another job? Instead of thinking this way, Nancy decided, “Sure, I could find another job, but then I would just end up at another job with the same conditions, maybe worse. If I were to walk away, then they would get away with doing this to me and to others. I didn’t do anything wrong. They should change.”

So what is it with these people? Is it anger at employers and at the system? Is it their connection to other workers facing the same problems? Is it the maturity to see that we really have little to lose and everything to gain?

Whatever it is, the challenge presented by people who stand up is inescapable. If they can do it, why can’t others, including me?

What about those who just lost their unemployment benefits? There are no easy answers. But when unemployed workers overcame their fears during the Great Depression, they fought hard and won reforms like unemployment benefits, government jobs programs and labor laws. In NMASS we’re fighting for reforms too, like an end to mandatory overtime. If employers can’t make people work long hours, they’ll have to hire more people. Or the demand for recognition and payment for all the hard work that parents do in the home. Or the way we’re fighting for compensation for everyone injured on the job and for health care for all New York workers. NMASS is fighting for reforms like these, but in a way that is helping us organize long-term for real change – for a society where we can control our lives and really live like human beings.

So, like everyone else I have a choice. Live in fear, isolated, as things deteriorate. Or get together with others to achieve change by overpowering our greatest enemy: fear itself.

--John Antush

Silver Palace Workers Fire Their Boss & Expose Tip-Stealing Landlord



NMASS members Shirley Brewster (far right) and Cornetta McNeil (2nd from right) address a rally outside Silver Palace, with Marie Koo of the 318 Restaurant Workers Union (left) and Betty Yu of Chinese Staff & Workers Association (2nd from left)

Moon Tong Leung is a deep-voiced man of few words. “If workers don’t fight,” he told *Sweatshop Nation*, “we have no say.” He and other members of 318 Restaurant Workers Union, New York Chinatown’s only independent restaurant workers union, have won a major battle at the Silver Palace Restaurant, not only fighting for their jobs and better conditions, but ousting its notoriously abusive owner/manager, Richard Chan, and his cronies.

For five years nonstop Tong and other workers withstood repeated threats, firings and abusive treatment to picket Silver Palace three days a week and demand the right to say “no” to long hours, stolen tips and other sweatshop conditions. When a court forced management to rehire them, these fighters went back to work and continued to picket on off-hours, withstanding intense pressure under management’s heel. Their actions inspired many others in the New York-New Jersey area to stand up against sweatshop conditions and led to formation of Justice Will be Served, a campaign for all service workers.

In 1997 Silver Palace closed and reopened as “New” Silver Palace. Since then the restaurant has continuously violated labor laws, targeted and dis-

criminated against union workers, stolen workers’ tips and withheld wages. The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) successfully brought charges against management, going to court and demanding Silver Palace compensate workers \$4.5 million in back pay. The NYS Attorney General brought a criminal case against the owners and managers for non-payment of wages. In 2000 the workers filed a RICO case against the bosses, the first time that RICO, an anti-racketeering law used against organized crime, has been used against a restaurant. Due to overwhelming evidence, before the hearing the judge issued a summary decision that even if Silver Palace files for bankruptcy, some owners and managers must pay part of the workers’ back wages out of personal assets.

The bosses are unrepentant. They changed the restaurant’s name four times to try to escape accountability, to bring in business and drag this fight out. Most recently, owner/manager Richard Chan attempted to collude with Joseph Chu, the building’s landlord and the owner of Eastbank, which made loans to the restaurant. The two worked out a scheme where the restaurant would declare bankruptcy and then give all the stolen tip money to Chu as payment for rent and

loans, leaving workers with nothing.

This time, however, the workers turned the tables and put Richard Chan out on the street for good. In October a NYS bankruptcy judge ruled against Silver Palace’s attempt to file for bankruptcy and ordered its current management – including Richard Chan — removed. A court-appointed trustee is in charge until the restaurant pays off its creditors. This victory was made possible only by the common ground the workers found with hundreds of working people and with organizations over the years that participated in the picket and boycott.

