

and are demanding that they stay on,” says UE field organizer Leah Fried. “They want to be made whole, and want the ability to blow the whistle on illegal things, and the assurance that they will be respected and the law will be followed.”

The Maersk/Bissell/Roadlink team is employing a comically circular argument to resist a union representation election. “Management is saying that there is no union election because there’s no bargaining unit,” says Fried. “And why isn’t there any bargaining unit? Because they fired them all!”

The struggle at the Maersk/Bissell warehouse is significant because it involves the shaping of a vital sector of the emerging U.S. economy “This is the new economy replacing manufacturing because things aren’t being made here, but instead are being shipped here,” Fried says. “These are potentially good jobs, but they have been converted to ‘perma-temp’ jobs (workers working indefinitely for temporary agencies at the same job without any hope of being hired permanently by the actual company) at the minimum wage, with no prospect of a raise. This is the dark underbelly of how products get to our stores.”

There is constant pressure from big-box retailers like Wal-Mart and Target to hold down wages and benefits to workers all along the supply chain—from the stores to the distribution centers to the manufacturing sites at low-wage plants in China (some 60 percent of China’s exports are shipped by foreign firms, writes Jeff Faux in *The Global Class War*). “It’s fascinating to see how standards are driven by big-box retailers that make sure that companies pay as little as possible,” says Fried.

As at Centerpoint and other transportation hubs, warehouse owners utilize a number of management layers to insulate themselves from legal accountability and to thwart the possibility of union organizing. The pattern plays out at the massive Inland Empire hub in San Bernardino, Calif., which employs 118,000 workers, points out R.M. Arrieta, a regular contributor to *Working In These Times*, this magazine’s workers’ rights blog.

For years, the warehouses there offered relatively decent pay, but then

saw potential for driving down wages through the use of temporary agencies. “When these companies hire workers through a third party, they can skirt responsibilities that were once a staple for many U.S. workers: healthcare, paid sick days and vacation pay, and the assurance that workers wouldn’t be fired on a whim,” Arrieta reports. “Hiring out through a third party also squelches organizing efforts. Temp workers often work side-by-side with permanent, direct-hire employees, creating a divided ‘two-tier’ workforce that fails to find a common cause.”

“Workers in this industry have a tremendous amount of power,” says UE’s Mark Meinster. “And now they’re doing things together to stop these abuses.” ■

Independence and ‘Catastrophe’?

IN A COUNTRY rooted in the Zionist narrative of how Israel was created, the organization Zochrot (Hebrew for “remembering”) says to its adversaries what the black nurse in *Angels in America* says to the dying Roy Cohn: “I am your negation.”

Founded in 2002 by activists, mostly Israeli Jews but a few from Palestinian political party Fatah, Zochrot is rooted in memory: the memory of the “Nakba,” Arabic for ‘catastrophe’, and how Palestinians refer to the creation of Israel on their land.

Zochrot tries to democratize memory. Each year on Israeli Independence Day, it holds its Nakba Day rally in Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, where a monument to the Holocaust stands. In that square in 2005, it unveiled its Nakba Map, which restores the locations of Palestinian villages destroyed during the ‘47 War of Independence and afterwards.

“The Jews in Israel,” says Eitan Bronstein, the director of Zochrot, “know almost nothing about the Nakba.” That must change, he says, if “our responsibility for taking part in the Nakba” is to be understood. “In school, when we studied Israel’s War of Independence, we learned



On May 18, young Palestinian men sit in front of a poster marking the 61st anniversary of Nakba. The poster hangs on the wall that divides the West Bank village of Azariya, near Bethlehem.

about Operation Gideon and Operation Danny, which conquered Ramle, but we never learned about who were expelled because of these operations.” Bronstein estimates that 750,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes, and 500 villages and neighborhoods were destroyed.

Zochrot members regularly take groups of Israelis and Palestinians on tours of these villages and neighborhoods, sometimes accompanied by the Palestinians who once lived there. Tour participants are told of the lives and fate of the vanished inhabitants.

Zochrot is known for putting up in signs at the sites of the wiped-out villages with their original Arabic names. “The signs are usually removed after 15 minutes,” says Norma Musih, one of Zochrot’s founders. “At most, two hours.”

Early in 2004, Zochrot activists were prevented from resurrecting the names of the villages of Yalu and Imwas in Cana Park, a suburb north of Jerusalem. Zochrot took the town to court and in March 2006, the court ruled in its favor. A commemorative sign was posted that read in part: “The villages, Imwas and Yalu, existed in the area of the park until 1967. In the village of Imwas there lived 2,000 residents who now reside in and around Ramallah.”

Musih was both outraged and amused. “Nothing is written about what happened to the residents. It’s as if they just decided one day to move to Ramallah.”

