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Don't call the police on poverty

By Lamont Lilly

I arrived at the Durham Co-op Market the morning of Jan. 2, 2017, for coffee and to finish some writing. As I approached the market's front door, a middle-aged Black man standing on the side of the building stopped me and asked for "spare change." Little did he know, I was four days from "pay day" and had absolutely no money. I was living on a credit card for the next four days. I told him I was out of cash and kept walking.

As I entered the sliding glass doors, one of the cashiers asked, "Is that man still out there asking for money?" I said, "Yes, but he's not posing a threat to anyone. He's just standing on the side, asking for spare change." She then informed me that she had already spoken with him once that morning and that the manager had instructed her to call the police.

I said, "Sis, please do not call the police. You call the

police and that man could lose his life just for asking people for 'spare change' this morning." There were customers standing in line, but I was very adamant about not calling the police, because as I shared with her, "That's exactly how Black lives become hashtags."

In reality, she was really just doing her job, as she was told. My job, however, was to speak up for the poor (and possibly, to save that man's life). The last thing we need here in Durham is another Frank Clark or Jesus Huerta [both murdered by police]. I said, "Look, don't call the police. I'll go out there and talk to him." So I did.

I walked out by the dumpster and said, "Yo, bro. They're about to call the police on you. I'm sorry, but you can't stand over here." I suggested he switch location to the convenience store across the street. He said, "Nah, man. I can't."

I apologized to him for not having anything to give, except the 72 cents that was buried among lint in my right

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MUNDO OBRERO WORKERS WORLD

Who we are & what we're fighting for

Hate capitalism? Workers World Party fights for a socialist society — where the wealth is socially owned and production is planned to satisfy human need. This outmoded capitalist system is dragging down workers' living standards while throwing millions out of their jobs. If you're young, you know they're stealing your future. And capitalism is threatening the entire planet with its unplanned, profit-driven stranglehold over the means of production.

Workers built it all — it belongs to society, not to a handful of billionaires! But we need a revolution to make that change. That's why for 58 years WWP has been building a revolutionary party of the working class inside the belly of the beast.

We fight every kind of oppression. Racism, sexism,

degrading people because of their nationality, sexual or gender identity or disabilities — all are tools the ruling class uses to keep us apart. They ruthlessly super-exploit some in order to better exploit us all. WWP builds unity among all workers while supporting the right of self-determination. Fighting oppression is a working-class issue, which is confirmed by the many labor struggles led today by people of color, immigrants and women.

WWP has a long history of militant opposition to imperialist wars. The billionaire rulers are bent on turning back the clock to the bad old days before socialist revolutions and national liberation struggles liberated territory from their grip. We've been in the streets to oppose every one of imperialism's wars and aggressions. □

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Court rules: ‘Give Mumia hep C Cure’

By Joe Piette

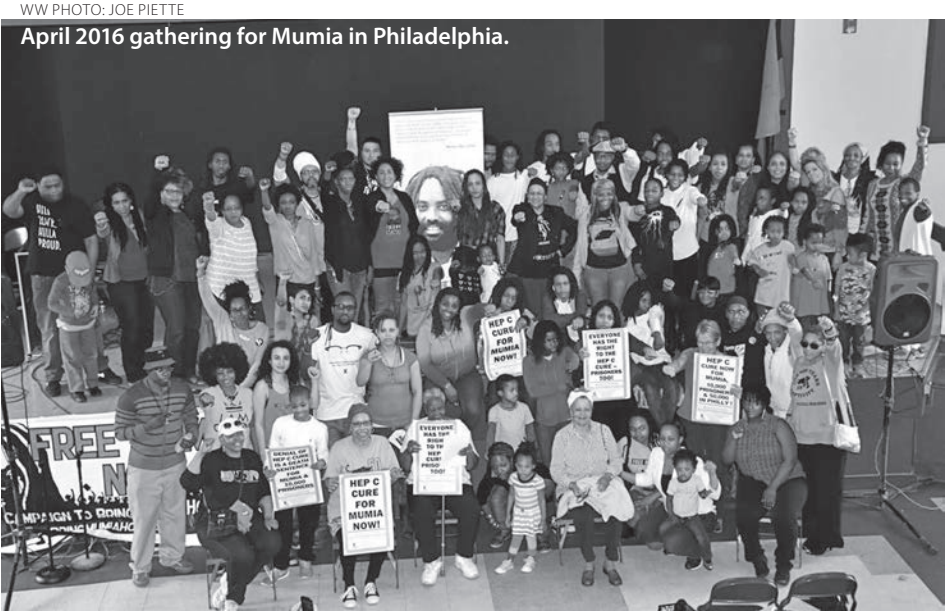
Federal District Court Judge Robert Mariani has ordered the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) to treat political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal within 21 days with direct-acting antiviral medications for his hepatitis C infection.

The unprecedented decision was announced Jan. 3 after a two-year-long campaign by community, health care and prison activists to force the state to treat Abu-Jamal and up to 7,000 other prisoners infected with the deadly virus. Even as supporters celebrated the legal victory, they began preparing a movement to see that the order is enforced.

“This is the first case in the country in which a federal court has ordered prison officials to provide an incarcerated patient with the new [hep C] medications that came on the market in 2013,” attorney Robert Boyle said in an Abolitionist Law Center (ALC) media release Jan. 3.

The Abu-Jamal vs. Wetzel et al. court decision stems from three days of evidentiary hearings in Scranton, Pa., in December 2015. Bret Grote of the Pittsburgh ALC and New York City attorney Robert J. Boyle represented Abu-Jamal before a courtroom packed with supporters from Philadelphia; New York; Pittsburgh; Washington, D.C.; and North Carolina.

On Aug. 31, 2016, Mariani ruled it was unconstitutional for the DOC to refuse to give hep C-infected prisoners medicines boasting a 95 percent cure rate. However, Judge Mariani refused to order the state to treat Mumia because of a technicality: the DOC’s Hepatitis C Committee members were not specifically named in the lawsuit. Bret Grote refiled the lawsuit naming the individual members of the committee on Sept. 30.



In response, Judge Mariani ruled Jan. 3, 2017, that the Pennsylvania DOC has an obligation under the U.S. Constitution to provide adequate medical care to the men and women incarcerated in its jails. In his 44-page decision, Mariani found the DOC was “deliberately indifferent to his (Abu-Jamal’s) serious medical need.” (Abu-Jamal v. Wetzel et al., 3:16-cv-02000-RDM)

Mariani’s decision and separate order requiring treatment compels the DOC to have Abu-Jamal “be seen by a Supervising Physician within 14 days” and that the DOC shall begin the 90-day treatment of direct-acting antiviral medication “no later than 7 days after the Supervising Physician’s determination that there are no contraindications for the administration of DM medications to Plaintiff.”

Health care a right regardless of cost

Under the law, the DOC can appeal that order, or they can also choose not to appeal and to administer the drugs immediately. Activists immediately launched a

new campaign to pressure the DOC to let the decision stand and comply with the ruling.

Pam Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal hit the airwaves at 6:30 a.m. on Jan. 4 on Thera Miling’s WURD 900 am radio show with news of the groundbreaking decision. Attorney Boyle, Pennsylvania state Rep. Vanessa Lowry Brown and Campaign to Bring Mumia Home spokesperson Johanna Fernandez all called in.

Rep. Brown emphasized to listeners that the high price of drugs affects everyone, especially seniors, and prisoners as well. “You have people who are dying because they can’t afford the medication. It’s what we have here in prisons too because the DOC doesn’t want to pay \$90,000 to treat them.” (tinyurl.com/haxklqg)

In a Prison Radio interview on the same day, Abu-Jamal criticized the medical industry for its high prices, saying, “It’s not medicine. It’s business. It’s profits. It’s not caring for the health of the people that you swore to care for.” (tinyurl.com/jhysnb4)

If the DOC does appeal, it’s expected they will focus on the high price of sofosbuvir (Sovaldi) or sofosbuvir-velpatasvir (Harvoni), the new drugs that cure hep C. The DOC claims treating all 7,000 prisoners would cost the prison system \$600 million.

However, a study presented at The Liver Meeting, Nov. 11-15, 2016, in Boston put the actual cost of producing sofosbuvir at only \$62, including a 50 percent profit, yet the current U.S. price is 1,355 times higher. (tinyurl.com/zl97eu4) At this more realistic and justifiable price it would cost Pennsylvania only \$434,000 to treat every infected prisoner.

If state officials are truly opposed to the outrageous pricing, it could take Gilead Sciences, the biopharmaceutical corporation that provides the hep C drugs, to court. It could bar the company from

doing business in the state because of its immoral conduct. It could arrest Gilead executives for criminal price gouging. It should do all these things, but it cannot refuse to treat prisoners because of the drug’s price.

Mariani’s ruling specifically states: “While the court is sensitive to the realities of the budgetary constraints and the difficult decisions prison officials must make, the economics of providing this medication cannot outweigh the Eighth Amendment’s constitutional guarantee of adequate medical care.” (p 44, Abu-Jamal v. Wetzel et al., 3:16-cv-02000-RDM)

DOC appeal would further delay treatment

Boyle pointed out during the WURD interview that the progression of hep C in Mumia’s body will not pause as appeals are fought in the courts. Anyone with the disease has “a significantly higher risk of liver cancer. Once you have liver cancer, these antivirals, which are a great drug, are useless. You have liver cancer.”

Abu-Jamal in Mahanoy Prison, Major Tillery in Frackville Prison and thousands of other prisoners infected with the deadly disease would continue to suffer and inescapably die from lengthy delays as an appeal advances in the court system.

Abu-Jamal spent 29 years on death row after a widely criticized trial which Amnesty International characterized as “in violation of international law and standards governing the imposition of capital punishment.” (tinyurl.com/zfdpbc9)

Mass public pressure led him to being taken off death row in 2012, but he is still serving a life sentence without possibility of parole for killing a white police officer, a crime that he did not commit. The struggle to free him continues, along with the immediate fight for his life.

In 2015, Abu-Jamal was hospitalized after he fell into diabetic shock and was found to have hepatitis C. He continues to suffer from severe itching, diarrhea, scaly skin and difficulty sleeping, despite medication and doctor-prescribed baths.

Mariani’s decision is expected to set a precedent for other prisoners in Pennsylvania and other states. Less than 1 percent of U.S. prisoners are currently being treated for hep C, according to a Health Affairs article entitled “New Hepatitis C Drugs Are Very Costly and Unavailable to Many State Prisoners.” (tinyurl.com/gte27bc)

Organizers are asking supporters to call, email or tweet Secretary John Wetzel, head of the Pennsylvania DOC, at 717-728-2573; 717-728-4109; ra-crapadocsecretary@pa.gov or @johnnewetzel. Demand that the DOC not prolong the suffering of those who have hepatitis C by appealing Judge Mariani’s decision. □

Don’t call the police on poverty

Continued from page 2

front pocket. When I reached out to give him spare change, he said, “Brother, I don’t want to do this. I used to be a working man. I still have my pride, you know. My VA [Veterans Affairs] check doesn’t get here until the 5th. I’m only asking for spare change because this is the only option I have right now. I tried to get a job in there, and other places around here, too. No one’s hiring homeless Black veterans right now.”

How veterans are viewed and treated

I shared with him how I too was homeless at one time -- slept in my car for a week before Camryn and Earnest Smith, thankfully, opened up their home to me while their daughter was away in college. I informed him that I too was a veteran, and someone who had been charged with a felony.

I know exactly how it feels to be denied employment opportunities, even with a college degree. I know exactly how it feels to depend on “favor and goodwill.” I know how it feels to be hungry, too. Like hell! People look at you like you’re “less than human.” Mind you, I was a college graduate who could actually articulate myself and be halfway charming. A lot of folk will feed hungry dogs before they feed hungry people, especially homeless Black people.

I went inside the market and fixed him a warm to-go plate of stewed chicken, beans and rice, cabbage and half a sweet

potato. I asked if he wanted to come inside and sit down with me, but he was worried that he might be recognized. I insisted again, but realized the best thing to do was to respect his concern. I brought the food out, and fought back my tears.

