



Actor Will Smith, Dr. Bennet Omalu at 'Concussion' premiere. See page 2.

# Poisoned by GM and racism Flint demands water justice

By Martha Grevatt  
 Detroit

Each new day brings more front-page headlines about the Flint, Mich., water crisis.

The latest outrage is the admission that an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease (a type of pneumonia) occurred shortly after Flint began drawing water from the Flint River in 2014. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines an outbreak as two or more cases. From June 2014 until November 2015 there were 87 known cases, resulting in 10 deaths. Only on Jan. 13 did Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder announce that an outbreak had been "discovered."

While safe to drink, Legionella are water-borne bacteria that affect the lungs when inhaled as droplets or steam. Even Flint residents who stopped drinking the suspicious water could inhale it while bathing. Others who boiled water to eliminate E. coli bacteria could also have inhaled Legionella. E. coli was one of the first contaminants detected in the water after the switch away from the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD).

Marc Edwards, University of Virginia professor and water safety expert whose research confirmed that toxic levels of lead in the water were caused by a failure to add anti-corrosion chemicals to the Flint River water, says that the lapse also caused the Legionnaires' outbreak. "The general idea," he explained, "is that the lack of corrosion control in the Flint system ate up the disinfectant, the chlorine that's normally put in the water to kill these bacteria, and it also caused the release of iron to the water." These two factors allowed Legionella to grow. (Michigan Radio, Jan. 14)

That amounts to murder.

The chemicals that could have prevented both the Legionnaires' outbreak and the lead poisoning emergency would have cost about \$100 a month.

The children of Flint who have lead poisoning will suffer lifelong damage. For over a year, city and state officials told their parents that the water was safe to drink and use for bathing. Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, a pediatrician from Hurley Medical Center, was met with

derision when she presented findings on Sept. 24 of elevated lead levels in children she tested.

## 'A population-wide exposure'

Now the truth is inescapable: The entire Flint population has been exposed to lead-contaminated water, with levels high above the 15 parts per billion that the federal government deems "cause for concern." "This is a population-wide exposure," explained Hanna-Attisha. (Detroit News, Jan. 15)

All of the 9,000 children under six, the most vulnerable age group, are assumed to be affected. Lead poisoning affects young brains, impeding intellectual development and causing behavioral disorders. It occurs disproportionately in poor, especially Black and Brown children, who often live in older buildings with lead-based paint. The resulting disabilities put them on a fast track in the "school-to-prison pipeline."

In Michigan, a young African American with a disability is 25 times more

likely to end up in prison than a white youth with no perceived disabilities. The medical costs of early intervention, which can minimize the damage done by lead, are astronomical.

An unknown number of older children and adults will also suffer. Lead can cause hearing and memory loss, kidney failure, high blood pressure, and nerve and digestive disorders. There are concerns about whether inmates housed at

Continued on page 6

## Ongoing struggles honor Dr. King



Detroit

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- **BALTIMORE PPA**  
 Leads housing battle 4
- **HAITI**  
 Resistance surges 9
- **PUERTO RICO**  
 'Refuse the debt' 11
- **EXTREME WEALTH,**  
 extreme poverty – Editorial 10

# 'Concussion' tells truth about NFL medical neglect

By Lamont Lilly

Through a vast display of medical examinations and scientific data, the film "Concussion" directly links repeated violent brain trauma of National Football League worker-athletes to dementia, depression, memory loss, mental illness and even suicide. The truth is all laid out here in a melodramatic and undeniable fashion.

It's an ugly reality, and a bit uncomfortable for most football fans, but the truth is, the NFL is a billion-dollar industry that doesn't give a damn about its player-employees. To the owners, management and corporate CEOs who reap most of the NFL's financial gains, the NFL brand is the greatest, most profitable form of violent entertainment in the world.

For the worker-athletes, professional football is a beloved passion that requires great strength, power, speed and courage. For the worker-athletes, it is also a game that may cost them their lives.

For those who want the truth, "Concussion" truly is a monumental film that needs and deserves to be seen.

Will Smith fans won't be disappointed. Smith does a damn good job in this movie. As a seasoned veteran among Black actors and obvious artistic descendant of Sydney Poitier, Smith fully embodies the Nigerian-born medical intellect Dr. Bennet Omalu with unwavering strength, grace and poise — a kind of poignant, stern intensity I haven't seen from Smith since his cinematic portrayal of Muhammad Ali in the 2001 release "Ali."

Omalu is a brilliant African immigrant doctor who practices in the U.S. as a neuropathologist. His work lands him in Pittsburgh — home of the old steel mills and the Pittsburgh Steelers. For Dr. Omalu, life is pretty stable, calm and peaceful until he performs an autopsy on former Steeler great, (center) Mike Webster. Following his induction into the NFL Hall of Fame, Webster was found in his car after having committed suicide.

After a thorough autopsy and a series of medical examinations, Dr. Omalu comes to realize that the long-time Steeler, "Iron" Mike Webster, had been quietly going insane for years. In a brief span of time, Webster went from being a well-paid NFL warrior to being homeless, sniffing glue and pulling his teeth out with pliers.

Webster had received more than 70,000 violent blows to the head from his childhood up throughout his 18-year career in the NFL. As Dr. Omalu states in the film,

"The human brain wasn't meant to absorb that kind of consistent violent impact." The team owners may deny it, but the raw physical evidence cannot.

The further he digs, the clearer it becomes to Omalu that the NFL's hard-hitting brand of violent entertainment and high-speed collisions are not only costing worker-athletes their arms, teeth, shoulders and legs: Repetitive brain trauma is costing them their lives. Omalu coins this condition "chronic traumatic encephalopathy." It's important that these worker-athletes know the ugly truth about this business.

Just like the corporate giant tobacco companies used to deny the impact of their product on cancer rates and other related illnesses, "Concussion" clearly illustrates how the NFL is just as guilty in their denial of the impact of consistent brain trauma. The numbers, however, speak for themselves. Eight former employee-players of the NFL have committed suicide since 2011.

## Suicides expose NFL's ugly truth

Dave Duerson was NFL "Man of the Year" in 1987 and a two-time NFL Super Bowl champion with the New York Giants and Chicago Bears. In 2011, he killed himself by putting a shotgun to his chest and pulling the trigger. Duerson was only 50 years old.

Kurt Crain of the Denver Broncos and Miami Dolphins was 66 when he committed suicide; Ray Easterling of the Atlanta Falcons was 62. In 2012, former San Diego Charger Junior Seau, one of the NFL's all-time greatest linebackers, was a young 43 years old when he committed suicide. Andre Waters died at 44, Jovan Belcher at 25 and Paul Oliver at 29. All died from self-inflicted gunshot wounds.

In May, 25-year-old Adrian Lynn Robinson hanged himself after playing for six different NFL teams between 2012 and 2015. In 2005, Pittsburgh Steeler offensive lineman Terry Long committed suicide by drinking a gallon of antifreeze.

According to a recent Boston University School of Medicine study, out of 34 NFL football players tested postmortem, 33 tested positive for clear signs of CTE.

More than 4,500 former NFL players are now in class-action suits against the NFL for its lack of care and denial of medical evidence. How can we cheer our he-

*Continued on page 3*

# WORKERS WORLD this week

## ★ In the U.S.

Poisoned by GM and racism, Flint demands water justice... 1  
 'Concussion' tells truth about NFL medical neglect... 2  
 #OscarsSoWhite decries Hollywood racism... 3  
 Iowa protest tells Trump: 'Stop racist attacks!'... 3  
 Baltimore PPA leads housing fight... 4  
 Police killing of child shows brutality of evictions... 4  
 Event honors captured Black freedom fighters... 4  
 Boston school bus union leaders return to work... 5  
 On the picket line... 5  
 Detroit teachers expose school crisis... 6  
 Global warming shuts down subway tunnels... 7  
 Chicago BLM occupies police bank... 10  
 At protest for Noel Aguilar: 'We continue the fight'... 10  
 Across the U.S.: Stop killer drones!... 10

## ★ Around the world

Changing the environment, part 2: Paris conference... 7  
 Burkina Faso hotel attacked... 8  
 Berlin: thousands march vs. war, capitalism... 8  
 Haiti elections: 2016 surge in mass resistance... 9  
 Argentina: Public workers under attack... 9  
 It's time to define Puerto Rico's status... 11  
 Puerto Rico: 'Refuse to pay debt'... 11

## ★ Editorials

Extreme wealth, extreme poverty... 10

## ★ Noticias en Español

Enfrentamiento en Oregón y el papel del Estado... 12

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## Who we are & what we're fighting for

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

Workers built it all — it belongs to society, not to a handful of billionaires! But we need a revolution to make that change. That's why for 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. □

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## For second year

# #OscarsSoWhite decries Hollywood racism

By Monica Moorehead

On Jan. 14, much of the world watched in shock and anger the announcements of the nominations for the upcoming 88th annual Academy Awards, also known as the Oscars, which recognized virtually all white acting performances.

This year and 2015 was the first time since 1997-1998 that not one Black actor was nominated for either a best actress, best actor, best supporting actress or best supporting actor award in consecutive years.

Most notable snubs included Will Smith for “Concussion,” Michael B. Jordan in the title role of “Creed,” Samuel L. Jackson for “The Hateful Eight” and Idris Elba for “Beasts of No Nation.” On top of these gross omissions, not one Black director was nominated, including, for instance, Ryan Coogler for “Creed.” The only actor nominated for “Creed” was white actor Sylvester Stallone.

Coogler was also snubbed for directing the 2013 movie “Fruitvale Station,” about the real transit police murder of a young Black man, Oscar Grant, on a Bay Area Rapid Transit subway platform in Oakland, Calif. Jordan brilliantly played Grant.

The popular and critically acclaimed “Straight Outta Compton,” a biopic about the hip-hop group N.W.A., garnered only one award for best original screenplay — for its white writers. The film’s African-American director, F. Gary Gray, was also overlooked by the Academy. The only real bright spot was the best documentary nomination for the astonishing “What Happened, Miss Simone?” on the life of the late, great, artist and political activist Nina Simone, co-produced by her daughter, Lisa Simone.

Once the 2016 nominations were made public, the Twitter feed #OscarsSoWhite exploded with disappointment and strong criticism, as it has in past years.

Chris Rock, the Black comedian and host of the upcoming Academy Awards show on Feb. 28, was also very critical of the nominations and has threatened to curse during the show.

The actor and producer Jada Pickett Smith wrote on Twitter: “At the Oscars ... people of color are always welcomed to give out awards ... even entertain, but we are rarely recognized for our artistic accomplishments. Should people of color refrain from participating altogether?” To take this even further, white Academy members should also participate in a boycott of the Academy ceremony to show anti-racist solidarity.

Director Spike Lee, who received an honorary Oscar in November for more than 30 years of filmmaking, stated on Jan. 14: “We may win an Oscar now and then, but an Oscar is not going to fundamentally change how Hollywood does business. I’m not talking about Hollywood stars. I’m talking about executives. We’re not in the room.” (New York Times, Jan. 15)

Black women actors like Viola Davis, Taraji P. Henson, Kerry Washington and others have found steady acting on TV thanks to Black producers, creators and writers like Shonda Rhimes and Lee Daniels.

In an article written by this author on March 1, 2012, entitled, “Why ‘Viola Davis was robbed’ of an Academy Award,” the main focus was the racist and sexist character of the Academy’s membership. Not much has changed four years later except for an increased count of Academy members, who now number over 6,100.

Just a handful of new members are people of color, including immigrants. Below are excerpts from that article; go to [tinyurl.com/WWViolaDavisOscars](http://tinyurl.com/WWViolaDavisOscars) to read the entire article.

### ‘A good, old white boys’ club’

“On Feb. 19, [2012] the Los Angeles Times published an extensive study entitled, “Unmasking the Academy: Oscar Voters Overwhelmingly White, Male,” which exposed institutionalized racism. The article states that out of the 5,765 voting members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, 94 percent are white and 77 percent are male. The eight-month study was based on interviews of Academy members and their representatives, which helped to confirm the identity of 89 percent of the present membership.

“The Academy includes selected people who work in front of and behind the camera. Only 2 percent are Black and less than 2 percent are Latino/a. Is it any wonder there have been only five African-American actors in the Academy’s 84-year history to win best lead actor awards? They are Sidney Poitier, Denzel Washington, Jamie Foxx and Forest Whitaker; Halle Berry is the only African-American woman.

“Out of the Academy’s 15 branches, whites compose 90 percent of each branch, except for the acting branch, which is 88 percent white. The Academy’s executive and writer branches are a startling 98 percent white. The cinematography and visual effects branches are 95 percent white.

“Sexism is also rampant within the Academy. According to the Writers Guild of America, women made up a mere 17 percent of employed writers in 2011.

