

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## Action needed to solve youth unemployment

By Joe Sims

**Y**outh unemployment is currently at its highest level since the Great Depression, topping even the cyclical downturn of the early 1980s. Back then, fueled by an industrial crisis, close to 20 percent of all young people under 25 were jobless.

There were huge consequences. The jobs crisis, combined with lack of education and influx of drugs, particularly crack, precipitated what Marx called "social death" where millions live on the margins without the experience of ever working.

In the early 1980s, led by the National Coalition for Economic Justice, important efforts were undertaken to bring attention to the jobs crisis. A national youth lobby for jobs was held in 1982 that brought 2,000 black, white and brown young people to D.C. to push Congress to pass jobs measures. While gaining some labor support, lauds from progressive legislators and nods here and there from the press, this movement failed to take firm hold. A few years later the cyclical economic upturn made it seem less pressing.

With the coming of the Great Recession these same issues have returned with a vengeance. From almost every standpoint, youth unemployment has grown far worse than before and shows no signs of abating. According to the Economic Policy Institute, "Since the start of the recession



in December 2007, young adults have attained the highest unemployment rate on record (since 1948). The unemployment rate for 16-24-year-old workers peaked in September 2009 at 19.2% - passing the peak rate of 19.0% from November 1982 - and started 2010 at 18.9%."

According to their study, young workers account for 70 percent of all job losses.

Needless to say, there is a racial dynamic to

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the crisis. "Black 16-24 year-old workers had the highest rate, starting 2010 at 32.5%, followed by Hispanics (24.2%), and then whites (15.2%). However, it is 16-24 year-old Hispanics workers who saw the largest increase in unemployment (13.2 percentage points), compared to their black (10.7 percentage points) or white (8.2 percentage

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points) counterparts.”

Thankfully, the trade union movement is uniquely aware of these problems and is undertaking serious efforts to address them, a key factor not present in the 1980s. The AFL-CIO in June is holding a youth jobs conference. Steelworkers President Leo Gerard in February called for a youth-led, labor-supported civil rights revolution around the fight for jobs.

Significantly, stress is being placed on the need for public works jobs, on the WPA model which celebrated its 75th anniversary last week. In this regard, citing the problems of workers over 20, a Firedoglake blog commentator recently wrote: “Unskilled workers between the ages of 20-24 are also have trouble finding work; their unemployment rate has climbed to nearly 15%. President Franklin D. Roosevelt dealt with this problem through the WPA’s National Youth Administration work-study program, in which 2.7

million young people were able to either stay in school while working, or receive job training.”

Great pressure will have to be placed on Congress to move in this direction. The Local Jobs for America Act, which has 100 sponsors, needs 100 more to have a chance of passing. It will provide one million new jobs.

Conservatives in both parties are loath to use leftover money from TARP to fund such programs, citing the deficit.

Even President Obama’s \$250 Social Security payment failed to gain congressional support last month over alleged fears of adding to the deficit.

Only a massive militant movement demanding federal action will push Congress in the right direction. It’s time to put on our marching shoes.



**Joe Sims writes for the People’s World.**

## A price too high to pay

By PW Editorial Board

**A**fter the death of 29 miners at Massey Energy’s Upper Big Branch coal mine south of Charleston, West Virginia, mine safety tops the national agenda. The tragedy comes after too many years during which the Bush administration devoted itself to conspiring with companies to circumvent safety laws. They did it to maximize production and they did it at the expense of the safety and the lives of miners.

The Obama administration has been radically different in this regard. With the appointment of mine safety expert Joe Main to head of the Mine Safety and Health Administration, for the first time in history, MSHA, a division of the Department of Labor, is headed by a union person. But, eight years of ant-labor policies under Bush had consequences. Incredible amounts of damage have to be undone.

Agencies such as the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission are still battered. This agency, which reviews challenges by mining companies, is overwhelmed with backlogs. While

the Obama administration has taken steps to add judges to the panel, Republican cooperation has not been forthcoming.

It is the non-union mines that have proven most dangerous and it is the NLRB that is supposed to protect workers who want to form unions so they can have a safer workplace. By crippling the NLRB the GOP was saying that none of that mattered.

If the men who died were union members they would have been able to refuse the unsafe work that led to their deaths, without fear that by speaking up they would lose their jobs and their livelihood.

Let those in the halls of Congress, the media and elsewhere who relish attacking unions, who subvert the right of workers to organize and specifically, who oppose the Employee Free Choice Act, understand that their attacks and their opposition exact a price. That price was paid by more 29 workers in West Virginia. It is too high a price.



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# Kyrgyzstan: A “free market” disaster

By John Wojcik

**T**he convulsions in the central Asian nation of Kyrgyzstan may have a lot less to do with the yearning for democracy there than they do with the aftermath of the World Trade Organization's forced “liberalization” of its economy. The policy has left the country with a few wealthy autocrats and devastated the lives of the overwhelming majority of its people.

Kyrgyzstan, in 1998, became the first former Soviet republic to be accepted into the World Trade Organization.

A USAID report, a few years later, bragged: “Kyrgyzstan's major achievement since independence in 1991 has been to establish the basic framework for a market economy. Foreign investment is strongly encouraged and the country's privatization is regarded as among the most ambitious of the former Soviet republics.”