For those who think poor people are “lazy” and do not want to work, please, stop! When you live in poverty, each and every day is “hard work.” The hustle. The grind. The mental and emotional strain, just to eat. Trust me, I can tell you from personal experience, there’s nothing “lazy” about surviving poverty, especially when you’re a descendant of the same people whose free slave labor was responsible for building this empire.

Poor people are not stupid. They’re not criminals. They’re not “welfare queens.” They’re not any of those things. They’re human beings that live in a society where jobs are drying up and opportunities can, sometimes, be nonexistent.

With all of the new “gentrification” money that’s here in Durham now, there has to be something that we can do for poor folk besides criminalizing them. You don’t call the police on someone because they’re poor. You ask them how you can help and be a blessing.

Lamont Lilly was the 2016 Workers World Party vice presidential candidate. In 2015, he was an Indy Week “Citizen Award” winner for his activism and journalism. Follow him on Twitter @LamontLilly.

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead.

Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination Larry Holmes

Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery Sam Marcy

Black Youth: Repression & Resistance LeiLani Dowell

The Struggle for Socialism Is Key Monica Moorehead

Domestic Workers United Demand Passage of a Bill of Rights Imani Henry

Black & Brown Unity: A Pillar of Struggle for Human Rights & Global Justice! Saladin Muhammad

Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior Mumia Abu-Jamal

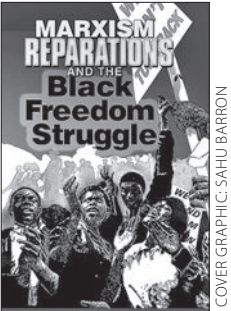
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Haiti Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions Pat Chin

Alabama’s Black Belt: Legacy of Slavery, Sharecropping & Segregation Consuela Lee

Are Conditions Ripe Again Today? Anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion John Parker

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Labor launches new fightback

By Workers World Staff

Workers and community members across the country began the new year in emergency actions to fight a vicious anti-union, anti-people Wall Street offensive at the state and federal levels.

Attacks on poor and working people have escalated sharply in recent years under both Democratic and Republican administrations. But the rich and their political servants are now further emboldened by the racist, anti-union Trump administration. Some of the largest attacks in decades are planned to eviscerate worker protections and social safety nets.

The attacks are sparking both increased resistance from traditional sectors, such as organized labor, and also from new formations such as the Appalachian Workers Alliance, the Kentucky Workers League and the Southern Workers Assembly, which are employing tactics and strategies beyond protest.

These organizations are joined by poor and working people who have participated in numerous battles in recent years in such states as Wisconsin, Michigan, West Virginia and Indiana. They have learned many hard-won practical and ideological lessons about the capitalist state. The lessons will be sorely needed during this period of capitalism at a dead end.

‘People’s lives are at stake’

In a swift and cowardly attack, both houses of the Kentucky Legislature met Jan. 7 and rammed through House Bill 1, which bans requiring a worker to join a union or pay union dues, as a condition of employment. This “right-to-work” (for

less!) law is rooted in racist opposition to equal pay for Black workers during the Jim Crow era of Southern segregation. If signed by the governor, the current bill will make Kentucky the 27th right-to-work-for-less state in the U.S.

Not done with anti-worker attacks, the Kentucky Legislature also passed House Bill 3, repealing a law that requires union-scale “prevailing wage” rates be paid to construction workers on state and local construction projects, including schools and university buildings. The Legislature also voted for Senate Bill 6, prohibiting employers from deducting union dues from workers’ paychecks without a worker’s written permission.

Also passed were two anti-women measures: House Bill 2 requires a woman seeking an abortion to have an ultrasound prior to the procedure, and Senate Bill 5 prohibits abortion after a woman reaches the 20th week of pregnancy, with no exceptions for cases of rape, incest or mental health issues.

Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin has declared his intent to sign all these bills into law. And more reactionary legislation is in the works.

But so is the people’s resistance. Hundreds of union and community members, many traveling great distances, protested inside and outside the state Capitol in subfreezing weather during the Jan. 7 vote. The Kentucky AFL-CIO received solidarity messages from across the country, including from the Wisconsin AFL-CIO.

“The labor movement is needed in Kentucky now, more than ever,” said Kentucky AFL-CIO President Bill Lon-

drigan in a statement. He added that the state AFL-CIO’s purpose is “to improve the lives of working families and bring fairness and dignity to the workplace. No laws written by corporate CEOs, ALEC, the billionaire Koch Brothers, or extreme right-wing politicians will change our mission or weaken our resolve.” ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council, is a “pay-to-play” organization for corporations to buy a place at the table to influence legislation. (ky.aflicio.org)

Besides the Kentucky AFL-CIO, other organizations also mobilized their members statewide for the Frankfort protests. Ashley Kelley, from the Lexington-based Kentucky Workers League, helped organize a delegation. Kelley told Workers World: “People’s lives are at stake. It’s nice to say RTW will create jobs, but you have to be a bit of a psychopath to ignore the fact that RTW drives down wages and helps create low-paying jobs.”

Federal workers fight back

Almost immediately upon being sworn in on Jan. 5, the new Republican-majority U.S. Congress declared war on federal workers by announcing plans for the Promote Accountability and Government Efficiency (PAGE) Act. If passed, this racist austerity act would wipe out decades of hard-won gains by federal workers and their communities, affecting people of color, women and LGBTQ people the most severely.

In an email to all members, the American Federation of Government Employ-

ees wrote:

- The bill completely changes the federal pay system, and prohibits all pay raises — including annual pay raises — unless you get a 4 or 5 out of 5 performance rating.
- The bill would make all new federal workers “at will,” meaning you can be fired without explanation.
- It would allow immediate suspension for current workers for performance or conduct and only ten days for appeal.
- It would eliminate official time, so that union representatives can no longer work to protect your pay, your benefits or your job during the work day.
- It would allow an agency inspector general to haunt you even after you’ve retired. (afge.org)

AFGE and other unions immediately began plans to fight and defeat this proposed act. The Jan. 5 Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO email newsletter details a series of labor protests Jan. 13 to Jan. 21 and states: “Local labor activists, staffers and allies gathered Jan. 4 to discuss the upcoming inaugural events and labor’s mobilization plans. A primary focus was how to bring working people and unions together and how to use these upcoming events to engage and motivate union and community members, with a goal of building labor’s ability to mobilize after the inauguration.” (dclabor.org) □



PHOTO: KENTUCKY WORKERS LEAGUE

Kentucky Workers League at protest of right-to-work-for-less laws in Frankfort, Jan. 7.

Solidarity with locked-out Honeywell workers

By Martha Grevatt
South Bend, Ind.

On Jan. 5, autoworkers from Detroit and Chicago traveled to South Bend, Ind., to show solidarity with Honeywell workers who have been locked out by the Honeywell bosses since May 9.

The workers attended United Auto Workers Local 9’s two monthly membership meetings, held at different times to accommodate everyone’s picketing schedule. Between meetings, members of UAW Locals 22, 140, 551, 600, 869, 909 and 1700 walked the picket line in the bitter cold. The solidarity delegation was organized by Autoworker Caravan.

On May 9, with no advance notice, over 300 Honeywell workers in South Bend and about 50 workers in Green Island, N.Y., were escorted out of their plants in the early morning hours and locked out. This act of corporate terror occurred two days after workers in these two former Bendix brake plants overwhelmingly rejected a contract that tore up 80 years of hard-fought gains.

In November, the company tried to shove the same offer down the workers’ throats again. Local 9 members were now weeks away from running out of unemployment benefits but an overwhelming majority voted “no.” They would not accept the runaway health care costs that would eat away at their paychecks and effectively reduce the hourly rate for the lowest paid to below \$15. An attack on seniority rights was one of several other big issues. The membership suspended the local’s president after he tried to convince the workers to vote “yes.”



Martha Grevatt and locked-out Honeywell workers.

Workers are angry that executives and shareholders, themselves rolling in dough, would deny the basic right to health care. Honeywell is a major defense and aerospace supplier with billions of dollars in Pentagon contracts and over 65 plants worldwide. The company, number 75 on the Fortune 500 list, made almost \$5 billion in profits in 2015. CEO David Cote was rewarded with over \$25 million in salary and other compensation. “Never has a company that soars in profit descended so swiftly and calculatingly for more profit on the backs of its longtime loyal union workers,” UAW Vice President Jimmy Settles wrote in a Detroit News op-ed piece.

Workers spoke at length about their uphill battle at the Jan. 5 meetings. “All you have left in this contract is wages,” Vice President Todd Treder explained. “If we take this now, what do you think they’ll be coming after next time? Your wages.” The company wanted another vote on the same bad offer right before Christmas. The local leadership refused.

“We are ground zero,” one of the members commented. Honeywell workers, the only UAW members currently locked out, are fighting for the union’s future. The UAW International, along with Region 2B, which includes Indiana, needs to mobilize labor and community solidarity. Workers at the meetings expressed frustration with the bureaucracy.

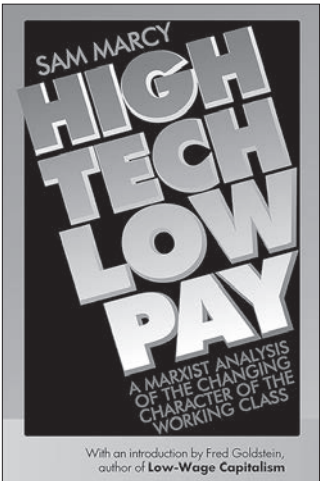
Local 9 thanked Autoworker Caravan as well as Local 551 from the Chicago Ford plant for its consistent solidarity. “Fundraising is important,” a Chrysler worker commented. “When they are trying to starve you out a full pantry is a weapon.”

Members of UAW Local 9 are proud of their struggle legacy. The self-published book, “We of Bendix Local No. 9,” explains the critical role Local 9 played in

U.S. labor history. The Nov. 17-23 Bendix sit-down in 1936 was the first for the UAW. “Order and discipline were maintained within the plant, members fed, families in distress were helped, amateur shows put on, parades, religious services, and an agreement for settlement was finally reached. ... Bendix Local 9 had won a tremendous victory!” Bendix dissolved the company union and recognized the UAW. This paved the way for victories at General Motors, Chrysler and others.

Over the years, Local 9 fought many battles and won many gains. In the early years, the union fought to get women paid the same hourly rate for the same exact job as men. Today, Local 9 is just as united in its fight for health care and contract justice.

Martha Grevatt, a 29-year UAW Chrysler worker, was part of the Honeywell solidarity delegation.



Capitalism at a Dead End

Job destruction, overproduction and crisis in the high-tech era

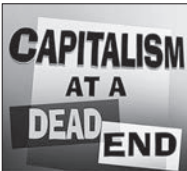
For more information on these books and other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to www.LowWageCapitalism.com

High Tech, Low Pay

A Marxist Analysis of the Changing Character of the Working Class

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Big Pharma prices soar, Part 2

Abundant gov’t investigations, but no end to crisis

By **Betsey Piette**

Lifesaving medications, including Harvoni which can cure hepatitis C, are often developed through taxpayer-funded research. But they are priced out of reach for most of the people who need them. There are no laws or other restrictions to stop pharmaceutical companies from charging whatever they can get away with. And they count on Medicaid and Medicare to pick up the bill.

While the December 2016 findings of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging should clearly be grounds to indict the CEOs of pharmaceutical companies responsible for price gouging, the odds are against this ever happening. (For names of offending companies, see Part 1 in Jan. 5 WW.)

Since 1959 the U.S. Congress has held over 50 separate hearings to investigate the pharmaceutical industry. All have reached pretty much the same conclusion: Pharmaceutical companies are maximizing their profits at the expense of the public.

Despite all these hearings, at who

knows what cost, Congress has yet to pass any legislation that would restrict pharmaceutical companies from charging whatever they want. Nonetheless, the hearings go on and on.

In 2014 the Senate Subcommittee on Primary Health and Aging held a hearing to investigate steep and unexpected price hikes on some generic drugs. But the cost of many generic drugs has continued to skyrocket.