Martha Lauzen, in a San Diego State University study, stated that in 2011, women made up 18 percent and 9 percent of the Academy’s producer and director branches, respectively.

“The median age of all Academy voters is 62. Fourteen percent of voters are under the age of 50. Academy membership is for life, whether members still work or not.

“Out of the 43 members of the Academy’s powerful board of governors, only six are women, one of whom is the only person of color on the board.

“The Academy reflects the racism and sexism that are prevalent throughout U.S. capitalist society, from those who control Wall Street’s profits to those who dominate the big-business parties of the Democrats and Republicans. The Academy, since it was founded in 1927, has paid only lip service to promoting affirmative action throughout the film industry for people of color and women.

“Denzel Washington stated: ‘If the country is 12 percent black, make the academy 12 percent black. If the nation is 15 percent Hispanic, make the academy 15 percent Hispanic. Why not?’ (Los Angeles Times, Feb. 19)

“People of color and women involved in TV production do not fare any better. According to a report released by the Directors Guild of America on Sept. 16, based on 2,600 episodes that appeared in primetime across broadcast, basic cable and premium cable during the 2010-2011 season, white males directed 77 percent of all episodes; white females 11 percent; Black males 11 percent and Black females just 1 percent. For one-hour series, white males directed 80 percent of shows; and for half-hour series, white males directed 74 percent.” □

## Iowa protest tells Trump: ‘Stop racist attacks!’

By Mike Kuhlenbeck  
Des Moines, Iowa

Protesters denounced Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump’s “racist attacks” during his live, Jan. 15 appearance on the “Morning Joe” TV program in this city.

Over 30 demonstrators rallied before dawn at Java Joe’s Coffeehouse to protest the real estate billionaire for his “racist, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim rants” during an interview with cable news talking heads Joe Scarborough, Mika

Brzezinski and Willie Geist of MSNBC.

Trump’s interview was part of his recent campaign stop in the Hawkeye State weeks before the Iowa caucuses on Feb. 1. “I really want to win Iowa,” Trump told the audience. Demonstrators inside and outside the building wanted to make it clear that he was in a minority in that regard.

During Trump’s on-air interview, his opponents loudly chanted, “Stop the Hate!” which led to hostile comments from the “Morning Joe” hosts. Brzezinski said: “Get them out. Don’t give them their

coats.” Scarborough joked: “It’s minus 80 out there and meteors are coming down. Throw them out.”

The rally was organized informally by local activists. Groups represented included the American Friends Service Committee, Des Moines for Palestine, Iowans for Bernie Sanders and others.

Two days prior to the demonstration, AFSC Iowa Program Coordinator Kathleen McQuillen told Iowa Free Press that if Trump “chooses to use hateful, abusive language there are people everywhere who will stand up to expose and oppose his hostility.”

Activist Katie Huerter, AFSC peace-building associate, said the rally was organized to show Trump, Hillary Rodham Clinton and all major media that Iowa welcomes refugees, immigrants and diversity. Racists, however, are unwelcome.

Trump calls for building a wall on the border between Mexico and the U.S., for assassinating family members of suspected terrorists and for herding Muslims into internment camps. He has been endorsed by the White Nationalist group American National Super PAC and former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, David Duke.



Iowans put out the unwelcome mat for Donald Trump’s racism.

“It is worth noting that there would be less need for protests if the mainline media would do their jobs,” McQuillen told WW.

Demonstrators carried signs with slogans like “Don’t Fence Me In,” “Climate Change is Not a Hoax,” and other rebuttals to the candidate’s fascist-like comments.

“There have been demonstrations in other cities and I hope they will continue as long as any of the candidates demean and scapegoat specific populations,” McQuillen said.

Mike Kuhlenbeck is a journalist, activist and National Writers Union UAW Local 1981/AFL-CIO member from Des Moines, Iowa.

## ‘Concussion’ tells truth about NFL medical neglect

Continued from page 2

roes when they’re on the field, yet deny their condition when they’re finally finished breaking their ribs and fibulas for our entertainment? This is the story of proud gladiators dying in disgrace, vibrant families left in ruins.

The beauty and power of a film like “Concussion” is that it pulls back the covers of just how heartless, greedy and unethical the ruling-class elite can be. While the primary concern of owners is the value of their entertainment product, team doctors are paid serious sums of money to completely ignore existing player conditions: headaches, torn ligaments, concussions, sprained ankles and more. Instead of receiving proper assessments, current and former players are often misdiagnosed and denied effective treatment.

As a professional organization, the NFL has known about CTE for years, yet refuses to acknowledge the long-term impact of repeated high-speed collisions on NFL players’ mental and psychological health. Instead, coaches, management and team doctors resort to Vicodin, Percocet and Zoloft in order to “keep the show going.”

To the worker-athlete, professional football is the ultimate team sport, a game of honor, skill and great sacrifice. To the NFL, however, professional football is merely a business of entertainment fueled by the American Dream, young bodies and expendable labor. “Concussion” effectively illustrates the importance of truth, honor and courage over exploitation, capitalism and big business entertainment. □

# Baltimore PPA leads housing fight

By David Card  
Baltimore

In September, women at the Gilmore Homes public housing complex began to publicly complain of regular sexual abuse by repair workers, criminal abuse that had gone on for several years. Residents had been forced to perform sexual acts in exchange for the necessary repairs. The housing commissioner, Paul T. Graziano, had been made aware of the situation several times and consistently failed to remove the abusers from their positions. In essence, he covered it up. The women banded together and filed a lawsuit against the Housing Authority seeking justice and an end to the years of sexual abuse.

The women who brought the lawsuit against the housing authority won a settlement on Jan. 8. The victims of the abuse will be awarded up to \$8 million, depending on the number of victims that ultimately come forward.

Workers World Party and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, in conjunction with the People's Power Assembly, decided to launch their own investigation into public housing condi-

tions in Baltimore. Activists went door to door in Gilmore Homes, asking residents about their experiences with public housing and the state of their homes with regard to repairs. What was found was horrific.

The very fact that repair workers had the sort of leverage required to demand sex for repairs, and the women desperate enough to be forced into it, speaks volumes about the prevailing conditions in public housing in Baltimore. At nearly every home, the story was virtually the same: The residents would report repairs that needed to be made and the management would practically ignore them. One woman reported not having working heat in her home for seven whole years, forcing her to attempt to heat her home with the oven: a dangerous solution born out of necessity! The terrible conditions that were seen also included broken windows, black mold growing uncontrolled, rodent and pest infestations, and severe water damage.

While the case of the woman without heat for her home was perhaps one of the most egregious cases of a violation of human dignity, all of these issues are chronic and by no means short term.

Many residents said that their issues had gone on for months or even years, with not even an attempt to fix them made by the housing authority.

The incredible public response of the community combined with the outrageous conditions found in the housing complex have led the PPA to begin a campaign demanding justice for public housing residents.

## Continuing the work of Dr. King

The year 2016 is an important year in the struggle for housing justice in the U.S., as it marks the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Chicago Freedom Movement by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In 1966, Dr. King traveled to Chicago and, together with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, began a struggle against slums and discrimination. The struggle there was instrumental in forcing the U.S. government to pass the 1968 Fair Housing Act, which ended legal segregation in housing based on race.

While the legal segregation of the mid-20th century has been defeated, national oppression and de facto segregation are still very much a reality throughout the country.

Baltimore is no exception. The slums of Baltimore, which include both private and public housing, make up a majority of the city and are inhabited overwhelmingly by people of color. Low-wage jobs and unemployment are the norm. The schools are underfunded and opportunities provided to young people are dwindling every year. This situation cannot continue.

Since the first visit to Gilmore Homes, teams of activists have visited many other public housing projects throughout Baltimore on a weekly basis, including McCullough Homes and Latrobe Homes. Activists are recording and compiling evidence of the horrible conditions that exist, while also organizing people in the housing projects to join the struggle.

All of this organization and data will be used to hold a People's Tribunal in Baltimore in late February that will put the city itself on trial for these inhumane conditions. The tribunal will demand the firing of Commissioner Paul Graziano, the making of repairs in the public housing projects, as well as making affordable housing a right in Baltimore. □

# Police killing of child shows brutality of evictions

By Chris Fry

State Constable Clarke Steele shot and killed 12-year-old Ciara Meyer in her home in Penn Township, Pa., on Jan. 11. Steele had come to evict her family from their home because they owed \$1,780.85 for three months' rent.

When Steele arrived at the house, Ciara's father, Donald Meyer, first shut the door, and then opened it again, holding a rifle. Rather than back away, the cop pulled his gun out of the holster and fired. The bullet grazed the adult's arm and struck Ciara, killing her.

Ciara was the 21st person and the first child to be killed by police this year, reported the Jan. 12 Guardian.

In typical capitalist "justice," Meyer — who never fired his weapon — is the one who is charged with aggravated assault, simple assault, "terroristic" threats and reckless endangerment. Steele was not charged.

Note the sharp contrast between this cop's shooting of a resident trying to stop his family from being thrown onto the streets and the state and federal officials' hands-off treatment of the armed, wealthy ranchers who are occupying an Oregon wildlife sanctuary on Indigenous peoples' land.

## Human toll of evictions, foreclosures

This fatal incident puts into sharp focus the ongoing housing crisis that so many working-class families have faced in the U.S., particularly since the Great Recession began in 2008. Oppressed communities across the country have been particularly hit hard.

In Detroit, where 40 percent of residents live below the poverty line, and where property tax rates are among the country's highest, 62,000 homeowners face foreclosure, many because they owe back taxes or huge water bills.

How are Michigan's right-wing Legislature and Gov. Rick Snyder "handling" this housing crisis? In September, their new law took effect. It says that "rightful owners" — often banks and investment

companies that bought homes at "tax auctions" for as little as \$500 — can now lodge criminal rather than civil charges against residents. It also says that "repeat offender" residents trying to stay in their homes can face felony charges. (Reuters, Jan. 6)

Cheryl West, a Detroit resident, had lived in her Victoria Park home for 60 years when all of her belongings were thrown into two dumpsters in May of last year. She was evicted because she owed \$15,600 in back taxes. In 1954, her parents were the first African Americans to purchase their home in the segregated neighborhood. "I'm afraid for a society that condones this sort of treatment of senior citizens," she told the Detroit News. (Oct. 14)

African-American women, who make up 9.6 percent of Milwaukee's population, were 30 percent of those evicted by the city, stated a MacArthur Foundation study that was reported by Common Dreams News Center on June 25, 2014.

These foreclosures and evictions take a terrible psychological toll. City Lab reported on Feb. 20, 2015, on an American Journal of Public Health study, released that month, which revealed that "suicides spurred by severe housing stress — evictions and foreclosures — doubled between 2005 and 2010." It also found that "the overwhelming majority of these suicides (79 percent) took place before the renters or owners actually lost their housing."

In July of last year, two deputies arrived at the home of 60-year-old Glenn Carter in Colonie, a town outside of Albany, N.Y., in order to evict him. Carter had drained all of his financial reserves to pay for his elderly mother's medical expenses. When the deputies opened the back door, Carter shot himself in the head.

These terrible tragedies may only be the beginning. The MarketWatch financial information website reported on Jan. 31, 2015, that a Bankrate.com poll found that about 62 percent of U.S. residents "have no emergency savings for such things as a \$1,000 emergency room visit

or a \$500 car repair."

The article also cited a U.S. Federal Reserve survey, which reported that among those who had savings before 2008, 57 percent had used up some or all of the funds during the banker-caused Great Recession and in its aftermath. Moreover, 56 percent of seniors and a whopping 67 percent of millennials — many burdened by huge student loan debt — do not have enough savings to cover unexpected expenses.

With no real recovery for many workers and oppressed people from the 2008 economic crisis, and signs of a downturn brewing, millions of families are vulnerable to a new wave of foreclosures and eviction.

Across the country, grassroots organizations have been fighting back. As the crisis deepens, the movement which is demanding a moratorium on all foreclosures and evictions is bound to grow and get stronger. □

## Event honors captured Black freedom fighters



Several hundred people filled New York's Martin Luther King Jr. Labor Center on Jan. 17 for the 20th Annual Dinner Tribute to the Families of our Political Prisoners/Prisoners of War. In this photo, Dequi Kioni-Sadiki, chair of the Malcolm X Commemoration Committee, which sponsored the dinner, speaks to these families and with some former political prisoners who were asked to the stage. She honors fallen political prisoners and especially Herman Ferguson, who, with partner Iyalua Ferguson — pictured sitting with a cane — started these dinners to raise commissary funds and build support for political prisoners. To the right of Ferguson is former political prisoner Lynne Stewart.

Dequi explained, "Our political prisoners are living in a nightmare reality that most people could never imagine. Our political prisoners are the vanguard. ... The task is to inspire more people to be active. Freedom will not happen without demands from us!"

