In face of gov’t inaction

Solidarity brings water to Flint

By Martha Grevatt
Detroit

Water You Fighting For? It’s more than a great play on words. It’s a grassroots organization in Flint, Mich., founded by mothers Melissa Mays and Lee Anne Walters, who refused to sit back and watch their children suffer. WYFF has been protesting the toxic Flint water for almost two years.

Mays said in a national interview: “When your 12-year-old wakes up in the middle of the night crying because his bones hurt and there is nothing you can do, no creams, no medicine that you can give him to ease his pain, that’s infuriating. When your youngest can’t go anywhere because his white blood cell count is four, and his immune system is so compromised you’re worried he is going to get sick with anybody breathing on him, that’s awful.

“When your oldest is starting to struggle in school subjects that were very easy to him,” continued Mays, “there’s nothing more than I want to do than scream and yell and that’s what we did for over a year, scream and yell, ‘This isn’t right, stop it, tell us the truth.’” (fox-business.com, Jan. 22)

Now, because residents like Mays organized and fought back, the Flint water crisis is a national scandal, even making the front page of the New York Times. Two officials of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the regional head of the Environmental Protection Agency have resigned in disgrace.

The DEQ failed to instruct the Flint water department to add anti-corrosive chemicals to the water when Flint stopped using water from the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department and began tapping into the polluted Flint River. The DEQ’s bad instructions allowed Flint system pipes to leach deadly lead into the water, leaving the whole city of 100,000, including 9,000 children under age 6, poisoned.

Calls for governor’s arrest

The primary target of community anger is Gov. Rick Snyder, a reactionary Republican who has been deflecting blame while scraping up a woefully inadequate $108 million in state and federal funds for Flint.

Political pressure forced Snyder — who by state law has immunity from the Freedom of Information Act — to release emails between him and other state officials about Flint’s water. Now it should be impossible for Snyder to escape criminal responsibility. Despite saying “I’m sorry” to Flint residents over two dozen times in his State of the State speech on Jan. 19 in the State House in Lansing, his disdainful indifference and lack of remorse were evident.

“ Arrest Snyder” has become a rallying cry. Signs against him were popular at Detroit’s annual Martin Luther King march on Jan. 18, which included a Flint delegation led by Mays. Later that day people picketed Snyder’s newly purchased swank condominium in downtown Ann Arbor. The following day, 500 people fought back, the Flint water crisis is a national scandal, even making the front page of the New York Times. Two officials of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the regional head of the Environmental Protection Agency have resigned in disgrace.

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Over 1,000 workers, union staff and their supporters showed up at a West Virginia AFL-CIO demonstration in the state Capitol rotunda on Jan. 15 to display their collective anger and opposition to proposed “right-to-work” (for less!) legislation, which is to be introduced this session. If passed, West Virginia would become the 26th RTW state.

West Virginia histórico en el plano laboral. La derecha Nacional es mayoría en la Asociación Republicana, pero un Demócrata ha sido elegido a su puesto. El Demócrata o Republicano debería ser nombrado a su cargo.

Muse was a conservative lobbyist from Texas who invented the “right-to-work” (RTW) movement against the unions. He was quick to educate people on the racist origins of RTW, saying “Beat back RTW! Say NO to Jim Crow!” The Appalachian Workers Alliance dropped banners from the rotunda saying, “Wrong for WV.” One organization stood out as a clear example of working-class solidarity and must unite low-wage and part-time workers, as well as the unemployed, Black/Native workers.

For more information, see appalachianworkersalliance.org.
Teachers call for ‘Walk-ins’ vs. austerity

By Workers World Milwaukee Bureau

In response to the largest cuts to education in the history of Wisconsin since right-wing politicians took over the Legislative Powerhouse’s governor’s office in 2011, the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association (MTEA) last September held walk-ins at over 700 U.S. schools on Feb. 17.

The MTEA call declares, “Parents, students, educators and community members: Please join us at a public school near you on Feb. 17 to celebrate public education and to stand up for public schools that welcome and serve all children. Public education supporters in Los Angeles; Seattle; Chicago; Green Bay; Wis.; Boston; and dozens of other cities around the nation will also be walking on the same day. Public education supporters will gather in front of their schools before the school day starts to chant, march and share information about how school takeovers hurt our students. We will also educate others about public community schools that we know are a better solution than handing schools over to private third party operators. Finally, attendees will walk into the school collectively just before the start of the school day as a community.”

(Miptstakeover.com)

Boston school bus union members ‘in very high spirits’ post-victory

By Martha Grevatt

Jan. 24 — It has now been more than a month since Strikers Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers’ union, won a major victory against the transnational corporation that operates in the state, the austerity-minded city administration that employs them. This company, which illegally fired four key union leaders in 2013 and was taking a hard line in contract negotiations, was forced by the militant rank and file to rehire President Andre Francois, Vice President Steve Kingham, Business Representative Steve Gillis and Grievance Chair Garry Murchison. Local 8751 also won a great contract for the members.

“Our members are in very high spirits and in a fighting mood,” said Gillis. “Good thing, because Transdev/Veolia’s management are in the throes of a major corporate temper tantrum, refusing to pay some of our members, withholding millions of dollars in retroactive pay and benefits, bringing down the unjust discipline hammer on our good people, etc.”

Indications are, however, that the fighting spirit that brought the four leaders back to work will prevail and that the workers will see the retro pay in their checks before the end of January. They have already won other victories, such as the reinstatement of an unjustly fired union veteran in the first arbitration struggle since the four’s return.

