



PHOTO: COLIN ASHBY

Blocking New York City traffic to protest ICE deportations. Read more on page 3.

Wave of U.S. terror raids

Stop deporting refugees!

By Teresa Gutierrez

The Obama administration rang in the New Year with a wave of terror against undocumented workers, particularly Central Americans.

In an unprecedented act, the raids particularly targeted children, the first in this country to target minors.

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson announced on Jan. 3 that 121 people had been taken into custody in the states of Georgia, Texas and North Carolina over the New Year’s weekend to await deportation.

He stated: “This past weekend, Immigration and Customs Enforcement [ICE] engaged in concerted, nationwide enforcement operations to take into custody and return at a greater rate adults who entered this country illegally with children. This should come as no surprise. I have said publicly for months that individuals who constitute enforcement priorities, including families and unaccompanied children, will be removed.” (Politico, Jan. 4)

White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest added at a press conference that President Barack Obama supports deportation of those who recently entered the U.S. illegally. Earnest said at the daily briefing for reporters, “Certainly, people should take from this the understanding that the administration is quite serious about enforcing our immigration laws.”

In fact, President Obama has carried out more deportations than any other U.S. president. Since his election, over 2 million workers have been deported.

Raids illegal, inhumane and unprecedented

The response to the raids, not only by longstanding immigrant rights associations and advocates but also by a number of legal entities, was swift and forceful.

The way that the raids were carried out led to an immediate condemnation by advocates, and human rights and legal aid organizations.

ICE agents, according to several news sources, typically arrived in pre-dawn hours at the homes of people with deportation orders. One woman in Dallas told VICE news (Jan. 5) that she and her two sons were asleep in her parents’ home. When her father opened the door, agents burst inside. She said she was wearing very little as she was still in bed. Nonetheless, ICE took her and her two children to a detention center in south Texas to await deportation.

Similar scenes took place in Georgia and North Carolina. Immigration activists report that such raids also occurred in Maryland.

One reason the raids were met with such quick and strong condemnation is the context in which Central American migrants are here and their unique status.

Many of the children and parents who were targeted for deportation faced a rushed and unfair legal process that never gave them their day in court. Legal experts and immigration advocates point out how utterly unfair and illegal it is to target this particular group for deportation.

Michelle Chen writes in the Nation (Jan. 5), “Those slated for deportation have spent months bouncing

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PHOTO: STEVE RHODES

Black and Brown unity march Jan. 6 to demand justice for Mario Woods, executed by San Francisco police. See page 7.



MLK’S LEGACY

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Unforgettable: Natalie Cole (1950-2015)

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

Taken from a Jan. 2 audio column recorded by prisonradio.org.

Her voice, rippling like warm lake water, has been moving through my memory for hours now, ever since I heard of her shocking passing.

How many hours had I enjoyed her playful, enchanting, enthralling alto, contralto, her soprano peaks? Countless. How many times had I stared at her photos, emblazoned on album covers, a beaming smile in a pecan-colored face, caught



Natalie Cole

in a moment of sun-touched beauty, her eyes ablaze like a laughing lioness?

Natalie Cole. “Unforgettable.” ... Yes. But also, unbelievable.

When she, the daughter of the dazzling dark crooner, Nat King Cole, was able to sing a duet with her long-dead father, a thing of magic and beauty was born. Daughter and father, joined across time: “Unforgettable.” It won her a Grammy in 2008, but, more importantly, it won the hearts of millions to hear the two united in song. “This Will Be” and “Our Love” were some of her biggest hits.

Natalie Cole suffered for years from hepatitis C and its side effects. She even had a kidney transplant.

Her remarkable voice will now, like her father’s, echo through time.

Natalie Cole, “Unforgettable Still,” joins the ancestors, after 65 winters in America. □

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If finding a new copy of Workers World in your mailbox or on your computer every week excites you, it’s time you started giving back to WW.

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But printing, mailing and posting the paper 51 weeks a year cost a lot of money. Much more than is covered by our modest \$30 subscription fee or \$1 per issue. We feel strongly that we need to keep the price low so that the vast majority of people can afford it. And all our staff contribute their time, talent and socialist viewpoint to help subsidize the paper and make it so accessible to our readers.

That’s why we appeal to our readers and subscribers for various kinds of financial help. Twice a year, we make an appeal for funds to specifically help subsidize production of WW. Now we’re about to conclude the Fund Drive. We hope you’ll give as generously as you can so WW can continue a new year of struggle on a sound

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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 57 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. □

Contact a Workers World Party branch near you:

National Office
147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
PO Box 18123
Atlanta, GA 30316
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443.221.3775
baltimore@workers.org

Bay Area
1305 Franklin St. #411
Oakland, CA 94612
510.600.5800
bayarea@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.286.6574
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
712 Main St #113B
Buffalo, NY 14202
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
312.229.0161
chicago@workers.org

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202
313.459.0777
detroit@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
804 Old Fayetteville St.
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

Huntington, W. Va.
huntingtonwv@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Lexington, KY
lexington@workers.org

Los Angeles
5278 W Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90019
la@workers.org
323.306.6240

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Pittsburgh
pittsburgh@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
585.436.6458
rochester@workers.org

Rockford, IL
rockford@workers.org

San Diego
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego, CA 92163
sandiego@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Virginia
virginia@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300
Washington, D.C. 20037
dc@workers.org

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Editor: Deirdre Griswold



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Protests denounce ICE raids

By Kris Hamel

When the Washington Post leaked on Dec. 23 that the Barack Obama administration would begin a series of raids by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of Homeland Security, and start deporting some 100,000 people in 2016, immigrant rights groups did not sit back. Protests to the raids, which mostly target migrants from Central America who fled violence in their home countries in the prior year, were immediately in the works. The raids began the first weekend of the new year.

On Dec. 30, a noisy demonstration was held by immigrant families and activists outside the White House. (wusa9.com) On Jan. 6, according to Mission Local, protesters gathered outside the San Francisco ICE headquarters. On Jan. 7, activists protested outside the federal building which houses ICE in Newark, N.J., reported nj.com. Other demonstrations have occurred in Boston; New Haven, Conn.; Homestead, Fla.; and Auburn, Ore. (democracynow.org, Jan. 8)

Following are reports on protests and press conferences from Workers World Party activists.

ICE-free NYC

With arms locked together and shielded with large black piping, heroic immigrant rights activists blocked traffic for nearly an hour outside the ICE offices and immigration court in lower Manhattan. The action was publicized as a noon-time press conference in response to the Obama administration’s authorization of more raids, detentions and deportations of migrants.

Following the press conference, organizers held a short march of 250 people, who were accompanied by the cops. Then, suddenly, another group of mostly immigrant youth activists and migrants, in touch with the march, moved in and shut down one of the largest and busiest thoroughfares in New York City.

Toni Arenstein, from the People’s Power Assembly, told Workers World: “Police were totally unprepared. They really didn’t know what to do. Not only were the people blocking the intersections, but everyone in the area went into the street.”

Protesters prevented the cops from opening up two corners by quickly stretching banners across the street stating their demands: “ICE Free NYC,” “Close Prisons — Open Borders,” “Not

PHOTO: STEVE EBERHARDT



One More Deportation: Cut the Fence” and “Fuck ICE.”

“It was empowering to see people’s response to the action and to see the community come together within a day to speak out against the raids. This is just the first step,” said Claudia Palacios, a PPA organizer who took part in the protest.

Seven protesters were arrested. Organizers outside the police headquarters heard that because of the way the seven were tied together and because they allegedly refused arrest, they were still being kept after 24 hours.

Predawn raids start in Atlanta

Several dozen immigrant women and children, one of them only 4 years old, were seized from homes throughout metro Atlanta by ICE agents in the predawn hours of Jan. 2.

By nightfall, at least 47 refugees from Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador were on a plane to Texas where they were taken to a detention center in preparation for deportation.

On Jan. 7, at a press conference in front of the Atlanta ICE office called by the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, Johanna Gutierrez provided the terrifying details of how her niece and nephew were removed by armed men from her Norcross, Ga., home.

Gutierrez described how agents came barging through the door, claiming they did not need a warrant to enter. Going from room to room, they separated the scared, crying children from the adults. They threatened to arrest her when she sought to comfort and reassure the children.

Gutierrez’s niece, Ana Lizeth Mejía, and her young son had fled Honduras in the summer of 2014 after her brother was killed by gang members. Gutierrez said that her niece wore an ankle monitor and had an upcoming court date on her application for asylum.

The GLAHR office has been inundated with phone calls since the raids took place. Some are relatives trying to find out where their loved ones have been taken. Other immigrants call seeking

PHOTO: JOE BRUSKY



advice, frightened to send their children to school or to open their doors — situations so similar to their fearful lives in the violence-wrought countries from which they had tried to escape.

Wisconsin says #StopTheRaids

Voces de la Frontera and the New Sanctuary Movement in Milwaukee held a protest Jan. 7 at the ICE office there to demand an end to the latest raids and deportations. Participants pledged their

PHOTO: COLIN ASHBY



support of refugee community members and called on ICE to stop the raids.

An upcoming “Know Your Rights” workshop and other resources for community self-defense were announced. The protest was supported by the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association and other labor and community organizations. See vdlf.org and #StopTheRaids.

Toni Arenstein, Dianne Mathiowetz, Lyn Neeley and WW Milwaukee Bureau contributed to this article.

Wave of U.S. terror raids Stop deporting refugees!

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around a legal gauntlet that baffles even attorneys, let alone 7-year-olds who don’t speak English, or young mothers suffering post-traumatic stress.”

The Southern Poverty Law Center immediately filed a Freedom of Information Act request just hours after the raids were announced. They wrote that the raids “raise serious questions about whether federal agents violated constitutional standards or used illegal tactics to detain immigrant families seeking safety.”

The group filed a FOIA request to investigate the legality of the raids and called the actions “simply unconscionable.” They continue, “Our preliminary investigation indicates that ICE and co-operating local law enforcement agencies used coercion and deception as part of the raids in Cobb, DeKalb and Gwinnett counties in Georgia.”

Throughout the country, immigrant groups and advocates responded swiftly and mobilized in defense of their communities. Press rallies, forums and know-your-rights outreach took place in cities throughout Texas, Wisconsin, California, New York and elsewhere.

Immigrants were advised not to open the door without being shown warrants, as ICE agents were knocking on doors and using chicanery and deception to get in. Agents say they are looking for John Doe or Tal Fulano — a person that no one knows in that home — and use that as a pretext to get in and pick up someone else.

Deported back to die

The targeting of migrants from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala in the New Year’s raids is especially unconscionable, as well as racist and criminal, because of the conditions the youth, children and families are being deported back to.

Decades of imperialist intervention in Central America have created unstable social conditions. The so-called U.S. war on drugs served not to stop illegal drugs but to build and expand the drug industry, including the cartels.

This lucrative industry for the banks and the entire drug business means that drugs won’t be stopped until the movement for justice stops them. In the meantime, drug violence soars in Central America and Mexico so the business can carry on.

Central American youth in particular are being returned to their deaths. Many of the migrant families report that they fled Honduras or El Salvador only after family members had already been targeted and often killed by drug lords. Families are fleeing for their lives. One migrant mother told a member of Congress that she could live in poverty but she could not live under conditions of war.

In 2014, more than 100,000 working-class people came across the border fleeing these conditions. Thousands were unaccompanied minors. Young people recounted how they were pressured to join [the so-called gangs] or die.

On Oct. 12 a Guardian newspaper headline read: “U.S. government deporting Central American migrants to their death.” The newspaper’s investigation documented that many of the deportees sent back by the Obama administration had been murdered just days or months after returning to El Salvador, Guatemala or Honduras. The study said that as many as 83 returnees had been killed since 2014. Immigration activists say that is just the tip of the iceberg. Three Honduran men were gunned down just days after being returned home.

The blood of migrants — whether killed by drug violence, attacks by cartels, during travel to the U.S., or losing their lives in the deserts or on the railroad tracks near the border — is on the hands of U.S. imperialism.

Instability in Central America, just as in Mexico, is absolutely and totally due to U.S. imperialist policies. This is why Central American migrants in particular deserve refugee status immediately. And immigrant groups are absolutely correct in demanding an immediate end to the raids and deportations.