Former political prisoner Sekou Odinga also spoke, telling of the repressive racist conditions behind the walls and offering ways that people could be supportive. For more information visit [www.MXCC519.org](http://www.MXCC519.org) and 'like' MXCC on Facebook.

— Story and photo by Anne Pruden

# Boston school bus union leaders return to work

By Martha Grevatt

For 26 months beginning October 2013, when they were falsely accused of staging an illegal walkout, four fired leaders of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union waged an uphill battle against the notorious Veolia/Transdev Corp. to get their jobs back. It took the full mobilization of the militant rank and file, combined with a rock-solid support coalition that united longtime labor leaders with veteran African-American community activists Chuck Turner and Mel King, to win their reinstatement on Dec. 23.

United Steelworkers Local 8751 members were beyond jubilant when President Andre François, Vice President Steve Kirschbaum, Financial Secretary Steve Gillis and Grievance Chair Garry Murchison returned to the bus yards Jan. 5 after the winter holiday break.

François and Local 8751 Guide Chantal S. Casimir — who works in the Reidville yard, where Kirschbaum worked before being fired — described their triumphant return and the struggles that have followed. Right now, a big fight is to get the company to pay the millions of dollars it owes the 900-plus drivers in retroactive pay increases, going back to when the old contract expired in 2014. On Jan. 15 the workers rallied to demand their retro pay.

**Workers World:** How was it, finally going back to work?

**François:** It was electric. Everybody was shaking your hand and hugging you and saying they're happy about it. Each of us went to a particular yard. I went to the one, Charlestown, where I always worked, where the whole yard voted for me except for one person. It was somewhat surreal. The fact that it was a long time coming, you are asking yourself, "Is that for real?" that you are back to start getting a paycheck. You feel relieved with a lot off your shoulders.

You are looking forward to thanking your supporters that were there with you. You are eager to get back at the job and start doing things. The fight is not over, because you are going to face the boss, who is going to renege before the ink is dry. Today [Jan. 13] we had a bunch of conditions we had to fight.

**WW:** What was it like when Steve Kirschbaum came back to work?

**Casimir:** Oh my gosh, it was great. Everybody was really excited to see him. When he came to have a meeting with us we couldn't wait to see him. Everybody was dying to see Steve come back.

It was a great victory, especially for me, because I know they were illegally fired. There were times I had to stay away because it would upset me so bad I couldn't sleep. It was just in my mind so much knowing they didn't do anything, but they got fired. And they got fired for who? For me and all the other drivers. When they came up with the final offer with the contract, the only thing everybody was thinking of was: When are the four coming back? Since they came back we have hope. It's going to take time but everything will fall into place again.

**WW:** How is it now at work?

**François:** I feel that there is so much to do. We are in the yards just about every day. I go to all four yards. We have an issue lately, it is the retro check. A lot of people are glad we are back but every time they see us they ask us, "When are we going to get our retro?" The company is doing a job to get the members mad at us.

They [Transdev] want to bring their own agenda that they never sat down with us to discuss — not in negotiations, not any other time. They want to implement things without talking with us. Before [under the previous union administration] these committees were in the contract, but they were not functioning. Now we told them they are going to meet — accident review committee, civil rights, safety — but they don't want to do any of that stuff. They turn their heads. And they are mad they had to swallow their pride and bring us back.

The accident review committee, we are going to get that going. They go crazy firing people for minor dents. Incidents are being called preventable accidents. That is because we didn't have the ARC going.

We are going to make sure that they don't set us up again. They act real nasty and they try to divide us. I had to tell them, "I feel in your mind you haven't brought us back, but you have to get it in your mind, we are back." We are equals. We are, all four of us, ready for it.



PHOTOS: TEAM SOLIDARITY  
Top: United Steelworkers Local 8751 President Andre François. Middle: Local 8751 Guide Chantal S. Casimir. Bottom: Team Solidarity leader Fred Floreal.

**Casimir:** It is still a lot going on right now even though the guys are back. They are still fighting with the company for a lot of other things. But right now we feel the hope because they are back. There are lots of things the company used to do to us, but now they are not doing those things.

**WW:** Describe the mood of the membership.

**Casimir:** How do I describe it? I can't speak for everybody but the majority is happy and they are still united. The majority of drivers that I spoke to, they feel a big relief. I can say it's around 90 percent united.

**François:** Oh it's just great. They are 97 to 98 percent united. The mood couldn't be any better.

We're just taking it day by day and the struggle continues.

**WW:** What else would you add?

**Casimir:** What I would add is that I would thank Workers World. We would not have won without you guys. Because of the four guys [the fired leaders] and your support we have a great contract — a big victory. □

# On the picket line

By Matty Starrdust and Sue Davis

## Phoenix bus drivers strike Veolia/Transdev

"You always hear about workers versus evil corporations — this is that situation," said Michael Cornelius, lead negotiator for Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1433 at a press conference about a possible strike of 650 public transit bus drivers in Phoenix. (PhoenixNewTimes.com, Jan. 4) The union struck for seven days after negotiations with contractor Veolia/Transdev collapsed Jan. 8. At issue were wages, bathroom breaks and bereavement time.

In anticipation of the strike, management canceled workers' health insurance on Jan. 7, despite payments made by workers in advance. "I'm just disgusted. We're human beings. Even if we have our differences, they have no integrity to do this to us," said driver Gilbert Balderas, whose cancer treatment medications cost him \$17,000 a month without insurance. (Jan. 12)

On Jan. 15, the union reported on its Facebook page that a five-year contract had been ratified by an 85 percent majority vote and drivers would return to work the next day. By dropping 1 percent from the wage increase, Local 1433 was able to end a two-tier structure for vacations and retirement. "Now we can focus on the overall issue of the outsourcing of our public transit system," said Local 1433.

## Seattle drivers for hire win union rights

The Seattle City Council passed an ordinance unanimously on Dec. 14 extending collective bargaining rights to for-hire drivers. Typically classified as "independent contractors," taxicab operators and drivers for services like Uber and Lyft are not protected by the National Labor Rights Act. As a result, these workers are often forced to work long hours for pay that falls well below the minimum wage. "Since I started driving for Uber, Uber has cut our pay without notice, terminated drivers without giving a reason and blocked our efforts to improve our working conditions," said driver Peter Kuel. (TheStand.org, Dec. 15) Under the new law, drivers can elect union representation to negotiate for wages, hours and working conditions.

"This bill means a lot to us drivers," said Fasil Teka. "It can have a positive impact, not just for drivers in Seattle, but for independent contractors across the country." The drivers worked with Teamsters Local 117, which represents 16,000 workers in Washington state, to form the App-Based Drivers Association and the Western Washington Taxicab Operators Association.

## NLRB strikes down Whole Foods regulation

In a Dec. 24 ruling, the National Labor Relations Board struck down a Whole Foods regulation barring workers from taking photographs or recording conversations with management on the job. In the 2-1 decision, the NLRB found that Whole Foods' policy interfered with the workers' legally protected right to document abuses and unsafe conditions and ordered the chain to cease enforcement of the regulation and to notify all employees of their rights. The complaint was filed by the Food and Commercial Workers and the Worker Organizing Committee of Chicago. (cbsnews.com, Dec. 29) Whole Foods appealed the decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit on Jan. 5. Stay tuned.

## AFL-CIO takes stand against sexual harassment

On Oct. 8, the AFL-CIO and eight U.S. groups supporting women's rights on the job sent a letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel requesting that workplace policies of German corporation Deutsche Telekom that have been found to harm women workers in the U.S. be immediately rescinded. The appeal was sent to Merkel because the German government is a major shareholder (30 percent) in DT.

Two independent NLRB cases initiated by the Communication Workers against T-Mobile, DT's U.S. subsidiary (one decided last March, the other last August), found that company policies restricted U.S. employees' rights to address sexual harassment and other abuses of power under U.S. law.

An in-depth Reuters article reported Jan. 7 that the issue is still a hot topic. ("Deutsche Telekom under scrutiny over working conditions at U.S. arm T-Mobile") However, the German finance ministry refused comment for the article. □

# Detroit teachers expose school crisis

By Kris Hamel  
Detroit

A series of rolling sickouts for several months by teachers across the Detroit Public Schools system culminated on Monday, Jan. 11, with the closure of virtually every school. The sickouts continued during the rest of the school week, while hundreds of teachers and supporters marched on DPS headquarters in Detroit and at the state Capitol building in Lansing, Mich.

The teachers' actions brought into sharp focus the crisis facing teachers, staff and students in public schools throughout the city and the deplorable conditions these workers and youth face.

More than a half-billion dollars in debt, DPS has been run for years by a state-appointed emergency manager who has usurped the elected school board in all decision making. Teachers, who have taken pay and benefit cuts, are severely understaffed. They often have 50 or more students in a class, with not enough textbooks and amid dreadful conditions.

Teachers and students in crowded

classrooms huddle in jackets because of inadequate heat in dilapidated buildings with crumbling infrastructure, often containing black mold and other toxins. Fungi growing on the walls and rodent infestations are not uncommon. Bathrooms, with many of their fixtures missing or broken, have no toilet paper. Supplies are short or nonexistent. Even Mayor Mike Duggan saw a dead mouse and "deeply disturbing" conditions when he made a media show out of touring some of the schools on Jan. 12, the day after 64 schools were closed due to teacher sickouts.

Detroit schools lost 84,000 students, or two-thirds of DPS enrollment, between 2005 and 2012. This was largely due to lack of jobs and the mortgage foreclosure crisis, which struck this majority African-American city with fraudulent subprime home loans, coupled with the proliferation of private charter schools and the opening up of suburban school districts to rob Detroit of many of its highest-achieving students.

Gov. Rick Snyder, a capitalist and reactionary, appointed an emergency man-

ager who took the city of Detroit into bankruptcy. The emergency manager, appointed under a law that guarantees the payment of debt service to the banks, placed the Detroit Public Schools into unpayable bonds.

## No. 1 priority: Pay the banks

Today, the number one item in the DPS budget is loan repayment and debt service to the banks and financial institutions. In February, the debt service is set to skyrocket ("balloon"), with the total debt up 74 percent from last year and with debt payments representing a whopping 97 percent of DPS's payroll costs. Debt payments of 10 percent of payroll costs are considered alarming.

Snyder is now under fire for sitting on information and failing to take action while the children and residents of Flint, Mich. — Flint's EM when that crisis started is the current DPS emergency manager! — have been poisoned by lead and other toxic metals in the city's water system.

Snyder's \$715 million solution to the

DPS crisis? Make up a new system that is debt-free, alongside the current one, to manage the schools where debt is paid down. However, the caveat is that the schools will continue to be run by a board dominated by Snyder appointees. Detroit schools will not return to control by an elected board until 2017, and even then the elected board will be barred from choosing a superintendent.

In addition, the new school board will have no oversight over the many charter schools which have proliferated in Detroit or over the Education Achievement Authority, a special district that manages "underperforming schools." The EAA has been riddled by corruption and failed to provide students even a minimum education.

Mass actions by teachers, after years of complaints that went nowhere, have finally brought this crisis to the light of day. Teachers, parents, students and community members, including the elected Detroit School Board in exile, continue to fight the state for control of the Detroit schools and an end to the financial crisis and austerity that have brought suffering to so many. □

## Poisoned by GM and racism, Flint demands water justice

Continued from page 1

the Genesee County Jail were given safe drinking water.

Officials appointed by Gov. Snyder to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality had stated that anti-corrosion chemicals were unnecessary. The pipes are now corroded beyond repair. It will cost \$1.5 billion to repair Flint's water infrastructure.

On Jan. 5, Gov. Snyder declared a state of emergency in Flint due to forceful community pressure. He "mobilized" the Michigan National Guard, said the media, but only seven soldiers were deployed to deliver bottled water and filtration supplies to 100,000 people in need. The door-to-door campaign is barely underway. People who don't have cars are walking or bicycling a mile or more to water pick-up sites and then carrying cases of water home in bitter cold.

On Jan. 16, President Barack Obama declared a federal emergency, pledging \$5 million — a drop in the bucket — in federal aid.

There is mass concern and outrage. Water rights' activists and unions are delivering water to Flint. Some Flint residents have filed a class action lawsuit demanding the governor and 13 other state and city officials be tried for negligence; the suit also seeks damages.

The water crises in Flint and Detroit, where tens of thousands of households have no water or face shutoffs, have united water rights' activists in both cities. Dozens of Detroiters have attended rallies in Flint. Activists from around Michigan occupied the State House rotunda on Jan. 13.

Celebrities like Cher, who drew headlines suggesting Snyder deserved the firing squad, and Flint native Michael Moore have spoken out. Moore blasted Snyder at a Jan. 16 rally in Flint. Cher and Moore have donated water.