Living the dream

The victory has not given the union a moment’s rest. According to Gillis, “Getting back to work has been an equally difficult job as winning our jobs back! We got back into the swing of things with a major yard rally, complete with picket signs, bullhorns and special guest speakers organizing for the Martin Luther King day march.” The January 18 march, organized by Massachusetts Action Against Police Brutality, combined community demands of “Justice for Julian” and “No to Islamophobia” with issues of young workers from the Service Employees Union who marched into a KFC restaurant and a Burger King parking lot to demand “$15 and a Union” and the re-hiring of fired co-workers.

Labor and community voices were heard loud and clear from the back of Local 8751’s round truck. The union also sent a delegation and the sound system to the Boston Black Lives Matter march on the same day. The local also carried colorful placards with slogans such as “Dr. King’s dream: end poverty, raise wages.”

Living Dr. King’s dream is Local 8751’s legacy, from its founding during the violent racist campaign aimed at stopping school desegregation in 1971 to its solidarity action on MLK Day in 2012, which helped stop the closing of the Grove Hall post office that provides critical service to the Black community.

Now bus drivers are getting ready to jump into the fight and spend $40 million in austerity cuts proposed by Boston Public Schools and the expansion of charter schools.

Frutial lessons

“It is certainly our desire to publicize our victory in the hope that it can provide some morale to our class,” said Gillis. “We offer fruitful lessons from the multinational unity, solidarity and militant actions we built over a sustained period, inside a relatively small local of mostly immigrant workers. Rank-and-file leadership with class-conscious thinking, in alliance with the communities we serve and the broader Working Class Movement, can turn back even the most well-planned and strategically targeted assault of the ruling class.”

The four have taken the victory’s narrative to the airwaves, including an hour-long radio show in Wisconsin — at the invitation of those on the front lines fighting Gov. Scott Walker and the Koch brothers’ brand of union busting and austerity — and the Labor Forum radio show in Atlanta. “[Veolia/Transdev] came with the promise to bust our union, and they gave the city that promise,” Francois shared. “To do that they had to try to get rid of us. I am glad that we finally won.”

In the coming months the four union leaders will share their story at the Southern Workers’ Assembly School in North Carolina March 4-6, the Appalachian Workers’ Alliance conference in West Virginia, the Labor Notes conference in Chicago April 1-3 and other gatherings around the country. The victory was written up in Avenue, the organ of the Portuguese Communist Party.

“The rich lessons of this historic struggle,” union Vice President Steve Kirschbaum explained, “are the collective property of the international working class.”

Milwaukee Teachers call for ‘Walk-ins’ vs. austerity

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Wisconsin has been taking place against K-12, technical schools and the University of Wisconsin system. Charter schools have expanded statewide and a Downtown emergency manager style “Opportunity Schools Partnership Program” (OSPP) was made law by Gov. Scott Walker last summer.

The defunding of public education in Wisconsin is part of Wall Street’s practice of manufacturing a “crisis” to justify privatization for corporate profits and to increase “debt service” for the banks.

Wisconsin’s decades-long austerity legislation was planned and funded by Wall Street forces, including the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), Americans For Prosperity, the Bradley Foundation, the Koch Brothers and the Heritage Foundation. Banks were a central driving force.

In Milwaukee, a city with a majority of people of color, the attacks on public education are modeled after austerity legislation policies enacted in other cities with large African-American and Latino/a populations, including Detroit, New Orleans and Philadelphia.

The MTEA brought water to Flint, Mich., residents poisoned by Wall Street and Wall Street’s bought-and-paid-for politicians. It mobilized members to support their union sisters and brothers during the 2015 strikes by Allied Workers Union 998 and United Auto Workers Local 833.

Feb. 17 is the next step in their courage, the right to march and stand in unity building process. The MTEA calls on families and educators in Milwaukee and across the U.S. to “Join us! Walk in on families and educators in Milwaukee today. The March 4-6 will be a part of history!”

For more information on Feb. 17 actions: facebook.com/schoolsandcommunitiesunited; mtea.wearc.org; and stopmpstakeover.com

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Milwaukee, May, 20.2011 Wisconsin public sector unions must annually vote to re-certify by 50 percent plus one of the entire membership in a bargaining unit. Even where certified, unions are barred from collective bargaining except for wages up to the rate of inflation. Act 10 also increased pension and health care payments by public sector workers, who must also work longer to be vested in the state’s pension system. The OSPP allows so-called “failing” Milwaukee public schools to be handed over to capitalist corporations to operate. They would be run by a commissioner to be appointed by Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele, a leading capitalist in the Wisconsin Democratic Party. The commissioner would have parallel authority with the elected Milwaukee Public School Board but be accountable only to the county executive. Targeted schools are those that have predominantly Black or Latino/a student populations and are in neighborhoods devastated by decades of deindustrialization and lack of social safety nets. All MPS workers at schools taken over would be fired and forced to reapply for their jobs. To be considered for rehire, workers would have to waive their right to union representation.

The MTEA, along with union and community organizations such as Schools and Communities United, Youth Empowered in the Struggle and Voices de la Frontera, is engaged in numerous battles to stop the OSPP and other austerity measures. Union members and supporters, including K-12 students, have led school defense actions at dozens of schools, staged walk-ins, packed Milwaukee school board meetings and initiated other actions.