Will more raids continue? If they do, the movement will respond with an even greater fightback. □

Detroit autoworkers protest

Despite bitter cold and wind, rank-and-file autoworkers and supporters protested Jan. 10 outside the North American International Auto Show in Detroit. The action was called by the Autoworker Caravan and was supported by members of the Moratorium Now! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs and the National Action Network. AWC attacked the “gigantic profits” of the auto companies, made at the expense of workers in the plants — here and around the world — as well as the environment.

— Report and photo
by Martha Grevatt



‘Arrest Gov. Snyder!’

Behind the poisoning of Flint’s children

By Martha Grevatt

The lead poisoning of children in Flint, Mich., now a national scandal, was entirely preventable.

Lead is poison. People exposed to lead have known this for centuries. According to the Centers for Disease Control, lead exposure can affect nearly every bodily system and no safe blood level in children has been identified. The brain is the organ most vulnerable to lead, particularly in children, whose brains and bodies are not fully developed. The effects of lead on children — most frequently learning, developmental and behavioral disabilities — are well known.

Prevention of lead poisoning, however, is straightforward: Avoid ingesting, inhaling or making skin contact with lead.

For decades, Flint received its water from the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, whose water quality is among the country’s best. In 2014, however, after haggling over what Detroit was charging, the Flint City Council voted to join a new water authority. With its infrastructure not yet built, the decision to unhook from Detroit and get Flint’s water from the highly polluted Flint River was made by Jerry Ambrose, the unelected emergency manager of this majority African-American city.

The pollutants in the Flint River — a result of decades of unchecked chemical dumping by General Motors and other companies — have made the river water highly corrosive. This allowed lead to leach from the aging pipes in Flint’s system. This leaching could have been prevented by adding anti-corrosive chemicals to the water at a cost of roughly \$100 per day. Now, the corrosion of the lead pipes has destroyed the entire infrastructure. Even though the city has reconnected to the Detroit system, the water is still not safe because of the corroded pipes.

Too late for Flint’s children

This switchback to Detroit came too late for Flint’s children. Complaints to authorities about the brownish color and the foul taste and smell of the water, noticed immediately after the switch to the Flint River, were repeatedly ignored. Reports of skin rashes, hair loss and digestive disorders were dismissed.

Bob Bowcock — an associate of environmental activist Erin Brockovich — after studying the situation for no charge,



WW PHOTO: MARTHA GREVATT

recommended the obvious: reconnect to Detroit until the new project is finished. Instead, the emergency manager paid the notorious Veolia Corp. \$40,000 to conduct a study which recommended reducing other unsafe pollutants with chemicals and using filters. Veolia did not address the lead pipe corrosion issue. Now that it will cost well over \$1 billion to replace the corroded pipes, will Veolia emerge with an offer to rebuild the infrastructure in exchange for being allowed to privatize the water department?

LeeAnne Walters, whose son Gavin has lead poisoning, had the water department test her water when her family developed skin rashes after bathing or using the kids’ pool. While no level is considered safe by the federal government, a lead level of 15 parts per billion or higher is deemed cause for concern. The first test measured 100 ppb. A second test a week later showed 400 ppb!

Officials in the state Department of Environmental Quality, appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder, and even the governor himself, repeatedly assured Flint residents the water was safe to drink and bathe with.

Meanwhile GM, after expressing fears that the corrosive water would damage equipment, was allowed to disconnect from Flint city and connect to Flint Township’s water supply, which does not draw from the Flint River.

The people expose the truth

It took an independent effort by community activists, aided by University of Virginia professor and water safety specialist Marc Edwards, pediatrician Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, and Michigan ACLU investigative journalist Curt Guyette, to expose both the toxic lead levels in the water and the lead poisoning already impacting the children.

Edwards used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain the now scandalous email sent by the governor’s chief of staff, Dennis Muchmore, to Snyder back in

July. In it, Muchmore admits “these folks are scared and worried about the health impacts and they are basically getting blown off by us.”

Snyder has apologized and state DEQ head Dan Wyant and spokesperson Brad Wurfel have resigned. After a federal investigation of this horrible crime was announced, Snyder declared a state of emergency.

Efforts to get bottled water and water filters to residents were slow to get under way. Solidarity donations from Detroit water rights activists and the United Auto Workers helped temporarily.

Even when the water is deemed to be safe, many families will still be without service. These households had their water shut off when they fell behind in their bills. Despite being undrinkable, Flint’s water is the most expensive in Michigan and among the most expensive in the country. Residents of the mostly white suburbs of Genesee County pay much less.

Arrest Gov. Snyder!

There are many links in the chain of blame, but the prime suspect is Gov. Snyder.

“I feel like he should be arrested,” said Flint activist Nayyirah Sharif of the Democracy Defense League. “He can take his apology and flush it down the toilet.” More than 60,000 people have signed an online petition by filmmaker and Flint native Michael Moore for Snyder’s arrest.

Over 200 Flint residents and Detroit supporters rallied outside Flint City Hall Jan. 8 for an “Arrest Snyder Road Show” demonstration. The action featured a giant papier mache head of Snyder, with the person wearing the puppet head clad in a prison jumpsuit.

The protest was called by the Flint group “Water You Fighting For,” “We the People of Detroit,” the Detroit People’s Water Board and the Detroit Light Brigade, who carried lighted signs that spelled out “Arrest Snyder 4 Flint Water.” “Water You Fighting For” founder Melis-

sa Mays, who has suffered along with her children, spoke, along with Sharif and Detroit water activists.

Behind the crisis

Public Act 436, passed in 2012, allows the governor to appoint an emergency manager over a city or school district in financial distress. The EM has broad dictatorial powers. Elected city officials have no standing beyond what the EM grants them. This appointed overseer can unilaterally overturn union contracts, sell off city assets, declare bankruptcy and generally make his or her own rules with one exception: Bondholders must be paid. This bankers-first, dictator law was a slightly modified version of Public Act 4, which the voters rejected at the polls.

All but one of the Michigan cities that have had an EM imposed are majority African-American. All of the cities that have been under emergency management have a high poverty rate. Flint’s is 40 percent. (Democracy Now)

Flint, the birthplace of GM, was not always poor. The town grew in the 19th century as a center for carriage building and in the 20th century shifted to automobile manufacturing. People from all over the country and the world flocked to GM’s plants. GM had 10 plants in Flint in 1937, the year of the sit-down strikes, employing most of the population.

The city’s tax base never recovered from the wave of GM plant closings in the 1980s, made famous in Michael Moore’s documentary, “Roger and Me.” Two decades later, Flint, like Detroit, was hit hard by the foreclosure crisis caused by racist predatory lending. Debt service to the banks has been a strain on the city budget.

These are the economic facts behind the toxic cost cutting decisions. This is capitalist austerity at its worst. Snyder has committed a horrific crime and should go to jail. So should the GM bosses and the bankers for their role in the mass poisoning of a population. □

On Roe v. Wade anniversary

By Sue Davis

Roe v. Wade, the landmark Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion in 1973, took a beating in 2015. Yet despite all the attacks limiting access to abortion passed by the states, especially in the last five years, the ruling still will stand, on Jan. 22, its 43rd anniversary, as a testament to the struggle for women’s reproductive rights.

Of nearly 400 anti-abortion bills introduced in the states in 2015 — up from 335 in 2014 — 57 of them were ultimately passed, mostly in southeastern states, according to statistics compiled by the Guttmacher Institute. These included regulation of medication abortions, mandatory waiting periods and parental consent, bans on abortions after 20 weeks’ gestation and all-out bans on the most common method for second-trimester abortions after 14 weeks.

The most devastating attack on wom-

en’s right to access safe, legal abortions took place in Colorado Springs, Colo., on Nov. 27, when Robert Dear murdered three people at a Planned Parenthood clinic and injured nine. (While this and other state and federal attacks on Planned Parenthood were clearly motivated because the organization is the largest provider of abortion services in the U.S., the ongoing attempts by federal and state governments to defund Planned Parenthood were not specifically tied to those services.)

That brings the total to 11 people murdered due to their association with abortion services — the majority physicians, health care professionals and clinic workers. Such domestic terrorism began in 1993.

One possible result of 12 bills restricting abortion in Tennessee is that Anna Yocca attempted to self-induce a miscarriage at 24 weeks with a coat hanger in September and was charged with attempted first degree murder on Dec. 9.

Cherisse Scott, founder and CEO of SisterReach, a reproductive justice group in Memphis, Tenn., told RH Reality Check: “Our greatest fear has come to pass, and it could have been avoided. Women are attempting to self-abort due to restrictive abortion and punitive fetal assault legislation.” (Dec. 14)

Meanwhile, some court rulings affirmed Roe regulations when judges struck down Arkansas’ ban on abortion after 12 weeks, Idaho and North Dakota’s 20-week bans, and Alabama and Wisconsin’s laws requiring abortion providers to secure admitting privileges at a hospital.

The most pro-active move for abortion rights occurred in Congress on July 8, when Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA), along with more than 64 congressional co-sponsors, introduced the EACH Woman Act. The bill would ensure health coverage for abortion for every woman, no matter how much she earns or however she is insured. Backed by 36 national

and state organizations, the campaign initiated by “All* Above All,” a reproductive justice organization run by a multinational group of mostly young women, would effectively overturn the Hyde Amendment. Passed in 1976, Hyde denies Medicaid coverage for abortions for poor women, who are disproportionately women of color, young, immigrants, victims of domestic violence, women with disabilities and those living in rural areas.

Supreme Court to rule on Texas law

Attacks on the right to abortion “could get worse in 2016,” predicted Elizabeth Nash, a Guttmacher Institute state policy analyst. “It does not appear that the pending U.S. Supreme Court case is slowing down abortion opponents.” (Mother Jones, Dec. 30) The court will hear arguments from both sides about the Texas case on March 2. Their decision is expected in late June.

The Supreme Court agreed on Nov. 13

Massive methane leak endangers Los Angeles and environment

WW PHOTO: SCOTT SCHEFFER

By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

A rupture in a 7-inch gas pipe at a well belonging to the Aliso Canyon Natural Gas Facility in Los Angeles has been spewing between 50,000 and 100,000 pounds of methane into the atmosphere each hour since Oct. 23. Roughly equivalent to adding the emissions of a half million cars to the environment, the gas leak has raised California’s methane output by 25 percent.

Residents of the nearby Porter Ranch neighborhood have suffered headaches, vomiting, heart palpitations, shortness of breath and nosebleeds. Nearly 3,000 have evacuated their homes, and 2,000 more are in the process. Two schools have had to close. California Gov. Jerry Brown, after 11 weeks of inaction, has declared a state of emergency, and the Federal Aviation Administration has taken the unusual step of declaring the area a no-fly zone.

When methane rises into the atmosphere, it traps the sun’s heat 25 times as efficiently as carbon dioxide. It is the second-biggest contributor to global warming. This leak has been called the worst environmental accident since the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

Health dangers on top of environmental ones

Gas company officials have dismissed claims of illness and assert that methane, also known as natural gas, is harmless in the atmosphere. The symptoms reported so far are from mercaptan, an additive that emits the smell of rotten eggs and allows people to detect the otherwise undetectable gas. But natural gas also contains benzene, a known carcinogen. Warnings have been issued about prolonged exposure for oil workers, but not enough study has been done to determine what dangers might be posed by exposure to leaks like this one.

Aliso Canyon is the largest methane reservoir in the West and one of the largest in the country. Southern California Gas, which owns and operates the facility, has tried seven times to plug the leak and now says it has to drill two relief wells 8,700 feet below the surface, which will take three to four months.



The company is a de facto monopoly. It owns three other reservoirs in southern California and has no competitors because of a 2003 legal maneuver agreed to by the Public Utilities Commission. It is a subsidiary of Sempra Energy, the largest natural gas utility in the United States and a major force in international markets, with profits of \$11 billion in 2014.

The scope of the disaster was well known by the time of November’s climate conference in Paris. Gov. Brown attended the conference as a climate change crusader, uttering not a word about the Porter Ranch well rupture. Brown’s family has old ties to oil and gas interests, and he inherited a stake in the family business.