The militant activism of Flint group Water You Fighting For made public the city's water crisis. These activists brought a delegation to Detroit's Martin Luther King march on Jan. 18.

"Nobody should have to be living like this," declared Kerry Wheeler, a moth-

er of an 11-year-old. (Detroit Free Press, Jan. 17)

## Flint, Detroit and the banks

The other new outrage is that Flint will begin shutting off water to some 1,800 households that are behind in their water bills. Some residents refuse, on principle, to pay for water they cannot drink or use for washing. Others cannot afford the high rates — the highest in Michigan — when they have to buy bottled water. None of the purported \$12 million saved annually by unhooking from Detroit's water system was passed on to water users.

All of Genesee County, encompassing Flint and its suburbs, will eventually join the new Karegnondi Water Authority that will bypass Detroit and draw water directly from Lake Huron. Only Flint was switched to the polluted Flint River in 2014, while the rest of the county stayed with Detroit's water system. When Gov. Snyder finally ordered Flint to reconnect to Detroit's water supply in October, the damage had already been done.

A spin on why Flint's emergency manager decided to drop DWSD early is that Detroit was raising water fees to fund its post-bankruptcy turnaround. All of the outlying town governments that purchase water from DWSD, including Flint, buy it at wholesale and sell it at retail, generating funds for budgetary items. But when rates go up, Detroit is scapegoated. This pits two of Michigan's poorest cities — both with an African-American majority and a poverty rate near 40 percent — against one another.

Both city budgets, including funds allocated to water departments, are drowning in obligations to bondholders. Flint's water debt is around \$20 million, with \$2.2 million due each year to the banks. Now this predatory debt is being used to justify the shutoffs!

Kristen Moore, Flint's public relations director, wrote, "Per state law, the city must set rates and charges for the city's water system in order to provide revenue sufficient to maintain ongoing operations and maintenance of its system as well as payment of outstanding bond payment obligations." (Detroit News, Jan. 15)

Public Act 436, the law granting broad executive powers to governor-appointed emergency managers to oversee cities and school districts in financial distress, mandates that banks be paid before any other budgetary items are considered.

The racist looting of Detroit's assets, carried out by Snyder-appointed Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr during the city's bankruptcy in 2014, includes the absorption of DWSD into the suburb-dominated Great Lakes Water Authority. Detroit's water department still owes billions of dollars to the banks, including \$537 million in fraudulent interest rate swaps. DWSD's loss of Flint, its largest customer, as ordered by another governor appointee, is part of the plan to undermine DWSD and make it ripe for takeover by the GLWA, which is a potential bridge to privatization.

Veolia Corporation, named as a "cost-cutting consultant" to the GLWA, has set itself up to appear as a rescuer of the troubled water departments of Detroit and Flint. This French-based transnational company is involved in everything from mass transit to water to helping polluters cover their tracks, and specializes in austerity.

In March 2015 Flint's emergency manager ordered the city to pay Veolia \$40,000 for a 160-hour study of the city's water issues. Residents had complained for almost a year about rashes, hair loss and other health issues. Veolia recommended \$3 million in chemical additives and filtration improvements after a spike in trihalomethanes (THMs) violated the federal Clean Water Act.

The rise in THMs, carcinogens that cause genetic mutations and miscarriages, was caused by the use of chemicals to kill E. coli. Veolia recommended anti-corrosive chemicals — but only to treat "aesthetic" concerns about the water's foul color, odor and taste. The possibility of lead poisoning and Legionnaires' disease due to the water's corrosive quality was not mentioned in Veolia's report. The 11-page, \$40,000 document ignored the obvious: Go back to Detroit's water system.

Veolia should pay for its role in poisoning Flint. Instead, Veolia is in a prime position to win a lucrative water contract

in both Flint and Detroit. Flint cannot pay for a new water infrastructure, and Detroit's water department is billions of dollars in debt.

## A case against capitalism

Try as they might, all the governor's men and women can't put things back together again. The whole world knows of their crimes.

The fight for water justice won't be won, however, by causing a few politicians' heads to roll. Ultimately, the poisoning of Flint was caused by the capitalist system that puts profits ahead of people and the environment.

The Flint River was a pristine flowing river from the time of the glacier melts about 10,000 years ago. It was Flint's water source until 1966. By then it had become so polluted that Flint had to turn to Detroit for water access. How was this allowed?

There was no mass environmental movement, and the Environmental Protection Agency had not yet been established. Flint was General Motors' birthplace and still beholden to the auto corporation. Who was going to stop GM from dumping industrial waste into the Flint River?

GM has left a 100-year legacy, where their now-closed plants once stood, of arsenic, chromium, mercury, lead, solvents and other toxins that will take centuries to dissolve. The auto corporation's 2009 bankruptcy relieved the new GM of any obligation to clean up "Old GM's" mess.

If cash-starved Flint needed to cut costs and draw water from a river which is still badly polluted, who has impoverished the city? When GM closed nine of its 10 Flint plants, the city lost its prime source of tax revenue. Foreclosures caused by predatory lending have eroded property tax income. Debt to the banks is eating away at the city's budget. This is all because of the capitalists' golden rule: profits first!

The poisoning of Flint was due to a convergence of economic and environmental devastation that — like the presence of lead in the water supply — was entirely preventable. It is not the first time a community has been poisoned by capitalist greed and austerity. Only a socialist revolution can make it the last. □

## PART 2

# Changing the environment: What the Paris conference showed

By Deirdre Griswold

Jan. 18 — Stock markets around the world have been sliding downward for the last two weeks, propelled in large part by the news that the glut of oil has grown worse despite the shutting down of many wells. By Jan. 15, crude oil had fallen below \$30 a barrel for the first time in 13 years.

The mood in financial circles is doom and gloom. Because of the heavy debt load throughout the world, including in the United States, a downturn has the potential of spinning out of control. The banks and other financial institutions are the core of modern capitalism. They rake in interest on huge loans based on the assumption that economies will keep on growing, no matter what the growth is based on. Fancy automobiles, mansions and private jets are at least, if not more, stimulating to the economy than health care, affordable housing and healthy food. So are industries that wreck the environment.

Here, in a nutshell, is an illustration of why achieving a sustainable environment is so impossible under capitalism.

One might think: Demand for oil has decreased. Wonderful! Less greenhouse gases to warm the planet! But one would be wrong, according to Wall Street.

At a time when the warming of the planet can no longer be denied — even trendy Miami Beach finds itself often underwater because of rising sea levels — you wouldn't know these problems exist if all you read were the business pages. There, it's sell more oil, sell more cars, sell, sell, sell. Or the whole thing will fall apart.

Capitalism has been a dynamic economic system, remaking the world in just a few centuries. Instead of the small-scale individual crafts that prevailed under feudalism, capitalism developed factories where the productivity of labor was raised by a phenomenal amount as individual skills were replaced by machines and eventually by the assembly line. In today's economy, shaped to serve the profit interests of imperialist billionaires, this division of labor has gone global.

With the deskilling of the individual worker alongside a tremendous increase in productivity, the workers' share of the value produced has plummeted. This widening wealth gap is well known and is grinding down workers everywhere, while also exacerbating national oppression and super-exploitation, especially of people of color.

Capitalism's dynamic growth has come at the expense of the environment.

The last thing any boss wants to factor into the cost of production is what damage it has done to the air, the water and the land — not to speak of the people who live in contaminated areas, like the residents of Love Canal in Niagara Falls, N.Y., back in the 1970s or today in Flint, Mich. In both cases, poisonous industrial wastes have sickened a whole generation.

## Socialism vs. capitalism

The basic theme of this series is that it will take socialism — not a "regulated" capitalism but the revolutionary ousting

from power of the capitalist ruling class and its agents — to reorganize human society and economic activity in order to have a sustainable planet. We have described some of what the People's Republic of China has done toward this end.

China? Doesn't China have the worst pollution of all?

Yes, it has severe environmental problems, some that go back centuries, and the Chinese government acknowledges this. Not only acknowledges it, but takes it very, very seriously. That is why climatologists were excited when, for the recent climate conference in Paris, China prepared a detailed plan to lower its greenhouse gas emissions.

China is not an ideal socialist society, and doesn't pretend to be. Many of its environmental problems can be linked to what it calls "socialism with Chinese characteristics." That means the current leaders have made big concessions to capitalist mechanisms that they have felt are necessary to overcome the extreme underdevelopment the country faced at the time of its revolution. It also means they do not advocate that revolutionary socialists all over the world follow their path, which has evolved through many internal political struggles. The masses of people have not been passive observers of China's trajectory, but are extremely active and militant in raising their demands.

So how will China's conduct affect the outcome of the growing climate crisis?

Let's look at the Paris meeting. Out of that global event came an agreement that the warming of the planet should be held to less than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit). Note the word "should," not "must" or "shall."

This was hailed as a great breakthrough. However, it didn't commit any country to anything. The U.S., in particular, has fought at every one of these conferences to prevent firm targets being set for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions cuts.

## U.S. threats at Paris conference

According to a recent article about the conference, "When U.S. lawyers discovered a phrase declaring that wealthier countries 'shall' set economy-wide targets for cutting their GHG pollution, Secretary of State John Kerry told the delegates, 'We cannot do this and we will not do this. And either it changes or President Obama and the United States will not be able to support this agreement.' So it was changed to 'should.'" (The Nation, Jan. 4)

Even a statement that vague, which didn't say how big the cuts must be, just that there "shall" be cuts, was rejected by the U.S. government. The U.S., by the way, continues to be the world's largest polluter on a per capita basis.

There is nothing in the final agreement to threaten the workings of capitalism, and especially the fortunes of the fossil fuel magnates who have run the show here ever since Rockefeller Standard Oil Co. took over 90 percent of U.S. oil production in 1890.

John Kerry and the Obama administration are supposed to represent the lib-

eral pole in U.S. politics. So what hope is there that any U.S. capitalist government will rein in the giant corporations — which would see the world destroyed rather than give up a small fraction of their profits?

By contrast, China went to the Paris Conference with a detailed plan and commitment to redirect its economy away from fossil fuels and toward nonpolluting sources of energy. Its plan also includes measures to improve energy efficiency and transmission and to reforest vast areas in order to sequester carbon from the atmosphere.

What makes China different — and why the capitalist rulers see it as an enemy — is that it had a revolution in which the oppressed masses took the power away from the ruling classes. The leaders of that revolution were communists. China has since made big concessions to capitalists and capitalism, but the state born out of that revolution has not been overthrown.

Just a generation ago most Chinese people were terribly poor. Yet China today is able to do what Kerry himself said the U.S. absolutely cannot do. Western capitalists understand the difference, but of course put their own spin on it.

The Economist, a British financial magazine, wrote back on April 10, 2013: "In the West it is often said that one of China's chief advantages in dealing with climate change is that its leaders can impose tough policies that democratic systems shy away from." Translated: It's democratic for the big fossil fuel billionaires and their paid-for politicians to prevent capitalist governments from adopting concrete measures to cut emissions.

So what are China's "tough policies"?

The article continues: "[China's] carbon emissions are growing at half the rate of GDP [gross domestic product], a bit better than the global average. China has also boosted investment in renewable energy far more than any other country. It has the world's most ambitious plans for building new nuclear power stations. To combine economic growth and environmental improvement, China has concentrated on reducing carbon intensity — emissions per unit of GDP. This fell by about 20 percent in the past five years and the government is aiming to cut it by 40-45 percent by 2020, compared with 2005. Most of the

improvement is coming from a scheme to bully 1,000 state-owned enterprises (SOEs) into using energy more efficiently — arguably the single most important climate policy in the world.

"The enterprises sign a contract with the central government agreeing to meet efficiency targets, abide by new building codes and install environmental-control equipment. This helped Chinese cement-makers (who produce as much of the stuff as the rest of the world put together) reduce the energy needed to make a tonne of cement by 30 percent in the 10 years to 2009. The scheme has now been expanded to 10,000 SOEs, covering the majority of polluters.

"China is also generating energy more efficiently. According to the World Bank, better operations and the closure of [outmoded] plants helped to push the average thermal efficiency of its coal-fired power stations from 31 percent in 2000 to 37 percent in 2010; America's remained flat, at 33 percent.

"The other big energy change is China's vast renewables program. The government aims to get 20 percent of its energy from such sources by 2020, the same target as in richer Europe. The largest slice will come from hydropower, which accounted for around 15 percent of total energy in 2012 (with nuclear power at 2 percent). But the big rise comes from wind and solar: the government will roughly double investment in these two in 2011-16, compared with 2006-10. Chinese investment in renewables puts others to shame. It amounted to \$67 billion in 2012, says REN21, a network of policymakers, more than three times what Germany spent. The aim is to have 100 gigawatts of wind capacity and 35 gigawatts of solar capacity by 2015. ...