Building labor-community power

Since 2011, the MTEA has implemented a social justice union approach similar to the Chicago Teachers Union and public workers in other cities. They prioritize mass outreach and solidarity events in schools and communities across the state. Union members are joining in solidarity with the Fight For $15 movement and Black Lives Matter actions, including protests demanding justice for Dontre Hamilton and other victims of police brutality. MTEA brought water to Flint, Mich., residents poisoned by Wall Street and Wall Street’s bought-and-paid-for politicians. It mobilized members to support their union sisters and brothers during the 2015 strikes by Allied Workers Union 998 and United Auto Workers Local 833.

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Struggles spotlighted at Detroit MLK rally and march

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Detroit

The 13th annual Martin Luther King Day rally and march took place Jan. 18 in downtown Detroit, where a host of speakers and organizations participated. Despite a wind chill factor below zero, Central United Methodist Church was filled with justice and peace activists who work tirelessly throughout Michigan. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke in this church numerous times in the 1950s and 1960s.

The special guest for the 2016 gathering was Pastor Cori Bush of Ferguson, Mo., who traveled to Detroit and Toledo, Ohio, to bring news about the ongoing movement against racist violence and state repression in St. Louis County. Bush is a legal professor and a recently elected member of the Delhi Board of Education in exile, which is still under emergency management appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder; U.S. Rep. John Conyers Jr., who drafted and pushed through the federal bill recognizing the King holiday; and Marcina Cole, a speaker, but was unable to drive some 200 miles from Berrien County due to inclement weather. However, a statement from her was read by Marcina Cole, a leading organizer in the Detroit area campaign to win freedom for the Rev. Edward Pinkney, Michigan’s political prisoner.

Rev. Pinkney was railroaded in the racist Berrien County courts during 2014 on fraudulent felony charges of changing five dates on recall petitions aimed at the removal of Benton Harbor Mayor James Hightower. During the course of the trial there were no eyewitnesses presented by the court who could testify that Pinkney had committed the alleged crimes.

The political activities of Pinkney and his associates were introduced as evidence by the prosecuting attorney. Pinkney is the leader of the Benton Harbor Black Autonomy Network Community Organization (BANCO), whose political work was utilized by the prosecution to concoct the inane charges.

At present, Pinkney is serving a sentence of 30 to 120 months in Marquette prison in the far northern area of the state. He is appealing the conviction in the state courts.

The Homrich 9, who were arrested in July 2014 for blocking Homrich company trucks that were heading out to shut off Detroit residents’ water services, were co-recipients of the People’s Spirit of Detroit award.

Solidarity with broad array of struggles

The Detroit MLK event is the largest and most significant movement against racist violence and state repression in southeastern Michigan and is endorsed by a host of organizations and coalitions dealing with education, water rights, housing, police misconduct and other issues.

Speakers and artists participating in the rally and march included people’s lawyer Vanesa Fluker and Alice Jennis, addressing housing and water rights, respectively; Elena Herrada, an elected member of the Denver Board of Education in exile, which is still under emergency management appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder; U.S. Rep. John Conyers Jr., who drafted and pushed through the federal bill recognizing the King holiday.

For speaking out against this corporate-political domination, Pinkney became the target of the legal system.

At trial, no one even claimed Rev. Pinkney altered anything. He turned a mansion and live like a prince, Pinkney has, for years, advocated for his community, fighting for water rights, fair elections and social justice for the people of Benton Harbor, Mich.

Because of his political activities, he’s been targeted by the government, tried by the Michigan political machine before an all-white jury and, with no evidence, convicted of allegedly altering five petition dates!

Incredibly, Rev. Pinkney is facing 10 years in prison!

Remember the petitions? They were recall petitions of Benton Harbor’s mayor, a politician owned and operated by the Whirlpool Corporation – the real owner of the town.

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Mumia Abu-Jamal:
‘Free Reverend Pinkney!’

The following edited commentary was written by political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The Rev. Edward Pinkney is the kind of preacher that Martin Luther King Jr. would have admired.

Rather than build a mansion and live like a prince, Pinkney has, for years, advocated for his community, fighting for water rights, fair elections and social justice for the people of Benton Harbor, Mich.

Because of his political activities, he’s been targeted by the government, tried by the Michigan political machine before an all-white jury and, with no evidence, convicted of allegedly altering five petition dates!

Incredibly, Rev. Pinkney is facing 10 years in prison!

The call to “Free Rev. Pinkney!” is growing!

Treat hep C in Philly jails!

By Betsy Piette
Philadelphia

Supporters of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal took their campaign demanding life-saving drugs for him and 10,000 other Pennsylvania prisoners suffering from chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) to Philadelphia’s City Council on Jan. 21.

The prisoners carried signs urging the Council, and the new mayor that James Kenney, to investigate the obstacles and inequities people face in accessing the costly antiviral medications that cure the deadly disease. Demonstrators also called on city officials to end their multi-million dollar contract with Corizon Health to manage the prisoners in Philadelphia’s jails.

The group distributed a flier to city officials and audience members on the dangers of untreated HCV. It also addressed Corizon’s deadly pattern and practice of withholding medical care in order to save money and maximize profits.

The denial of health care to the state’s prisoners essentially impacts urban communities at prisoners’ return home. An estimated 45,000 people in Philadelphia already have hep C. Left untreated, the virus causes liver disease and other complications that can lead to death.

In 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Sovaldi, a new direct-acting antiviral drug. However, it costs $84,000 for a 12-week treatment course. Gilead Sciences, which controls sale of the drug, subsequently marketed Harvoni, Sovaldi’s successor, at $94,000 a treatment course.