The Brown administration has been more than friendly to California’s energy billionaires. In the last few years Brown has accepted \$1.72 million in donations from the energy industry. Two weeks before the Aliso Canyon crisis, he appointed an oil executive to regulate the state’s oil industry. And he has been silent about the fact that his sister, Kathleen Brown, is a paid board member of Sempra Energy, drawing a \$188,000 annual salary.

The federal government leaves regulation of natural gas up to the states. California has virtually no regulations for construction or maintenance of natural gas facilities. The decrepit state of the

reservoir at Aliso Canyon is typical of the state’s dozen reservoirs. Built in 1953 as an oil reservoir, it was converted after 20 years into a natural gas facility and has not been updated since.

Had a safety valve been in place in 2015, it might have relieved some of the pressure and made it possible to plug the leak. But after such a valve broke in 1979, it was removed and bypassed by the company instead of being replaced. No federal or state regulation said it had to be there.

Capitalism is a recipe for environmental crises. The agencies supposed to ensure safety and transparency are a sham and provide high-paying jobs for worthless bureaucrats. Politicians like Jerry Brown depend on corporations for their political fortune.

Sempra Energy will fight tooth and nail to continue making profits regardless of the consequences to health and safety. And it’s not the only one. In southern California many oil wells are situated close to residential neighborhoods.

Grass-roots struggle breaks media silence

Every step forward since the Porter Ranch leak has happened because of grassroots struggle. Activists in both Food and Water Watch and Earthworks created a video, finally shown on the

news, that uses an infrared, time-lapse technique to make visible the gas leaking from the well. FWW has also worked hand in hand with community group Save Porter Ranch to canvass neighborhoods, push for evacuations, organize rallies and generate 1,800 phone complaints about the health symptoms and odor. They also pushed the Air Quality Management Board to hold hearings to consider shutting down the Aliso Canyon facility completely.

On Jan. 9, some 300 people gathered outside the high school where the first hearing was being held. They rallied and then packed the meeting hall. Nalleli Cobo, a 15-year-old student, told the rally: “I lived in South Central in front of an oil site called Allenco whose toxic emissions made us sick. I suffered nosebleeds, headaches, stomach pain, heart palpitations and I developed asthma. I realized my community was sick as well. Porter Ranch and my community have a neighbor that doesn’t belong.”

After a news white-out, the consequences of the Porter Ranch disaster are now being closely followed by the capitalist media, thanks to the pressure of activists. No one knows how many more crises are in the making. Only united struggles by the people and communities most affected by capitalist chaos can ensure that health and safety are top priorities. □

abortion rights spiked in 2015

to hear a suit brought by abortion providers in Texas — Whole Woman’s Health v. Cole — which challenges Texas’ HB 2 law. Two provisions of that law limit access to abortion services. One is that all clinics in the state meet standards for “ambulatory surgical centers,” including regulations concerning buildings, equipment and staffing. The other requires doctors performing abortions to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital.

While Texas officials say these provisions are needed to protect women’s health, providers say they are expensive, unnecessary and intended to put many clinics out of business. In fact, the American Medical Association and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists assert that this provision is “medically unnecessary,” while providers note that running an ASC costs about \$600,000 to \$1 million more than running a facility that met prior standards.

In their case against the restrictions,

which will be argued by the Center for Reproductive Rights, abortion providers state: “A woman in Texas is currently 100 times more likely to die from carrying a pregnancy to term than from having an abortion in a licensed abortion facility.” Providers note abortion complication rates are very low — rarely do they need to admit patients to hospitals.

The 62-page brief that the plaintiffs filed on Dec. 29 on behalf of 5 million women of childbearing age in Texas, stated unequivocally that the requirements are intended to reduce women’s access to legal abortion. “Together, the requirements would close more than 75 percent of Texas abortion facilities and deter new ones from opening. Indeed, more than half of these facilities are currently closed because the admitting privileges requirement is largely in effect. The impact of these closures has been dire, delaying many women — and preventing others — from obtaining a legal abortion. This, in

turn, has led to an increase in abortions later in pregnancy and in illegal abortions.” (msnbc.com, Dec. 30)

On Jan. 5, a dozen Latino/a health and civil rights advocates, representing 2.5 million women of reproductive age in Texas, filed a friend of the court brief supporting the providers’ case. In a press conference that morning, Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, executive director of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, stated that the effects of HB 2 on Latinas are “direct, documented and disproportionate. For many the burdens imposed by HB 2 act as a de facto ban on abortion.”

Lucy Felix, the Texas Latina Advocacy Network senior field coordinator for NLRH, testified during a Fifth Circuit appeal hearing last year, which led to the current case, that the law has “already had a devastating impact on Latinas’ ability to access safe and affordable health care in the Rio Grande Valley. For

immigrants, mothers, low-wage workers and Latinas who are all three, securing an abortion means navigating a state-created obstacle course. If the challenged provisions are not struck down, more clinics will close [only 17 out of 41 are currently open], women will have to wait even longer, and many will face higher costs to access the abortions they need. Those unable to overcome these obstacles will be forced to carry an unwanted pregnancy to term or take matters into their own hands.”

How will the Supreme Court rule? That hinges on the concept of “undue burden,” which Justice Sandra Day O’Connor originated in the 1992 ruling she authored in Planned Parenthood v. Casey. The “undue burden” concept will be discussed in future WW articles.

Davis is a longtime reproductive justice activist and author of the pro-choice novel, “Love Means Second Chances.”

Overflow crowd attends Duka appeal hearings

By Joe Piette
Camden, N.J.

The courtroom was packed. Despite 20 degree Fahrenheit weather, a rally outside the courthouse before the hearing started drew over one hundred loud, sign-carrying supporters. Most of the extensive press coverage before and after the hearings questioned whether the Fort Dix 5 should have been convicted.

But will the pressure from the community be enough to compel the judge to reverse course and rule in favor of justice for three of the defendants?

In 2008, five Muslim men, including three brothers, were entrapped in an FBI sting operation for allegedly plotting to attack the Fort Dix military base in New Jersey. In an atmosphere of Islamophobia fueled by ambitious politicians and sensationalist media headlines, the Duka brothers were convicted for a plot they literally had never heard of before their arrest. Eljvir, Dritan and Shain Duka received life sentences plus 30 years for their disputed role in a government-manufactured “conspiracy” to attack the military base 33 miles from Philadelphia.

The federal government paid two informants hundreds of thousands of dollars to entrap the men, who became known as the Fort Dix 5. Chris Christie, current New Jersey governor and U.S. presidential candidate, in 2008 was the U.S. attorney who prosecuted these defendants.

Eight years later, Islamophobia still pervades the media but opposition to it is more widespread. The Fort Dix Five Support Committee organized the Jan. 6 rally in front of the federal courthouse here. About 20 family members attended the rally and hearings.

Supporters traveled from Texas; New York; Maryland; Washington, D.C.; Pennsylvania; and Maine as well as New Jersey. Organizations present included Witness Against Torture; the National



Supporters rally on Jan. 6.

Coalition to Protect Civil Freedoms; The Aafia Foundation; the Philly Coalition for Racial, Economic And Legal Justice; Project SALAM; the Brandywine Peace Community; and the Catholic Worker Movement. The widespread support at the hearing showed that the Duka brothers are not alone.

Using agent provocateurs, government strategy over the last decade or so is to arrest people whom the FBI suspects “might” commit crimes. The government hopes to obtain convictions before any crimes actually occur. Since Sept. 11, 2001, there have been hundreds of unjustified arrests based on evidence unfairly concocted and/or twisted to convict innocent Muslims. Prosecutors have appealed to irrational fears of Islam — Islamophobia — to gain convictions, often based on the testimony of unethical FBI agent provocateurs or informants. Many more details can be found at projectsalam.org, where a database of these cases is kept.

Hearings limited to one narrow issue

On Dec. 28, 2011, the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit refused to overturn the Dukas’ convictions. The Duka brothers consequently raised seven “ineffective assistance of counsel” claims in what are known as Section 2255 motions. U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler denied six of the motions but surprisingly ruled he

would hold hearings (one for each Duka brother) limited to one issue: whether they had been denied their constitutional right to testify at their own trial. Kugler is the same judge who sentenced the three men to life in prison.

Mohamad Shnewer and Serdar Tartar, who were co-defendants with the Dukas at trial, are also separately pursuing Section 2255 hearings.

Attorneys Robert Boyle, Chad Edgar and Charles Swift represented the Duka brothers in the three separate hearings that day here in Camden. Each Duka brother testified under oath that their conspiracy convictions are flawed because their lawyers in 2008 wouldn’t let them testify at their trial. In explaining why he wanted to testify during the trial, Shain Duka stated, “The jury needed

to hear from us, and we need the truth to come out, especially when you are innocent.” Attorneys Michael Huff, Troy Archie and Michael Riley all denied the charges against them.

Judge Kugler gave the attorneys until Feb. 16 to submit final documents. A decision will be made after that date, probably in March.

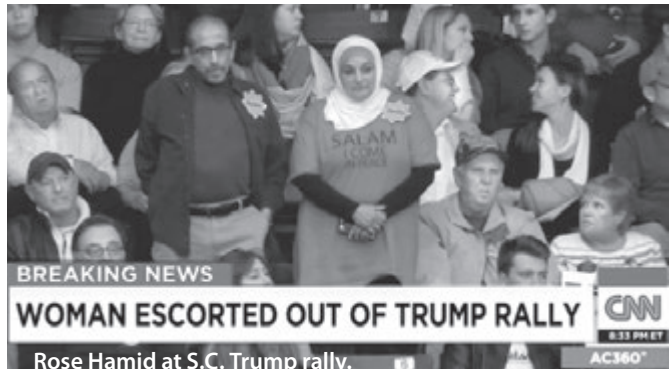
Shain Duka’s attorney, Robert Boyle, told Democracy Now! after the hearings: “Well, we’re hoping that the court rules in our favor on the narrow factual issue as to whether they were unconstitutionally deprived of their right to testify. If the court rules favorably on that, we’ll have another hearing where they will, in more detail, describe what they would have said had they testified at trial. If we prevail on that part of it, we’ll get a new trial.” (tinyurl.com/zoeyety)

No matter what Kugler’s ruling is, the Camden hearings revealed that there is a growing movement of people willing to oppose Islamophobia in all its manifestations, even in politically charged cases where the government falsely claims a terror threat. □

Heroic Muslim woman stands

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Rose Hamid, a 56-year-old flight attendant, rose up against Donald Trump’s Islamophobia at a Rock Hill, S.C., rally on Jan. 8.



Visible behind Trump in media coverage, Hamid wore a white hijab and a turquoise shirt emblazoned with “Salam, I come in peace.”

Hamid silently stood up in protest when Republican presidential candidate Trump made racist insinuations that Syrian refugees fleeing U.S.-instigated war were “terrorists.” Trump supporters began shouting at Hamid to leave, with one person saying, “Do you have a bomb?” She replied, “No. Do you?” (CNN, Jan. 9)

Hamid is president of Muslim Women of



By Dolores Cox
New York

The year 2016 will represent the 35th year of imprisonment of Puerto Rican freedom fighter, Oscar López Rivera. On Jan. 6, he turned 73 years old.

Oscar López was born in Puerto Rico. His family emigrated to the U.S. when he was 9 years old. He was drafted into the U.S. Army and served in Vietnam. Afterwards, he became a community activist and a member of Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional. The FBI persecuted López for five years, and he went underground. He was captured in May 1981 and sentenced to 55 years in prison for “seditious conspiracy” and has been in solitary confinement for most of those years. His release date is July 27, 2027.

Activists in New York City celebrated the birthday and life of Oscar López at the 1199SEIU union headquarters in Manhattan on Jan. 8. The event was high energy in a packed room.

At the beginning of the program, Cuban Mission to the United Nations delegates dropped by to express their support for Oscar López and for Puerto Rico. For the past several years, international sup-

The best birthday present Free Oscar López Rivera!

port for Oscar López has included Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela’s president; Alejandro García Padilla, Puerto Rico’s governor; and Carmen Yulin, San Juan’s mayor.