Unfortunately, the bankruptcy court is allowing landlord Chu to sell the lease to the buyer of his choice. The fight for reinstatement and compensation continues, but now 318 and NMASS must hold Chu accountable. Guo Chiang Liang, a 318 leader and Silver Palace worker explains that Chu, like many landlords in Chinatown, has been taking under-the-table money from management for years. “It’s been coming from our tips,” says Liang. “All that sweatshop money is in Joseph Chu’s hands. We must make an example of New Silver Palace.”



Marriott Rehires Few 9-11 Victims— Then Overworks and Fires Them Again!

When the World Trade Center (WTC) Marriott was destroyed on September 11th, 2001, the Marriott Corporation pledged to relocate surviving workers. Instead, the company found it cheaper to abandon them. Around five hundred cleaners, waiters, cooks, and others were out on the street. Many lost friends and co-workers on September 11th. Some were hurt physically; all were injured emotionally. Now they faced a new trauma — being tossed aside by their employer. Hundreds joined Justice Will Be Served!, a campaign of NMASS and other groups fighting unfair firings and other sweatshop conditions in the service industry. Marriott workers got together with NMASS to protest outside Marriotts, hand out boycott material on the streets, and reach out to individuals and groups. NMASS members and supporters, including readers of *Sweatshop Nation* and members of the United Methodist Church from around the country, gathered thousands of signatures on petitions.

We had an impact. One by one, Marriott quietly rehired about three-dozen of the most outspoken workers, placing them at the two new hotels it had recently opened under its Ritz Carlton division - one in Battery Park and the other in Central Park South. From the beginning it was clear, however, that Marriott was just trying

to divide and silence us. Management interrogated workers about each other during job interviews: "So-and-so isn't a troublemaker, right?" And conditions were abysmal. One man had his pay cut in half while working 2-3 times harder than before. A cleaning woman said her manager at the Central Park Ritz Carlton made them clean rooms at an impossible pace. She developed severe foot pain. Her pay went down from \$17.58 an hour at the WTC Marriott to \$13.

Despite urgings by other workers and NMASS, once they were hired many decided to be silent and accept bad conditions for at least six months until the hotel would become unionized. This was a terrible mistake. Later one

We continue to boycott, petition, and keep up the pressure until all WTC Marriott workers are rehired with decent conditions.

of the room cleaners said she felt the manager wanted to force the former WTC workers out before their 3-month probationary period was up. After a while, she said, things were so bad, "all the [WTC] Marriott workers are getting out." Some quit. She worked from May until June before she and several other ex-WTC workers were fired again. Many ex-WTC workers are still without work and unemployment benefits have run out. Others have found jobs at non-Marriott hotels but also report sweatshop conditions - long hours, lack of carts to carry around mops and equipment, threats of layoffs. Some have left the hotel industry completely in disgust at how Marriott has treated them.

The NMASS Media!

A new voice for working people.

- Join the video project, documenting workers' lives and struggles.
- Sweatshop Nation needs writers, editors, designers, photographers and Polish and Spanish translators.
- Distribute Sweatshop Nation in your city.
- Join our Web-Site Committee.

The First International Hearing of Injured Workers: The U.S. Violates Our Human Rights

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People put up posters in their buildings, on the streets in their communities and in their doctors' and therapists' offices. During the final week of preparation meetings lasted late into the night.

Over 350 people participated on the day of the hearing. Most were injured workers. The United States' violations of the NAFTA labor side-agreement are the subject of a lawsuit filed in Mexico in October 2001 by injured workers from NMASS and other organizations charging the Workers Compensation Board of New York, Governor Pataki, and the New York State and U.S. government with delaying compensation and benefits for injured workers for years at a time. The testimony from the hearing was transcribed and will be used to support the lawsuit.