Because of the high costs, less than 3 percent of Medicaid enrollees are able to receive the new cures. Very few prisoners with hep C can get these medications.

While not allowed to raise their demands from the floor of the Council meeting, protesters arranged for a meeting with some of its members. They also received broad support from members of Philadelphia’s Muslim community who were there to discuss the role of the police in the murder of Fred Hampton and other African American political prisoners.

Mumia Abu-Jamal: ‘Free Reverend Pinkney!’

The Homrich 9, who were arrested in July 2014 for blocking Homrich company trucks that were heading out to shut off Detroit residents’ water services, were co-recipients of the People’s Spirit of Detroit award.

Among those addressing the assembly, Joe Mchahwar of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) spoke on the plight of the Syrian people and the role of the U.S. and Israel in the continuing oppression of the peoples of the Middle East. Michael Brown on Aug. 9, 2014, the police violence against the people of Ferguson in the aftermath of the cop killing of Michael Brown on Aug. 9, 2014. Whitney Houston, respectively; Elena Herrada, an American writer and adjunct professor at the University of Detroit Mercy Law School, explained the central role of Palestinian oppression in the political developments in the Middle East.

Music was provided by Bobbi Thompson of Central United Methodist Church, the director of the Deep River Choir. Songs that addressed the right to clean, safe water were performed by the Flowertown Revue.

March for justice & people’s gathering

After a more than two-hour rally, a march was held through downtown Detroit. It wound past the 36th District Police Department and police building and evictions; then to the Wayne County Jail to protest the mass incarceration of African Americans and other oppressed peoples; on to the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department in opposition to water shutoffs and proclaiming that water is a human right, and finally through the financial district with the message, "Bail out the people and not the banks!"

Marchers returned to the church for a community meal supplied by the Detroit Wobbly Kitchen. Hundreds were served. A cultural program, coordinated by award-winning poet Aarraya Harris, an author and lecturer at the University of Michigan at Dearborn, followed.

Numerous artists, musicians and poets presented their works, including Wardell Montgomery, Joe Kidd and Sheila Burke Music, Wanda Olughala, Jim Perkins, Shushanna Shakur, Susan Sunshine and many more.

Tracy Mathews, a longtime Detroit community activist who has been a logistical volunteer at the Detroit MLK Day for the last six years, said this year’s event was the best so far. Mathews commented, "My interaction with Pastor Cori Bush provided insight into the struggle in Ferguson and was inspirational."

This annual commemoration, which seeks to evoke the social justice and anti-war legacy of Dr. King, was founded in 2004 by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice (MECA-WI) during the early months of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. Since then, a Detroit MLK Planning Committee has been organized, bringing in veteran Civil Rights activists working with youth and workers who help organize the event. More than two dozen progressive organizations and individuals are co-sponsors and endorsers.
Several events celebrating the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. took place throughout Southwest Virginia Jan. 16-18. This area of Appalachia has a long history of people's resistance against Wall Street barons and bankers, most notably from the United Mine Workers union, but also from many other labor and community organizations. Some highlights of solidarity with King's ideas and tactics were practiced during the 1989-900 UMW strike against the Pittston Coal Co.

In Abingdon, Va., on Jan. 16, a diverse array of nearly 200 community organizations participated in the 50th annual King holiday parade and march sponsored by the Appalachian Peace Education Center. Speakers made connections between King's historic resistance to poverty, racism and war, and today's Black Lives Matter movement and the fight for living wages.

On Jan. 18 in Roanoke, Va., the King Day parade and program was sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and endorsed by the NAACP Youth Council and other organizations. Many community members participated to demand an end to racism, union-busting and police brutality. Other 2016 MLK holiday events in Southwest Virginia took place in Bristol, Wise, Wytheville and other locations.

A huge Black Lives Matter contingent behind the banner “Death by Cop is Lynching” led the Martin Luther King Jr. march in Denver. Attended by over 20,000, the multicultural and multiracial event included people from churches, Jewish groups, peace groups and schools. They carried signs about the recent multiple police killings of youth of color, including Jessica Hernandez and Michael Marshall, by the Denver police.

Local supporters joined the Interfaith Committee in Solidarity with Black Lives Matter -- Bay Area for a vigil and candlelight funeral procession on Jan. 15 in Oakland, Calif.'s Oscar Grant Plaza as part of the Anti Police-Terror Project’s “96 Hours of Direct Action to Reclaim King’s Radical Legacy.”

Organizers called on Oakland City officials and residents alike to see, connect with, and mourn the Black and Brown lives lost to police violence as well as the losses born by communities of color in Oakland as a result of over-policing, displacement and gentrification.

Protesters called out the Oakland Police Department for its role in racist police killings. Called by “Showing Up for Racial Justice” as part of the 96 hours of direct action, over 50 people marched on Schaaf’s home with signs in the shape of coffins and real estate “sold” signs. SURJ stated that “since Mayor Schaaf took office in January 2015, at least seven Black people have been murdered at the hands of Oakland police. Schaaf and other civic officials have also encouraged massive increases in commercial development that is resulting in the traumatic displacement of Black, Brown and working-class folks across Oakland.” The coffin and real estate signs, mounted on poles, were pounded into Schaaf’s lawn.

The 96 hours of direct action continued on the evening of Jan. 16, when over 100 protesters gathered inside the Oakland airport terminals in the evening to read aloud the names of dozens of Black and Brown people killed by Bay Area police in the past few years. They marched between terminals carrying a banner which read “Welcome to Oakland.”