"A few years ago Chinese politicians said such emissions would go on rising at least until 2050. Now mainstream Chinese opinion says the peak will come in 2030-40. Academics at the Energy Research Institute and CASS reckon it could come earlier — in 2025-30. Compared with what seemed likely a few years ago, that would be a big achievement."

That was written almost three years ago. China has not only fulfilled its goals but in many cases already exceeded them.

*Next: What way forward?*

## Global warming shuts down subway tunnels

By G. Dunkel

In New York City, some 300,000 people use the "L" subway train every workday to travel between Brooklyn and Manhattan. There are not any viable alternatives to this train for Brooklyn residents.

One of the subway tunnels damaged by Hurricane Sandy in 2012 has been repaired, but the Metropolitan Transit Authority has eight more to fix. The Canarsie Tube, which is the tunnel the L uses, was extensively flooded with salt water by the superstorm. Since salt water is extremely corrosive, this tube is in dire need of repair.

In early January of this year, the MTA announced that it was raising proposals on repairing the Canarsie Tube. The MTA laid out three options: Close the tube entirely for three years; close one tunnel but continue to use the other in the tube; or

do the work on weekends. Any of these options would be a major inconvenience for hundreds of thousands of people and involve additional hours spent traveling.

It has not been fully established whether the unprecedented track of Superstorm Sandy — which started its existence as a late-season hurricane and became a deadly storm surge that created much damage, damage that remains today — is due to atmospheric warming created in large part by man-made greenhouse gas emissions.

A 2013 report by scientists at NASA and Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Observatory establishes that such storms will become much more frequent events as the world's climate gets warmer. (New York Times, Jan. 24)

New York City will not escape the effects of global warming, even if it is one of global capitalism's leading financial centers. □



## Capitalism at a Dead End

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

For more information on these books and other writings by the author, Fred Goldstein, go to [LowWageCapitalism.com](http://LowWageCapitalism.com)

Available at online major booksellers

# Burkina Faso hotel attacked

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**  
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Gunmen attacked a four-star hotel in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on Jan. 15, highlighting so-called “Islamist extremist” organizations’ operations in West Africa — and the role of Burkina Faso and other regional states as partners in French and United States “counterterrorism” operations.

The attacks took place at the Splendid Hotel, a facility popular with foreign nationals, diplomats and military operatives from Europe and North America. Nearby Cappuccino Café was sprayed with bullets, leaving many casualties.

After a several-hour standoff involving more than 100 hostages, Burkinabe police and soldiers, led by French and U.S. Special Forces, stormed the hotel and retook the area. Paris and Washington maintain military operatives in this landlocked nation and coordinate a task force ostensibly designed to track down members of al-Qaida of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and similar organizations. (BBC, Jan. 18)

Hostages released after the operations said gunmen targeted those who appeared to be of European ancestry; many lay wounded after being hit by bullets. One U.S. citizen, six Canadians, French, Dutch and Swiss nationals were among the 29 people who died.

Burkina Faso’s government declared three days of national mourning beginning on Jan. 17 and announced that police and military forces stepped up security measures there in conjunction with neighboring states, including Mali, which has experienced similar incidents.

Newly elected President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré stated, “These truly barbaric criminal acts carried out against innocent people, claimed by the criminal organization al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), seek to destabilize our

country and its republican institutions, and to undermine efforts to build a democratic, quiet and prosperous nation.” (Aljazeera, Jan. 18)

The online agency SITE, which monitors global posts on such actions, reported that AQIM had taken responsibility.

## Power struggles add to instability

The impoverished state of Burkina Faso underwent a national uprising in October 2014 that ousted longtime Western-backed dictator Blaise Compaoré. After mass demonstrations pushed for Compaoré’s removal, another coup occurred illustrating divisions in the military.

In September, an attempted coup by the Regiment of Presidential Security (RSP), headed by Gen. Gilbert Diendéré, sought to oust interim President Michael Kafando weeks before the election. Diendéré was a former ally of the ousted Compaoré, who is now in Ivory Coast. Nevertheless, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was elected as the new head of state on Nov. 29.

In 2015, during the transition and period leading to the national elections, Diendéré attempted to take power ostensibly to try to halt the election and change the character of the constitutional model. Decisions regarding the elections and the current government’s composition resulted from negotiations among various political interests, the military and envoys from the regional Economic Community of West African States.

Pascaline Compaoré, a junior fellow at the Conflict Prevention and Risks Analysis Division, noted in an article posted Jan. 15 on the website of the Institute of Security Studies in Dakar, Senegal, “[Former President] Compaoré’s regime depended heavily on the ... Regiment of Presidential Security. Despite the former president’s ousting, the RSP continued to interfere in the political transition

process. Some of its members, under the leadership of General Gilbert Diendéré, were responsible for the 17 September 2015 coup attempt, which resulted in the disintegration of the corps.”

The report continued, “The coup d’état pointed to a lack of concrete progress in neutralizing the RSP. During the first post-putsch cabinet meeting, it had been decided that the RSP should be disarmed and reintegrated into other army postings. That some of these soldiers could continue to threaten the country’s security and stability remains a cause for concern. The dismantling of the RSP created an important security gap, which must be addressed with urgency given the volatility in the region and the backdrop of instability in the country.”

This Jan. 15 attack is not the first; there have been two other incidents in northern and western Burkina Faso. Mali underwent a similar disturbance in November at a hotel housing foreign diplomats and Western military personnel.

Prior to the attacks at the hotel and café, the Burkinabe Ministry of Defense released an advisory reporting that 20 armed men killed a policeman and a civilian in an attack on the village of Tin Abao in the country’s northern region. It was not immediately clear who was behind that incident.

In December, the French embassy warned its citizens not to travel to a national park in eastern Burkina Faso amid reports that Malian-based Islamist groups had pledged to abduct foreign nationals. Al-Mourabitoun, which claimed responsibility for an attack in Mali late last year, said in May that it was holding a Romanian man abducted from northern Burkina Faso.

In other reports, 50 unidentified gunmen carried out an offensive operation against a Burkina Faso security brigade near the western border with Mali in

October; three people were killed. The then-transitional government blamed the incident on disgruntled elements in the RSP who were involved in September’s attempted coup.

## Operation Barkhane and ‘war on terrorism’

Burkina Faso and Mali have become centers in the U.S. and French “war on terrorism.” Large deployments of imperialist Pentagon and French military troops are also in Niger and Chad.

Operation Barkhane, a force based in Chad that was purportedly established to combat Islamist fighters throughout the Sahel region, is stationed at the Splendid Hotel in Burkina Faso. This French-led unit was created in 2014 as the successor to other military contingents in Mali, known as Operation Serval, and Operation Epervier in Chad.

Barkhane consists of a 3,000-person French force permanently headquartered in N’Djamena, Chad’s capital. The operation has representatives from five countries — the former French colonies of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. They are described as the “G5 Sahel.” The military operations units are named after a crescent-shaped dune in the Sahara Desert.

Until recently, Burkina Faso was a major producer of cotton and other agricultural commodities exported to Western states. It has emerged as a major center for gold mining, and is now the fourth largest producer of the mineral on the African continent.

Neighboring Niger contains large deposits of uranium, which is mined and controlled by the French-based Areva nuclear energy corporation. The U.S. has constructed drone stations and other offensive weaponry in Niger in cooperation with Paris to guard its corporate interests. □

## BERLIN

# Thousands march vs. war, capitalism

This article from the German left daily *Junge Welt* was translated by WW Contributing Editor Greg Butterfield. The German original can be found at [www.jungewelt.de/2016/01-11/001.php](http://www.jungewelt.de/2016/01-11/001.php).

By **Sebastian Carlens**

Jan. 11 — Despite the frost, there was no trace of coldness in Berlin on Sunday, Jan. 10, when more than 10,000 people in the capital commemorated Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the murdered founders of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). The large demonstration marched — despite near-freezing temperatures — in the morning for about one and a half hours through Berlin. It ended at the Memorial of the Socialists at the Friedrichsfelde Central Cemetery where, among others, Luxemburg and Liebknecht are honored.

Traditionally, red carnations are laid down in their memory. Left Party politicians also took part in the commemoration of the two revolutionaries. Around 9:30, members of the party leadership and parliamentary group laid a wreath at the tomb, including party chairs Bernd Riexinger and Katja Kipping and parliamentary group chairs Sahra Wagenk-



Berlin commemoration for murdered revolutionaries Luxemburg and Liebknecht.

necht and Dietmar Bartsch.

Over 14,000 people participated in the Luxemburg-Liebknecht demonstration, according to organizers. Organizer Klaus Meinel informed *Junge Welt* that there were more people than last year. Among the demonstrators there was a consistently militant mood — although many of the mostly young protesters had likely participated in political festivities the night before, which traditionally take place on this date in Berlin. The weekend of the Rosa Luxemburg Conference of *Junge Welt* on Saturday and the following day’s march honoring the martyrs

marks the start of the year’s political activities for many left-wing groups and parties.

The march was divided into blocs. Behind the lead banner — “Luxemburg, Liebknecht, Lenin: Nobody is forgotten! Stand up and resist!” — you could see flags of various organizations, including the Left Party and the Socialist German Workers Youth (SDAJ), but also of migrants’ organizations such as the DIDP youth. This was followed by a large group from the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD), an antifascist bloc, then internationalists, youth, and finally the

German Communist Party (DKP).

The call for the demonstration was reminiscent of the anti-militarist attitude of Luxemburg and Liebknecht. It read: “In their spirit — with their clarity and energy — we demonstrate peacefully against wars and exploitation, for humanity and internationalism.”

The participation of German soldiers in the war in Syria, initiated by the Federal Government, and the deployment of Bundeswehr Tornados [fighter planes] were particularly criticized. Banners read: “International solidarity to fight German imperialism!” and “Bundeswehr out of Syria!”

Throughout the day, people came to the memorial for Luxemburg and Liebknecht. Despite icy rain, the revolutionaries were honored in the afternoon by groups of visitors, even after the demonstration had ended.

At the turn of 1918-1919, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht founded the German Communist Party (KPD). Shortly after, both took part in the Spartacist Uprising. The revolutionary attempt was bloodily suppressed. Luxemburg and Liebknecht were captured by the right-wing Freikorps and murdered at the behest of Gustav Noske’s Social Democrats on Jan. 15, 1919. □



## Haiti elections

# 2016 opens with new surge in mass resistance

**Bulletin:** *The verification commission of the Oct. 25 first round of Haiti's presidential election returned a report in early January damning the whole process. Since President Michel Martelly must leave office Feb. 7, his regime's Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) has agreed to hold a second round of voting on Jan. 27. The candidate Jude Célestin, of the opposition LAPEH (Ligue Alternative pour le Progrès et l'Émancipation Haïtienne) party, threatens to withdraw from the second round, which would leave only Jovenel Moïse, of Martelly's current ruling PHTK (Parti Haïtien Tèt Kale) party.*

By Dave Welsh

Jan. 8 — The seemingly irresistible momentum of Haiti's mass movement, combined with convincing evidence of widespread election fraud, have forced a surprising delay in the slow-motion theft of the 2015 national elections.

Faced with December's incredible outpouring of nonstop demonstrations throughout Haiti — and daily revelations of vote rigging and voter suppression in the Aug. 9 and Oct. 25 elections — the authorities were constrained to postpone the runoff that had been set for Dec. 27. But there's no end to the maneuvering by Haiti's ruling elite, outgoing President Martelly and their foreign backers, determined as they are to thwart the popular will in this election.

### U.S. ambassador OKs faked election results

U.S. Ambassador Peter Mulrean said he sees “no evidence of massive electoral fraud.” But his “see no evil” pose is contradicted by Martelly's own election commission. This body disclosed on Jan. 4 that they had studied 1,771 vote tally sheets and found 92 percent had “seri-

ous irregularities” amounting to “massive fraud.” Then, on Jan. 6, thousands marched to denounce Mulrean and Martelly: “Don't steal our votes!”

The 2015 elections were plagued by endless incidents of ballot stuffing, vote buying, armed coercion and naked vote rigging, all the way from polling place to final tabulation. Fanmi Lavalas, long the most popular political party in Haiti, described the Oct. 25 election as “a preplanned fraudulent enterprise that stripped the elections of all credibility” in its petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. ([tinyurl.com/jjmdqx2](http://tinyurl.com/jjmdqx2))

Here are some key facts about the 2015 stolen election: Lavalas, election officials, observers, representatives of the ruling PHTK party and another contesting smaller party, Meksepa, examined 78 randomly selected vote tally sheets and found them all fraudulent. While in U.N. custody, the ballot boxes were switched en route with boxes of pre-filled-out ballots. Kenneth Merten was appointed U.S. Special Haiti Coordinator in August to deal with the election crisis; Merten had overseen Martelly's election in 2010.