The hearing was a step forward, but more people must get involved. The U.S. government and the insurance industry know what is at stake – they want to bury

this issue. The hearing was supposed to be a call, addressed to all invited politicians, for the passage of the Workers' Health and Safety Bill to overhaul Workers' Comp. However, despite promises that they would attend, politicians did not show up. In addition, Mexico's Department of Labor – which is investigating our lawsuit against the United States, Pataki and the WCB – chose not to come; instead a representative from the Mexican Consulate attended. Why did we experience these shortcomings? Not enough injured workers are organizing their friends and families to participate. Everyone must answer for themselves the question, "Am I really standing up for myself? Am I doing enough?" If more people try, the next hearing will not have hundreds of participants, but thousands. This is the only way to get the government to respond: if injured workers really mobilize.

Give to the Injured Workers Support Fund

NMASS members Alexandra Baran, Josef Lizon, and George Vavatsikos are just a few of the injured workers in our It's About TIME!

campaign who have recently won their Workers' Comp cases and donated part of their settlements to the Injured Workers' Support Fund. Dues and donations like these help make our work together possible.



In addition to these front page stories in El Diario and Super Express (Polish), the Daily News covered the story. Channel 4 shot footage of workers giving testimony for a special about Latinos in New York. Although we did get important media coverage, most of the major U.S. media still refuses to cover this issue.



WORDY

Unscramble the clues, one letter per box to form five common words.

- THELAH
- SKEWORR
- UPSO
- CALMEDI
- MYSTES

Now arrange the circled letters to form the answer.

Answer:

Words: "Sweatshops Suck" health workers soup medical system



voices from the hearing

These are just a few of the injured workers who spoke on August 24th at the "First International Hearing of Injured Workers" conference held at Hunter College in New York City.



– **Al Lewis**

"My case has been going on for eight years. At the time of my injury I was responsible for my nieces and nephew. I ended up losing my apartment due to the delay tactics of the Compensation Board. We were all forced to go into the shelter. I was in and out of hospitals because of my injury. I had to end up putting the kids back into the system. I am still waiting for benefits. I give out fliers every day in front of the Compensation Board. This is the only way I can get out the frustration and anger that the Workers Comp has put upon me."



– **Shirley Brewster**

"I lived middle class all my life so when I got hurt my family and friends abandoned me. It's hard to live like that, not knowing where my next meal is coming from. I am in pain but I am still fighting because the system has to be changed. The reason I am telling this is that I lost my home after working 17 hours per day. And now I'm homeless. We are the ones who can expose what's happening to our lives. Come in here and give us the story of your life and let's expose the conspiracy against our lives."



– **Arek Tomaszewski**

"I was forced to wait 8 years to get medical care. I had to go to hearings 50 times before a decision was made about my case. Before I got injured I could have been in the top 15 or 10 runners in the New York Marathon. When I got injured, all of my dreams got destroyed. When I couldn't get medical treatment, I felt so angry. I felt crazy, stupid, desperate. The American government doesn't care. They are killing their own people."

Workers Hurt by 9-11 Need YOU – To Fight the U.S. Government for Our Right to Health

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months FEMA publicly stated that its northernmost boundary for aid was Houston Street. In practice it denied aid to thousands of low-income garment workers who worked north of Canal Street and south of Houston Street. Lower-income workers who live on the LES – primarily Latinos, Blacks and Chinese — were also shut out of aid by guidelines asking people to provide letters from their landlords saying they were behind in rent. This policy put poor families at the mercy of landlords. FEMA hid the fact that people were entitled to have disaster-related healthcare costs covered. Until workers stood up, FEMA even failed to publicize the fact it is supposed to pay for people's air conditioners and purifiers. BGZ filed a Freedom of Information Act request to get FEMA's stats and found that if you lived in one posh zip-code area on the West Side you were 41 times more likely to receive aid than if you lived in a Chinatown zip code to the East. Additionally, less than 2 percent of Lower East Side residents received assistance from FEMA's Individual and Family Grant program – designed to cover all types of health-related costs.