In 2015 the U.S. Congress held hearings to investigate Gilead Sciences for raising the cost of drugs, including Harvoni. The investigation concluded that the only explanation for the high costs was the company’s greed: Gilead was charging as much as it could get away with for the drug because it could.

Early in 2016 the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform called Mylan CEO Heather Bresch to testify after the outrageous rise in the price of the lifesaving EpiPen. While Mylan has now lowered the cost, it still remains significantly higher than what is charged outside the U.S.

In December 2016, the U.S. Justice

Department brought criminal charges against two pharmaceutical executives for conspiring with other drug makers to fix generic drug prices. The DOJ charged former pharmaceutical executives Jeffrey A. Glazer and Jason T. Malek with colluding over the course of seven years with “unnamed brand-name corporations and individuals” to fix prices and rig bids on drugs used to treat bacterial infections, acne and diabetes.

Six pharmaceutical companies are currently under investigation for conspiring to fix prices of generic medicines under a civil action filed by 20 states. News of these investigations sent pharmaceutical stocks tumbling, but odds are it’s a temporary setback.

U.S. gov’t policies promote higher drug prices

When the House Committee on Oversight and Government attempted to question Martin Shkreli in 2015 over the dramatic price increase of Daraprim, he refused to answer any questions other than explaining how to pronounce his name. After repeatedly taking the Fifth Amendment against self-incrimination, Shkreli later expressed his disdain for the process in a Twitter post: “Hard to accept that these imbeciles represent the people in our government.”

While his contempt of Congress comes from the point of view of people in the billionaire class that Congress actually protects, in a way Shkreli underscored an important problem: The U.S. remains the only developed country with no real oversight to restrict what drug companies can charge the public.

Prescription drugs can be found at lower prices — outside the U.S. In Egypt Harvoni costs \$10 per pill. Daraprim can still be purchased in Britain for 66 cents a pill and costs even less in India. An EpiPen two-pack can be purchased at a pharmacy in Canada for \$145 and in Britain for \$69. If you didn’t live in the U.S., you could buy all these drugs and more

from other countries for far less.

However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration makes it very difficult for individuals to import prescription drugs for personal use unless the drug is for a serious condition and not available in the U.S. Even then, no more than a three-month supply can be imported.

Congress passed the Prescription Drug Marketing Act (PDMA) in 1987 prohibiting anyone other than U.S. pharmaceutical manufacturers from importing prescription drugs. Some states have recently required doctors to electronically send prescriptions to pharmacies instead of giving written prescriptions to patients, making it harder for them to seek lower prices.

Profits before people remains the governing principle that dictates U.S. policies. The U.S. is the only country that allows pharmaceutical manufacturers to set drug prices with no limitations.

As of this writing, one of two people being vetted as the next Food and Drug Administration commissioner is Jim O’Neill, a managing director at Mithril Capital Management, run by one of Donald Trump’s billionaire donors and advisors. O’Neill has suggested that the FDA let drug companies put products on the market before proving they work. They just have to be “safe” before being sold. O’Neill’s take on new drugs: “Let’s prove efficacy after they’ve been legalized.”

This is after passage of the 21st Century Cures Act under the Obama administration, which has already undermined patient safety by requiring less restrictive testing before drugs are marketed.

Whether Trump appoints O’Neill or another billionaire, it’s clear that the end game won’t be to improve conditions for working and poor people. Untested and potentially unsafe new drugs are not the solution to the health crisis caused by exorbitant prices. The prescription called for is to eliminate the capitalist profit drive behind this crucial industry. □

‘The U.S. Mail is not for sale!’

Union victory over privatization

Citizens Labor United for Postal Justice contingent protest at a Staples in New York City in 2014, with People’s Power Assembly members.



By **Dave Welsh**

Five years ago the Postmaster General began a series of moves aimed at the step-by-step privatization of the Postal Service, the country’s largest unionized employer. One such action was a 2013 program to farm out postal window services to so-called “postal counters” at 500-plus Staples office supply stores.

The American Postal Workers Union swung into action with an ambitious campaign to beat back the Staples challenge. The APWU used many strategies, from a nationwide boycott, internet organizing and mass demonstrations at Staples stores to legal actions, USPS Inspector General investigations and National Labor Review Board appeals.

Union activists organized a mailing of 100,000 postcards to the company CEO, attended stockholders’ meetings and intervened to help scuttle Staples’ proposed \$5.5 billion merger with Office Depot. The two biggest teachers unions, AFT and NEA, acting in solidarity with the postal workers, saw to it that Staples’ substantial revenue from the sale of school supplies suffered a drastic cut.

The Postal Service informed the union on Jan. 5 that its scab partnership deal with Staples was finished, effective the end of February.

The union, in its victory statement, an-

nounced that the Staples boycott was over and that “the U.S. Mail is not for sale!”

“This is a big win,” said APWU President Mark Dimondstein. “Staples is out of the mail business. This is also a big win for those who care about their neighborhood post office, and for all those who think that workers should earn a fair living wage with decent health care and a pension, rather than the Staples’ model of minimum wage, part-time hours and no benefits.” (Daily 202 Newsletter, apwu.org)

“If Staples was going to take our work and jobs for their private profit, we were going to hit back and affect their bottom line,” Dimondstein said. He added that not only is this a victory over Staples, but it will affect USPS plans to privatize retail services using other corporations. “Those companies,” he noted, “have largely backed-off and gotten the message — mess with postal workers and our customers and you will have to tangle with the APWU family.”

Dimondstein thanked the many Stop Staples activists who worked day-in and day-out to see this struggle through for “a job well-done,” adding, “This victory helps strengthen and steel us for the battles ahead.”

Welsh is a retired letter carrier with the Postal Service in California. This article also appeared in the Voice of the Golden Gate Letter Carriers.



By **Tom Michalak**
Detroit

While the political basis for fascist activity has long existed within the imperialist system dominant in the U.S., it has been on the resurgence in recent years. Based in white supremacist ideology and the colonial experience, fascist activity has been on a steady uptick during the presidency of Barack Obama. Now, the election of Donald Trump has given the far right increased boldness and perceived legitimacy.

Arising from a history of intense national oppression and class exploitation going back centuries, the racists and bigots are on the offensive in the public political sphere once again, not seen on such a scale for many decades.

In the face of this reality, communities are organizing. In Detroit, workers of all ages and backgrounds have initiated an effort called the Michigan People’s Defense Network. With the tagline of “Resisting white supremacy and fascism everywhere!” it is a rebuke to potential fascist organizing and racist attacks in southeast Michigan.

New coalition forms to resist fascist attacks

The network’s first meeting was convened in a packed room of 50 or more people on Dec. 10. They pledged to provide material solidarity wherever possible to those who have become or fear becoming victim to fascist violence or aggression. Whether offering escorts, scrubbing racist graffiti off property or simply providing refuge, the People’s Defense Network pledges resistance. Its meetings have been ongoing, with the next set for Feb. 4.

The coalition agrees that all sectors of the working class must be involved in creating a united front as the political and economic crisis deepens and the struggle becomes more intense. Donald Trump and the emergence of the so-called “alt-right” are symptoms of this crisis and must be met with resistance.

Similar groups have been forming across the country, and the struggle is intensifying around the globe. Building solidarity and people’s power is the answer to this right-wing offensive.

For more information, contact peoplesdefensenetwork.mi@gmail.com and facebook.com/MichiganPeoplesDefenseNetwork. □

Reproductive justice takes on the Trump-Pence agenda

By Sue Davis

Organizing for the Women’s March on Washington on Jan. 21 has been deep and massive. As of this writing, over 150 “partners” are listed on womensmarch.com. Local marches are planned in multiple cities in 48 states and 26 countries. There is at least one march on every continent, with many in Europe and some in Central and South America.

After the defeat of a woman running for U.S. president by a man who boasted of his coarse sexism and blatant misogyny, many women felt compelled to assert their rights. While the J21 march theme is very general — affirming women’s human rights — the diversity of issues represented by march partners reflects the broad scope of religious, educational, health, social justice, legal and economic action groups in this country.

Reproductive justice under severe attack

Significant J21 partners are the Center for Reproductive Rights, Naral Pro-Choice America and Planned Parenthood. All are particularly concerned with attacks on reproductive justice that began as soon as the 115th Congress convened. House Speaker Paul Ryan announced on Jan. 5 that the goal of defunding Planned Parenthood was part of the impending budget bill, which would attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act. No replacement program for the ACA, also known as Obamacare, has been proposed.

Planned Parenthood has been targeted by the right wing because it is a national provider of abortions, though there has been no federal funding for abortions since the Hyde Amendment passed in 1976. Meanwhile, Planned Parenthood provides 2.5 million women and men with a variety of reproductive health care services annually, including birth control and cancer screenings as well as tests for sexually transmitted diseases.

Those who oppose legal, safe, accessible abortion make defunding Planned

Parenthood sound deceptively easy. They would just cut funding for Medicaid reimbursements. According to Planned Parenthood, about 75 percent of the \$553 million it received in federal reimbursements in 2014 was through Medicaid; two-thirds of its patients rely on Medicaid for health care. (Time, Jan. 7)

In fact, what defunding the organization means in human costs is that the poorest of poor women and men would have to pay out of pocket, look elsewhere for services or go without. Mostly affected would be poor women, women of color, youth, immigrants, women with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence and rural residents — those who rely on Planned Parenthood for essential health care.

There are no alternatives to Planned Parenthood. Existing city health centers are unequipped to give such reproductive health care. Last year, when anti-abortion zealots gave Congress a list of alternative providers of reproductive health care, a quick survey exposed the list as a sham. Podiatrists, optometrists and the Salvation Army are not adequate providers.

Responding to the defunding threat in Time magazine, Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood, was quoted as saying, “You can’t completely end a public health care system in America and not think about what the impact will be on the folks who have least access to care.” Judith Solomon, vice president for health policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, added that defunding Medicaid support for Planned Parenthood would dismantle “decades of work to ensure that low-income women have ready access to family planning.”

Repercussions of repealing the ACA

One reason the right wing can’t wait to get rid of the ACA is that its coverage subsidizes all costs of contraceptives. This created havoc after some companies raised “religious objections” to covering birth control. In 2014, the Supreme Court ruled in their favor. But a work-around re-

sulted, and the ACA still does not require payment for contraceptives — a real bonus for millions of women.

Without such coverage, many unplanned pregnancies would occur, leading to increased abortions, which have been declining. The decrease is not due to government restrictions on abortions, but to long-term contraceptives. A Guttmacher Institute study noted in March 2016: “The overall rate of unintended pregnancies dropped 18 percent between 2008 and 2011 — its lowest in 30 years.” The study concluded: “These findings have major implications for the U.S. abortion debate as ... they validate that supporting and expanding women’s access to contraceptive services leads to a lower incidence of abortion.”

Another reason the ACA has been targeted is because it provides reproductive health care to all women. But its repeal would immediately cut health care access for 20 million people who gained coverage under it. “Repeal could lead to increases in the number of newly uninsured [U.S.] Americans, the number of people facing difficulties from pre-existing conditions, the size of the federal deficit, and how much money people will have to pay for their health care.” (Politifact, Jan. 5)

Repeal would also remove millions of low-income women from Medicaid, because that program was expanded under the law. ACA is also linked to the Medicare program, and its repeal would drastically increase costs for 57 million seniors and the disabled. According to a Kaiser Foundation brief: “The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has estimated that full repeal of the ACA would increase Medicare spending by \$802 billion from 2016 to 2025 ... by restoring higher payments to health care providers and Medicare Advantage plans. The increase in Medicare spending would likely lead to higher Medicare premiums, deductibles, and cost sharing for beneficiaries.” (kff.org, Dec. 13, 2016)

Another attack on reproductive justice

in the Trump-Pence agenda is to make the Hyde Amendment permanent. But All* Above All, a coalition to overturn the Hyde Amendment led by young people and people of color, launched a new campaign against that on Jan. 3. The “We will be Bold, We won’t be Punished” campaign answers the Trump-Pence plan to shame, bully and punish poor women who have abortions.