Present at the celebration were several former political prisoners, who spoke briefly about their imprisonment and what Oscar López represents to them. Lynne Stewart, who received a compassionate medical release from prison on Jan. 1, 2014, described prisons as “death camps” and “hell holes.” She announced that she’s still alive two years after discharge, when authorities had predicted and hoped that she would be dead within six months. “Re-entry gives life,” she said, and added that she “will never show the enemy that they can win. Live like Oscar!” She urged everyone to develop a relationship with political prisoners by writing to them.

The other former prisoners present mutually stated that Oscar López represented for them the ultimate defiance toward the evil U.S. empire: a steadfast, uncompromising commitment to freedom, humanity and mutual solidarity, and an inspiration to others to continue in Oscar’s tradition. Former political prisoner Laura Whitehorn mentioned that she recently spoke to

political prisoner Herman Bell, who sends his love to everyone from prison.

The event also focused on sick prisoners and aging political prisoners who’ve been behind bars for decades because of their beliefs and for daring to speak out against the hypocrisy of so-called U.S. democracy. As an example of white supremacy, mention was made of the contrast between this government’s peace-making treatment and response to the armed terrorist militia takeover by white cattlemen of Oregon’s Wildlife Refuge, as opposed to their racist, murdering response to unarmed Black men and youth. In the 1870s, white men stole that land from the Indigenous peoples.

A historical overview was given on the European invasion and colonization of Puerto Rico beginning with Columbus in 1492, which culminated in the massacre and extermination of the Indigenous Taíno people and the exploitation of enslaved Africans. The Spanish language was imposed. These developments led to the formation of the Puerto Ricans as people with a Spanish, African and Taíno heritage. The subsequent U.S. invasion and colonization resulted in the imposition of the English language.

Information was given about ongoing gentrification and privatization of public land, particularly the beaches. The people are fighting to defend their right over their land and to have access to a beach designated for the construction of a new Marriott hotel. However, the federal court has ruled that the people have no right to intervene. They are calling for a boycott of the Marriott. One of Oscar López’s dreams is to see a Puerto Rican beach again.

At the end, there was consensus that the long fight against capitalism requires more activism in the streets, among other things, with increased demands for social justice.

“Agitation, organization, resistance, struggle and love are the ingredients that will guarantee us victory!” — Oscar López Rivera, Puerto Rican political prisoner.

Free Oscar López Rivera! Oscar López Rivera, presente!

Send a letter or postcard to Oscar López Rivera #87651-024, FCI Terre Haute, P.O. Box 33, Terre Haute, IN 47808. Or donate to his commissary by money order to Federal Bureau of Prisons, Oscar López Rivera #87651-024, P.O. Box 474701, Des Moines, IA 50947-0001. Print his name and prison number on the money order. □

Baltimore

Cops shoot, then frame up Keith Davis Jr.

By Steven Ceci
Baltimore

Baltimore police officers shot a 24-year-old African American, Keith Davis Jr., twice — once in the face and once in the arm last June 7. Police had chased Davis into a garage where they fired at him 44 times. After shooting Davis, police proceeded to charge him with robbery.

The Baltimore Sun reported that officers Catherine Filippou and Lane Eskins had received a call at 10 a.m. that day about a car accident. Responding to the call, the officers were informed by an unlicensed cab driver that he was being robbed. The cops charged Davis with the robbery.

Davis’ family members and supporters assert that Davis is being framed for a crime he did not commit. Davis says that he did not rob the driver and that he was among a group of spectators at the scene of a hit-and-run accident when an officer arrived with his weapon drawn and pointed it at the crowd.

“It wasn’t [pointed at] Keith in specific; it was at the crowd,” explained Davis’ fiancée, Kelly Holsey, in a Jan. 9 interview

with RT: “As a result, the crowd scattered. Davis and some others sought shelter at a nearby auto garage. Davis was then shot in the arm and called Holsey. Holsey described hearing a ‘constant pop-pop-pop’ while Davis told her, ‘Babe, I’m gonna die.’ ” (tinyurl.com/huqybb5) Holsey said the call lasted one minute and seven seconds; she heard one last gunshot and then the call dropped.

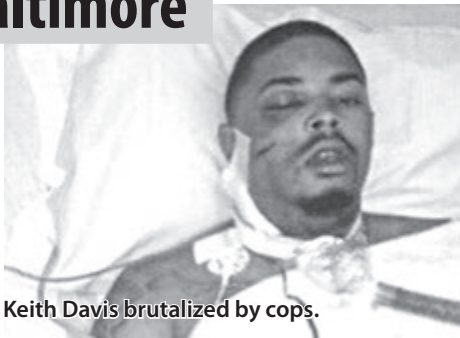
Davis was taken to a hospital to be treated and at first was not charged. The police gave no information as to his whereabouts. This pointed to there being no evidence to support a reason for the police to have shot Davis twice — let alone firing 44 shots in a garage where there were bystanders. The cops finally arrested Davis at the hospital and charged him with armed robbery.

They claim that Davis fired a 22-caliber gun at them, but a 22-caliber gun found in the garage had not been fired and didn’t have Davis’ fingerprints on it. In addition, the driver who reported he was robbed never identified Davis as the assailant.

On Jan. 8, the state was granted a third postponement in the Davis case. Prosecutors

said they were unprepared to present evidence. The officers involved in the case have yet to give formal statements about what exactly happened on June 7, but the police added another indictment of Davis. According to Davis’ lawyer, since the prosecution had already been given two postponements and was supposed to go ahead with the trial, the new indictment was simply a tactic to delay the proceedings.

Supporters of Keith Davis gathered outside the courthouse after the postponement and decided to march over to



Keith Davis brutalized by cops.

the office of Baltimore State’s Attorney Marilyn Mosby to demand that charges be dropped. The Baltimore Bloc and the People’s Power Assembly have been attending the court hearings and plan to keep the pressure on until the charges against Keith Davis Jr. are dropped. □

Justice for Mario Woods!

By Terri Kay
San Francisco

Ever since the Dec. 2 firing squad execution of 26-year-old Mario Woods in the San Francisco Bay View neighborhood by cops, the Black community and its supporters have been in the streets and at City Hall, disrupting meetings and blocking intersections.

A newly formed organization, The Last 3 Percent Coalition, and Black Lives Matter Bay Area have worked to support Woods’ family in their struggle for justice. The very name, “The Last 3 Percent,” epitomizes the plight of San Francisco’s Black community, diminished by gentrification.

Three now famous bystander videos



Left, Gwendolyn Woods, Mario Woods’ mother, during Black/Brown unity march.

graphically show Woods surrounded by officers and up against a wall when the firing began. Police claim Woods was carrying a knife.

Most recently, protesters disrupted the inauguration ceremony of San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee on Jan. 8. Starting with a rally on the steps of City Hall, the demonstrators then marched inside. Refusing to be herded into an isolated viewing room, they gathered on the second floor balcony, shouting “Fire [San Francisco Police Chief Greg] Suhr!” and “Justice for Mario Woods!” Cops in riot gear kept swooping in on the crowd, grabbing signs and any people they could call disruptive.

On Jan. 6, there was a Solidarity Night march. This move to build Black/Brown solidarity combined the supporters of justice for Mario Woods with those of the Alex Nieto Coalition. It was held on the 50th anniversary of the 1966 Bayview “riots.”

In the pouring rain, there were two marches. One, organized by The Last 3 Percent Coalition, originated in the Bay View, where Mario Woods was killed. The other, organized by the Alex Nieto Coalition, started in Bernal Heights. The two then marched towards each other for a convergence and culminating ceremony.

Nieto was killed in a hail of 59 bullets by the San Francisco Police Department on March 21, 2014, when police responded to a 911 call about a “suspicious person.” Nieto, on his way to work as a security guard, was carrying his licensed taser and was far from anyone else when the police confronted and killed him.

During a Dec. 24 press conference and rally at San Francisco City Hall, Clarence Thomas of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 announced that the San Francisco Labor Council had unanimously passed a resolution calling for the prosecution of the cops who killed Mario Woods.

Susan Soloman, executive vice-president of United Educators of San Francisco, said that her union had passed the same resolution. After the rally outside, they marched into City Hall to meet with Mayor Ed Lee. When told he wasn’t in, the crowd promised to come back another day.

In a fiery speech during a police commission hearing on Dec. 9, Cat Brooks of the Anti Police-Terror Project dressed down Chief Suhr and told him, “You are inciting the rage of the people. ... A new day has come. ... It’s a movement sweeping this country and we are not going to stop until you stop killing us. ... We will continue to shut it down, interrupt your business as usual. We’re going to take to the streets. We’re going to interrupt your election cycle. And I have news for you, Chief Suhr. We are going to shut it down until you resign or until all of you get the courage to fire him. And Oakland will be here! We’re bringing the East Bay!” (tinyurl.com/jbdaedl)

s up to Trump’s Islamophobia

the Carolinas and supports the rights of the Palestinian people, a stand now being used to vilify her on social media.

Several protesters accompanying her also wore yellow, eight-pointed stars, a common symbol in the Islamic world. These bore the words “Muslim” or “Stop Islamophobia.” The yellow stars echoed the six-pointed badges that the Nazis forced Jews to wear during the European Holocaust. (Washington Post, Jan. 9)

Marty Rosenbluth, who wore this badge and stood next to Hamid, is a North Carolina pro-bono lawyer for immigrants and is Jewish. He has previously worked with the General Federation of Palestinian Trade Unions. (Indy Week, Jan. 2013)

At the rally, Trump called for a ban on

all Syrian refugees in the U.S. He has previously floated proposals to create both a database of Muslims and a ban on Muslims entering the country.

Protests of Trump’s racism and Islamophobia have become more common and forceful since lone Black Lives Matter protester, Mercutio Southall Jr., was kicked and beaten by Trump supporters at a Birmingham, Ala., rally on Nov. 22.

During Trump’s Dec. 4 rally in Raleigh, N.C., activists from a statewide coalition constantly interrupted him. On Jan. 7, in Burlington, Vt., hecklers repeatedly disrupted Trump despite his staff asking in-line ticketholders if they supported Trump — and kicking out anyone who said, “No!” □

For the murder of Black war veteran Georgia cop to face grand jury

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

According to research done by the Atlanta Journal Constitution, 184 people have been killed by police in Georgia in the last five years.

In not one case, even when the victim was unarmed or shot in the back, has the police officer been prosecuted for any crime.

That wretched record may be about to change.

On March 9, 2015, DeKalb County policeman Robert Olson killed Anthony Hill, a 26-year-old Iraq and Afghanistan war veteran who was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and being bipolar.

Hill was a singer/songwriter who aspired to have a career in the music business. Always smiling, he was loved by the children in his mostly Latino/a and African-American, Chamblee, Ga., apartment complex for his willingness to play sports with them.

According to his partner, Bridget Anderson, he had recently stopped taking his medication because of its debilitating

side effects and had made a follow-up appointment at the Veterans Administration.

In the early afternoon of March 9, a neighbor called 911 requesting help after seeing a naked Hill, climbing down from his second-floor balcony, and then crawling and rolling on the ground.

Olson claimed he was in fear of his life when he fired twice at Hill and killed him. Some witnesses say that Hill was in a prayer-like position when Olson pulled up in his squad car and had his arms outstretched as he walked toward the officer.

Hill’s body lay in the parking lot as the school bus bringing the complex’s children home drove onto the property. Angry that police had not covered him, his neighbors quickly put a sheet over the corpse.

Hill’s death evoked large and militant protests with hundreds blocking the downtown streets of Decatur, the county seat, and in Chamblee.

On Jan. 7, DeKalb County District At-



Anthony Hill

torney Robert James held a press conference to announce that on Jan. 21 he will bring to a criminal grand jury two charges of felony murder, as well as aggravated assault, two counts of violating the oath of office and providing false statements against Officer Olson.

One unique feature of the Georgia grand jury process that has made indictments against police officers even more unlikely is the extraordinary privilege of the officers being allowed to observe the entire proceedings. This not only includes hearing all the witness testimony and forensic evidence, but also being able to make a final statement before deliberation that cannot be cross-examined or rebutted by the prosecutor.