As passengers exited the gates area, they were greeted with a “mic check” statement, led by the APTC’s Cat Brooks, welcoming them to Oakland, but not the pretty one in the travel brochures: “Under the mayorship of Libby Schaaf, a mandate has been issued to make the city pretty for tourists and developers. This has meant an upsurge in police terror and murders in Oak- land what we have dubbed ‘Libby’s Bloody Era,’ a string of Black men were murdered in Oakland in 2005. All of them declared ‘fugitives,’” the airport action was so successful, it was repeated the next night at the San Francisco International Airport.

On Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday, Jan. 15, a protest was called in Buffalo, N.Y., to address racist hiring practices, low wages and the lack of job opportunities at recent development projects in the city. The speakers took out the Russell Park Health Center along with other publicly funded projects. Many of these projects are part of the gentrification process in Buffalo that has pushed people from oppressed communities out of their homes and jobs to make way for luxury apartments and other projects.

The protest and march were called by Charley H. Fisher III, president of B.U.L.L.D. Inc., Erie County legislator Betty Jean Grant and Alberto O. Cappas, president of the Puerto Rican and African American Association, as well as the Buffalo Committee for a Racial Discrimination-Free Healthcare. The demonstrators vowed to return again and again until victory is won.

Between 5,000 to 10,000 demonstrators marched in the 96th annual Martin Luther King Day Celebration March in Seattle. Following an opening rally that included many speakers and cultural performers, marchers went from Garfield High School in the Black community to the downtown federal building for an ending rally. The march was coordinated by 22 social justice and community organizing workshops.

Another contingent of 400 activists organized by Black Lives Matter Seattle marched from Garfield High School to a site of neighborhood gentrification. They were greeted at 2262 Broadway, a large, empty store called Ike’s, which has a dominating presence in the Black community. While marijuana sales are legal in the state, Ike’s refuses to sell to communities of color. The organizers were joined by local activist group, “We the People,” and “Welcome to Oakland.”

As two pew rows of Black, Brown and other communities stood up and said, “No! Do not use the words of Dr. Martin Luther King!” As two pew rows of Black, Brown and other communities stood up and said, “No! Do not use the words of Dr. Martin Luther King!” As two pew rows of Black, Brown and other communities stood up and said, “No! Do not use the words of Dr. Martin Luther King!” As two pew rows of Black, Brown and other communities stood up and said, “No! Do not use the words of Dr. Martin Luther King!”
**Criticism grows of racism surrounding Oscar snubs**

By Monica Moorehead

The shutout of Black and other actors of color from the Oscars nominations an- nounced on Jan. 14 has intensified a de- bate about the entrenched racism inside the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Prominent Black artists, such as director Spike Lee, actor and producer Jada Pinkett Smith and actor Will Smith, have publicly stated their plans to boycott this year’s Feb. 28 Academy Awards ceremony in protest of the lack of nominations for Black artists in front of and behind the camera.

Chris Rock, the Black comedian and host of the Oscars telecast, has already publicly said that he will address this is- sue during his opening monologue and throughout the program.

Some white actors, such as Dustin Hoffman, Mark Ruffalo and George Cloo- ney, have also called out racism within the academy and throughout the film in- dustry in light of this recent controversy.

There has been strong criticism for decades about the lack of diversity in Hollywood when it comes to quality, non- stereotypical roles for African-Ameri- can and other actors of color, female and male, due to the gross underrepresentation of Black screenwriters, directors and producers.

However, this year’s Academy Award nominations, coupled with last year’s snubs of Black actors like David Oyelowo for “Selma” and the film’s Black director, Ava DuVernay, have just ex- acerbated this injustice to an unprecedented level for those inside the industry and for filmgoers.

DuVernay tweeted on Jan. 22, “Mar- ginalized artists have advocated for acad- emy change for DECADES. Actual cam- paigns. Calls voiced FROM THE STAGE. Decade. Closed minds.” (twitter.com/ AvaETC)

April Reign, a managing editor of BroadwayBlack.com, which promotes Black artists on Broadway, created #OscarsSoWhite on Twitter in 2014. The hashtag continues to provide an outlet for activists and activists and people from every walk of life.

The Los Angeles Times interviewed Reign on Jan. 14 about her reaction to the new nominations. She lamented that the academy’s insensitivity toward people of color is just a mere reflection of the entrenched white supremacist poli- cies within the Hollywood industry from top to bottom.

Reign commented: “I’m disappointed, but not surprised. While I appreciated the fact that academy president, Cheryl Boone Isaacs, attempted to make some changes by inviting over 300 new mem- bers, in the academy this year, we can see that that is not enough, that there’s still the erasure of marginalized communities — not just with respect to the academy but also in Hollywood overall.”

Additionally, Reign said: “The academy understandably can only do so much, and they do need to do more, but we also need to focus on the heads of the studios who make the decisions with respect to green- lighting films so that we see more people of color and more LGBTQI people and more people who are differently abled up on the screen telling their stories as well.”

Hollywood: “a private club”

It has been reported that inactive acad- emy members have been allowed to have a voice and vote on who gets nominated and who wins the awards.

To this effect, The Guardian in his Jan. 24 Daily News column, entitled “Full-color mov- ies: Not nearly here yet”; “Turns out, the industry, with precious few exceptions, is white, from top to bottom and in- side. Theinside the heads and the people who have the power to greenlight movies outside the box.”