BGZ organized the only town hall meeting of injured, low-income LES workers. FEMA, Red Cross and other private charities as well as local politicians were invited to come down to answer to the people. Thousands of injured workers who live in the projects and LES came out to share their concerns about health and the way landlords are using 9-11 to convert manufacturing spaces and affordable housing into luxury housing or office space – making people unemployed and even homeless. Olga Paulino lost her husband after September 11th, leaving her to care for four young daughters, three of whom are now suffering serious respiratory problems. Now she has asthma too. Olga told the crowd at PS 124, "My whole life is running around taking care of my children's health problems. Meanwhile, the government says everything's okay, that the air is clean and safe. It's ridiculous that we have to fight so hard just to get air purifiers. FEMA has already denied me twice. Am I going to have to spend every day of the next 10 years going

to the hospital as my children get even sicker?" Tima Lah, a lifelong resident of Lower Manhattan, asked, "How can the federal government give so much money to big businesses and residents in Battery Park to make sure they stay there, and then totally neglect those of us on the Lower East Side and Chinatown. Where's our guarantee that our health, jobs and housing will be protected?"

When FEMA failed to respond to the community's demands that it change its racist, anti-poor, anti-working class policies, BGZ organized a march on FEMA's offices at Foley Square in Manhattan. Feeling the heat, FEMA announced that it was expanding its eligibility for benefits to all workers in New York City affected by the disaster. However, the federal government, through FEMA, still refused to change its discriminatory policies and procedures against low-income workers. Four thousand outraged people who live or work in Lower Manhattan marched on June 5th. Garment workers turned out whole factories during their lunch break. Families who had never been to a protest came out for the first time. BGZ had released a torrent of anger and frustration against FEMA.

A month later, over a thousand workers and their families got on buses to D.C. to march on the White House for their rights to health care and reparations. The marchers charged the Bush administration with promoting policies that ignore human loss—especially the massive loss of health—but prioritize the property losses of the rich. After the march, people returned to their communities to organize meetings and clinics and to dig in for the long haul.

BGZ won the right to health care coverage for Chinatown's workers for one year, paid for by private agencies. Chinese workers continue to stand with others in BGZ to demand that all workers in NYC be given this right and that the federal government meet all our demands. Over Thanksgiving, however, FEMA closed down its only program that covers health-related costs. And while some elected officials have begun to acknowledge that there are problems with FEMA, most are still reluctant to take on the Bush administration. Now lower-income Latina and African-American women are leading the formation of an NMASS workers' center in Lower Manhattan. By standing up to the government's discrimination and repression and by calling for the government to respond to the needs of working people at home, working people hurt by September 11th are laying the groundwork for the struggle for a just and peaceful world.

THE GOVERNMENT MUST:

- 1) Expand existing relief efforts and set up a new relief program to provide living expenses to everyone suffering loss of health or income due to the disaster.
- 2) Provide reparations for its cover-up of the toxic air, including monetary compensation, an immediate clean up, and the establishment of a medical institution to study the effects of the toxic air and to provide appropriate medical care.
- 3) Create a law to protect low-income housing and garment manufacturing and make Chinatown a special zone to preserve industrial buildings and factories and to prevent displacement of working people.
- 4) Change the Family Health Plus program and raise the income eligibility level so that all people who work in New York can enjoy medical health coverage.
- 5) Change the wrong policies and procedures of FEMA's Mortgage and Rental Assistance program to address the housing needs of all working people affected by 9-11.



Ain't I a Woman?! members Cornetta McNeil, Mercedes Vega-Vukosaoljevic, and Maria Reyes take the NMASS message to California

"Ain't I a Woman?!"

Campaign Update

Women workers from the Latino, African-American, Afro-Caribbean, and Polish communities — who are traditionally marginalized and ignored — are taking the lead in bringing the call for workers' health to many parts of the country and the world.