Hill’s family and friends, the Black Lives Matter movement and the Atlanta social justice community are determined to win justice — no matter the odds — not just for Hill but for all the others too, whose lives have been taken by a racist and unjust system. □

Dr. King’s legacy and the struggle for the cities

By Abayomi Azikiwe

This year’s national commemoration of the 87th birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. comes during a period of renewal in the anti-racist movement. King was born on Jan. 15, 1929, in Atlanta. The annual official commemoration of his birthday always falls on the third Monday of the month. Since 1986, the date has been designated as a federal holiday. However, almost no information is transmitted by the corporate media, the educational system or through numerous organizations that hold events in honor of the holiday that speaks directly about the work that the Civil Rights and anti-war leader was involved in.

These official channels almost never mention that King was arrested more than 30 times, nor that toward the end of his life he became a staunch opponent of the United States military invasion and occupation of Vietnam. Neither is there any recognition of his desire to eradicate poverty in the U.S. or the call for a guaranteed income as well as mandatory full employment. Three major campaigns of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, co-founded by King in 1957, during the final two years of his life (1966-68), have tremendous bearing on the task facing African Americans, the working class and the progressive movement in general today. These efforts center around the SCLC’s intervention in the Chicago Freedom Movement of 1966 demanding open housing; linkage of the struggle for Civil

Rights with the demand for unilateral withdrawal from Vietnam; and support for striking African-American sanitation workers in Memphis, who were fighting for recognition as a union against the racist city administration of Mayor Henry Loeb.

King’s legacy and the 2016 anti-racist struggle

Since the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., on Aug. 9, 2014, much media focus has rightly been on the rash of police killings of African Americans in cities, suburbs and small towns across the United States. These killings exploded the myth gaining currency within certain political circles that the U.S. had become a “post-racial” society. The vigilante murder of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Fla., in early 2012 and the subsequent acquittal of his assailant in 2013 had already re-awakened the consciousness of oppressed and anti-racist youth around the country. Even though President Barack Obama has been elected twice as the first White House occupant of African descent, race relations and the social plight of African Americans had worsened under his tenure. Census data and a series of reports looking at the correlations between poverty and race illustrate clearly that national and class oppression is intensifying during the current period of capitalist downturn and restructuring. Consciousness is rising not only in urban areas. A series of demonstrations at university and college campuses highlighted the symbols of institutional rac-

ism and administrators’ lack of sensitivity to the demands of African-American students as well. These demonstrations during the fall of 2015 began on some of the most elite higher educational institutions and were led by those African Americans whom the ruling class had considered privileged and destined to find a secure position in bourgeois society. Within the purported “color-blind” social context, schools and buildings named after slave owners and ideological racists had remained unchallenged. The dreaded Confederate flag was still flying on state Capitol buildings and public locations 150 years after the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, which ostensibly ended legalized enslavement of 4 million Africans. These realities were further magnified when Dylann Roof massacred nine African Americans in Charleston, S.C., on June 17 last year at one of the most historic places of worship, the Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. This church dates back to the antebellum period in one of the most concentrated slave production states in the U.S.

Nevertheless, despite mass demonstrations and three significant rebellions in Ferguson and later Baltimore in 2015, the federal government has taken no effective action to redress the worsening situation, regarding either police racism or the overall economy. The administration claims that the financial crisis of 2008 has been corrected and that the jobless rate stands at only 5 percent. Yet the labor participation rate is at its lowest level in four decades, and African-American poverty is rising as a direct result of the Great Recession of 2008. This downturn is testament to the failure of the current Democratic White House. The campaign of presidential aspirant Hillary Clinton has not proposed any legislative or executive programs to improve the social conditions of African Americans.

This vacuum leaves the political landscape open for left forces to articulate and organize around a program that speaks directly to the status of the oppressed and workers in the U.S.

Reigniting the movement in the cities

Some 50 years ago, Dr. King and the SCLC moved into Chicago to join the Freedom Movement in that urban area. The African-American masses in Chicago exploded in anger after Democratic Mayor Richard Daley refused to seriously consider demands for the abolition of slums and a policy of open housing.

The SCLC, in alliance with local organizations, exposed the hypocrisy of Democratic Party-controlled political machines such as that of Daley in Chicago, which provided lip service to Civil Rights but practiced segregation and therefore facilitated super-exploitation. The Chicago campaign, coming in the aftermath of the Watts Rebellion of August 1965, prompted the escalation of tensions between the Chicago authorities and the African-American community. This led to mass demonstrations against racism and a full-blown rebellion on the West Side in late July of 1966.

Rebellions had erupted in numerous cities in 1966, including Cleveland and Omaha, Neb. Chicago’s would prove to be the most violent and disruptive. Instead of granting the demands of the Chicago Freedom Movement in totality, the ruling class blamed King and the other organizations for inciting the rebellions.

There are profound lessons from the Chicago Freedom Movement and the plight of cities today as relates to the housing question, police brutality, political and economic power.

Although the housing question in 2016 takes on a different character than in 1966, it is still a pressing concern for oppressed and working people. Millions were driven from their homes during the Great Recession, while the administrations of both President George W. Bush and Obama did nothing to alleviate the suffering of the people.

In 1966 de facto segregation was prevalent in cities like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York and many other municipalities. Five decades later the marginalization and oppression of African Americans through the denial of jobs, decent wages, quality education, access to water and utility services, environmental justice and affordable housing represent the continuation of institutional racism well into the 21st century.

It will take an even more revolutionary movement than that which emerged during the 1950s and 1960s to complete the struggle for absolute equality and national liberation. These efforts, like King’s in 1967-68, must bring together progressive elements from all the oppressed nations in alliance with the workers and the poor.

Ultimately socialism must become the rallying cry of the majority of the people in capitalist society. A genuine anti-capitalist movement that will upend private property and all exploitative relations of production is the only solution to the current crisis in the U.S. and globally. □

‘Repair all public housing!’

By Baltimore Workers World Bureau

January 7 was the 50th anniversary of the Chicago Freedom Movement, launched by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1966 to end slum housing in Chicago. This campaign, also known as the Open Housing Movement, led to the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968. It opened up a fight not only for housing rights but also for jobs and against police brutality in the North. To mark this anniversary, on Jan. 16 the Peoples Power Assembly in Baltimore will be gathering outside the downtown office of Housing Commissioner Paul Graziano. That’s at 417 E. Fayette St., across from City Hall. The protesters will demand justice for all public housing res-

idents, the repair of all public housing and the commissioner’s firing. They will also demand the rehiring of housing authority worker Lucky Crosby, who helped blow the whistle on the sex-for-repairs scandal. The PPA has launched a campaign to win rights for housing project residents and to end slum housing. The group has visited hundreds of homes in housing projects and collected an equal number of signatures on petitions demanding repairs, going door-to-door in Gilmor Homes, McCullough Homes, Latrobe and O’Donnell Heights. Recently, the federal government has awarded close to \$10 million in a class action suit to women who were victims of being forced to trade sex for repairs of their homes. □

When a child dies

By Mumia Abu-Jamal

Taken from a Dec. 28 audio recording by prisonradio.org. News break: Cleveland officials announce no charges to be filed in the police killing of 12-year-old Tamir Rice. There is something shattering about the death — the killing — of a child. When a child dies, the natural order is torn, the stars weep and the earth quakes. We have become so accustomed to this system that we suppose it is natural, instead of a human imposition. Politicians, in the pocket of so-called police unions, bow before bags of silver, and blink away the death of a child; especially if a Black child. What man-made institution is more precious than a child?

What job? What so-called profession? What office? What state? When a child dies, adults don’t deserve to breathe their stolen air. When a child dies, the living must not rest until they have purged the poison that dared harm such a one. When a child dies, time runs backward and attempts to right such a wrong. This should inspire movements worldwide, to fight like never before. For something vile has happened before our eyes. A child has been killed; and in America, because it’s a Black child, it means next to nothing. □



Tamir Rice

Movie review ‘The Big Short’ shows capitalism has nowhere to go

By G. Dunkel

“The Big Short” is a true crime story, a heist movie about the housing bubble built on subprime loans that crashed in 2007-2008. Adam McKay, the director of “The Big Short,” deliberately uses outrageous scenes to explain the Wall Street “constructs,” perhaps a better word would be “obfuscations.” These explanations are necessary to understand the tale of the small band of Wall Street operators who saw the housing crash coming and figured out how they personally could profit from it. He also breaks the “fourth wall,” having actors face the camera and speak directly to the audience about the events. They let the viewers know if what is happening on screen didn’t really exactly

happen that way. Or, worse yet, if it did. The movie uses a model/star named Margot Robbie in a bubble bath to define mortgage securities. Later, the singer Selena Gomez, with the assistance of the economist Dr. Richard Thaler, stands at a blackjack table to describe collateralized debt obligations and then goes on to describe synthetic CDOs. Synthetic CDOs are bets on bets. In the housing boom preceding the bubble burst of 2008, these were built up layer upon layer. It was possible to start with an actual mortgage pool of \$50 million and build this up to a \$1 billion synthetic CDO. And it was far easier and more profitable to speculate on this froth than to go out and find land, materials and workers to build housing, which might not be sellable, anyway.

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Oregon standoff & the role of the state

By Sara Flounders

Heavily armed right-wingers have occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge outside of Burns, Ore., since Jan. 2, declaring they are ready to “kill or be killed.” Ammon Bundy and his brothers, leaders of the takeover, are demanding the federal government turn over millions of acres of publicly owned and federally administered land to ranching, lumber and mining industries.

The response to this takeover starkly exposes the role of the capitalist state as a repressive apparatus and as an arbiter of private property rights and ownership in class society.

The state functions historically and in Burns, Ore., in contradictory ways toward people of different classes and nationalities. Response is never based on equal rights, equal justice and equal ownership. These double standards must be exposed and challenged.

Well-known racists, Cliven Bundy and his sons, are wealthy Nevada ranch owners and armed states’ rights advocates. They led a stand-off in 2014 against the Bureau of Land Management by refusing to pay more than \$1 million in fees for grazing their cattle on publicly owned land. They have asked supporters to bring arms and join the occupation.

Some corporate media have ludicrously described these racist extremists as “patriotic militia,” “freedom fighters,” “leaders of a ‘populist uprising’” and even as “peaceful protesters.” FOX News, CNN and radio talk shows sympathetically portray these forces and all but champion their demands for unrestricted control of public land.

So far, local and federal law enforcement have had a hands-off policy and not imposed martial law or called in the National Guard to end the armed occupation.

Law enforcement’s inaction in Oregon stands in stark contrast to the massive police response and hostile corporate media coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement. After the police killing of 18-year-old African-American Michael Brown on Aug. 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Mo., protests by the city’s African-American residents, Black Lives Matter members and their allies demanded “Justice for Mike Brown!”

How did the state respond then? Martial law was declared and the National Guard was called out. Military equipment and armored vehicles were positioned across from unarmed, peaceful protesters; high-tech rifles were pointed at them.

In Baltimore, Chicago and other cities, the courageous Black Lives Matter movement has been met by repressive police who threaten protesters with tanks, helicopters, drones and other weapons and aggressively make arrests. This is in response to basic demands for justice and an end to police killings.

A few days after police were exonerated for killing 12-year-old African-American Tamir Rice who was playing with a toy gun in Cleveland, white, armed militias pointed their real guns at federal officials in Oregon. Police routinely kill Black youth holding cell phones, toy guns or nothing at all.

The capitalist state does not recognize the right of oppressed people to defend themselves, even in their own homes. When the MOVE family, supporters of John Africa, attempted to do so in Philadelphia in 1985, police bombed their home and 65 others in their community; 11 people died, including five children. Based on another police attack, nine MOVE mem-

The reactionary nature of the racist Bundys’ takeover must be exposed and the demands of wealthy ranchers for unlimited access to land and resources opposed. But a violent government siege of this grouping is not the answer. It would only strengthen the capitalist state’s power and use of repression — and that won’t help oppressed peoples, the working class or other progressive forces.

bers are serving 100-year prison sentences for asserting their right to self-defense.

When the Oglala Lakota Nation and American Indian Movement held a 71-day encampment at Wounded Knee, S.D., on Pine Ridge Reservation in 1973, they were met by a brutal siege of police and federal agencies, even facing assassinations. The Native people were protesting mistreatment by the government and demanding that it abide by treaty obligations. Hostile media conjured up a new “Indian War.”