The campaign was launched to reinforce an open letter to Trump by 100 members of Congress on Dec. 19, calling for the elimination of the Hyde Amendment. The letter promotes the EACH Woman Act, introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) in 2015, which seeks to lift the ban. “By disrespecting poor women, [anti-abortion] politicians are disrespecting all women — and we will not stand for that,” stated Kierra Johnson, executive director of Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity, in a Jan. 3 A*AA release.

‘Rallying cry for resistance’

Calling the campaign a “rallying cry for resistance,” Destiny Lopez, A*AA co-director, noted in a Jan. 9 release, “There are many reasons to oppose Hyde: because you support abortion rights, because you think poor women shouldn’t be discriminated against, or simply because you don’t think politicians should interfere with our personal decisions by taking away coverage.”

Will women-hating, racist, patronizing patriarch Trump and rabidly right-wing evangelical Pence get the message on Jan. 21? Probably not.

What’s most important is that the march is calling into the streets thousands of women of all nationalities, ages, range of physical abilities, gender expressions and identities. Many will be marching for the first time. Millions of women in the U.S. and worldwide will be inspired by this solidarity and determination. Millions will be energized to continue fighting for women’s social and economic rights — for full women’s liberation. □

A history of resistance at inaugurations

By G. Dunkel

The 1973 counterinaugural demonstration, coming at a sensitive moment in the Vietnam War, was one of many protests that focused on a president’s first day in office. Historically, the first protest at a president’s swearing-in appears to have been led by a group of unemployed workers who attempted to break into the march for Franklin Pierce’s Inauguration in 1853. They were dispersed by the cops and arrested.

The next big counterinaugural protest was at Woodrow Wilson’s first Inaugural in 1913. Demanding the right to vote, 8,000 people, nearly all women, came from all over the country. They paraded on March 3, a day before the March 4 Inauguration. Reactionary men who had come to the District of Columbia early attacked the marchers. Even though the marchers had a permit, cops refused to stop the attacks and joined in the insults. About 100 marchers needed hospital care.

The next inaugural protest was at Nixon’s first inauguration in 1969. There were also major protests at his second. Reagan’s inaugurals were also the target



Women protest at 1913 Woodrow Wilson’s inauguration.

of major protests along with those of the Bushes, both father and son.

1968 election campaign

Earlier, in January 1968, an offensive of the National Liberation Front of Vietnam against the U.S. occupying army — known as the Tet Offensive since it began on Tet, the country’s new year holiday — imposed a major political defeat on the U.S. strategy. Heavy casualties among U.S. troops caused a major change in public opinion. It also deepened opposition to the war among the rank and file within the U.S. military.

The Tet Offensive and the war in general had a big impact on the election cam-

paign, as President Lyndon Johnson stepped back at the end of March, saying he would not run for re-election.

A week after Johnson’s announcement, the assassination of Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and subsequent massive, militant protests took place throughout the country in April. Then, two months later came the assassination of leading Democratic presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy.

There were widespread demonstrations against the Vietnam War, particularly but not exclusively on university and college campuses. Violent confrontations between police and anti-war protesters occurred at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in August, at which this reporter was arrested.

The election was a three-way contest between Republican Richard Nixon, Democratic Vice President Hubert Humphrey and the racist governor of Alabama, George Wallace. Nixon won with only 43 percent of the popular vote.

While the anti-war movement had differences on how to respond on Inauguration Day, a varied, spirited, sometimes satirical, sometimes confrontational series of protests were planned and carried out

during the inauguration period.

Protests on Inauguration Day

The day of Nixon’s inauguration, several hundred people gathered in Franklin Park and were joined by many others during a march from the park to Pennsylvania Avenue, where the inauguration parade was scheduled. Several skirmishes with police along the way resulted in arrests.

Demonstrators gathered in the widest spot along Pennsylvania Avenue, between 14th and 15th streets, where the parade would turn to go to the White House reviewing stand. While waiting for the parade to pass, cops and protesters skirmished, especially when protesters burned U.S. flags that the Boy Scouts were handing out. Another group of 1,000 protesters across Pennsylvania Avenue was less confrontational.

As the presidential limousine approached 12th Street, several smoke bombs were thrown at it. At 14th Street, the official count was twelve hard projectiles and many softer ones such as tomatoes and tin foil.

After the presidential car passed, some of the protesters on the north side of the

Continued on page 8

DR. KING’S LEGACY

Linking struggle at home and abroad relevant today

By Abayomi Azikiwe

When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at Riverside Church in New York City on April 4, 1967, he denounced the escalating U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam.

King, along with Dr. Benjamin Spock, pediatrician and co-chairperson of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, had just led a mass demonstration on March 25 in Chicago. The protest called for then-President Lyndon B. Johnson to enact an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal from Southeast Asia.

Marching with King at the front of the demonstration were Al Raby, of the Chicago Coordinating Committee of Community Organizations; Jack Spiegel, of the United Shoe Workers Union; and Bernard Lee, King’s assistant in the local chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Members of Veterans for Peace in Vietnam also walked alongside the others at the head of the march of thousands of people.

This was the first demonstration that King participated in to protest the war. However, King had expressed his evolving public position in an article published by the Chicago Defender in January 1967. The following month, he delivered an address at an antiwar conference held in Southern California, sponsored by the Nation magazine..

Although SCLC leader King had expressed reservations about the escalating war in Vietnam since early 1965, and even stated his opposition to it, he had refrained from participating in antiwar demonstrations, and had not addressed the military intervention in a comprehensive way. After speaking at Howard University on March 2, 1965, King told the press that the war in Vietnam was accomplishing nothing and negotiations were necessary..

Then at the SCLC national conference in August 1965, King called for a halt to U.S. bombing of North Vietnam and for empowering of the United Nations to negotiate the cessation of hostilities. In his

speech, he said, “What is required is a small first step that may establish a new spirit of mutual confidence ... a step capable of breaking the cycle of mistrust, violence and war.” (King Encyclopedia at Stanford University)

Coretta Scott King, his spouse, was ahead of him on issues related to world peace. She traveled to the Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament conference held in 1962 in Geneva as a Women Strike for Peace delegate. Three years later, she addressed two antiwar demonstrations, one on the Mall in Washington, D.C., and the other at New York City’s Madison Square Garden.

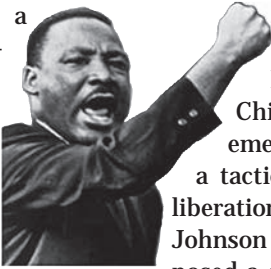
Before the SCLC came out publicly in opposition to the Vietnam War, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee issued a comprehensive statement in January 1966. It correlated the Johnson administration’s failure to guarantee the democratic rights of African Americans with the massive deployment of U.S. troops in Vietnam.

By 1967, demonstrations and rallies against the Vietnam War grew in numbers and militancy. On April 15 of that year, 100,000 people marched in New York from Central Park to the United Nations demanding an end to the war. Drs. King and Spock, along with then-SNCC Chairperson Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), led the demonstration. A protest at the Pentagon was held six months later on Oct. 21, at which there were clashes with police.

Urban rebellions shake up Washington

The growth of the antiwar movement coincided with urban rebellions throughout the U.S. and unrest in the educational sector. Students and youth began calling for the removal of Reserve Officers Training Corps programs from high schools and college campuses and the defunding of military research.

After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the struggle of African-American



people shifted to the implementation of these legislative measures in the U.S. South, North and West. Independent political parties and mass initiatives were established, such as the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, the original Black Panther Party, in an effort to build substantive political power.

State and federal government resistance to independent political action after 1965 sparked urban rebellions in many cities, including New York, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles. The emergence of urban rebellions as a tactic of the struggle for national liberation and equality alarmed the Johnson administration because it posed a direct challenge to its pro-war foreign policy.

With African Americans serving in Vietnam in disproportionate numbers to their population, a successful antiwar movement calling for a rejection of the draft and the desertion of troops from the frontlines would mean a defeat for the U.S. and ensure a victory for the people of Southeast Asia.

King said at the Chicago rally on March 25, 1967, “Poverty, urban problems and social progress generally are ignored when the guns of war become a national obsession. When it is not our security that is at stake, but questionable and vague commitments to reactionary regimes, values disintegrate into foolish and adolescent slogans. ... America is a great nation, ... [b]ut honesty impels me to admit that our power has often made us arrogant.

“We feel that our money can do anything,” continued King. “We arrogantly feel that we have some divine, messianic mission to police the whole world. We are arrogant in not allowing young nations to go through the same growing pains, turbulence and revolution that characterize our history. ... We arm Negro soldiers to kill on foreign battlefields but offer little protection for their relatives from beatings and killings in our own South.” (tinyurl.com/mggp36a)

By late 1967, Dr. King announced that SCLC, in alliance with other organizations from Chicano, Native and poor white communities, would launch a Poor People’s Campaign in Washington, D.C. Thousands would be mobilized to occupy the country’s capital until legislative and administrative actions were taken to end poverty and economic inequality.

Before the Poor People’s Campaign began in May 1968, King went to Memphis to support the strike of 1,300 African-American sanitation workers who were demanding union recognition with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. In March, King called for a general strike in Memphis if the workers didn’t get union recognition.

King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, before the strike was settled. In response to his murder, rebellions erupted in 125 cities, including Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Pittsburgh and Chicago.

National oppression and social injustice today

Since 1968, the problems of national oppression and economic inequality have worsened. Unemployment and poverty remain major obstacles to the full realization of national liberation for African-American and other oppressed communities.

These problems cannot be resolved under capitalism. The greater concentration of wealth among the ruling class mandates a redistribution of resources from the small elite of exploiters to the majority of the working class and oppressed.

This social transformation of U.S. society will not come about through the ruling class’s goodwill. The workers, farmers and oppressed must be mobilized outside the framework of the corporate political system, where both major parties are pillars of capitalism.

These are the challenges which face today’s youth. Consequently, a revolutionary party must be built that can speak and act in the interests of the exploited and oppressed in the U.S — and in solidarity with the peoples of the world. □

Alabama resists racist Cabinet nominee

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Two dozen members of the Alabama NAACP occupied the office of U.S. Sen. Jeff Sessions in Mobile, Ala., on Jan. 3. Protests were also held at other Sessions’ offices in Alabama. The NAACP actions kicked off resistance to the far-right-wing Cabinet proposed by president-elect Donald Trump.

Sessions, the Republican senator nominated to be U.S. attorney general, was rejected for a 1986 federal judgeship when former Justice Department colleagues testified to his racist comments and behavior when serving as U.S. district attorney in Mobile.

His comments included calling the NAACP “un-American,” the Ku Klux Klan “OK” and stating that a white lawyer defending Black clients “betrayed his race.” (New York Times, Jan. 8)

During the occupation, six African-American and white protesters were arrested, including Cornell William Brooks, national NAACP president, who said the occupation was “an act of civil disobedience standing in the tradition of Rosa Parks.”

Bernard Simelton, Alabama NAACP president also arrested, stated the group

would have acted even if Sessions had never made his statements. “He has not been a champion for civil and human rights.”

This is an understatement about the political record and beliefs of Jefferson Beauregard Sessions III, named like his father and grandfather for Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate slavocracy, and P.G.T. Beauregard, a Confederate general.

Heinous segregationist history

Born in Selma, Sessions was educated at then-segregated, all-white Wilcox County High School and all-white Huntingdon College. Wilcox County, with 72 percent African-American population, is still the poorest county in Alabama because of the economic consequences of enslavement and apartheid-like conditions that persist.

Sessions has continued to hold to segregationist patterns, including hostility to the 1965 Voting Rights Act prohibiting racial discrimination at the polls, which he called as “an intrusive piece of legislation.”

In 2013 a Supreme Court decision nixed a core provision requiring Justice Department approval to change election laws in places with discriminatory histories. In the Times article, Sessions called that



“good news ... for the South.” That meant in coded language “good for the white South.”

Sessions’ attack on African-American voting rights was most dramatically revealed in his 1985 prosecution, as U.S. district attorney, of the “Marion Three.” These were Black community activists tried for so-called “ballot-fixing.”

One activist, Albert Turner, had been an adviser to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and one of the Selma marchers attacked by state troopers. Sessions’ case fell apart in trial as voter after voter testified to the activists’ innocence.

