

## Immigrant Groups Call for More Protests on May 19

NEW YORK (Reuters)—Pro-immigration activists are urging supporters to follow up on a nationwide boycott with more protests and rallies on May 19 to demand amnesty for illegal immigrants.

Leaders of immigrant groups from Chicago, New York, California and Washington said the added protests

were aimed at protesting legislation that would declare illegal immigrants felons and erect a fence along much of the U.S.-Mexico border.

"We are making an open call to organizations that are working on the immigration issue to hold an action day on May 19," said Rhadames Rivera, vice president of the Maimonides/Lutheran

Network, part of a local health-care union.

The debate over immigrants' rights has divided Congress, the Republican Party and public opinion. President Bush has split with many members of his own party by supporting a guest-worker program and giving illegal immigrants a path to citizenship.

Immigrant leaders have proposed a variety of protests for May 19, including a rally near the White House, forming human chains and candlelight vigils.

Juan Jose Gutierrez, national coordinator for Latino Movement USA, said sympathizers in Mexico also planned protests that day along the U.S.-Mexico border.



**SPEAKING OUT:** Students from the activist organization Campus Choice are shown here talking to passers-by at a campaign table at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada, about the business practices of Coca-Cola and the dangers of exclusive beverage contracts.

## University Students Campaign to Ban Coca-Cola

By MATT GNAIZDA  
Epoch Times Los Angeles Staff

LOS ANGELES—Student and labor-rights groups across the country are using a decades-old phrase to denounce what they say are the Coca-Cola Company's egregious human rights abuses abroad.

The once-popular phrase "Killer Coke" is being invoked at more than a dozen universities, including NYU, the University of Michigan, and Rutgers by activists who say that union leaders at Coca-Cola's foreign bottling facilities are violently silenced or even murdered. The groups say the situation in the South American country of Colombia is particularly bad.

Over the past academic year, they have also seen that Coca-Cola prod-

ucts are banned from their campuses, claiming that a business relationship with the company violates the schools' ethical codes.

"It's not that students are finding out about something in another country and we decide that we want to do something about it. Union workers [in Colombia] ... have asked students to get involved and we make the decisions for strategic actions together," says Clara Hardie, a student leader on the issue and a member of the University of Michigan's Amnesty International group.

Hardie says that at her university alone, 22 student groups—totaling approximately 5,000 students—got together to ban Coca-Cola products from their campus.

The aim of boycotting Coca-Cola

and subsidiary brands like Sprite at universities is to put pressure on the company by taking away one of their most important consumer groups, students, who often become valuable lifetime customers.

Ms. Hardie says student groups asked that the University of Michigan's Dispute Review Board, a body created to uphold the school's ethical code of conduct, ban Coca-Cola products on campus until there is an independent investigation of certain accusations, including the murders of eight union leaders by paramilitary groups in Colombia, allegedly hired or directed by bottling companies contracted by the Coca-Cola Corporation.

Coca-Cola spokespersons could not be reached for comment, although they have issued several official company statements responding to student allegations. In a January 25, 2006 statement they mention that "two different judicial inquiries in Colombia—one in a Colombian Court and one by the Colombian Attorney General—found no evidence to support the allegations that bottler management conspired to intimidate or threaten trade unionists."

Coca-Cola has also established a 24-hour hotline to give employees a confidential means to report "any workplace concerns and/or complaints."

Student groups are also protesting the company's alleged abuses in India, saying that it is giving farmers fertilizer polluted with toxic metals, selling soft drinks that contain dangerous levels of pesticides "sometimes 30 times higher than EU standards," and polluting soil and groundwater.

According to Hardie, Coca-Cola representatives have spent considerable money and effort to lobby students and administrators, running full-page ads in the student newspaper, the Michigan Daily. She says that they have also sent representatives to give public presentations to students and administrators.

The school banned sales of Coca-

Cola products on campus beginning January 1, 2006.

Yet a short time later, Coca-Cola announced in a letter to the University of Michigan administrators that they had joined with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva and were ready to conduct an investigation. Following the letter, although Coca-Cola products are not officially banned on campus any longer, actual sales of their products have not yet resumed.

No policy reversal has happened at the other dozen or more schools in the U.S. who have banned Coca-Cola.

### Overseas Campaigns Part of Effort

In the United Kingdom, Ireland and Canada, 14 other universities have also banned Coca-Cola products for similar reasons, says Ray Rogers, Director of Corporate Campaign, Inc., an NGO that fights for labor rights around the world.

Rogers's organization has put considerable resources into exposing Coca-Cola's alleged crimes, and uses the slogan "Killer Coke" in a branding campaign to make people think of the human rights violations whenever they think of Coke.

"It's a threat to their image, their brand name," says Mr. Rogers.

He doesn't know the precise financial effects of the boycotts and the negative publicity they generate, but he believes it is having a financial impact on their sales.