In the summer of 2002 we launched the United Sweatshops of America Tour to help define and expose sweatshop conditions in this country. Injured women leaders in NMASS traveled to California and New England as part of the tour,

learning about conditions in different communities. They also shared with other groups our criticisms of traditional responses to problems facing women workers — for example, job-training that just keeps women in the same low-paying,

Join National Mobilization Against SweatShops (NMASS)

...to take control of your life

We are injured workers fighting for our right to compensation and medical benefits; mothers demanding recognition for the work we do raising kids; office workers and garment workers rejecting brutally long working hours; restaurant and hotel workers standing up to tip-stealing and unfair firings; students and other workers from many other walks of life. Many of us are from the Chinese, Polish, African-Caribbean, African-American and Latin American communities. One of our central demands is the right to a 40-hour workweek at a living wage for all — the overworked and the unemployed, and including the right to pay for the valuable caretaking work we do in our homes, raising our children. We are fighting for our liberation: the right to health, to control over our time and our

lives, and to pursue our dreams — the right to live fully as human beings.

The United States today resembles the brutal sweatshop system that existed in the garment industry over a hundred years ago. Financiers and employers are sweating immense wealth out of us without any accountability, using downsizing, subcontracting, outsourcing, and temporary and contingent labor. We are working longer and longer hours, leading to injuries and occupational diseases. Our human rights to medical attention, to compensation, to rest and recovery are increasingly violated. This sweatshop system also fails to pay for the hard work we do outside of our jobs, such as raising children in our homes. It is stealing away our freedom and our lives, turning us into disposable work animals.

strenuous jobs. Instead, they proposed that the hard work women are doing every day, inside and outside the home, should be recognized and paid for.

Last summer, injured women workers went to Mexico to participate in a conference entitled "Re-inventing Globalization" organized by the Women in Development association. They conducted a workshop presenting our local organizing in New York as a model of a working class response to globalization. The "Ain't I a Woman?!" Campaign continues to lead the way in mobilizing injured women workers for our health, our lives, and our future.

Liberty Apparel Update

Liberty Workers Challenge Court Ruling that Guts Rights of Subcontracted Workers

On January 16 garment workers who sewed for Liberty Apparel in Manhattan challenged a lower court's decision upholding the sub-contracting system that permits manufacturers and retailers to promote sweatshop conditions. They were joined by workers citywide to speak out and call upon the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit to hold general contractors such as Liberty Apparel and Donna Karan responsible for the long hours and other sweatshop conditions endured by their subcontracted workers. Join us in fighting for manufacturer and retailer accountability.

Boycott Liberty Apparel!

In a few short years NMASS has forced the scandal of sweatshops to the forefront of national and international consciousness. We're getting people to see that sweatshop conditions such as long hours have spread to every corner of our economy. We've begun to popularize the idea that long hours are the key issue facing U.S. workers. Our current fighting campaigns include It's About Time!, Ain't I a Woman?!, Justice Will be Served, and Beyond Ground Zero. We are also working to build a new working class culture through a video project, theatrical productions, music concerts, poetry slams, art shows, and publications such as *Sweatshop Nation*. To find out how you can get involved contact NMASS by phone, mail or e-mail. If you want to join right now just send in your completed membership form and dues and a give us a call.

Join NMASS!

Sweatshop conditions are a problem for all of us. They violate our most basic human and democratic rights - the right to live and work with dignity, to spend time with our families, to contribute productively to our communities, to live free from abuse and physical danger, and to earn a decent wage for our labor.

Fight Sweatshop Conditions!!
The right to a 40-hour work week at a living wage is a human right!!

Let's build a movement to take control of our time (Membership is valid for one year after dues are received)

Check one: \$25 general \$10 student/unemployed/underemployed \$50 dues & donation \$100 dues & donation

First name _____ Last _____ Date _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Fax _____ E-mail _____

Job Description _____ Talents, skills _____

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Check our website for upcoming events! www.nmass.org

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