Moreover, Muslims, whether in the U.S., Europe or anywhere, who carry any type of weapon, are labeled “terrorists.” Even the use of a paintball gun in play is treated, as in the case of the Fort Dix Five, as proof of criminal activity.

Lands stolen from Black and Native peoples

After the Civil War, lands of white plantation owners, who had waged war on the federal government to maintain slavery, were supposed to be expropriated to provide reparations to the formerly enslaved. It didn’t happen. Union leaders’ promises of 40 acres and a mule to each formerly enslaved Black person did not materialize. Instead, federal troops were withdrawn from the South and sent to expropriate and exterminate the West’s Indigenous population, leaving formerly enslaved peoples defenseless from the former Confederacy and plantation owners.

Since 1865, government agencies have expropriated 95 percent of Black farmers’ land.

Native people were driven to unviable land after their lands were seized. Even after treaties were signed, their land was again expropriated if resources were found on it, such as gold in the Black Hills or oil in Oklahoma.

Historically, white militias have played a reactionary role when they grabbed Native peoples’ lands and used the Ku Klux Klan to terrorize formerly enslaved African Americans in order to expropriate their labor, land and small businesses.

Paiute Nation: ‘The land belongs to us!’

The Paiute Nation lived in the Malheur Refuge’s region for 10,000 years. In 1872, Malheur Reservation was created on a

fraction of the 1.5 million acres of land promised by the federal government. Ranchers opposed this, wanting the land for their cattle.

In 1878, the Malheur Reservation was dissolved, and hundreds of Paiutes were shackled and forcibly moved, in the dead of winter, to the Yakima Reservation in Washington state. Some Paiutes hid or returned home. They were given 10 acres of the Burns town dump. Their children were barred from attending local schools.

Painstakingly over the next 100 years, the Paiutes purchased 760 acres of their tribal lands and re-established the Burns Paiute Reservation. In 1972, the Burns Paiutes were finally recognized as an independent Indian tribe. Today, they have secured more than 11,000 acres of allotment lands, which are leased by local ranchers for cattle grazing. This tribal land is considered federal land; it is tax-exempt but

exists under county jurisdiction.

In this era of privatization, it is not surprising there are demands to seize public lands and privatize them for profit. The Bundy gang is demanding this land and more — for free and with unlimited access. But the Paiute Nation says the land is theirs. They say if they had occupied the Malheur refuge, site of their original reservation, the government would have treated them very differently than the Bundy occupiers.

Charlotte Rodrique, chairperson of the Burns Paiute Tribal Council, told National Public Radio on Jan. 10, “If I, as a native person, a person of color, were to go down there and do the same thing, they would have hit me on the forehead with a baton” and dragged her out.

Burns Paiute Tribal Council member Jarvis Kennedy recounted his people’s violent dispossession at a Jan. 6 press conference, stressing, “We weren’t removed; we were killed.” He demanded that the occupiers “get the hell out” of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. (KGW.com, Jan. 6)

Stop privatizing public lands

The capitalist state’s role in land disputes must be examined to refute the ranchers’ outrageous demands for free access to public lands. The federal government owns more than half the land in the West, including 80 percent of Nevada and half of Oregon. The Bureau of Land Management manages 245 million acres of U.S. public land. The capitalist state seeks to allocate, mainly for private profit and some public use, the vast Western lands expropriated from Indigenous peoples.

Federal land policy in the West involves balancing agribusiness, lumber, mining, railroads, commercial and other interests. Costs are exorbitant for building roads, bridges, dams and water allocation, but free to businesses.

Vast tracts of national forests are public timber farms for private logging contractors. The 1872 Hard Rock Mining Law still allows mining companies to annually take \$1 billion of minerals from public lands without paying royalties or fees, and they avoid liability for environmental damage, says Pew Trusts. (tinyurl.com/zxt7nwo)

Federal irrigation systems bring arid land into cultivation at highly subsidized rates for agribusiness. Grazing fees that some ranchers are refusing to pay are a 93 percent subsidy over market rates.

In the 1800s, range wars raged between cattle and sheep ranchers over grazing land, and then were aimed against settlers and small farmers. Each economic grouping fighting for grazing land and resources had its own militia.

The railroad industry and big banks had the largest stakes in these conflicts. The federal government arbitrated

among the powerful economic interests. However, neither the government nor the banks assisted small farmers; millions lost their lands as banks foreclosed. Subsidies grew for corporate agribusiness’ large-scale production.

Today’s small ranchers cannot compete with corporate ranching operations, such as those owned by the billionaire Koch brothers and Ted Turner, the second largest U.S. landowner. They and other mega-ranchers hold subsidized grazing leases on hundreds of thousands of acres of federal land — another government handout to billionaires.

Many large ranch owners view Bundy’s reactionary movement as a convenient battering ram for them to gain greater control of public land. The big investors’ political influence may explain the favorable media coverage of Bundy’s militia. They know these forces will not challenge their wealth. The Bundys and their ilk are seeking to build their own fortunes, via land theft, racism and violence.

It should be pointed out that the state of Oregon was founded on a racist basis in 1859. African Americans were prohibited from living, working or owning property there. In 1922, the Ku Klux Klan had 14,000 members in the state, including top officials. Even Portland, now a “progressive” city, maintained segregated facilities.

The capitalist state arbitrates among competing business interests in an economic system based on theft of labor, land and resources. So the federal land policy the ranchers are denouncing is wholly corrupt and based on bribery and graft.

The struggle over water rights, especially during this decade-long drought, the fracking industry’s impact and the collapse of commodity prices are raising competition among corporate property owners to a fever pitch.

The power and influence of most small ranchers and businesses pale before the overwhelming economic influence and power of the transnational corporations, banks, hedge funds, weapons manufacturers and oil corporations. The Bureau of Land Management and state agencies seek to buy out the small ranchers and business owners. They are no longer highly profitable, so their profits are not guaranteed, but neither are subsidies. This drives their desperation.

The reactionary nature of the racist Bundys’ takeover must be exposed and the demands of wealthy ranchers for unlimited access to land and resources opposed. But a violent government siege of this grouping is not the answer. It would only strengthen the capitalist state’s power and use of repression — and that won’t help oppressed peoples, the working class or other progressive forces.

Rather than allowing the very individuals or companies that have devastated the land to grab more acreage, these lands should be put under the guardianship of Indigenous nations. That would be one step toward justice and reparations.

Sara Flounders is the author of “War Without Victory,” available at online booksellers.

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 Demand a Bill of Rights Imani Henry

Black & Brown Unity Saladin Muhammad

Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior Mumia Abu-Jamal

Racism & Poverty in the Delta Larry Hales

Haiti Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions Pat Chin

Alabama’s Black Belt Consuela Lee

Anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion John Parker

Available at major online booksellers.



Dr. King’s legacy still relevant

“I have worked too long now and too hard to get rid of segregation in public accommodations to turn back to the point of segregating my moral concern. Justice is indivisible. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. And wherever I see injustice, I’m going to take a stand against it whether it’s in Mississippi or in Vietnam.”

— Martin Luther King on “Face to Face,” July 1967 (antiwar.com, May 16, 2008)

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the heroic leader of the Civil Rights struggle, whose birthday is honored with a federal holiday on Jan. 18, was put under tremendous pressure to stay silent on the imperialist war against Vietnam. He was told that the only way that the political establishment of his time would pass progressive legislation would be for him not to object to the brutal war against the Vietnamese people. King absolutely refused.

Infamous Birmingham, Ala., cop Bull Connor, who ordered the brutal assaults on Civil Rights demonstrators with dogs, fire hoses, clubs and guns in the early 1960s, is long dead. However, young Black women and men still remain victims today of a racist war by cops from Ferguson to Cleveland, from Chicago to New York, from Oakland to Minneapolis to Los Angeles.

Certainly, the brave activists of the Black Lives Matter movement carry forward King’s legacy to this very day.

And King would have been proud of activists linking the Black Lives Matter struggle with that for immigrant rights, particularly with the current Gesta-po-like ICE raids and deportations targeting Central American immigrants who have fled the U.S.-caused turmoil in their home countries.

King said that the conditions faced by African Americans, who were denied voting rights; equal employment and pay; equal rights to housing, education and hotel rooms; and who were trapped in a life of poverty, were linked to the death and devastation caused by the U.S. military adventure in Vietnam. King was coming to the conclusion that the struggle of workers and the oppressed for justice knew no borders before he was struck down by an assassin’s bullet in 1968.

An excerpt from his historic April 4, 1967, Riverside Church address in New York City reads: *“There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I and others have been waging in America. A few years ago, there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor, both black and white, through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam, and I watched this program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war. And I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic, destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.”* (nationall-journal.com, Jan. 20, 2014)

U.S. imperialism has never ceased its relentless war drive, whether by open invasion, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, or proxy war, as in Syria, Yemen or Libya. Trillions are spent to feed the war machine, and millions are killed or driven from their homes, while workers and oppressed communities here face stagnant or starvation wages, evictions, huge college debts and never-ending cutbacks to social programs like food stamps.

In the face of the heroic rebellions against the racist oppression of the Black communities that broke out in Watts, in Newark, in Detroit and elsewhere, King pointed to the true cause and the true target of many struggles.

King went on to say at Riverside Church: *“I knew that I could never again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today — my own government.”*

King is gone now, cut down by an assassin’s bullet just twelve months after he spoke those words. But his vision of linking all the different struggles against injustice offers a stirring example for us today and many lessons. □

WWP sends solidarity message

The government of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea announced the successful test of its first hydrogen bomb on Jan. 6. It reiterated in a statement that it will never be the first to launch nuclear weapons, pledging to use them in defense only if attacked by nuclear weapons. China and India have made similar no-first-use pledges.

However, the United States and its imperialist NATO “partners” have long refused to make such a commitment, arrogating to themselves the right to use nuclear weapons if attacked in any way.

On Jan. 10, the U.S. flew a nuclear-capable B-52 bomber and two fighter jets on a low-level flight across south Korea in an open threat to the DPRK.

The U.S., since it started the nuclear arms race by dropping two atomic bombs on Japanese cities in 1945, has built 70,000 nuclear warheads. Even with the dismantling of many nukes since the end of the Cold War, the Pentagon continues to keep thousands ready for use. As of January 2014, the official number was 4,650 active warheads and another 2,700 “retired” nuclear weapons not yet dismantled. At the height of the Cold War, the U.S. military occupying south Korea was armed with 950 nuclear warheads. (Brookings Institution)

During the 1950-1953 war against socialist north Korea, the U.S. imperialists

killed millions of Koreans and leveled cities and towns in the north with “conventional” bombing. The U.S. government still refuses to negotiate a peace treaty that will normalize relations with the DPRK.

Given these undisputed facts, it should be obvious to any honest person that the DPRK has every right to develop whatever weapons it needs to defend itself against U.S. aggression.

On Jan. 11, Workers World Party in the U.S. sent the following message of solidarity to the Workers’ Party of Korea.

WWP reaffirms solidarity with Workers’ Party of Korea

Workers World Party reaffirms our solidarity and support of the Korean people’s struggle for self-determination and socialist construction, including the right of self-defense in the face of U.S. imperialism’s continued threats and pressures.

Media around the world report that the people of the DPRK are celebrating the successful testing of the DPRK’s first hydrogen bomb, and for good reason. No country on earth has suffered more at the hands of U.S. imperialist aggression than the DPRK, yet remained strong, sovereign and united.

The ability of the DPRK to march for-

The Cuban Adjustment Act:

By Cheryl LaBash

A lingering product of the decades-long U.S. war against the Cuban Revolution is visible today in Costa Rica, where nearly 8,000 Cuban migrants wait for permission to cross Central American borders on their trek to the U.S.

According to the Jan. 10 New York Times, an additional 3,000 Cubans are in Panama. The anti-Cuba weapon is the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act (CAA), which affords unique privileges — including a quick path to citizenship and permission to work legally — to any Cuban who reaches U.S. territory by any means. Although the Obama administration has steadfastly refused to consider any changes to the CAA, the opening of U.S.-Cuba diplomatic relations spiked the number of Cubans seeking to take advantage of those special benefits before the normalization process ends them.