The self-described Core Group, which oversaw the Oct. 25 election, consists of the U.S., France and Canada, whose troops invaded Haiti in the 2004 coup; Brazil, which heads the U.N. military occupation of Haiti; the European Union, Organization of American States and Spain. The Core Group accepted CEP's fraudulent election results as “legitimate.”

### International Days in Solidarity with the Haitian People

Inspired by the Haitians' strong response to the election debacle, the Haiti Action Committee issued a call for solidarity actions on Dec. 16 — the 25th anniversary of Haiti's first free election in 1990. That was when Jean-Bertrand Aristide swept into the presidency with

two-thirds of the vote on a platform of social and economic justice for the poor majority. After barely seven months in office, Aristide was overthrown in a U.S.-backed military coup in 1991.

In 2015, after being excluded for 11 years since a second U.S.-sponsored coup in 2004, Aristide's Lavalas party was finally able to run candidates again, headed by presidential standard-bearer Dr. Maryse Narcisse. People in poor neighborhoods all over Haiti welcomed the grass-roots campaign of Dr. Narcisse with obvious joy. And they marched on Dec. 16 against the brazen attempt to steal the election in the cities and also in smaller places like Camp-Perrin and Port-Salut in the south.

Meanwhile, Haiti's overseas supporters were organizing. The call for Dec. 16 solidarity actions was widely promoted. U.S. officials received a flood of emails, phone calls and tweets on Dec. 16 and beyond. The message was (1) stop supporting fraudulent elections in Haiti and (2) stop support for police terror in Haiti. Friends of Haiti organized 25th anniversary actions or teach-ins in Los Angeles; Boston; Miami; Oakland, Calif.; Palo Alto, Calif.; Washington, D.C.; New York City (United Nations); Windsor, Ontario, Canada; Buenos Aires; and London.

### Use of systematic terror

Fraud effectively prevented Haiti's voters from electing candidates of their choice. Instead, the ruling party's hand-picked Jovenel Moïse, a banana exporter and political neophyte, miraculously emerged as the top first-round vote-getter for president.

But state violence played a role in suppressing the vote. National police and paramilitaries fired automatic weapons into working-class areas like Arcahaie and Cite Soleil in the leadup to the Aug. 9 and Oct. 25 elections. Scores of peo-

ple were killed, including two pregnant women and a 7-year-old boy. Some were “disappeared,” never to be heard from again. Later, hooded paramilitary gangs attacked marchers in Port-au-Prince with machetes, pipes, hammers and guns, killing young election protesters as police looked away.

Now people are noticing a rise in killings of local neighborhood organizers. During the Christmas holidays, the newly created special police unit, BOID, continued its killing spree in Lavalas strongholds of Port-au-Prince. But these death-squad types have not deterred the resistance.

### 1804 Haitian Revolution

Many have commented that the Haitian people, in their vast majority, are very aware of their history — proud inheritors of the Revolution of 1791-1804, when Haiti defeated the army of Napoleon, ended plantation slavery and declared independence from France. The story of the Haitian Revolution has been passed on, in the oral tradition, from generation to generation.

How does this connect with their battle in the streets today — to stop the ongoing “electoral coup d'état” and to have their votes counted, their choices honored and their country's sovereignty respected?

“It's on every lip,” said one Lavalas activist we spoke with. “People are saying that in rejecting this stolen election, we are lighting the fires of struggle, continuing the fight for equality and sovereignty that our ancestors fought for 200 years ago.”

Welsh, a delegate to the San Francisco Labor Council, was a member of the Human Rights and Labor Fact Finding Delegation to Haiti in October, which reported on systematic voter suppression, violence, fraud and intimidation in the election process. A longer article is posted on [workers.org](http://workers.org).

## Argentina

# Public workers under attack

By Carl Lewis

Argentina's rightist government, led by newly elected President Mauricio Macri of the Cambiemos political coalition, has terminated the employment of 10,000 federal and state employees in the first seven days of 2016. Macri won the second round of a close election against Daniel Scioli of the center-left faction of the Frente para la Victoria (an electoral front) and the Justicialista Party (a continuation of the Peronist Party) in November.

From May 2003 until last November, former President Nestor Kirchner, who died in 2007, and his widow, President Cristina Fernandez, had set the tone for Argentine politics. While not challenging the capitalist system, they implemented a moderate social democratic program that provided some benefits for the poor and the working class — compared with the neoliberalism of the 1990s — and maintained some independence of Argentina from U.S. imperialist domination.

Cambiemos is a coalition of market oriented Argentine business elites that openly promises neoliberalism and closer adherence to U.S. interests. In brief, neoliberalism means using government to shift wealth from the poor and workers to the capitalists and foreign investors. The shift in Argentina is part of a wave

of U.S. instigated attacks on progressive and pro-socialist governments in Latin America, especially Venezuela and Bolivia but including Brazil and Argentina.

Immediately after Macri entered office on Dec. 10, he and the newly appointed cabinet of ministers created a new ministerial office termed the “Ministry of Modernization.” This ministry was to “review” the jobs of 24,000 public sector workers. Then, on Jan. 6, some 10,000 of these employees were laid off.

One of the first acts of a neoliberalist regime in any country is to implement a “downsizing” of the public sector. This includes cutting any social welfare and/or safety net program that is typical of the capitalist welfare state, but which they find no longer sustainable. This recipe is the modus operandi for capitalism at a dead end. It demands austerity for the workers and a government that follows the dictates of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other imperialist mechanisms.

The Macri campaign's promises to his capitalist and imperialist promoters are reflected in the words of his vice president, Gabriela Michetti, who called the fired workers “political activists” appointed by the former government and promised to get rid of them. (Telesur, Jan. 6)

It is common in any capitalist govern-

ment where different parties replace each other to purge the public appointees as well as elected officials of the defeated opposition party.

The actions of the Macri regime, however, target masses of public worker jobs for the chopping block, and not so much the administrators. Michetti derogatorily referred to these workers as being “ñoquis,” a pasta dish that in colloquial terminology is used to describe “unproductive public service workers.”

### Public worker unions fight back

Both the Union of Civil Employees of the Nation (UPCN) and the Association of State Workers (ATE), representing tens of thousands of public workers, took to the streets to protest the cuts as an injustice. TeleSUR reported that ATE leader Hugo Godoy labeled the cutbacks “a grave situation” and stated, “The union is preparing to take further steps to secure labor stability for the country's 3 million public sector workers,” including 600,000 who are marginally employed.

Godoy added, “We are in a state of alert and mobilization and are taking mea-



Senate workers protest imminent layoffs in Buenos Aires.

sures everywhere there are layoffs.”

On Jan. 8, ATE declared a national strike against the government and its plan to destroy public jobs and devalue the currency amid future plans to open up the country to more foreign transnational companies. These actions are consistent with Cambiemos' pliant and conciliatory prostration before monopoly capitalism and imperialism.

In Argentina's La Plata municipality, police attacked strikers with tear gas and rubber bullets that left several wounded. According to the Jan. 9 newspaper La Nación, “The workers were protesting a decision by local mayor Julio Garro that cancelled the 4,500 contracts on Dec. 31.”

Both ATE and UPCN have petitioned for an injunction to suspend Michetti's actions. What is clear is that the tension within the context of class conflict is growing and is already moving past the setback at the ballot box to a struggle in the streets and workplaces. □

# WORKERS WORLD

## editorial

### Extreme wealth, extreme poverty

To greet the super-rich, now meeting in Davos, Switzerland, anti-poverty analysts from Oxfam — who challenge capitalism's symptoms without challenging the disease — have issued a new report on wealth inequality.

Back in the Cold War, when every aspect of capitalist culture exuded anti-communism, it was constantly drummed into the U.S. working class that “Karl Marx was wrong: The workers are becoming middle class.”

Presidential candidates still talk about the middle class. But the Oxfam report shows this phrase is empty: “In 2015, just 62 individuals had the same wealth as 3.6 billion people — the bottom half of humanity. This figure is down from 388 individuals as recently as 2010.”

That's quite a concentration of wealth. Indeed, these few super-rich amassed even more riches. An Oxfam illustration shows that while in 2010 they would have needed a giant airliner to travel together, now they can all fit in a bus. Not that any of them would ever travel in a bus, without servants, aides, secretaries and bodyguards.

What is worse, the 3.6 billion people at the bottom got even poorer. And that's despite the fact that several hundred million Chinese workers rose out of real poverty in that time.

Now let's examine Oxfam's report from another angle: “The richest 1 percent now have more wealth than the rest of the world combined.”

This level of wealth concentration arrived a year earlier than Oxfam had predicted. It has brought greater instability and erosion of support for the system of capitalism. It means that even for those with a few possessions, life is precarious. And Oxfam shows that even in the imperialist countries, so-called “middle class” workers are losing out:

“One of the key trends underlying this huge concentration of wealth and incomes is the increasing return to capital versus labor. In almost all rich countries and in most developing countries, the share of national income going to workers has been falling.”

Oxfam emphasizes that low-wage workers, disproportionately women, are losing the most. In the U.S., there is no doubt workers of color also lose the most.

To summarize: A strong worldwide trend shows this system is concentrating greater wealth in fewer hands while impoverishing billions and grinding down those who sell their labor — leading to growing instability, even in imperialist countries like the United States.

Oxfam's leaders think the solution is to call for stricter enforcement of tax laws. But they have little hope it will happen, since the super-rich own the governments. Oxfam, like a preacher, can rage at greed and corruption, but the fault lies not in “sin,” but in the motivating force of the capitalist system itself: The goal of production is not to raise the living standards of the people, but to increase the profits of those who claim ownership over this vast, socially integrated economic system.

To reverse the growing inequality, to eliminate poverty, to transform the great wealth now being created into the property of the people, we must replace capitalism with socialism. We must build the fighting party with this goal. Solidarity between the working class and the most oppressed is the essential ingredient in winning this struggle. Unity can be built only by putting first the interests of those most pushed down by this vicious system. We must start yesterday.

It is the only way forward.

The Oxfam briefing paper, “An Economy for the 1%,” is at [tinyurl.com/hfmylx9](http://tinyurl.com/hfmylx9). □



PHOTO: TWITTER

Black Lives Matter activists occupied a Fraternal Order of Police credit union office on Jan. 16 in Chicago to protest epidemic police brutality that has recently claimed the lives of Laquan McDonald, Quintonio LeGreir, Bettie Jones and many others. An ongoing struggle is demanding the resignation of Chicago mayor, Rahm Emanuel, by activists accusing him of being complicit with and covering up for police violence.

— Monica Moorehead

## At protest for Noel Aguilar: ‘We continue the fight’

By Rebecka Jackson  
Long Beach, Calif.

*More than 300 protesters gathered to demand accountability for the murder of Noel Aguilar on Jan. 16 in Long Beach, and then marched to the Compton Courthouse, shutting down the Metro Blue Line along the way. Aguilar was brutally killed in May of 2014 by two Los Angeles County Sheriff's officers who then lied to cover their crime.*

*Aguilar's family has recently been able to secure a video of the 2014 incident which clearly shows one sheriff first accidentally shooting his partner, and then attempting to execute Aguilar while Aguilar's hands are behind his back. The officer who was shot by his partner then fires four more rounds into Aguilar's back as he lies on the ground, handcuffed. Bystanders are heard off-camera describing the execution.*

We watch. A thin, young body flounders on the ground as heavy men bear down on his back relentlessly. The men are stiff, their motions heavy and unarticulated. We feel the desperation and fear of their victim. We know his panic. One inept officer shoots his corpulent partner. The truth from May of 2014 is now undeniable, trapped in video evidence.

We already know Noel's fate before the video starts to play. We have heard his story told by his mother, his fiancée, his friends, so we watch knowingly for his execution. We attempt to brace ourselves as we bear digital witness to murder. The shooting officer now focuses his weapon on Noel and pulls the trigger casually; a lubricious murder, a crime that was committed as easily and freely as taking a deep breath. Unsure if the shot landed, the next officer does the same: He shoots. For these officers, this is standard practice. Stopping a young man, invading his privacy and body, and then ending his life. For we at the bottom have nothing. Our freedom is limited to the dispositions of the ruling class.

We wait. Each time we lose a life to the police a small part of us waits for justice. We wait for a break in the system, we wait to be recognized, we wait for someone to do the right thing. This waiting lasts only moments. Again we see the coverup, the dismissal, the victim blaming. We know justice cannot be served through this system.

We organize. Noel's fiancée, Mary Her-

rera, galvanized by her infant daughter Noely, leads the effort. She has strong support from Long Beach organizers including Michael Brown, co-founder of Black Lives Matter Long Beach, who has been rallying supporters from all over Los Angeles to “ask for accountability and justice.” Brown explained, “(Noel) was killed by deputies [Jose] Ruiz and [Albert] Murad,” and both officers were cleared of any wrongdoing in February although they gave several contradictory reports throughout the investigation. Dozens of organizations and individuals lend their support and voices.