In a January 19 statement to the University of Michigan Board of Regents, Coca-Cola wrote: "Moving beyond accusations to constructive collaboration will result in tangible results and more progress for the people of Colombia and India. A partnership between the University of Michigan and The Coca-Cola Company could do much more to protect human rights and raise environmental standards than a continued focus on the past."

## New Orleans Preservation Hall Reopens on Wary Note

NEW ORLEANS (Reuters)—The Preservation Hall jazz shrine reopens this past weekend for the first time since Hurricane Katrina, and for a stellar group of musicians it is more than a New Orleans homecoming.

"That's my purpose in life—to keep this music alive," Preservation Hall Jazz Band trombonist Lucien Barbarin said.

With a lineage that includes legendary New Orleans drummer Paul Barbarin, a great uncle, and composer and guitarist Danny Barker, a second cousin, it is no surprise Barbarin, 49, is a man on a mission.

But it will take more than one man's ambition to keep the nightclub and jazz alive in a city still struggling to recover from America's costliest natural disaster.

The Aug. 29 hurricane destroyed the homes and instruments of hundreds of musicians and closed the venues where they played, shutting down the music scene at least temporarily.

Preservation Hall, the tiny 45-year-old French Quarter club nearly synonymous with the city, is home base for Barbarin and his band. The members were scattered across several states after the storm.

The venue's owners are unsure whether it can make enough money to stay open, even as large crowds are expected for the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, which started Friday.

"There still is uncertainty," said Ben Jaffe, whose parents founded Preservation Hall. The club has received enough private donations to keep operating for a few months, he said. But the outlook for autumn, the end of the New Orleans tourist season, is less certain.

"We feel we will make it through the summer," Jaffe said. "Then

we'll see what happens.

"It's exactly like it was when my parents opened the place in 1961. We have absolutely no idea what our future is here in New Orleans."

That uncertainty permeates much of the city's music scene. Clubs are open in repopulated parts of town, and musicians are finding work. But many still live outside the city, and the tourist trade that kept many local musicians employed is in a major post-Katrina slump.

Moreover, many artists are finding more lucrative work in cities like Houston and Atlanta, where thousands of displaced New Orleansians evacuated.

"A lot of people are not even coming back," said Preservation Hall Jazz Band guitarist and banjo player Carl LeBlanc, who now lives in Houston. "A lot of New Orleans musicians, the ones who need this place's soul, they're coming back just to refuel every once in a while."

LeBlanc and many others are struggling with insurance companies and uncertainties over rebuilding devastated neighborhoods. "They're giving us so much trouble trying to get back," he said.

Still, the mood at the hall's reopening party on Thursday night was celebratory. The club received a donation of instruments from guitar maker Gibson USA, which flew in U2 guitarist The Edge for the occasion.

He joined several New Orleans musicians for a version of U2's "Vertigo." Later, the house band and several dozen party-goers paraded through the French Quarter to Bourbon Street, then circled back to end with a lively rendition of the Professor Longhair standard "Mardi Gras in New Orleans."

## L.A. Mayor Picks NFL Talks Over Immigrant Boycott



**TWO COMMITMENTS, ONE CHOICE:** Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, pictured here at the CBS Studios in April in Los Angeles, made plans to attend pro football meetings with officials in Dallas instead of pro-immigration rallies in Los Angeles.

LOS ANGELES (Reuters)—Antonio Villaraigosa, Los Angeles' first Latino mayor in the modern era, planned to skip huge pro-immigration rallies planned for Monday to meet with pro football officials in Dallas, leaving organizers feeling like "a ship without a captain."

Oscar Sanchez, an organizer of the Great American Boycott in Los Angeles, said the mayor's office previously told the group he would speak at a downtown Los Angeles rally last Monday then backed out.

Instead, the mayor will be in Dallas speaking with National Football League officials about the possibility of bringing a team back to Los Angeles.

Activists said the rallies, which could become the largest protests since the civil rights era of the 1960s, would shut down major U.S. cities and serve as an indicator of their economic power, with or without the mayor.

They have predicted that 2 million to 3 million people would flood the streets of Los Angeles alone.

"It has been advertised everywhere and he is the mayor of the second-biggest city of the country where a boycott is going to happen. It would feel like a

ship without a captain," Sanchez said.

A spokesman for Villaraigosa said the mayor had never promised to be present at Monday's immigration rallies—part of a nationwide boycott and demonstration—and that his Dallas trip had been in the works for a long time.

Villaraigosa, the son of a Mexican immigrant, has long championed immigrant rights. But he has urged restraint in the May Day event, asking protesters to be "lawful and respectful" and children to stay in school.

"He is not making us, he is not breaking us," Sanchez said. "This march is about the people, not about the mayor. I'd be hurt if people didn't show up."

An immigration rally on March 25 in Los Angeles drew at least 500,000 people and was credited with rattling Congress as it debates the divisive issue.

Immigration has split Congress, the Republican Party and public opinion. Conservatives want the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants returned to Mexico and a fence built along the border.

Others, including President Bush, want a guest-worker program and a path to citizenship.

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