The same is true of the casting directors, the heads of the various guilds and the people who run the talent agencies.

Boyol says: “But the type of change that is needed now is not a de- porative, defensive announcement like that made on Friday — that the acade- my will attempt to double the number of minorities and women in its ranks by 2020. What we need instead is the type of slow but lasting structural change that transforms the entire industry. … Unless this happens, the announced changes are cosmetic, akin to putting a Band-Aid on a bullet wound.”

Solidarity brings water to Flint

Continued from page 1

ple demonstrated in bitter cold outside Snyder’s annual speech, making enough noise to be heard inside the Capitol. Some protest signs carried the words “Fire Anne” and “Fire Gretchen.”

Activists are also demanding the firing of former Flint Emergency Manager Dar- nell Earley, who now oversees the Detroit Public Schools system and who carried out the decision to draw water from the Flint River. On Jan. 19, the day President Barack Obama visited the North Amer- ican International Auto Show, another teacher sick-out over cuts, huge class sizes and dangerous building conditions closed the Detroit public schools. Some 500 DPS teachers, along with Flint resi- dents, picketed the auto show. The main demand was that these two criminals, Earley and Snyder, be punished.

Emergency Management & water justice

The movement is fighting for more than just the drinking water problem. As we have discussed, however, and calls for an end to Emergent Man- agement. Public Act 436 allows the governor to appoint an Emergency Manager as dictator over a city or school district deemed to be in financial distress — rendering elected local and school offi- cials can American. Half of Michigan’s Afri- can-American population — compared to 2 percent of the white population — has been under Emergency Management.

Flint Democracy Defense League, forged to oppose Emergency Manage- ment, is now deeply in the fight for water justice. League representative Nayirah Sharif has called for Snyder’s arrest, say- ing that “he can take his apology and flush it down the toilet.” (Detroit News Jan. 8) The FDDL and WYFF have formed the Coalition for Clean Water.

Water justice groups in Detroit and Flint have been supporting each other, re- minding the public that tens of thousands of households in Detroit remain without water after a brutal shutoff policy was in- stituted in 2014 under Emergency Man- agement Kevyn Orr. A People’s Tribunal Jan. 23 drew 200 people and found Snyder and Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan guilty of de- priving people of water.

Thanks to heroes like Mays and Sharif, Flint has called the attention of millions of money, water and supplies have come from celebrities like Cher, Michael Moore, Meer Miller, Big Sean and Pearl Jam; employers like the UAW, the UAW-TEC (Teamsters) and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters in Minneapolis; and of course United Auto Workers locals around the country. It was in Flint in 1979 that the heroic 44-day sit-down strike won the first UAW contract with General Motors.

People all over the U.S. have joined the people of Flint in saying, “Water is a hu- man right — fight, fight, fight.”
1966 murder prompted SNCC's anti-war stance

Sammy Young Jr.

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Samuel “Sammy” Leonan Younge Jr., a 21-year-old activist from Tuskegee, Ala., was shot and killed at a Standard Oil gas station as he was attempting to use a whites-only restroom in Macon County on Jan. 3, 1966. His racist murder occurred during the time when he was a voter registration volunteer.

For many decades prior to the mid-1960s, African Americans were by law denied equal access to public and private accommodations in the U.S. South. It was not until the summer of 1964 that a comprehensive Civil Rights bill was passed aimed at ending the Jim Crow system of discriminatory segregation.

The Voting Rights Act was signed in August 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson in the aftermath of the repressively violent Selma to Montgomery March in March 21 to 26, 1965. After the campaign in Selma, an area where SNCC had worked since 1962, organizers spread out to neighboring Lowndes County. There, the first Black Panther organization was formed by the soon-to-be SNCC Chairman Stokely Carmichael — later known as Kwame Ture — and his comrades, working in close collaboration with local activists.

Martyrdom sparked more resistance

Sammy Younge's murder in nearby Macon County led to a variety of protests. His death symbolized why people had to intensify the struggle to expose the false notion of "fighting for freedom" abroad that were routinely denied in the U.S.

Student protests erupted in Tuskegee when white county officials initially declined to indict Marvin Segrest, the elderly white gas station attendant who shot Younge. Yet, when there was a show trial in December 1966, the all-white jury, in a majority African-American county, deliberated for only one hour and 10 minutes and then acquitted Segret.

SNCC was in the process of transitioning its program to Black Power and revolutionary nationalism in 1965-66. The blatant killing of Sammy Younge Jr. and the lack of accountability for these deaths.

SNCC's call for an end to the U.S. war against Vietnam and abolition of the draft sent shock waves through the ruling class, particularly as dozens of urban rebellions erupted during the spring and summer of 1966.

In July 1966, during the “March Against Fear” through Mississippi, SNCC Field Secretary Willie Ricks — now known as Mukasa Dada — and newly elected SNCC Chairman Carmichael advanced the slogan “Black Power.”

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., leader and co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, left the emerging Chicago Freedom Movement to march to Jackson, the state capital, alongside Black Panther Party leader and executive secretary of the Congress on Racial Equality — which had also adopted the Black Power slogan — and in solidarity with the youth and farmers of Mississippi.

Opposing the Vietnam war

SNCC had taken a formal position against the war even after SNCC issued its statement on Jan. 6, 1966. Nonetheless, King admitted in March and April of 1967 that he could no longer refrain from speaking out against what the Johnson administration was doing to the people of Vietnam and Washington's failure to adequately address poverty and racism in the U.S.