We gather. Organizers specifically picked the weekend before MLK Day to bring awareness to the continued violence against Black and Brown bodies that continuously increases. By 12:45 p.m., the parking lot of Eddie's Market is filled with protesters. Mothers and families who have lost their loved ones proudly wear the red T-shirts made to honor Noel's final words as he fought for his life: “I'm dying.” Organizers pass out buttons, posters wave about babies' strollers demanding police accountability. Entire families unite in the anger created by the last images of Noel as he lay bleeding to death under the weight of his murderers. Traditional “concheros,” ceremony dancers, perform a ceremony and honor Noel before we depart for the Compton Courthouse.

We march. Three hundred protesters make the three-mile trek to the Compton Courthouse and police station. The protesters march for the honor of those killed and to protect the lives still under threat. We show solidarity, strength and rage. We march to save further generations from Noel's fate and to create a better future. We are able to shut down the Metro Blue Line and take over the streets. Most importantly, stopping business as usual. Forcing Noel's story to be known. The residents, business owners and motorists show overwhelming approval and many passing pedestrians join in the journey to show their support of Noel and condemn the police violence that has been ravaging their communities.

We continue the fight. We take Noel's story to our homes, our workplaces, our social engagements. We say his name, we continue his fight, we demand justice. Officers Ruiz and Murad must be held accountable; murderous police all over America must be held accountable. □

## Across the U.S.: Stop killer drones!

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Multiple protests against death-dealing U.S. drone warfare took place across the U.S. on Jan. 12, a National Day of Action to Stop Killer Drones. The actions were scheduled to expose the real “State of the Union” as President Barack Obama hyped U.S. greatness in his annual speech. Secret U.S. military documents leaked by an internal whistleblower reveal that 90 percent of U.S. drone assassinations kill civilians, including children, rather than the alleged targets. (The Intercept, Oct. 15)

Mohammed Tuaiman, a 13-year-old

Yemeni boy killed by a 2015 CIA drone strike, said of the drone “death machines” in a Guardian interview before his death: “A lot of the kids in this area wake up from sleeping because of nightmares from them and some now have mental problems. They turned our area into hell and continuous horror, day and night, we even dream of them in our sleep.” Earlier strikes had killed his father and brother. (Guardian, Feb. 10)

On the Day of Action, resisters were arrested at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada, Beale AFB in California and in Washington, D.C. Later solidarity actions are planned at CIA headquarters in Virginia

# It's time to define Puerto Rico's status

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

The year 2016 has just begun, and it already looks like one filled with political definitions for Puerto Rico. The huge public debt of \$73 billion and its default remain the problem which the corporate news media focus on internationally. Even though Puerto Rico's colonial government has cut essential services trying to pay that debt and has put the majority of Puerto Rican families in misery, the main center of attention and action in Puerto Rico is really elsewhere: in its political status.

For many years there has been discussion of this status and even referendums on it. Because these referendums were structured within a colonial state and imposed to a certain extent by the U.S. metropolis, they have actually been unlawful and meaningless. The current discussions, however, which are the result of the enormous crisis at all levels affecting the country, have legitimacy because only by defining Puerto Rico's status can the people find the path to a real solution to this deep crisis.

After more than 117 years of a colonial process affecting even how we think and reason, even a patently obvious truth can be disguised and presented as its opposite. This has been the case in Puerto Rico. The classroom, radio, television and all spheres of social life have served as platforms used by the empire to hid the obvious reality that Puerto Rico is a colony. They instead disguise this colony as a country with autonomy and sovereignty.

This truth was precisely what Lolita Lebrón, Irving Flores, Andrés Figueroa Cordero and Rafael Cancel Miranda tried to expose to the world when they opened fire in the U.S. Congress on that March 1, 1954.

To hide from the international community its terrible role as the oppressor of a people — a truth which if exposed could retard the progress of its Cold War against the Soviet Union — the U.S. for decades pushed a false image of “Puerto Rican autonomy” through a Constitution in Puerto Rico that granted limited rights under a ridiculous euphemism — “Commonwealth” or “Free Associated State,” a concept in itself contradictory. As of 1953, the imperialists no longer accounted for their colony at meetings of the United Nations, since they presented Puerto Rico as a “nearly” sovereign country that had its own Puerto Rican governor elected by the people, not a Yankee nominated by Washington. The

colony had been “perfumed,” and the U.S. could continue to exploit all the wealth it needed without any international objections.

## A defining moment

That farce ended a few days ago when U.S. Attorney General Donald Verrilli Jr. clearly stated that the Commonwealth has no sovereignty. It is interesting that these statements came during a hearing where the attorney general appeared as a “friend of the court” before the United States Supreme Court in a case that has nothing to do with the island's economic crisis. This itself illustrates the urgency of the status issue.

The case, known as Puerto Rico v. Sanchez Valle, is one involving double jeopardy. The subject was tried in U.S. courts for illegal possession and sales of weapons, and he now asserts that he cannot be prosecuted for the same offense in local Puerto Rican courts. The Puerto Rico Department of Justice, however, says it does have the power to charge people for the same crime because Puerto Rico has its own sovereignty. It has submitted the case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Gov. Alejandro Garcia Padilla of the Popular Democratic Party, which is a proponent and advocate of the colonial Commonwealth, immediately responded to Verrilli with feigned indignation common to corrupt traitors of their own people. Were this not so tragic, it would be rich material for a comedy. Noting that the U.S. “changed its opinion,” the governor wrote that “the laws and the Constitution of the Commonwealth emanate from the power of the people of Puerto Rico in the exercise of their inherent right to organize themselves politically in their own government. The United States had also acknowledged this for decades before the international community.”

The Obama administration, however, through its Deputy Attorney General Nicole Saharsky, took a clear position at the Jan. 13 Supreme Court hearing when she said: “[First] Congress can, in fact, revise the current arrangement it has with Puerto Rico. That's because Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory. The territories belong to the United States, which means they exist under U.S. sovereignty. And second, it is Congress that makes the rules.” (noticel.com, Jan. 14) In short, PR is owned by and not part of the U.S., and Washington can do whatever it wants through Congress.

A decision on the case is expected in the coming months.

This has great relevance now because as

a result of a series of hearings in Congress on the crisis in Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican government's request for access to a bankruptcy law for debt restructuring, there is a congressional proposal to impose a so-called independent Federal Financial Control Board for financial oversight in Puerto Rico. This really would function as a junta to ensure payment to bondholders on Wall Street — because it could act outside the island's legal and governmental framework. A true colonial junta!

## Response of the movement in PR

This situation is helping to increase unity within the independence movement. One example could be seen at the Puerto Rican Independence Party Assembly last month, where the PIP's candidate for governor, Maria de Lourdes Santiago, currently a senator representing the same party, was announced. At that meeting, various parties, organizations and personalities on the left and in the liberation movement who are not affiliated with the PIP attended, which demonstrated they were growing closer and might create the consensus so necessary at this time for the struggle for independence.

Many individuals connected to the independence struggle have stated and demonstrated that this is the crucial year for sovereignty and independence.

Indeed, never before have there been such perfect opportunities for facilitating broad and open discussion with the people about independence. It is imperative that a campaign of popular education be held on the need for self-determination and liberation from the imperialist yoke, which demonstrates that only independence, not statehood, is the only status that can guarantee a future of social and economic justice for the people. The debt crisis has been the great school that is helping to remove the colonial cloud cover imposed by the empire.

Oscar López Rivera, the political prisoner who has spent 34 years in Yankee prisons for fighting for independence, is playing a very important role. Recently he wrote from prison a message to the people that his daughter, Clarisa López, read at the celebration of his birthday on Jan. 6. (See article below) In it, he urged the whole nation to unite to reject the payment of the debt and boycott it, calling also for the unity and cooperation of the independence movement in a joint struggle. (See workers.org for full text of letter)

*Joubert-Ceci is a member of the recently formed Philadelphia-Camden Boricua Committee, which is composed of Puerto Ricans in the diaspora who are joining forces in the fight for the independence of Puerto Rico.*

## Puerto Rico

# 'Refuse to pay debt'

From a letter by Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera (see workers.org for full text):



“My first suggestion is that all we Puerto Ricans get organized and take just one position: Refuse the debt payment and start a debt boycott. To begin with, we can start chanting: “That's a debt I will not pay, those who borrowed it must pay.” (“Esa deuda no la pago yo, que la pague el que la incurrió.”) ...

“We are poor, but we are hard workers and have every right to say no to the impositions that Wall Street and Washington will try to put on us. Every Puerto Rican who cares about the future of Puerto Rico and wants a better and fairer world must say NO to the payment of the debt. And every Puerto Rican who aspires to political office must agree to be part of the boycott. And every pro-independence militant must do everything he or she can possibly do to create unity among them in the struggle for independence.” □

and at Volk AFB in Wisconsin. The National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance called the actions. (KnowDrones.com)

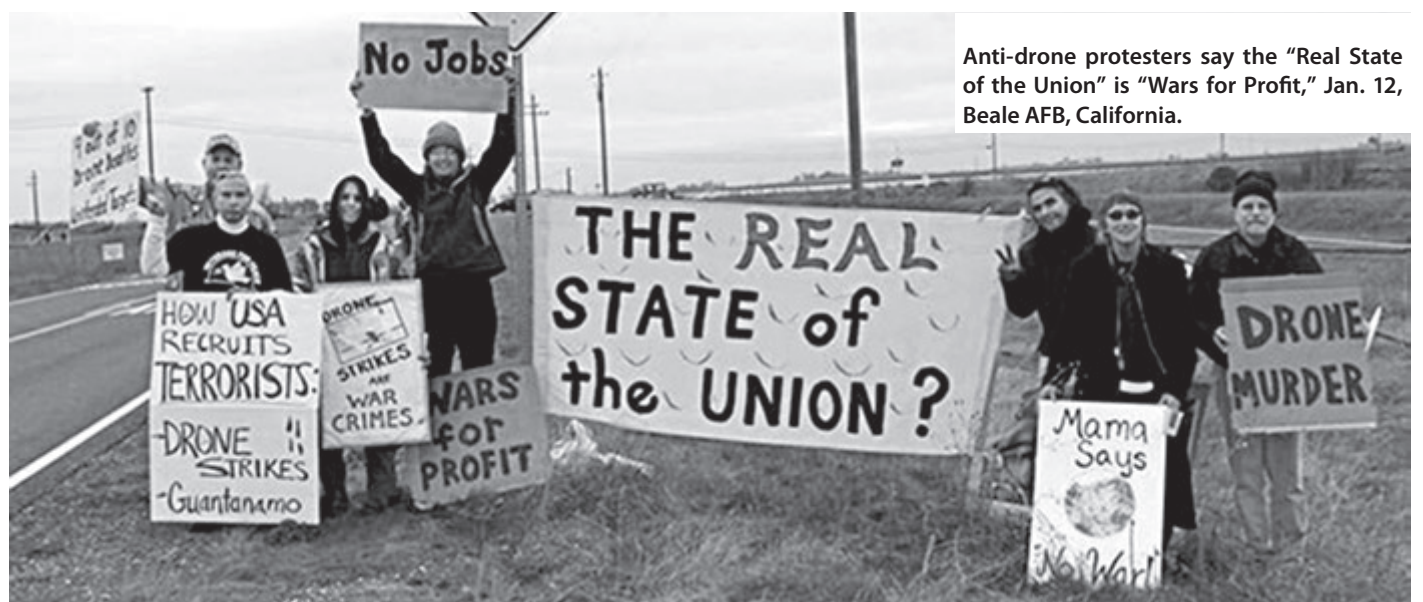
At the Washington, D.C., rally, activists condemned the unending U.S. wars, mass incarceration and Islamophobia, as well as killer drone strikes. An alternative State of the Union address was read that included demands to shut down the U.S. prison at Guantánamo in Cuba and demolish all armed drones. Thirteen protesters, representing states across the country, were arrested on the Capitol steps after attempting to deliver to Congress a petition naming U.S. war crimes. (popularresistance.org)

In California, the “Occupy Beale Air Force Base” resisters staged mock drone attacks at the federal courthouse and the city hall in Sacramento, the state capital, to dramatize how automated warfare terrorizes people in other countries on a 24/7 basis. Joining an ongoing homeless

advocate rally, they shouted: “Homes, not drones! Food, not bombs!” They attempted to deliver a letter to their “elected representative,” Sen. Barbara Boxer,

but were locked out of her office despite a scheduled appointment. Demonstrators commented, “That's what democracy looks like in America!”