Sessions has fought to keep additional state money from going to schools in poor districts. He has supported reviving chain gangs of Alabama prisoners. He has declared same-sex marriage a threat to “American” culture and gone

to court to deny funding to LGBTQ student groups. He revealed his anti-woman bias when he said that Donald Trump’s video-taped boasts of sexual assault were not technically illegal.

Sessions is OK with the Christian nationalist bias of an Alabama judge who illegally posted the Ten Commandments in his courtroom. Sessions is also OK with Trump “building a wall” against Latinx immigration and banning Muslims from entered the U.S.

In 2015, Sessions was chosen as annual Keeper of the Flame by the Center for Security Policy, a Washington, D.C., think tank promoting anti-Muslim conspiracy theories.

Wayne Flynt, professor emeritus in Auburn University’s Department of History, has followed Sessions’ career for decades. Flynt says, “His whole life, [Sessions] has been on the wrong side of every issue.” Senate hearings on nomination of Sessions to supervise “justice” as U.S. Attorney General began Jan. 9. (NY Times, Jan. 9) □

Trump, Russia, the Democrats:

The enemy is at home

By John Catalinotto

As the inauguration of the president-elect approaches, the popular movement that has arisen to oppose his reactionary program is facing a vital political decision. The most important first step for this movement is to reject the attempt to focus the criticism of the new president on the alleged “outside intervention” in the U.S. election.

The question facing anti-racist and anti-war activists who side with the working class is how to work with this new movement to keep it from being diverted by powerful forces within the capitalist system in a pro-militarist direction.

The movement sprung up almost spontaneously in reaction to the unexpected election of Donald Trump. It spans a broad spectrum of political views, including Hillary Clinton supporters on the right and Bernie Sanders’ supporters, migrant and Black Lives Matter activists, unionists and others more to the left.

Had Clinton won, many of these people

might have stayed passive and accepted her presidency. That they are afraid or angry enough now to fight against Trump, however, provides an opportunity that left radical forces must not ignore.

The president-elect’s rhetoric alone encourages racism, misogyny, Islamophobia and immigrant bashing. In alliance with the Republican Congress, he threatens reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, medical care for poor women and poor people in general, public education, Social Security, Medicare and the rights of workers to join labor unions, while his climate-change denials endanger the environment.

Attempt to divert movement and attack Russia

When the Democratic Party leaders, the corporate media and the imperialist spy agencies focus withering attacks on alleged “Russian hacking,” blaming this for Clinton’s loss, this allows the Democrats to avoid confronting the Republicans on these other issues. It is exactly these issues that concern U.S. workers and all op-

pressed people and why they want to fight the new administration tooth and nail.

By blaming Russia for their defeat, the Democratic Party leaders, including Hillary Clinton, divert the movement from their own failures. Released email exposed their sabotage of the more pro-worker Bernie Sanders’ campaign. In the unlikely event that’s why Clinton lost the election, the Democrats are responsible.

But the attacks on Russia are parroted by establishment liberals like Bill Moyers and by spokespeople for groups like Moveon.org that have a role in the fight against Trump. Their anti-Russian statements impose this issue on the new movement.

More revolutionary forces should expose the hypocrisy behind the anti-Russian position and convince the new movement to oppose deploying NATO troops on the Russian border and increasing economic sanctions on Russia. These are pretexts for a new arms race.

Look inside the U.S., not to Russia, to

see why the election is undemocratic. The Electoral College system, which the Democrats haven’t fought, handed the election to Trump, even though Clinton had nearly 3 million more votes.

Then there are voting obstacles the Republicans have thrown up that disenfranchise African-American voters and naturalized U.S. citizens, poor people, prisoners, young people and more who don’t have “official” identification. Even though the Democrats would get most of those votes, they chose not to do battle on those issues. The Democratic leaders know that more poor people’s votes push electoral politics to the left.

Some good signs

Fortunately, not only the revolutionary media — like Workers World — are exposing the anti-Russian offensive. Progressive journalists who have historic credibility in this new movement are also responding.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry, who broke many of the 1980s’ Iran-Contra stories, wrote an article Dec. 13 with the headline “Hypocrisy Behind Russian Election Frenzy.” (tinyurl.com/jyojllx)

Norman Solomon, co-founder of Root-Action.org, wrote an article criticizing progressive media that repeated uncritically what the spy agencies and corporate media shouted. Its headline was “Urgent to Progressives: Stop Fueling the Anti-Russia Frenzy.” (tinyurl.com/hoghc7h)

Still, Democratic Party leaders continue to use the anti-Russian offensive to join Republicans like Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham and all the so-called neocons who provoked the aggression against Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria in the first place. This includes Hillary Clinton.

They threaten to charge Trump with treason. To some this seems a relatively easy way to push him aside and join a dangerous bandwagon that raises the spectre of a nuclear war.

This must be battled within the movement. Not only Trump, but the Democratic establishment promises nothing to those targeted by the new administration. The revolutionary left must be shoulder to shoulder with the people against Trumpism, and bring to all in the new movement the lesson that their fight must stay independent of both capitalist parties.

Not just the Trump forces but Democratic Party leaders are also the foes of the workers and oppressed peoples in the U.S. and in the world. The enemy is at home. □

Long live the whistleblowers!

By Deirdre Griswold

Look behind the drumbeat of attacks on Russia for allegedly causing Trump to be elected and what you find is a sneaky, vicious attempt to defame the courageous whistleblowers who have brought into the light of day some of the nasty secrets of the imperialist political establishment.

Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning. They and others have risked their freedom to make public government documents which prove, among other embarrassments, that there has been a hidden agenda behind the U.S. interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and other places. Manning has been incarcerated, including in solitary confinement, in a military prison where she has attempted suicide twice, all because she sent to Wikileaks hundreds of thousands of Pentagon documents that revealed the true nature of the war in Iraq.

Some of the documents Wikileaks has put online involve emails of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and her staff. For this, Wikileaks director Assange is being accused of colluding with Vladimir Putin. The screaming headlines are a throwback to the Red Scare days — a diversion from how the real backers of Trump were able to put this bigoted and dangerous billionaire in the White House.

Covering up war crimes

Yes, Hillary Clinton has been part of the gang that carries out wars on behalf of big business, all in the name of “national security” and “human rights.” So have thousands of other ambitious politicians, Republicans and Democrats, who are carefully groomed to put a good face on organized slaughter in the “vital interest” of the U.S.

Both George Bushes have been part of the gang. So have Gen. Colin Powell, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger and many, many others. You don’t get to be in the inner circles of the imperialist state without being vetted for your loyalty to the class of billionaires who run this country and for your ability to lie to the people.

Lyndon Johnson was part of that gang when he claimed that a little Vietnamese PT-boat attacked giant U.S. warships in the Gulf of Tonkin. That became the flimsy excuse for escalating a war in which

2.6 million U.S. military personnel, mostly young draftees, were sent into a nightmare that killed almost 4 million Vietnamese, devastating Cambodia and Laos as well. Johnson was dutifully repeating a lie concocted by the foreign policy establishment.

After years of tumultuous mass opposition to the Vietnam War, in 1971 whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, an analyst for the Pentagon, smuggled out reams of documents exposing the lies. For his leak of what came to be called the Pentagon Papers, Ellsberg was charged with conspiracy, espionage and theft of government property. The war was soon over, the Vietnamese had won, and the charges against Ellsberg were eventually dropped. However, the Pentagon kept the documents “classified” for another 40 years, even though they had been published in book form and read by millions.

In the same vein, Secretary of State Colin Powell, earlier a four-star general, went before the U.N. Security Council in 2003 with false claims that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction — replete with ridiculous charts to “prove” it — so the Pentagon could go in and devastate that country in pursuit of profits for the oil monopolies.

Now the FBI, the CIA and the major

corporate news media have joined forces to smear today’s whistleblowers. They want to discredit Wikileaks by claiming, without providing any proof, that Russia was behind its leaks about Clinton, which Assange vehemently denies. As Assange pointed out in a press conference on Jan. 9, Wikileaks began posting the leaked emails before Trump was even the Republican nominee.

At that time, Bernie Sanders was still attracting large crowds of distressed workers all over the country and financing his campaign with a huge number of small donations. It was only after the Democratic Party leaders made sure that not only would Sanders not get the nomination but also that his movement’s demands for economic justice would be iced out of its campaign that the Trump candidacy, with its phony promises of jobs, began picking up steam.

Trump also got a helpful nudge right before the election from FBI Director James Comey, who publicly accused Clinton of endangering national security with her emails. The same FBI is now charging the whistleblowers with helping Trump win, on behalf of Russia. You can’t make this stuff up.

Long live the whistleblowers! Keep the leaks coming! □

History of resistance at inaugurations

Continued from page 6

street tried to get near the reviewing stand and others were chased by the cops as numerous small demonstrations broke out throughout downtown Washington.

The assessment of the large contingent of members of Students for a Democratic Society — one of the leading youth anti-war organizations at the time — who participated in this confrontation was that we had made a major statement that U.S. youth opposed the war and Nixon with such vehemence that we surprised the cops and the government. It was a major success.

Nixon’s second inauguration

Nixon’s Democratic opponent in the 1972 election was George McGovern, a Democratic senator from South Dako-

ta. Considered an anti-war candidate, McGovern had limited support from the Democratic Party.

By 1972, the U.S. troop level in Vietnam had dropped, under Nixon, from 540,000 to less than 100,000. The U.S. was openly negotiating with the Vietnamese for a peace treaty. Wallace had been eliminated from the election when an attempted assassination left him paralyzed from the waist down. Nixon won with over 60 percent of the popular vote and 520 electoral votes to McGovern’s 17.

The United States and Vietnam had engaged in years of diplomacy, which ended in an October 1972 agreement. Elements in U.S. ruling circles resisted this treaty, as it amounted to recognizing U.S. imperialism’s strategic defeat. Beginning in early December 1972, Nixon ordered an

intensive bombing campaign, attempting to force the Vietnamese to accept terms more favorable to Washington.

The anti-war movement—including the National Peace Action Coalition and the Peoples Coalition for Peace and Justice, SDS, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Clergy and Laity Concerned and Youth Against War & Fascism—responded with a series of demonstrations against war and racism, including a protest on Christmas Day 1972 in front of the White House, demanding, “Sign the Treaty Now!”

Some 100,000 people who came to Washington on Jan. 20, 1973, gathered in the National Mall and lined the inauguration route to demand an end to the war and racism and that the treaty be signed. The treaty was signed seven days later in Paris. □

Israeli settlements drive crisis of Zionism

By Joe Catron

A United Nations Security Council resolution condemning illegal Israeli settlements only in the West Bank region of Palestine has sparked a flurry of recriminations between Zionist and world leaders. This has illuminated and deepened fissures within the Israeli settler state, the Zionist movement and imperialist supporters of the Zionist colonial enterprise. Resolution 2334, which passed by a vote of 14-0 on Dec. 23 after a surprising abstention by the United States, found broad support from Palestinians.

Fatah leader and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Mahmoud Abbas called the measure “a slap in the face to Israeli policy.” A statement by Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum welcomed it as a “significant transformation in international positions that support the Palestinian people’s rights.” (maanews.com, hamas.ps)

Similarly, Dawoud Shehab, a spokesman for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement, hailed the resolution as “a Palestinian victory.” The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, while also celebrating it, warned that “Israel and its allies will try to impede implementation of the resolution or call attention to parts of the resolution’s content related to terrorism, violence, and incitement, which can be harmful to the Palestinians.” (news.xinhuanet.com)

Many found the U.S. abstention notable. Palestinian-American author Ramzy Baroud wrote that “the U.S. neither vetoed the resolution nor threatened to use its veto power. Nor did it even seriously lobby, as it often does, to soften the wording in advance.” (arabnews.com, Dec. 27)

In Tel Aviv, the reaction was markedly different.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately launched a broad-



Palestinians protest growing Israeli settlements

side against the Security Council, downgrading Tel Aviv’s diplomatic ties with the twelve world powers that voted for the resolution. (Malaysia and Venezuela already had no formal relations with Israel.) Netanyahu also alleged, “The Obama administration not only failed to protect Israel against this gang-up at the UN, it colluded with it behind the scenes.” (reuters.com, Dec. 24)

Then, only five days after the start of his diplomatic offensive against much of the world, including Israel’s foremost military and economic sponsor in Washington, Netanyahu found himself under investigation on longstanding allegations of bribery and fraud. He has since undergone two rounds of questioning by Israeli police.