As early as 2002, Mark Ames of the Moscow-based alternative newspaper, *The Exile*, reported on the deteriorating conditions that have laid the groundwork for the current chaos and violence:

“Entry into the World Trade Organization didn't do a single thing for Kyrgyzstan. In fact, in the three and a half years since joining, the country's economy, which was one of the best performing in the region until then, slowed dramatically to the point of contraction, its debt ballooned and foreign investment has practically disappeared. The WTO-enforced liberalization of the economy meant that neighboring autocratic regimes like Uzbekistan, which violate the neo-liberal ortho-



doxy by subsidizing industry, have undercut the Kyrgyz and devastated local industry.

“Worse still, its experiment with democracy, which according to the dogma preached by the fundamentalist neo-liberals is supposed to walk hand in hand with free markets, has, since joining the WTO, been abandoned for the usual Central Asian autocracy.”

Reports from a variety of sources indicate that since the collapse of the Soviet Union almost all government-owned enterprises in Kyrgyzstan have been transferred to private control and that WTO-mandated budget cuts have diminished the resources of the government and ballooned its debt.

Gas-powered vehicle use has increased and, coupled with a huge speed up in de-forestation, has led to deterioration in the country's wildlife and air quality.

The World Health Organization reports growing mortality rates and decreasing life expectancy since the Soviet days. The population, which once received free medical care, now is paying rapidly escalating health care costs with many going with no medical care whatsoever.

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## LOCAL NEWS

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### Evergreen Reds urge fight for jobs

By Tim Wheeler

**M**embers of the Communist Party of Washington State — they could be called “Evergreen Reds” — gathered in convention here in Seattle, April 3.

Juan Lopez, chair of the Communist Party of California, drew warm applause when he described as a “huge victory” the enactment of health care reform, calling it a step toward the universal, comprehensive care that the party has long advocated. He pointed out that the bill also took the federal college student loan program out of the hands of the banks and returned it to U.S. government control.

The importance of the upcoming midterm elections “cannot be overstated,” he said, warning of the danger posed by the “teabaggers,” the upsurge of the armed militias and the Republican’s drive to wreck the Obama presidency.

The challenge, he said, is to build a broad majority movement for “the right to a job, the right to health care, housing, education.”

State Chairman Marc Brodine noted in his welcoming remarks that the party “has been active in the struggles of the Pacific Northwest” for 90 years.

Sitting in the room listening were Irene Hull, 101, and Will Parry, 90, both being honored by the labor and senior movements, for their decades of service to working people of Washington State. Also attending the convention were half a dozen delegates in their twenties or late teens. Delegates adopted action resolutions and elected delegates to the May 21-23 national convention.

## Campeonato mundial de futbol: Diego Maradona

Por Jesús Alvarado

**L**egó el Campeonato Mundial de Futbol! Se inaugura el 11 de Junio 2010 en Sudáfrica. Las 32 selecciones nacionales que clasificaron preparan su mejor plantel porque saben que lograron un cupo entre los mejores del mundo para competir por la Copa Mundial.

Desde 1930 sólo los equipos nacionales de Europa y Sudamérica han competido, los de América del Norte, Centroamérica y el Caribe empezaron a tomar parte en las eliminatorias para los mundiales desde el 2006. Saludamos efusivamente la decisión centro y norteamericana y del Caribe de tomar parte en este fantástico certamen mundial del que han permanecido ausentes por mucho tiempo, realmente ahora si podemos llamar este campeonato “mundial” porque todas las regiones del mundo están representadas.

En la participación de Sudamérica en este campeonato mundial, el hermano país del Brasil que ha conquistado la corona mundial cinco veces, Uruguay dos veces, pero queremos llevar nuestra mirada hacia la hermana República de la Argentina, que ha conquistado la corona mundial dos veces, y que en una de ellas, la de México 1986, el protagonista de la hazaña, Diego Armando Maradona, capitán del equipo argentino de entonces y actual director técnico del equipo argentino para los mundiales de este año, se

ganó el título del Mejor Jugador de los Campeonatos Mundiales de todos los tiempos, de acuerdo a la revista de The Times, de Londres, Inglaterra.

En el campeonato mundial de México 1986, Maradona mete dos goles a uno, sobre Inglaterra que pasaron a la historia del futbol mundial por dos razones: el primer gol fue una “mano” que el árbitro no vio, y que Diego lo llamó “la mano de Dios”, y el segundo gol fue regatear la pelotea en una carrera de velocidad de 60 metros, burlando a 5 jugadores ingleses, y finalmente perforando la portería del arquero inglés Peter Shilton, gol que recibió el nombre de “El Gol del Siglo”, con el que Argentina clasificó para semifinales, y que luego Argentina se coronó campeón mundial de ese año.

Sin embargo, Diego Maradona, como todos los grandes hombres, también tiene sus altibajos: sufrió por una época la tentación de las drogas que lo colocó al borde de la muerte. Es cuando el sistema de salud de la República de Cuba actuó para su recuperación, resultado de lo cual se genera una entrañable amistad entre Diego y Fidel Castro, hasta el punto que Diego considera a Fidel como un gran amigo, una figura paternal y un estadista de talla mundial, como lo reconoce en su biografía “Yo Soy el Diego” publicada en 2000.

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