On March 25, 1967, King and other anti-war activists, including Benjamin Spock, noted pediatrician and author, led a demonstration of hundreds of thousands of people in Chicago. They called for a comprehensive halt to hostilities against North Vietnam and the revolutionaries fighting for national liberation of the South. Just 10 days later, the SCLC leader delivered his historic speech, “Why I Oppose the War in Vietnam,” at Riverside Church in New York City.

A compendium of condemnation in opposing King's views on the Vietnam War. On April 15, he participated in a march from Central Park to the United Nations, aimed at blocking the bombing of Hanoi and calling for U.S. forces to be withdrawn from the country.

Just one year later King was assassinated in Memphis, Tenn., on April 4, 1968, while assisting a strike of African-American sanitation workers seeking recognition as a labor organization affiliated with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. His combined efforts for Civil Rights and the elimination of segregation lead to his position to U.S. militarism and imperialism, sealed his fate with the ruling class.

For more information, see “Sammy Younge Jr.: The First Black College Student to Die in the Black Liberation Movement” by James Foreman, Grove Press, 1968.

Black History Month Matters: SUPPORT WW

Ferguson, Mo., August 2014. 

Brown people all around the country. We also expose the criminal injustice system that allows killer cops to walk free — like the one who arrested Sandra Bland in Tex as and the one who executed 12-year-old Tamir Rice while he was playing with a toy gun in Cleveland. Even if the cop who murdered Laquan McDonald in 2014 in Chicago was indicted, he might get a slap on the wrist like the cop who served 11 months for killing Oscar Grant in Oakland in 2009 in cold blood.

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MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle


By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Say his name!

Anthony Hill’s killer cop indicted

By Dianne Mathiowitz

Jan. 21 — After a four-day, round-the-clock vigil was held in front of the DeKalb County Courthouse — despite frigid temperatures and driving rain — more than 100 protesters cheered the news that a criminal grand jury had brought a six-count indictment against police officer Robert James in the March 9, 2015, shooting of Anthony Hill. The charges include felony murder, aggravated assault, violating oath of office and making false statements.

The encampment was initiated by Rise Up Georgia, a social and economic justice group, and members of, among others, more than 100 protesters set up on the front lawn of the DeKalb County Courthouse in the center of Decatur. It brought out youth, veterans and other local residents from across Atlanta. The four-day action, which garnered daily media coverage, was a constant reminder of the widespread outrage across the unbridled impunity given to police who kill.

Hill, a 27-year-old African American, was shot twice in the chest as he walked erratically and naked around his Chamblee, Ga., apartment complex. Several neighbors called 911, seeking help for the Afghan war veteran, whom they knew as a gentle, friendly man. No one alleged that he had hurt anyone or was acting in a threatening manner.

Witnesses say that when DeKalb County Officer Olsen pulled up in his squad car, Hill was in a prayerful position on the ground, and then he began approaching the uniformed officer with his hands up and outstretched. Olsen drew his gun and ordered Hill to stop. The young man and his partner had planned to celebrate their third anniversary the night he was killed. Hill reportedly had stopped taking his prescription medication, as it brought about sleeplessness and caused his jaw to lock and his tongue to swell.

Just months earlier, Kevin Davis, a popular restaurant worker, called 911, requesting help for his partner, who had been stabbed by a roommate. Upon arriving at the apartment, DeKalb County Officer Joseph Pitts shot and killed Davis’ beloved, three-legged dog.

Hill had been released from the Air Force after being given a bipolar disorder diagnosis and was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. He had sought help from the Veterans Administration, without much success. Yet, despite all the obstacles he faced, he remained optimistic about the future and was passionate about his music. He was especially well-liked by the children in his complex, always willing to play sports with them.

The young man and his partner had planned to celebrate their third anniversary the night he was killed. Hill reportedly had stopped taking his prescription medication, as it brought about sleeplessness and caused his jaw to lock and his tongue to swell.

When Davis saw his dead dog, he yelled at Pitts several times, “Why did you shoot my dog?” Pitts then shot Davis multiple times. He died two days later in the hospital in ankle restraints, having been denied family visits and even charged with aggravated assault on a police officer.

Atlantans: Stop racist police killings!

Numerous militant demonstrations were organized, demanding justice for Anthony Hill, Kevin Davis and others killed by Atlanta area police. Thousands of Atlantans, particularly African American youth, had already become engaged in the struggle against racist police and vigilante killings after the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Eric Garner, among others.

Around the country, and particularly in Georgia, it is unlikely that police officers who have shot people are brought before a grand jury, regardless of how suspicious the circumstances might be. Georgia allows police to shield and find their lawyer to sit through the entire proceedings, hearing all the witness testimonies. The officer is allowed to make the last presentation, which cannot be challenged or cross-examined.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution published a study in December which revealed that of the 184 fatal police shootings since 2010, half of the victims were either unarmed or shot in the back. More than one-third were killed in their own homes or that of a loved one, following a call for help. African Americans were more than twice as likely as whites to be killed. A police officer was indicted only once by a grand jury, but in that case, the district attorney persuaded a judge to drop the indictment.

Following several police killings of African-American men in 2015, DeKalb County District Attorney Robert James brought the cases before civil grand juries for review in October. Neither Davis’ nor Hill’s killers were indicted, but the judges recommended that state police investigate Hill’s shooting. This led to the criminal grand jury hearing eight hours of testimony about Olsen’s shooting of Davis, and then indicting Olsen.