Protesters then went on to Beale AFB, where five activists blocked commuting traffic and were arrested. (Nuke Resister, Jan. 16) □



Anti-drone protesters say the “Real State of the Union” is “Wars for Profit,” Jan. 12, Beale AFB, California.



## Enfrentamiento en Oregón y el papel del Estado

Por Sara Flounders

Derechistas fuertemente armados han ocupado el Refugio Nacional Malheur de Vida Silvestre en las afueras de Burns-Oregón desde el 2 de enero, declarando que están dispuestos a “matar o morir”. Ammon Bundy y sus hermanos, líderes de la toma, están exigiendo al gobierno federal que entregue millones de acres de propiedad pública administrada por el gobierno federal a industrias ganaderas, madereras y mineras.

La respuesta a esta toma expone crudamente el papel del Estado capitalista como aparato represivo y como árbitro de los derechos de propiedad privada en la sociedad de clases.

Históricamente, el Estado funciona de forma contradictoria hacia las personas de diferentes clases y nacionalidades. La respuesta nunca se basa en la igualdad de derechos, justicia equitativa o igualdad de propiedad. Este doble rasero debe exponerse y ser desafiado.

Cliven Bundy e hijos son conocidos racistas y propietarios ricos de un rancho en Nevada y defensores armados de los derechos de los estados. Lideraron un enfrentamiento en 2014 contra la Oficina de Administración de Tierras, rehusando pagar más de \$1 millón por pastorear su ganado en tierras públicas. Han pedido a sus partidarios armarse y unirse a la ocupación.

Algunos medios de comunicación corporativos han descrito a estos extremistas racistas como “milicia patriótica”, “luchadores de libertad”, “líderes de un ‘levantamiento populista’” e incluso como “manifestantes pacíficos”. Fox News, CNN y algunos programas radiales muestran simpatía hacia estas fuerzas y defienden su demanda por el control irrestricto de tierras públicas.

Hasta ahora, las autoridades locales y federales han tenido una política no intervencionista y no han impuesto ley marcial o llamado a la Guardia Nacional para poner fin a la ocupación armada.

La inacción en aplicar la ley en Oregón contrasta marcadamente con la masiva respuesta policial y la cobertura hostil de los medios corporativos del Movimiento Las Vidas Negras Importan (BLM por las siglas en inglés). Después del asesinato policial de Michael Brown, el joven afroamericano de 18 años el 9 de agosto del 2014 en Ferguson-Misuri, las protestas de las/os residentes afroamericanos de la ciudad, las/os miembros de BLM y sus aliadas/os exigieron ¡“Justicia para Mike Brown”!

¿Cómo respondió el Estado? Se declaró ley marcial y se llamó a la Guardia Nacional. Equipo militar y vehículos blindados se posicionaron frente a desarmadas/os manifestantes pacíficos; rifles de alta tecnología les apuntaban.

En Baltimore, Chicago y otras ciudades, el valiente movimiento BLM ha enfrentado represión policial que amenazaba a las/os manifestantes con tanques, helicópteros, drones y otras armas, y agresivamente arrestaban. Esto es en respuesta a demandas básicas de justicia y fin de asesinatos policiales.

Días después de que la policía fue exonerada por haber matado al niño negro Tamir Rice, de 12 años, quien jugaba con una pistola de juguete en Cleveland, milicias blancas armadas apuntaban con sus armas reales a funcionarios federales en Oregón. La policía mata rutinariamente a jóvenes negros con celulares en las manos, armas de juguete o con nada en absoluto.

El Estado capitalista no reconoce el derecho de los pueblos oprimidos a defenderse, incluso en sus propios hogares. Cuando la familia MOVE, partidarios de John África, trató de hacerlo en Filadelfia en 1985, la policía bombardeó su casa y 65 más en su comunidad; 11 personas murieron, incluyendo cinco niños. Basado en otro ataque policial, nueve miembros de MOVE cumplen penas de prisión de 100 años solo por hacer valer su derecho a la legítima autodefensa.

Cuando la Nación Lakota Oglala y el Movimiento Indio Americano realizaron un campamento de 71 días en Wounded Knee-Dakota del Sur, en la Reserva de Pine Ridge en 1973, enfrentaron un brutal asedio policial y de agencias federales, enfrentando incluso asesinatos. La población indígena protestaba por el maltrato del gobierno, exigiéndole que acatara las obligaciones del tratado. Los medios noticieros hostiles hablaron de una nueva “Guerra India”.

Por otra parte, los musulmanes, ya sea en EUA, Europa

o en cualquier lugar, que llevan cualquier tipo de arma, son etiquetados de “terroristas”. Incluso el uso de una pistola de pintura en un juego se trata – como en el caso de los Cinco del Fuerte Dix – como prueba de actividad criminal.

### Tierras robadas a pueblos originarios y negros

Después de la Guerra Civil, las tierras de hacendados blancos que habían declarado guerra al gobierno federal para mantener la esclavitud, se suponía que fueran expropiadas para proporcionar reparaciones a quienes fueron esclavizados/os. Eso no sucedió. La promesa de dirigentes federales de dar 40 acres y una mula a cada persona negra que fue esclavizada no se materializó. Al contrario, las tropas federales fueron retiradas del sur y enviadas a expropiar y exterminar a la población indígena en el oeste, dejando a pueblos anteriormente esclavizados indefensos ante los antiguos propietarios de las plantaciones y la Confederación.

Desde 1865, las agencias gubernamentales han expropiado el 95 por ciento de la tierra de los agricultores negros.

Las/os indígenas fueron conducidos a tierras áridas después de incautar sus tierras. Incluso después de firmar tratados, sus tierras fueron expropiadas nuevamente si se encontraban recursos en ella, como el oro en Black Hills o petróleo en Oklahoma.

Históricamente, las milicias blancas han jugado el papel reaccionario cuando tomaban tierras de los pueblos nativos y utilizaban al Ku Klux Klan para aterrorizar a ex esclavos con el fin de expropiar su mano de obra, su tierra y sus pequeños comercios.

### Nación Paiute: ¡La tierra es nuestra!

La Nación Paiute vivió en la región del Refugio Malheur por 10.000 años. En 1872, la Reservación Malheur fue creada en una fracción de los 1.5 millones de acres de tierras prometidas por el gobierno federal. Los ganaderos se opusieron a esto, queriendo la tierra para su ganado.

En 1878, la Reservación Malheur se disolvió y cientos de Paiutes fueron encadenados y trasladados/os por la fuerza, al final del invierno, a la Reservación Yakima en el estado de Washington. Algunas/os Paiutes se escondieron o regresaron a sus hogares. Se les dio 10 acres del vertedero de la ciudad Burns. A sus hijos les impidieron asistir a las escuelas locales.

Trabajosamente en los próximos 100 años, los Paiutes compraron 760 acres de sus tierras tribales y restablecieron la Reservación Paiute Burns. En 1972, los Paiutes Burns fueron finalmente reconocidos como una tribu indígena independiente. Actualmente se han asegurado más de 11.000 acres de tierras de adjudicación, alquiladas por ganaderos locales para el pastoreo de ganado. Esta tierra tribal se considera federal; está libre de impuestos, pero existe bajo la jurisdicción del condado.

En esta era de privatización, no es extraño que haya demandas para apoderarse de tierras públicas y privatizarlas. La pandilla Bundy está exigiendo esta tierra – de forma gratuita y con acceso ilimitado. Pero la Nación Paiute dice que la tierra es de ellos. Dicen que si hubieran ocupado el refugio Malheur, su reservación original, el gobierno les habría tratado muy diferente a los Bundy.

Charlotte Rodrique, presidenta del Consejo Tribal Paiute de Burns, dijo a la Radio Pública Nacional el 10 de enero, “Si yo, como persona nativa, persona de color, fuera allí e hiciera lo mismo, me golpearían en la frente con un garrote” y arrastrarían fuera.

El miembro del Consejo Tribal Jarvis Kennedy recordó el despojo violento de su pueblo en una conferencia de prensa el 6 de enero, destacando que “No nos retiraron; nos mataron”. Exigió que los ocupantes “se largaran” del Refugio Malheur. (KGW.com, 6 de enero)

### Alto privatización de tierras públicas

El papel del estado capitalista en disputas por la tierra debe ser examinado para refutar las indignantes demandas de los ganaderos por el libre acceso a tierras públicas. El gobierno federal posee más de la mitad de la tierra en el oeste, incluyendo el 80 por ciento de Nevada y la mitad de Oregón. La Oficina de Administración de Tierras maneja 245 millones de acres de tierras públicas. El Estado capitalista pretende destinar, principalmente para beneficio privado y algún uso público, las vastas tierras occidentales expropiadas a los pueblos indígenas.

La política de tierras federales en el oeste implica equilibrar los intereses de las industrias agropecuarias, madereras, mineras, ferroviarias, comerciales y otros. Los costos son exorbitantes para la construcción de carreteras, puentes, represas y aguas, pero gratis para las empresas.

Vastas extensiones de bosques nacionales son plantaciones madereras públicas para contratistas privados. La Ley de Minería Hard Rock 1872 aún permite a las empresas mineras tomar anualmente mil millones de dólares en minerales de tierras públicas sin tener que pagar regalías o derechos, y evitan responsabilidades por daños ambientales, dice Pew Trusts. (tinyurl.com/zxt7nwo)

Sistemas federales de riego cultivan tierra árida a precios altamente subsidiados para beneficio de la agroindustria. Las cuotas por pastoreo que algunos ganaderos rehúsan pagar tienen subsidio del 93 por ciento sobre las cuotas del mercado.

En los años 1800, se libraban guerras entre los ganaderos de vacuno y los de ovejas sobre las tierras de pastoreo, y luego se enfrentaban contra los colonos y los pequeños agricultores. Cada grupo económico que luchaba por la tierra y los recursos de pastoreo tenía su propia milicia.

La industria ferroviaria y los grandes bancos tenían más en juego en estos conflictos. El gobierno federal mediaba entre los poderosos intereses económicos. Sin embargo, ni el gobierno ni los bancos ayudaban a los pequeños agricultores; millones perdieron sus tierras en ejecuciones hipotecarias. Los subsidios crecieron para la producción a gran escala de la agroindustria corporativa.

Hoy en día los pequeños ganaderos no pueden competir con las operaciones granjeras corporativas como las propiedades de los multimillonarios hermanos Koch y de Ted Turner, el segundo mayor propietario de tierras en EUA. Ellos y otros mega-ganaderos tienen arrendamientos subvencionados de cientos de miles de acres de tierras federales, otro regalo del gobierno para multimillonarios.

Muchos mega propietarios de ranchos ven al movimiento reaccionario de Bundy como un conveniente artilugio para poder obtener un mayor control de tierras públicas. La influencia política de los grandes inversionistas puede explicar la cobertura favorable de la milicia de Bundy en los medios. Saben que estas fuerzas no desafiarán su riqueza. Los Bundys y su calaña están tratando de construir sus propias fortunas a través del robo de tierra, racismo y violencia.

Debe señalarse que el estado de Oregón fue fundado sobre una base racista en 1859. Se prohibía que las/os negros vivieran, trabajaran o tuvieran propiedades allí. En 1922, el Ku Klux Klan tenía 14.000 miembros en el estado, incluyendo a altos funcionarios. Aún Portland, ahora una ciudad “progresista”, mantenía instalaciones segregadas.

El estado capitalista arbitra entre intereses comerciales en competencia en un sistema basado en el robo del trabajo, tierra y recursos. Así que la política de las tierras federales que los ganaderos denuncian es totalmente corrupta y basada en el soborno y el saqueo.

La lucha sobre los derechos de agua, especialmente durante esta larga sequía, el impacto de la industria de fracking, y el colapso de los precios de las materias primas, están aumentando la competencia entre los dueños de propiedades corporativas a un punto febril.

El poder y la influencia de la mayoría de los pequeños negocios y ganaderos palidecen ante la abrumadora influencia económica y poder de las corporaciones, los bancos, los fondos de cobertura, los fabricantes de armas y las petroleras. La Agencia de Administración de Tierras y agencias estatales tratan de comprar a los ganaderos y comerciantes pequeños. Ya no tienen grandes ganancias, así que éstas no están garantizadas ni sus subsidios. Esto los lleva a la desesperación.

El carácter reaccionario de la toma de los Bundy debe ser expuesto y se deben oponer las demandas de los ganaderos ricos al acceso ilimitado a la tierra y los recursos. Pero un asedio violento por esta agrupación no es la respuesta. Solo fortalecería el poder del estado capitalista y su uso de represión – y eso no ayudaría a los pueblos oprimidos, la clase trabajadora y otras fuerzas progresistas.

En lugar de permitir que las mismas personas o empresas que han devastado la tierra obtengan más terrenos, estas tierras deben ser puestas bajo la tutela de las naciones originarias. Eso sería un paso hacia la justicia y la reparación. □