‘Most extreme elements of the settler movement’

Many Zionist leaders, linked to 19th- and 20th-century social-democratic trends that dominated the colonial enterprise’s origins, had warned for years of emerging breaches between Israel and its social base in world Zionism, as well as with its imperialist sponsors like the U.S. and the European Union.

Arab territories — in 1967, social-democratic coalitions led by the Labor Party oversaw some of Israel’s bloodiest military operations, including its 2006 offensive against Lebanon and 2008-09 massacre in the Gaza Strip. The two parties’ differences stem rather from the orientation of the Labor Party and its allies toward the international community and its expectations, as opposed to Likud’s embrace of unapologetic bellicosity. Since the signing of the first Oslo Accord in 1993, world powers have pushed Israel to accept even the semblance of a “peace process” that might someday result in a “two-state solution,” or the partition of historic Palestine between its indigenous Palestinians and the Israeli settlers.

For many sponsors of Israel, like the U.S., this would offer them a fig leaf of respectability among Arab and Muslim allies, despite their open support of these countries’ foremost enemy. Now, much of the Zionist movement, which finds itself hemorrhaging support, longs for an end to the protracted crimes it has spent decades defending. But since his last election in 2015, Netanyahu has overseen the most extremist governing coalition in Israeli history, based among fanatical West Bank settlers and dominated by politicians who openly desire ethnic cleansing and genocide of Palestinians. Today, Netanyahu finds himself between two irreconcilable sets of demands. Any steps he can take to reinforce Likud’s support and fend off political challenges, both within his coalition and from the Labor Party and its allies, will further Israel’s international isolation. □

Mexican rebellion vs. high gas prices

By LeiLani Dowell

Protests and rebellions have taken place in at least 22 Mexican states over a 20 percent hike in the cost of gas imposed by President Enrique Peña Nieto at the beginning of the year. Demonstrations have been held throughout the country at gas stations, government buildings, oil refineries, city squares and highways. Gas had previously been subsidized by the Mexican state to prevent high prices at the pump. Peña Nieto’s deregulation scheme, called the “gasolinazo” by protesters, means that gas prices in Mexico will now be set according to international rates.

According to the Times Union: “The change boosted the average price for a liter of premium gasoline to 17.79 pesos (about 90 cents). That makes 4 liters, or about a gallon, equal to nearly as much as Mexico’s just raised minimum wage for a day’s work — 80 pesos (about \$4).” (Jan. 6) In Mexico City, some 20,000 businesses have been shuttered in response to the ongoing uprising. While Mexican officials and mainstream media outlets have attempted to denounce the rebels for looting, it was four police officers in Mexico City who were caught on video filling up their patrol cars with stolen goods. (thedailybeast.com, Jan. 8) Making an implicit link between the austerity measure and the neoliberal attack on immigrant rights, the same article reported that protesters also freed a group of migrants from an immigrant detention center in the state of Chiapas on Jan. 4, and then burned the center down.



PHOTO: TELESUR

Protesters, organized by a student group in the Mexican state of Baja California, converged Jan. 7 on the busy Mexico-U.S. border crossing between Tijuana and San Ysidro, Calif. The action forced officers from U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the California Highway Patrol to divert traffic for nearly four hours. (San Diego Union Tribune, Jan. 7) Peña Nieto begged for understanding on national television on Jan. 5, claiming that the increase was solely the result of an increase in international oil prices. He asked, “What would you have done?” The Jan. 8 New York Times reported some answers posted on social media shortly after Peña Nieto’s speech: “Combat corruption and impunity. Eliminate gasoline vouchers for elected officials. Collect more taxes from multinational corporations. Cut the salaries and benefits of high-level government officials. Sell the presidential plane. Reduce the first lady’s wardrobe spending. Resign.” □

HAITI

Ongoing struggle over stolen election

By G. Dunkel

The Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) declared on Jan. 3 that Jovenel Moïse had won the Nov. 20, 2016, Haitian presidential election. Moïse was the candidate of the Bald Headed Haitian Party (PHTK), founded by former President Michel Martelly. Thousands of people at the call of the mass organization Fanmi Lavalas came out Jan. 4 to protest the CEP’s decision. Their protest was broken up by cops firing tear gas. There have been over 30 massive militant demonstrations in Port-au-Prince against an electoral coup d’état since the election. The statement Fanmi Lavalas issued Jan. 3 on their Facebook page made it clear that Fanmi Lavalas is going to continue to struggle. The statement raises how the votes were counted but doesn’t raise the issue of how the voting itself was conducted. It reads in part: “When we saw how the CEP through the National Electoral Challenges Court (BCEN) chose not to respect article 187 of the electoral decree which allows the contesting parties to observe verification at Vote Tabulation Centers after the BCEN had ordered verification. “When we see the CEP’s conspiracy

through the BCEN not to apply article 158.1, 171.1 of the electoral decree where three quarters of the minutes have not been processed; “When we find that the CEP refuses to respect the democratic principle that is one person one vote; “For all these reasons, the Political Organization Fanmi Lavalas says that it continues to reject this electoral coup, that it does not recognize any results of the CEP until the verifications that should have been carried out as required by the electoral decree are carried out. “Fanmi Lavalas asks all democrats, all peasant associations, workers, students, professionals, women and young people to continue to mobilize against the CEP and all the thieves of their vote. “We will never obey! Long live democracy!” Moïse won the election, according to the CEP, with a total of 590,927 votes. To put this into context, former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide won with 1.6 million votes in 1990 and 2.2 million in 2000. The U.S. and France, which earlier had expressed satisfaction with how the vote was conducted and its outcome, have not said anything publicly on the CEP’s decision. □

Chicago and racist oppression

This is a violent capitalist country. Shootings, beatings, murders occur every day. It is historical fact, beginning with the war against Native people, slavery, the lynchings of African Americans in the South and the brutal treatment of Mexicans in states stolen from that country, that people of color have been — and continue to be — much more likely to be attacked and killed by whites than the other way around.

Police and racist vigilante killings of Black and Brown people occur so often that a whole movement, Black Lives Matter, has arisen in protest. Police violence has spurred people with cellphones to capture digital proof that so often contradicts and exposes the official versions of these incidents.

It is important to keep this in mind when reacting to the terrible news that four Black youth in Chicago are alleged to have kidnapped and beaten a young white man with mental disabilities while shouting racial insults. The four have been charged with hate crimes.

Blurry parts of a video that purportedly shows the torture of the young man went viral on the internet and have been shown repeatedly on television.

But the same media showed only a passing interest last June when a video was released of two white teens and their mother beating and almost drowning a Black youth at a summer camp near Chicago, while yelling racial slurs. (tinyurl.com/huys88b)

And back in 2012, seven white teens in Chicago were videoed beating and kicking an Asian boy as they robbed him in an alley. While they also yelled racist slurs, the case was not treated as a hate crime. Nor did it get more than passing publicity. (tinyurl.com/z64nwd7)

Is the present case attracting so much attention because the victim, who appar-

ently suffered no permanent injuries, has mental disabilities? That, absolutely, should evoke public sympathy.

But what about similar victims of police killings? A paper issued in March 2016 by the Ruderman Family Foundation reported: “Disability is the missing word in media coverage of police violence. Disabled individuals make up a third to half of all people killed by law enforcement officers.”

Whether they’re white or Black, shouldn’t there be the same concern for people with disabilities who are victims of the police? People who all too often needed medical attention but were shot dead instead?

What stands out in the handling of this case is that Fox News and the rest of the pro-Trump, right-wing media have used it to attack Black Lives Matter, claiming that the movement against police violence has incited “racial hatred” against white people. That’s what is so hypocritical about their so-called concerns.

Because media coverage never names the real “racial hatred” — racism and white supremacy. This bigoted hatred provides the rationale for oppressing and exploiting people of color.

Black Lives Matter is a movement against the specific hatred that is racism, especially what is acted upon by the armed forces of the state. When people of color fight back against the hatred of racism, this is not hatred — it’s self-defense.

We all must fight to end the oppression of racism. One way for white people to join that fight is to support the Black Lives Matter movement.

Oppressed Black and Brown people must be free to determine their own destiny. Only then can genuine feelings of empathy and concern replace the hatred, isolation and anger generated by this oppressive and exploiting racist system.

Global warming, Trump and China

By Deirdre Griswold

The year 2016 just ended was the hottest on record. So was 2015. And 2014 before that. Each year, new world records are being set as a blanket of CO2 in the atmosphere, caused by the burning of fossil fuels, warms the planet even faster than scientists had predicted. In the U.S., the heat last year was surpassed only by the record-breaking year of 2012.

So what are the powers-that-be in the richest country on earth doing about this monumental crisis? Well, they’ve just succeeded in getting one of their right-wing billionaire buddies elected president, and he’s picked a cabinet that abounds in fellow climate deniers — very conveniently, given their connections to the coal and oil industries.

There’s Rex Tillerson, the outgoing chair of ExxonMobil, Trump’s pick for secretary of State. Rick Perry, a former governor of oil-rich Texas, for secretary of Energy. And there’s Scott Pruitt, a former Oklahoma attorney general who has been waging a legal battle against the Environmental Protection Agency’s Clean Power Plan, which would curb greenhouse-gas emissions from coal-fired power plants. What job is Pruitt getting? Of course — the EPA.

Scientists, environmentalists and just people thinking about the future are tearing their hair out. What can they do?

The answer: Fight like hell against this putrid system that is destroying the world. Help build a revolutionary mass movement against capitalism and its evils, from racism, sexism, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer oppression to the exploitation of all workers and the destruction of the environment, all for profit.

China to spend \$360 billion on renewables

It’s instructive to look at what China is doing about climate change. It’s still a developing country, needing to feed and house 1.3 billion people on the same amount of land area as the U.S.

But China’s National Energy Administration announced on Jan. 5 that the country will spend another \$360 billion — more than a third of a trillion dollars — on renewable energy sources like solar and wind by 2020. China is already the largest producer of solar panels in the world.

Environmentalists around the world are hailing this decision, noting that when the Chinese government makes such an announcement, it is not just an empty promise, a political ploy or a wish list. It means that economic planners have already laid the groundwork and figured out the details of how to finance such a huge project and how to develop the infrastructure to deliver the power to where it is needed.

At the same time, China is in the middle of a major campaign to downsize its coal, steel and cement industries. It’s called supply-side structural reform. After several decades of rapid industrialization, China’s growth rate has slowed in recent years.

Industrialization brought serious pollution. And there is now a surplus of housing in some areas, as well as stockpiles of such basic materials as steel and cement. Improvements in technology have also caused some industries to become redundant.

In a capitalist society like the United States, redundancy in the productive forces causes the big investors to just walk away from the problem, leaving a Rust Belt (aka deindustrialization) behind. And some of the “advisers” to China from the capitalist world who push for more market reforms have urged them to do just that, especially because the industries involved are predominantly state-owned enterprises.

What about the miners? The steelworkers? Forget about them. Let the market sort everything out.

But it appears that the Communist Party and the Chinese government are not following such advice. Under supply-side structural reform, redundant industries are being shut down under a plan — yes, their system allows for a comprehensive plan for economic development — in which the full weight of the government insists there be job training and an income for the workers affected until they get other employment. At the same time, the overall plan is creating new industries — like the state investment in solar and wind power, which alone will open up 13 million new jobs.

It is possible to reorganize human life and economic activity to be sustainable on this beautiful, unique planet. But to get there, we must pull down capitalism and build socialism. □

Under capitalism: ‘They don’t really care about us’

By Stephen Millies

Six-year-old Toussaint Birwe was killed by a 14-car State Department convoy that barreled through his hometown of Mokong in the African nation of Cameroon on April 18, 2016.