Contrast that to the Obama administration’s New Year’s raids and depor-

tations of Central American refugee families who sought safe haven from warlike conditions in their homelands, conditions created by U.S. imperialism. Where do the drug cartels, paramilitaries and repressive coup regimes, like in Honduras, get the guns? Who profits off the international weapons trade? At the same time, the so-called U.S. Agency for International Development and the National Endowment for Democracy work for “soft coup” destabilization against progressive governments like those in El Salvador and Venezuela. This double standard made headlines in the 1990s, too, when Haitians attempting to reach Florida by boat were sent back to Haiti while Cubans were welcomed.

Noted professor and author Salim Lamrani wrote in a Jan. 6 public email about the CAA: “This is a great tool for inciting illegal emigration. For nearly 50 years, the richest country in the world has opened its doors to the population of a small, poor, Third World country with

Movie review ‘The Big Short’ shows capitalism has nowhere to go

Continued from page 8

This movie makes it clear that the real purpose of Wall Street is not to allocate capital to projects that produce useful products. It is instead to create profits, indeed super-profits, for those who own capital or who can borrow big chunks of it.

Where “The Big Short” falls short is that it gives the false impression that greed, fraud and the bubble caused the capitalist recession. But it was capitalist overproduction — producing houses workers need but cannot afford to buy — that caused the recession, which burst the bubble.

To sell the “overproduced” houses, the Fed encouraged home buyers to take risky subprime and variable rate mortgages. Unscrupulous brokers pushed these risky mortgages on workers who couldn’t afford to pay them once the in-

terest rates rose or when they lost their jobs. Then, home prices dropped, which collapsed the bonds issued on the mortgages, the CDOs.

In one scene, a pole dancer in a club explains her worries about refinancing the mortgages on her five houses and her condo to one of these operators as she speaks to a customer. The audience quickly gets a feel for how deep and wide this speculative frenzy had gone.

The film presents an interesting and satirical way to explain a crash whose impact is still being felt. Millions of people lost their jobs and their homes in this frenzy so ably depicted by McKay and the actors. According to the International Monetary Fund, bailing out the Wall Street and foreign banks from the effects of the bursting of this subprime bubble cost the U.S. a trillion dollars.

A recent report from the Securities and Exchange Commission claims that the rating agencies like Moody’s and Standard & Poor’s are still putting profit ahead of principle when they assign high grades to low-quality debt. (New York Times, Jan. 8) This practice was one of the contributing factors leading up to the 2008 crash. Reasonable people would call their actions pure and simple fraud.

What is clear about this whole story is that Ben Bernanke, who led the Federal Reserve during the huge bailout of Wall Street and the big banks, was far more concerned about preserving the economic interests of the billionaires than the jobs and homes of the millions of working people who were losing them right and left.

Both Bernanke and his predecessor, Alan Greenspan, who proudly pro-

claimed that housing prices could only rise in a capitalist economy — a foolish notion — strove to preserve the existing system. To a degree, they have. Profits and wealth have rebounded since 2008.

But wages have not. Millions of people in the United States live in absolute poverty, with a cash income under \$2 a day. (See “\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America” by Kathryn J. Edin and H. Luke Shaefer.) Even people with a job are finding it hard to locate an affordable home.

The book that was the basis of the movie makes the same points but is a drier slog. The movie, “The Big Short,” is a well-made, entertaining, satirical look at Wall Street’s greed and fraud and the consequences, and worth seeing as long as you don’t expect that it will challenge the existing capitalist system. □

to Koreans

South Africa

Unfinished revolution causes instability

ward with socialist construction, while never for an instant failing to maintain a strong defense, is a living testament to the heroic Korean Revolution led by Marshal Kim Il Sung. The revolution toppled Japanese colonial rule and its local collaborators in the north of the peninsula in 1945, bringing to power the workers, farmers and progressive intellectuals. This amounted to a huge defeat for U.S. imperialism, which had expected to pick up all the pieces of the Japanese empire. Washington actually rearmed Japanese troops in the south to keep control until the Pentagon could send in enough forces to prevent the people there from joining the revolution.

It is particularly infuriating to the Western imperialists today that the people of the DPRK are united behind Kim Jong Un and the Workers’ Party of Korea, both of whom represent an unbroken line of leaders committed to the Korean Revolution’s goals of independence, sovereignty and socialist construction.

We demand: U.S. sign a peace treaty with the DPRK and get out of Korea! No to sanctions and military threats! Long live the worldwide struggle of workers and oppressed peoples against racism, class oppression and imperialist war!

Larry Holmes
First Secretary
Workers World Party

Its impact on migration

limited resources and victim, moreover, of extremely severe economic sanctions.”

The CAA is the carrot end of the stick that is the U.S. economic, financial and commercial blockade. The architecture for the blockade was laid out in an internal U.S. State Department memo dated April 6, 1960. Admitting the Cuban people’s support for the Revolution, the document concluded: “The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship ... a line of action which, while as adroit and inconspicuous as possible, makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.” (tinyurl.com/h6tm8e5)

In addition to the CAA, since 2006, the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program solicits Cuban educated “doctors, nurses, paramedics, physical therapists, lab technicians and sports trainers” (state.gov) to abandon international service and migrate to the U.S., taking along with them their high quality professional training that was provided to them without cost by the Cuban Revolution.

Cuba’s revolution spreads free health care

More than 50,000 Cuban medical internationalists are serving in at least 66 countries. Often, the Cuban doctors are the very first medical professionals rural and poor people have ever seen. Cuba sent medical brigades to Algeria in 1961 and even earlier to Chile following a devastating earthquake there. From the hillsides of the Himalayas to tracking down the sources of cholera in Haiti to fighting ebola hemorrhagic fever in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone — there are Cuban doctors. And we can never forget that more than 1,500 fully equipped Henry Reeve Brigade, disaster trained, medical professionals waited to help the people of the U.S. Gulf Coast to survive hurricanes Katrina and Rita. But George

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Several developments in South Africa over the last few weeks have brought to the fore the ongoing unfinished quest for national liberation and economic justice.

A social media post by Penny Sparrow, a real estate agent and member of the opposition Democratic Alliance party, denigrating Africans went viral and ignited a discussion on the need for stiffer laws against hate speech.

Sparrow referred to the majority African population in the postapartheid nation as “monkeys.”

Sparrow decried the policy of integration, where all residents of and visitors to the Republic of South Africa, under the leadership of the ruling African National Congress party, are allowed to enjoy beaches and other public areas of the country. Sparrow revealed the continuing racist sentiments of many whites, particularly those who constitute the actual leadership of the DA. This party holds second place among the political parties in the South African parliament in Cape Town, having gained 22 percent of the vote in the 2014 national elections.

In response to the furor generated over these statements, the DA announced the

W Bush said they weren’t needed! This was the very same Bush who almost on the anniversary of the hurricanes instituted the CMPPP to lure the doctors whose previous offer of help for New Orleans he refused.

On Jan. 8, Reuters reported the CMPPP is under review with an announcement on whether to end it is expected before the end of the month. “With such a thaw under way, the parole program no longer seemed to fit what the White House has called a ‘new chapter’ in U.S.-Cuban relations.”

After the 1959 revolutionary victory, half of Cuba’s doctors opted for life in Miami, leaving only 3,000 medical professionals in a country of millions with vast inequalities. Not only professionals, but also many wealthy and light-skinned Cubans fled to Miami. But the police, military officers and torturers of the Batista dictatorship came, too. The 1966 CAA was crafted for their benefit. Now, the anti-Cuba minority in Congress opposes the CAA, citing the current emigres as unworthy — pointing out that many quickly return to Cuba and travel back and forth freely, which, by the way, is a boon to the Miami economy, where the majority of the many, many daily charter flights to Cuba originate.

In place of the CAA, the U.S. government needs to adjust its relationship with the world and its people. That means ending the blockade of Cuba, respecting its sovereign right to self-determination and its socialist economic plan, returning occupied Guantánamo, and ending the multitude of hostile policies and actions, including the CAA and CMPPP, which use immigration as a weapon, and also defunding the USAID, the NED, and propaganda TV and radio broadcasts to Cuba.

It also means ending the raids and deportations, recognizing the refugee status of the Central American migrants and adjusting the status of the millions of undocumented without political bluster. Doesn’t the CAA show it can be done, at least when it serves their political purposes? □

expulsion of Sparrow, saying there was no place for racists within their party. The DA’s KwaZulu-Natal provincial leader, Zwakele Mncwango, stressed in a press release: “I can confirm that Penny is no longer a member of the DA and after serving her suspension last week I can confirm that she resigned this morning.” (Eyewitness News, Jan. 8)

Sparrow is also facing criminal charges, and will have to appear before the South African Human Rights Commission and the Estate Agency Affairs Board. Human Settlements Minister Lindiwe Sisulu instructed the board to initiate a probe. In addition to these developments, Sparrow’s former bosses at Jawitz Properties will be pursuing legal action against her.

These racist comments were not the only ones gaining attention in South Africa in recent weeks. According to Eyewitness News, “The SAHRC is also investigating after concerns about racist comments made by Sparrow as well as economist Chris Hart and Justin van Vuuren on social media in recent days, saying further legal steps could be taken against all three.”

ANC celebrates 104th anniversary

This discussion arose amid the commemoration surrounding the 104th anniversary of the ANC’s founding on Jan. 8. This liberation movement turned political party is the oldest such organization on the continent.

Tens of thousands of people attended rallies and other celebrations throughout South Africa to mark this date when the party was formed at the height of European colonial rule in Africa in 1912. In five consecutive national elections since 1994, the ANC has won well over 60 percent of the vote.

The largest opposition party to emerge since the democratic breakthrough of 22 years ago has been the DA. In an effort to obscure its racist, neoliberal and imperialist agenda, the DA uses various strategies to recruit and promote Africans.

In early 2014, the DA attempted to stage a march on ANC headquarters in Johannesburg, but was rebuffed by thousands of ANC supporters who were mobilized to defend the party offices. DA criticisms of the ANC in parliament are clearly designed to agitate for the return of the system of white supremacy and a close alliance with the imperialist states.

South African President Jacob Zuma said in an address before ANC anniversary celebrations in Rustenburg in the Northwest province, “Economic freedom must become a reality in our lifetime. The ANC has long set out to place our economy on a new growth path that will deracialize the economy and make a fundamental break with the ownership patterns of the past.” (Bloomberg, Jan. 9)

During the same speech Zuma also demanded that the ANC be given “space to govern” in light of recent calls by the DA and other opposition forces for his resignation. He also derided the factionalism that has begun to plague the party and the Tripartite Alliance of the ANC with the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party.

Condemning what he characterized as “obstructions to government,” Zuma emphasized, “You can’t lose elections and hope to interrupt and obstruct the government that has been elected by the people through taking every issue to court or disrupting Parliament. The party that wins elections must be given space to govern. The ANC must be given space to govern — this is the fundamen-

tal basic principle of democracy and is practiced throughout the world; that is why it is called majority rule.”

Warning that those fomenting divisions will not be tolerated, the president said, “Tendencies such as factionalism, careerism, gatekeeping, arrogance of power patronage — have no place in the ANC. We also wish to remind those who continue to perpetuate division and counterrevolution within our movement that there is no place for them.”

Global capitalist crisis impacts internal politics

Like many so-called “emerging economies,” South Africa’s is experiencing a crisis due to the decline in commodity prices and the ongoing dependency upon the world system dominated by capitalist modes of production and relations. The continuing depressed value of the national currency, the rand, the rise in joblessness and low wages has triggered various responses, including an apparent right-wing demonstration in December demanding the resignation of President Zuma.

On Jan. 11, there was yet another decline in the value of the rand on international currency markets. This continues a pattern begun during 2015 that precipitated a change in finance ministers twice within the course of a few days during December. This instability in the finance portfolio was credited with a previous drop in the currency value.