Most Israelis hold Zochrot in contempt for its identification with Nakba. This is especially true of older Israelis who cling to the traditional narrative of how the Jewish state was created. The younger generation, says Bronstein, is more cynical and open to hearing out heretical challenges to cherished beliefs.

While Dan Flesher, of the Israeli-Palestinian blog, Realistic Dove, stresses the importance for the Palestinian side of having their narrative presented unedited to Israelis, he questions Zochrot's interpretation: "I am not sure it is entirely accurate. Each side has its own version. Each side committed atrocities, and were guilty of injustices. The narrative is not a simple one."

This past Nakba Day, *Yediot Aharonot*, Israel's largest newspaper, ran an op-ed piece by a Zochrot member explaining why she doesn't celebrate Israeli Independence Day. Much of the response to the piece was nasty, said Musih. "People wrote: 'You are traitors. You should be jailed.' But we did actually get some very

nice letters sent to our website."

Bronstein was pleased with *Yediot*, but he remains fundamentally at odds with the Israeli press. "They get things twisted. They say we have the Palestinian narrative about the Nakba. It's *our* narrative."

The Knesset is currently considering a weak version of an anti-Nakba Day Law, first proposed last spring by MK Alex Miller of the right-wing Israel Beiteinu Party. Miller called for the criminalization of any observance of Nakba Day. Violators of the law would have faced up to three years imprisonment. The amended law, expected to pass shortly, would result in the denial of government funding for legislators in Israeli Arab towns that organize Nakba Day rallies. Zochrot responded with a statement, saying the legislation reflects the Israeli establishment fears "the inevitable encounter with the Palestinian Nakba, and the understanding that the Nakba is a foundational part of the Israeli identity."

—Robert Hirschfield

Free Speech, for Art's Sake

CHICAGO, IL.—ON NOVEMBER 13, the hordes of holiday season shoppers encountered a sight rarely seen in downtown Chicago: an artist selling art on the sidewalk. Near the entrance to Macy's at the corner of Randolph and State Streets, artist and activist Chris Drew displayed an array of \$1 patches and a prominent "Art for Sale" sign affixed to his bright red poncho. His conspicuous appearance attracted several customers over the course of his two-and-a-half-hour vigil, but most of the attention he received was of a less positive nature. Four police officers stopped to tell him that what he was doing was illegal. One wrote him a ticket.

Today, however, this attention was welcome. Drew knows it's illegal to sell art in most of downtown Chicago and other prohibited districts. As the leader of the Free Speech Artists' Movement

DEAR ITT IDEOLOGIST

Dear ITT Ideologist,

Naturally, our plan at *Law and Order* for the forthcoming 9/11 Manhattan terror trial is to rip it from the headlines, melodramatize it, ballyhoo its network premier, and then rerun it on TNT for the next three centuries. We've got the prosecution part down, but are having trouble dreaming up a doable defense. I am therefore asking you to act as *amicus curiae* in the case.

D. Wolf, New York

Dear Mr. Wolf,

I am happy to be of counsel. Coincidentally, I mastered *corpus juris* by watching 323 episodes of *Law and Order* after inadvertently subscribing to a cable operator that carries only TNT.

I emphasize that I am offering the following argument *advocatus diaboli* rather than out of personal conviction.

I suggest a Blackwater-Bush defense. Defense counsel should argue *a fortiori* that the accused were privately contracted to attack U.S. command and control targets for remuneration (*vis Army Air Corps v. Milo Minderbinder*). Those

actions were taken in accord with the Bush doctrine, which holds that a country may attack any other country that it surmises might do it harm at some future time (*vis Bush v. Iraq*). The contractor claim of sovereignty for the purpose of invoking the Bush Doctrine is as *per stirpes* inheritor of the caliphate (*vis Mohammed v. Infidels*). This is so, whether or not the governor of Alaska was aware of it (*vis Gibson v. Palin*).

Further, defendants should hold that both the Pentagon and World Trade Center qualify as command and control facilities under prevailing U.S. military doctrine. Civilian casualties resulting from these attacks would therefore be considered collateral damage. "Such damage is not unlawful so long as it is not excessive in light of the overall military advantage anticipated from the attack" (USDOD Joint Publication 3-60). Since contractor anticipated that God's wrath would guide its thunderbolts in achieving the greatest



of earthly victories, collateral damage level was acceptable.

Finally, I recommend that you engage Denny Crane from ABC's *Boston Legal* as first defense chair. The twinkle in his eye and his colorful cravats would be a plus in humanizing the defendants.

Should you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact me at the Professor

Irwin Corey Institute for Inchoate Studies at Hudson University.

Dear ITT Ideologist,

I've been hearing a lot about angry atheists lately. Is this something I should get riled about?

M. Huckabee, Little Rock

Dear Governor Huckabee,

Not to worry. Angry atheism, or being mad at something that isn't there, is a harmless form of moper, such as exposing one's self to a blind person.

—Pete Karman