The motorcade, carrying armed-to-the-teeth Navy SEALs, didn’t even stop. It was carrying that great defender of human rights, Samantha Power, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

Power was in Cameroon as part of U.S. imperialism’s “tilt toward Africa.” In 2014, the Pentagon carried out 674 military operations in that continent. (The Nation, April 15, 2015)

To the generals in the U.S. African Command — Africom — Toussaint Birwe’s death was just “collateral damage.”

The State Department eventually paid Toussaint Birwe’s African family \$1,700, two cows and sacks of flour, rice, salt, sugar and onions in compensation. (New York Times, Dec. 16, 2016)

That’s more than the \$120 that Vietnamese families got when their children were killed by U.S. armed forces. Meanwhile, the Pentagon paid Michelin \$600 for each rubber tree it destroyed during its carpet bombing of Vietnam. (vva.org/about/warhistory.php)

The U.S. government refuses to pay any compensation to the hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese people suffering from Agent Orange, which was sprayed by U.S. planes,

As Michael Jackson’s song pointed out, “They don’t really care about us.”

Donald Trump certainly didn’t care about 200 undocumented Polish immigrant workers who tore down the old Bonwit Teller department store in order to build Trump Tower on Manhattan’s Fifth Avenue.

These workers labored in 12-hour shifts and many were poisoned by asbestos. Hired by a contractor for Trump, they were cheated out of wages and spent nearly 20 years in the courts to get any

justice. (New York Times, June 14, 1998)

“You people”

Rich people have been running over poor children since the days of chariots.

It was a common occurrence in France before the French Revolution. Charles Dickens wrote about it in “A Tale of Two Cities.”

A passage in that book reads: “With a wild rattle and clatter ... the carriage dashed through streets and swept round corners, with women screaming before it, and men clutching each other and clutching children out of its way. ... At last, swooping at a street corner by a fountain, one of its wheels came to a sickening little jolt, and there was a loud cry from a number of voices, and the horses reared and plunged. ...

“What has gone wrong?” said Monsieur, calmly looking out. ...

“Pardon, Monsieur the Marquis!” said a ragged and submissive man, ‘It is a child.’...

“It is extraordinary to me,’ said he, ‘that you people cannot take care of yourselves and your children. One or the other of you is forever in the way. How do I know what injury you have done my horses. See! Give him that.’

“He threw out a gold coin for the valet to pick up, and all the heads craned forward that all the eyes might look down at it as it fell. The tall man called out again with a most unearthly cry, ‘Dead!’”

At least the Marquis was forced to stop. The State Department motorcade didn’t even do that for the African child it killed, although Ambassador Power was compelled to come back later.

It was Ambassador Power who arrogantly asked, “Are you truly incapable of shame?” speaking of Syria, Iran and Russia in the United Nations Security Council after Aleppo was liberated. Mass graves of people tortured to death by U.S.-backed terrorists were found after-

Continued on the next page

Impact of oil glut and a socialist perspective

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan African News Wire

Substantial finds of oil and natural gas resources have been under development along the Indian Ocean coast in East Africa in recent years.

British exploration corporation Tullow Oil and its Canadian partner, Africa Oil, have “discovered” over 600 million barrels of oil in Kenya. Since 2012, at least eight exploitable and viable oil sources have been recorded.

In neighboring Uganda, 6.5 billion barrels of oil deposits have been found since 2008. Tanzania, another East African Community member, harbors about 50.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas resources.

The southern African state of Mozambique — not an EAC member — has also discovered natural gas, with reserves estimated at around 200 billion cubic feet. The combined natural gas resources in Tanzania and Mozambique are among the most lucrative in the world.

Yet today’s overproduction of oil and natural gas resources has driven down prices on the international market. As a result, states which rely on these strategic energy sources have fallen into economic decline. Although some countries in Africa and other regions are described as being in recession, considering the precipitous drop in currency values and debt accumulation, “depression” may be a more accurate description.

In Mozambique, financial speculation centered on these natural resource projects has drawn the attention of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Allegations of impropriety involving financial institutions are providing an opening for further interference in the country’s internal affairs. Mozambique won its independence through a popular revo-

lutionary armed struggle led by the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) against NATO member Portugal in 1975.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Dec. 28: “The [SEC] is investigating the sale of \$850 million in bonds issued by Mozambique. ... The move inserts the U.S. into a widening global investigation of Mozambique’s debt deals, which involved undisclosed loans and military purchases facilitated by [international] banks.”

These developments are taking place amid a recrudescence in the counterrevolutionary war waged by the so-called Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO). This organization grew out of the Portuguese intelligence agency’s counterinsurgency operations aimed at undermining the national liberation struggle which was committed to socialist development in Mozambique.

RENAMO was funded and trained by the then settler-colonial regime of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). After Ian Smith’s Rhodesia fell in 1980, South Africa’s apartheid regime took over RENAMO’s operations. The group sought to destroy Mozambique’s newly liberated state led by the late President Samora Machel.

FRELIMO leader Machel was killed in a plane crash in 1986. Reports suggested the plane was brought down during South African military operations against the encroaching liberation movement of the African National Congress.

RENAMO claims it is fighting for a greater say in Mozambique’s political structures, yet it has operated as a political party since a ceasefire was signed with the FRELIMO government in the early 1990s. The renewed hostilities raise concerns about the future economic and social well-being of the country, a leading member of the regional Southern African Development Community.

Angola: Which way out of the oil crisis?

The Republic of Angola, another former Portuguese colony, won its independence through armed struggle from 1961 to 1975. Its independence was threatened by interventions by the U.S. and the apartheid regime’s South African Defense Forces from 1975 to 1988. Hundreds of thousands of Cuban internationalist volunteers secured the country’s liberation by 1989. This led to freedom for Namibia, a former German colony, and later the downfall of the settler-colonial regime in South Africa.

Angola has been impacted by the petroleum crisis as its revenue largely depends

on oil exports. The country has been the first- or second-largest oil producer in Africa. The ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola remains the dominant political force there.

A Jan. 2 Wall Street Journal article emphasizes the impact of the drop in oil prices on Angola. During this decade’s early years, economic growth was so vibrant that the government even loaned money to its former colonial master, staving off a potential collapse in Portugal. The Journal said gated communities built for a middle class “that never materialized” are mostly empty, and the foreign elite left when the oil-price boom went bust in 2014. Stores “struggle to stock their shelves, as a free-falling local currency and dollar shortages batter imports.”

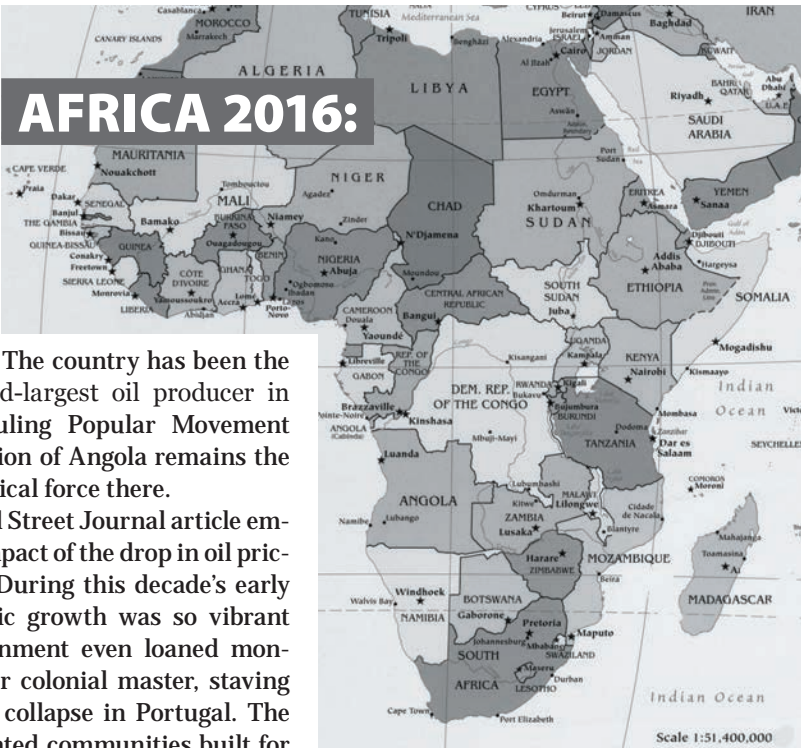
This report discusses the Angolan government’s travails in seeking a way out of this crisis: “The International Monetary Fund expects that Angola’s economy will have zero growth in 2016 ... a disaster for a country whose population of 26 million is growing by 3.2% annually. [The IMF estimates] government debt has jumped to 78% of gross domestic product, from just 41% when oil prices plummeted in 2014.”

Analysts warn about its ability to repay its debts. Since the government abandoned bailout negotiations with the IMF in July, “the central bank has used 18% of its foreign-currency reserves to keep some imports flowing into the country.” Investors warn reserves will run out “if spending continues at this pace.”

Pan-Africanism, socialism and the global crisis

Although there appeared to be a renaissance in African political economy during a supposed “recovery” from the Great Recession in the imperialist states of Western Europe and North America from 2007 to 2010, this growth in regional business activity is proving to be unsustainable. From Egypt and Nigeria to South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the postcolonial nation-states are at a crossroads.

The prospects for foreign direct investment in natural resource development markets have reached a breaking point due to overproduction of oil and gas. The U.S. has pursued a concerted strategy to curtail imports of oil and natural gas — and to utilize domestic production through hydraulic fracking, shale technology and offshore drilling. The ostensible “recovery” in the U.S. has been most-



ly untenable since it is largely based on stock market speculation, tax cuts for the super-rich and the normalization of low-wage employment.

There is a dire need in Africa for continental integration based on socialist planning. The merging of economic projects and political unity provides the only real solution for the perpetual ebbs and flows of global capitalist economic viability.

With the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump, the Pentagon and intelligence apparatus are mounting pressure to continue the renewed Cold War against the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China. Such a policy will have profoundly negative consequences for the African continent.

Fostering socialist development in Africa would require the mass mobilization and organization of the youth, workers and farmers. It would necessitate the disruption of dependence on foreign direct investment as the primary mode of economic growth. The emphasis must be placed on political education with the objective of creating a unified continent under socialist relations of production.

Moreover, the collaboration between the imperialist states and the U.S. Africa Command should be halted. These military joint ventures have further destabilized the continent in Mali, Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria and elsewhere.

A continental military force should be independent of the imperialist states. As Dr. Kwame Nkrumah said over 50 years ago, the creation of an All-African High Command would serve as a defense against neocolonialist intervention — and not a gateway for its proliferation.

2017 will be an important year for the African continent. It is up to youth, workers, popular movements and governmental leaders to decide on the correct path to revolutionary liberation and unification.

□

wards. (CBS, Dec. 26, 2016)

Didn’t these victims have human rights, Ambassador Power?

Never forget Gavin Cato

Another motorcade that “dashed through streets” killed a Black child in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn on Aug. 19, 1991. The caravan was carrying Rabbi Menahem Schneerson, the late head of the right-wing, racist Lubavitch religious cult, and was preceded by a police car.

The last car ran through a red light and struck two Black children, killing seven-year-old Gavin Cato. A volunteer ambulance that arrived didn’t help Cato, but instead took the driver of the car that struck him. (New York Daily News, Aug. 13, 2016)

Schneerson instructed his followers not to rent to people who weren’t Jewish. (Jewish Press, July 20, 1990) In Crown Heights that means not renting to Black people.