An article published by Newscom.au on Jan. 11 reported, “The rand fell more than 9 percent to 17.9950 against the U.S. dollar, by far its weakest level on record, on fears that China wants to weaken its currency aggressively and boost its export competitiveness. The South African unit had recovered somewhat to 16.6500 by 0220 Tuesday AEDT [Jan. 12], but was still down two per cent from Friday’s close. It was the weakest performer in a basket of 25 emerging market currencies tracked by Reuters.”

Zuma said in response to the decline that it was an overreaction to overall developments in the global economy. Some market analysts echoed this assessment, although such a phenomenon does not bode well for the immediate future of the country.

Other factors involving relations with the U.S. based on the Africa Growth and Opportunities Act have played a role in the economic insecurity of the country by holding up the renewal of South Africa’s eligibility in the program, which was established under the Bill Clinton administration in 2000. An announcement was made recently that the outstanding issues related to the refusal of South Africa to accept certain meat products due to health concerns had been resolved.

South African Minister of Trade Rob Davies revealed on Jan. 9 that an agreement had been reached to allow the importation of the meat products in question. Nonetheless, U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman said while Washington welcomed the progress made in resolving the outstanding technical issues, the real measure of the resolution would be based on the ability of South African consumers to buy these meats in domestic outlets.

The Obama administration had threatened on Jan. 4 to suspend South Africa from the trade agreement. The AGOA was reauthorized by the U.S. Congress in June. The act eliminates import taxes on more than 7,000 products ranging from textiles to manufactured items in 39 African nations. □



Cambiando el medioambiente:

De Kioto al temporal Frank

Por Deirdre Griswold

La dispersión de los seres humanos a todos los continentes de nuestro planeta ha ido acompañada de grandes retos e innovaciones. El Homo Sapiens se convirtió en la forma de vida dominante en todo el mundo debido a nuestra capacidad no sólo de adaptarse al entorno - todas las especies se han adaptado, desarrollado o perecido - sino también para cambiar el propio medio ambiente para satisfacer nuestras necesidades.

Tan exitosos nos hemos vuelto en alterar el entorno, que ahora parece que se ha convertido en lo contrario. El calentamiento global y el cambio climático, resultante principalmente del crecimiento industrial y la quema de combustibles fósiles, plantean enormes peligros no sólo para los humanos sino para una amplia gama de especies animales y vegetales.

La gente de algunos de los países más desarrollados constataron estos peligros a finales de diciembre y principios de enero cuando las inundaciones en el valle del Misisipi y en toda Irlanda, Gales, Inglaterra y Escocia alcanzaron proporciones históricas.

Estas inundaciones no fueron las peores que afectaron a grandes poblaciones en los últimos años - se han producido desastres mucho más grandes en Asia, África, América Central y América del Sur - pero estas muestran que el clima extremo, mencionado durante décadas por los científicos climatólogos, está indiscutiblemente en marcha, y ningún país se verá librado.

En EUA, el río Misisipi y sus tributarias, después de fuertes lluvias en lugar de las nevadas estacionales habituales, alcanzaron niveles récord de inundaciones en algunas áreas a finales de diciembre, lo que llevó a una devastación generalizada en Illinois, Misuri, Oklahoma y Arkansas. Más de dos docenas de muertes se han reportado hasta el momento.

Se esperan más inundaciones en las próximas semanas, ya que la cresta del río se mueve aguas abajo hacia Tenesí, Misisipi y Luisiana.

Comenzando el 30 de diciembre, la tormenta, a la que los meteorólogos británicos le han llamado Frank, golpearon las costas y la parte norte de Irlanda, Gales, Inglaterra y Escocia durante varios días con fuertes vientos y lluvias torrenciales, antes de girar hacia el norte, en dirección a Groenlandia. Mientras que el daño fue generalizado, las muertes parecen haberse mantenido en un solo dígito. La contabilidad final no estaba disponible al tiempo de escribir este artículo.

Conforme se dirigía hacia el norte, Frank también trajo lluvia y temperaturas de deshielo a las áreas arriba del Círculo Polar Ártico - un insólito escenario durante el invierno del Polo Norte. Las/os científicos sostienen que la gravedad de los desastres, tanto en EUA como en Europa se puede trazar al calentamiento global, que ha

bombeado humedad a la atmósfera. El año pasado, 2015, fue el año más cálido registrado.

Criminal sabotaje de los acuerdos climáticos

Las/os jóvenes que ahora están en la universidad ni siquiera habían nacido cuando las/os científicos climatológicos comenzaron a presentar las alarmantes noticias sobre los gases de efecto invernadero y el calentamiento global en el mundo. Esto finalmente condujo en 1997, al Protocolo de Kioto para la Convención sobre el Cambio Climático de la ONU, que fue acordado por 36 países industrializados, incluyendo a EUA. Ese protocolo los comprometía a que redujeran sus emisiones de gases a un 7 por ciento más bajo que los niveles del año 1990 para los años 2008-2012.

El gobierno de EUA firmó el protocolo en 1998 - pero nunca lo ratificó, a diferencia de los otros 35 países signatarios. Luego, George W. Bush lo repudió abiertamente en marzo de 2001, el primer año de su presidencia. Sin EUA, en el momento el mayor contaminador del mundo, el protocolo tendría poco efecto. Para EUA, el Protocolo de Kioto había llegado muerto.

La manta de dióxido de carbono en la atmósfera siguió aumentando vertiginosamente.

La historia de la creciente amenaza que representa el calentamiento global, aunque ciertamente no ha sido ignorada por los medios de comunicación capitalistas, rara vez se relaciona con las guerras del último cuarto de siglo: la guerra contra Irak, iniciada en 1991 durante la presidencia de George W Bush; la invasión de Afganistán en noviembre de 2001 (una guerra que aún continúa) después de la denuncia del Protocolo de Kioto por Bush; la segunda guerra de Irak iniciada en marzo de 2003, de nuevo por el joven Bush; y la actual guerra contra el gobierno de Siria, iniciada a finales de 2011 bajo Barack Obama por las fuerzas de la oposición con el apoyo de EUA y Arabia Saudita.

Tampoco se menciona en relación con la amenaza climática, la guerra para destruir el gobierno de Libia. Ese país del norte de África había elevado su nivel de vida al más alto del continente.

En todos estos conflictos y otros en África y Asia, el control del petróleo del mundo ha sido un factor importante. Y el petróleo, después del carbón, es la principal fuente de gases de efecto invernadero.

Estas guerras han matado a cientos de miles, desplazado a millones de personas, y han costado billones de dólares - dinero que podría haber sido utilizado durante este período crítico, cuando los científicos ya sabían lo que estaba pasando, para reestructurar la producción de energía, el transporte y la vivienda para reducir la quema de combustibles fósiles.

Nada inevitable sobre el cambio climático

Los desastres enfrentados por gran parte del mundo no eran inevitables.

No son el castigo por “la codicia y los pecados del hombre”. No surgen de la sobrepoblación o de la “avaricia” de la humanidad. Son el producto del crecimiento de las fuerzas productivas bajo un sistema político y económico en particular: el capitalismo, que echó raíces sólo hace pocos siglos.

Sociedades anteriores tenían sus problemas ambientales también. Pero aunque la tecnología de entonces estaba en un nivel mucho más bajo, la gente encontraba maneras de hacer lo que se necesitaba para asegurar las fuentes de alimento y resguardo.

Uno de los esfuerzos más notables - comenzó hace 2.250 años en China durante la dinastía Qin. Fue un gran proyecto de recuperación de tierras y control de inundaciones que implicó el desvío de agua desde el río Min, que se inundaba periódicamente sin control, hacia el otro lado de una cordillera, donde la tierra era buena pero demasiado árida para cultivar.

Para romper la montaña, durante 7 años, los trabajadores quemaron montones de heno en la superficie de las rocas para que se calentaran y luego vertían agua fría para enfriarlas rápidamente, “dejando que la contracción casi instantánea abriera grietas. El corte finalmente llevó a una hendidura de 70 pies de ancho, y las aguas del río Min ... comenzaron a pasar a través de ella en el momento en que la pared final se rompió”. (De “El hombre que amaba a China”, un libro sobre Simon Winchester, un científico británico simpatizante de la Revolución China, que pasó los primeros años de los 1940 acumulando datos masivos sobre los primeros descubrimientos científicos de China.)

El aniversario de este evento aún se celebra en China, ya que trajo estabilidad a un área que había conocido devastadoras catástrofes naturales y hambrunas resultantes.

El proyecto del río Min mostró que la gente, cuando está movilizada y motivada para resolver un grave problema, tiene la persistencia y el ingenio para hacer lo que sea necesario para vencer.

La pregunta que nos tenemos que preguntar a la luz de los desastres de hoy y el aumento de las amenazas es la siguiente: Sabiendo lo que sabemos ahora, ¿cuál es el obstáculo en el camino de tomar las medidas necesarias para evitar que ocurra lo peor? □



Libertad para Oscar López Rivera, ¡YA!

El editorial del New York Times del 31 de diciembre titulado “Mr. Obama’s Trickle of Mercy” (“La misericordia en goteo de Obama”) criticó duramente el tacaño uso del proceso de clemencia presidencial por Barack Obama quien solo ha liberado a 95 prisioneros federales que estaban sirviendo penas de cárcel “absurdamente largas”.

Oscar López Rivera no era uno de los 95, pero después de 34 años, sin duda él hubiera debido de ser uno de ellos. En cambio, el 6 de enero, cuando celebra su 73º cumpleaños en la Penitenciaría Federal de Terre Haute-Indiana, millones de personas redoblarán sus esfuerzos para liberarlo.

Que el presidente Obama haya optado por ignorar a López en este punto, es un ejemplo del castigo especial infligido a los hombres y a las mujeres con principios inflexibles y con conciencia. López fue declarado culpable de “conspiración sediciosa” junto con otras/os miembros de las Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional. Sus creencias políticas, su compromiso de por vida a la independencia de Puerto Rico y la autodeterminación para el pueblo puertorriqueño eran imperdonables a los banqueros y patronos especuladores estadounidenses y sus tribunales. Ahora sus compañeras/os han sido liberados y han regresado a casa. Ya es más que tiempo para liberar a López también.

Todo Puerto Rico — desde el movimiento de independencia a las/os proponentes de estadidad y las/os estadolibristas (el actual estado colonial), a la juventud y las/os estudiantes que luchan por la educación, a las/os trabajadores puertorriqueños que luchan contra la austeridad y los recortes de pensiones — reclaman la libertad de López. El apoyo es tan fuerte que el gobernador de Puerto Rico visitó oficialmente a López en la cárcel. Y en la diáspora puertorriqueña, en las escuelas y organizaciones comunitarias que López y su hermano ayudaron a fundar en Chicago, en Nueva York donde el ayuntamiento aprobó una resolución para liberarlo, las voces son fuertes y unidas exigiendo la libertad de López.

Desde 1898, cuando Estados Unidos derrotó a España y ocupó a Puerto Rico, Cuba y las Filipinas en su expansión imperial más allá del continente de América del Norte, la lucha por la autodeterminación y la independencia contra el colonialismo ha sido incontenible. En Cuba, la liberación del territorio ha sido ganada. La lucha continúa en Puerto Rico y las Filipinas.

¡Libertad para Oscar López Rivera y todas/os los presos políticos! ¡Viva Puerto Rico Libre! □

El capitalismo en un callejón sin salida

La tesis de este libro es que la crisis económica, que se inició en agosto de 2007, marcó un punto de inflexión en la historia del capitalismo. El autor sostiene que el sistema no se recuperará, no volverá al ciclo capitalista normal de auge y caída.

Durante décadas, la clase capitalista ha utilizado a revolución tecnológica digital para aumentar la productividad del trabajo a un ritmo récord. Menos trabajadores producen más bienes y servicios en menos tiempo con salarios más bajos. El resultado es una serie de “recuperaciones sin empleos” que hace que las cosas vayan aún peor.

Goldstein utiliza las leyes de la acumulación capitalista de Marx, y la tasa decreciente de ganancia, para demostrar por qué el capitalismo global ha llegado finalmente a un punto de inflexión.

El continuo estancamiento y el desempleo generalizado provocarán inevitablemente un resurgimiento de la lucha de clases que no se ve en EE.UU. desde la década de 1930; esta vez se dirigirá contra el propio sistema.