Millions of Jewish people are rightfully concerned about neo-Nazi support for Donald Trump. But unlike the great majority of Jewish voters, most Lubavitch followers supported him. (DNA.info, Nov. 16, 2016)

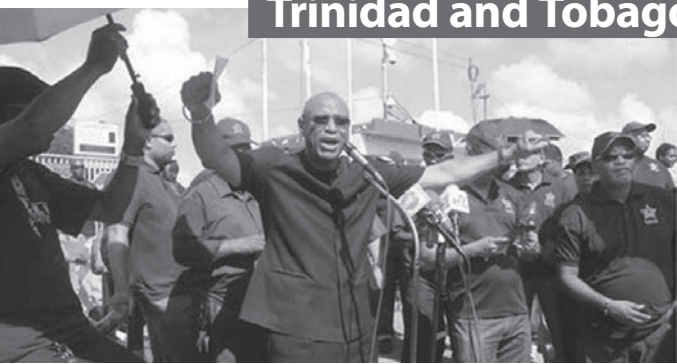
Charles Dickens made sure the fictional Marquis got justice. Dickens wrote that the slain child’s father put a knife through the aristocrat’s heart and left a note reading, “Drive him fast to his tomb.”

We need to drive a stake through capitalism’s putrid heart. Fighting Trump is a start. All out for J20! □

The following statement was posted Jan. 3 on wftucentral.org.

The World Federation of Trade Unions, representing 92 million workers in 126 countries all over the world, expresses its class solidarity with the workers of Trinidad and Tobago State Petroleum Company, Petrotrin, who have decided to go on a strike, defending their right to a wage increase.

As the OWTU [Oilfields Workers’ Trade Union] representatives have pointed out, for the past six years, Petrotrin had offered zero-zero-zero, denying workers of any wage adjustments. Therefore, after 19 hours of negotiations, the employers’ side didn’t show any spirit of



compromise. The Petrotrin workers risk life and limb, working in varying dangerous conditions, to guarantee a reliable supply of fuel to the travelling public; the Trinidad and Tobago people know better than anyone that the country’s econo-

my is based on products made possible by the tireless efforts of these workers. That’s why we call upon the workers and the simple people of the country to stand by the Petrotrin workers, ignoring the employers’ appeals to not struggle.

We once more reiterate our support to the Petrotrin workers and to any form of struggle they decide to follow, underlining that all the wealth belongs to those who produce it. □

Solidarity with oilfields workers

Trinidad and Tobago



Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, 6 de enero. Miles de puertorriqueños celebraron el cumpleaños 74 de Oscar López Rivera.

Los retos que plantea la ofensiva de la derecha en América Latina

Esta es la segunda sección de la exposición presentada por Olmedo Beluche, Analista y autor marxista panameño, profesor de sociología de la Universidad de Panamá y miembro del Polo Democrático. Beluche, hizo su presentación durante un foro titulado “La situación de las Izquierdas en América Latina,” organizado por la Fundación Friedrich Ebert en la ciudad de Panamá el 25 de agosto del 2016.

Parte II

La crisis política es una lucha por el control del ingreso nacional:

El efecto político de esta situación en nuestro continente implica la crisis o “fin de ciclo” de los gobiernos “populistas o progresistas”, que financiaron importantes programas sociales con el “boom” de los precios de las exportaciones de materias primas. La crisis política se manifiesta como una disputa más álgida entre los partidos y las clases sociales por el control del aparato del estado.

El sistema recorta la posibilidad de gobiernos que busquen equilibrios sociales mediante programas de transferencias (subsidios). La “medicina” ordenada desde los centros de mando del capitalismo es más austeridad, por eso se impulsa con todos los medios gobiernos capaces de imponerla a los pueblos, la derecha política.

Aunque haya gobiernos “progresistas” dispuestos a aplicar, así sea parcialmente, los ajustes, como sucedió con el PT brasileño, lo cual le llevó a erosionar su base social de apoyo facilitando el golpe de estado contra Dilma Rousseff, es más eficiente para el sistema que lo hagan gobiernos descarnadamente derechistas. En términos generales, los gobiernos socialdemócratas, progresistas o populistas siempre tienen presiones de sus bases electorales e internas que dificultan la aplicación consecuente de medidas neoliberales.

Para enfrentar crisis de este tipo son más útiles al sistema capitalista gobiernos de derecha. Por lo que, desde los centros de poder económico mundial, se impulsa el vuelco hacia gobiernos de derecha o liberales, ya sea por la vía electoral o mediante golpes de estado más o menos solapados. También a lo interno de los países, las burguesías están menos dispuestas a compartir los réditos de las exportaciones y el ingreso nacional con las clases populares, por ello luchan por el control del aparato del estado para usarlo a su favor en la crisis.

Este es el fenómeno político que se está produciendo en América Latina. Su origen es la propia crisis sistémica del capitalismo.

La derrota electoral del peronismo en Argentina, la creciente inestabilidad en Venezuela y el intento de la oposición de forzar el referendo revocatorio, así como el golpe de estado parlamentario contra la presidente Dilma Rousseff, son las ex-

presiones más claras de la crisis política y la disputa entre las clases sociales por el control de la renta nacional.

No olvidemos que a estos acontecimientos les han precedido los golpes de estado contra presidentes legítimamente electos como Aristide en Haití, Zelaya en Honduras y Lugo en Paraguay.

Otra víctima directa de la ofensiva de la derecha son las instituciones internacionales fundadas o refundadas bajo el liderazgo de Hugo Chávez que buscaban dar un poco más de soberanía y unidad a las naciones latinoamericanas frente al control del imperialismo norteamericano, como: el ALBA, CELAC, Mercosur, etc.

Si en los diez años de buenos precios de las exportaciones, alcanzó para que la burguesía latinoamericana tomara su parte y a la vez se financiaran desde el estado los programas sociales de “transferencias”, ahora hay que cortar y alguien tiene que perder. La burguesía no está dispuesta a ceder su pedazo.

Por ello, la imposición de gobiernos de derecha va acompañada de fuertes medidas neoliberales, de recortes del gasto social y derechos económicos, como lo prueban la gestión de Macri en Argentina y Temer en Brasil.

c. ¿Cuál ha sido el carácter de los gobiernos progresistas o populistas?

Los gobiernos progresistas o populistas latinoamericanos han sido producto de verdaderas revoluciones populares que estallaron hacia los años 90, luego de más de una década de aplicación de duros planes de “ajuste estructural” por gobiernos oligárquicos, neoliberales y obedientes a los dictados del FMI y el Banco Mundial. La superexplotación a que sometieron a los asalariados, la miseria y desempleo a la que llevaron a millones de personas, produjo en algunos países sublevaciones populares.

El liderazgo de Hugo Chávez nació de los dramáticos acontecimientos del “Caracazo” de 1989; el de Evo Morales de la lucha de los cocaleros por defender sus cultivos y la “guerra del agua” contra las privatizaciones; el de Rafael Correa, de movimientos sociales y crisis políticas semejantes. El gobierno de los Kirchner en Argentina no se entiende sin la explosión de 2000 - 2001 producida por “el corralito”.

Los 15 años de gobiernos del PT en Brasil son producto de un ascenso más moderado pero continuado de las luchas obreras, al igual que el retorno al poder del FSLN en Nicaragua, y la victoria del FMLN en El Salvador.

El carácter de esos procesos populares fue esencialmente popular, anti-neoliberal y democrático. Han sido procesos canalizados por la vía electoral, de manera que no rebasaron, hasta ahora, los márgenes de la democracia burguesa y de la propiedad capitalista. Contrario a las revoluciones ocurridas en el siglo XX, desde la rusa hasta la cubana, que

rápida-mente expropiaron a la clase capitalista, los procesos populistas latino-americanos de inicios del siglo XXI, se han mantenido dentro de los márgenes del sistema.

El fallecido presidente Hugo Chávez, que ocupó la vanguardia de este proceso continental, tuvo el mérito de recuperar la aspiración de las masas a una sociedad sin explotadores, el socialismo, en un momento decisivo de la historia humana cuando la “Caída del Muro”, la desaparición de la URSS y el “socialismo de mercado” chino se habían transformado en una victoria política del capitalismo neoliberal.

En una década a inicios del siglo XXI, cuando las fuerzas anticapitalistas reunidas en el Foro Social Mundial de Porto Alegre apenas se atrevían a sugerir que “otro mundo es posible”, por fuera de la globalización capitalista, Hugo Chávez se paró en su tribuna y dijo claramente que ese mundo posible era el “Socialismo del Siglo XXI”. Millones de personas se sintieron referenciadas en esa consigna, que inspiró su lucha. Ese es uno de los grandes aportes de Chávez a la lucha de clases en ese cambio de siglo.

Sin embargo, el “socialismo del siglo XXI” era una fórmula algebraica en la que cada quien entendía lo que quería: unos veían una continuidad con el socialismo soviético de principios del siglo XX, otros una versión latinoamericana de la socialdemocracia, otros una crítica al estalinismo. Sea como sea, el hecho real es que siendo una buena fórmula propagandista, el proceso político venezolano, hasta hoy, no rebasó los límites del capitalismo, la democracia burguesa y la propiedad privada capitalista.

El país donde las nacionalizaciones de empresas avanzaron más fue Venezuela, sin embargo, en ningún momento el peso de la economía estatizada llegó a superar al sector privado. Y las empresas nacionalizadas han sufrido mala administración, conflictos laborales internos e incluso, en algunos casos, corrupción en sus gestores. La banca y el comercio exterior han seguido bajo control de los grandes capitalistas importadores. En Venezuela el estado ha controlado las divisas, pero la burguesía ha tenido la habilidad de usar el control cambiario y el mercado negro del dólar para hacerse con buena parte de la renta petrolera y las reservas de la nación, fugando capitales (se estima en 300 mil millones de dólares) a países como Panamá parte de la riqueza nacional, incluso usándolo para sabotear la economía, acaparar y promover la desestabilización política ^[5].

Sin la nacionalización de la banca y el sistema financiero nacional, sin el control estatal del comercio exterior y sin la nacionalización de la gran industria, es decir, sin elementales medidas realmente socialistas, los gobiernos latinoamericanos en general están a mansalva de la burguesía, del imperialismo y del sabotaje económico, como prueba

reiteradamente el caso de Venezuela.

Esas contradicciones explican sus limitaciones y la dificultad para responder a la ofensiva de las derechas nacionales apoyadas por el imperialismo norteamericano, y alentadas por los grandes medios de comunicación. A lo que se suma la actitud reformista de muchos dirigentes de estos gobiernos progresistas que, afectados por una especie de “cretinismo parlamentario” (Marx), se someten dócilmente a los formalismos de las instituciones burguesas, quieren demostrar que son buenos gestores del capitalismo y, ante todo, temen convocar a las masas a las calles. En este sentido ha sido clara la actuación de los dirigentes del PT brasileño en el marco del golpe contra Dilma, cuyo gobierno se habría defendido mejor con una huelga general que con alegatos en un Senado corrupto.

d. Los programas sociales y algunas nacionalizaciones no son socialismo:

Algunas personas han confundido los programas sociales característicos de esta “década progresista o populista” con socialismo, pero se equivocan. Los programas sociales, las “misiones” o subsidios, no son medidas de tipo socialista, sino medidas redistributivas de estilo nekeynesiano, que se han financiado con los números positivos de las exportaciones de materias primas, principalmente petróleo.

Los programas sociales no se han financiado de la expropiación de la burguesía. Por el contrario, han sido incluso recomendados por los organismos de crédito internacional (FMI, Banco Mundial) para paliar el descontento social producido por la desigualdad impuesta por el neoliberalismo. Los organismos financieros del capitalismo les llaman “transferencias” y han sido ejecutadas incluso por gobiernos de derecha, como el de Martinelli en Panamá.

Las nacionalizaciones por sí mismas tampoco son verdadero socialismo, aunque son grandemente progresivas. Si las nacionalizaciones se convierten en un acto meramente burocrático de estado, en el marco de una economía de mercado, en especial si al final llevan a una gestión corrupta e ineficiente por parte de gerentes impuestos, en todo caso se transforman en un “capitalismo de estado”.

Para que la estatización o nacionalización de la industria adquiera un carácter socialista debe emanar de la auténtica e independiente movilización de los trabajadores, el control obrero de las fábricas y mecanismos ensamblarios democráticos (sóviets). El socialismo no es una medida administrativa, sino una relación social, parafraseando a Marx.

Notas:

^[5] Sutherland, Manuel. “2016: La peor de las crisis económicas, causas, medidas y crónica de una ruina anunciada”. Centro de Investigación y Formación Obrera (CIFO). Caracas, 16 de febrero de 2016. □