Hill’s family, his partner Bridget Andersen and the many activists who are fighting for justice for Hill want the people to know him — not as he has been portrayed in the media or by police, but as the genuinely thoughtful, talented and kind young man he was. He had shared his thoughts on Facebook and Twitter about living his life, despite having a mental illness, and encouraged other people to be kind and to “Love your Life.”

No trial date is set for Olsen, who has been released on $510,200 bond. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

State terror and the ‘Drone Economy’

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

Syracuse, N.Y.

Mary Ann Grady Flores, a Catholic Worker movement activist, took custody in the DeWitt, N.Y., Town Court on Jan. 20 to serve a six-month stretch of activists’ unrelenting nonviolent protest at nearby Hancock AFB.

Witnesses say that when DeKalb County Officer Olsen pulled up in his squad car, Hill was in a prayerful position on the ground, and then he began approaching the uniformed officer with his hands up and outstretched. Olsen drew his gun and ordered Hill to stop. The young man and his partner had planned to celebrate their third anniversary the night he was killed. Hill reportedly had stopped taking his prescription medication, as it brought about sleeplessness and caused his jaw to lock and his tongue to swell.

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At first trial, he admitted: “No, I don’t know Mary Anne Grady. No, I’ve never had a conversation with her. I’m not afraid of her. That’s just a piece of paper. I want — I just want these protesters away from my property.” (Democracy Now!, Jan. 10)

A court typically issues an “order of protection” to prevent abusers from getting close to and/or killing victims of domestic violence — most usually women being beaten by male partners. Yet, no Hancock soldiers, officers or property had been hurt or damaged by anti-drone protesters during the five-year anti-drone campaign. The U.S. repressive state and its military are cynically committed to building a drone test facility. (Atlantic Monthly, Nov. 13)

The Albany-to-Syracuse corridor is major user of new drone technologies under military-industrial development. In December, the Central New York region, centered in Syracuse, won Andrew Cuomo’s “Hunger Games” competition for a half-billion dollars in grants for “upstate revitalization.” The region pledged half the money, $625 million, to “a center for research and development of unmanned aerial and ground vehicles.” (Syracuse Post Standard, Dec. 10)

A key player in the plan is NUAIR, a consortium of Central New York state businesses and universities specializing in drone technology and testing. The Federal Aviation Administration designated nearby Griffiss Air Base as one of six U.S. sites for drone tests. NASA has committed to build a drone test facility. (Atlantic Monthly, Nov. 13)

Though publicity touts the drone boom as benefiting “private” or “civilian” uses, the primary backers of NUAIR have been military-industrial corporations like SREC, Saab Sensis and Lockheed Martin, as well as mining company Rio Tinto, which Sensis develops military radar and air-traffic systems out of East Syracuse. Lockheed Martin — the largest for-profit employer in Central New York, based on a drone operation — creates warfare electronics in suburban Salina. SRC Inc., which started up at Syracuse University, designs drone radar for military use.

The Department of Defense will be the major user of new drone technologies un-
What’s driving the shocks to the economy

By Sara Flounders

Jan. 25 — The working class in the U.S. has suffered devastating blows since the 2007-08 capitalist economic crisis. The threat of a new downturn is rumbling through the financial markets. City and state budgets have already been cut in the name of austerity. Government services, including those in hospitals, schools, libraries, water works and maintenance, have been privatized — sold to generate immediate revenue needed to pay the interest on bank loans. The impact of these criminal policies can be seen in Flint’s poisoned water and in decaying schools, from Los Angeles to Detroit and Philadelphia.

Even as a new round of layoffs is pending, the number of people participating in the workforce has reached its lowest level in 30 years, despite population growth. Real wages, stagnant since 1979 according to an Economic Policy Institute report of Feb. 19, 2015, have not improved since then.

The workers whose labor produces all wealth have been receiving a smaller and smaller portion of the value they produce. Some 56.3 percent of the U.S. population is now living paycheck to paycheck, with less than $1,000 in checking and savings accounts combined. And 24.8 percent are below the poverty line. (Forbes, Jan. 6)

Drone economy

Continued from page 8

dervay at NUAIR. The DOD has spent $20 billion in the last 13 years on the “sense and avoid” drone technology that the Syracuse firms specialize in. (Syra- cuse.com, Jan. 5, 2014)

Drone boosters say that the drone boom will bring jobs. Syracuse has the highest rate of “concentrated” extreme poverty for any U.S. city, with the highest number of the world’s largest U.S. metropolitan areas. (Paul Jagowsky, “Architecture of Segregation”)

And the activists disagree with the “more jobs” argument. David Kasher, a U.S. Navy veteran, says: “It’s not going to procure jobs for veterans. Kossak is a tech engineer jobs, and for that you need a high-tech education.” Only a quarter of the residents of Syracuse have a bachelor’s degree, even though Syracuse University is there. (Atlantic Monthly, Nov. 19)

When the local Post Standard ran a page-one headline: “Risperone Drone Makes History in Syracuse” in December 2011, the story emphasized that this was “the first unmanned aircraft in the [U.S.] to launch from a commercial airport.”

But the Reaper MQ “Hellfire” drone is used only as a battlefield remote-controlled bomber by the U.S. military — and for those working in their enormous U.S. borders. This is a far cry from corporate ads of a cute commercial drone delivering holiday packages from Amazon.

Syracuse anti-drone activist Ed Kinane says: “I think once the drones are normalized, they will bring them home and who are the targets? They are going to be dissenter, they’re going to be demon- strators, they’re going to be minorities. It doesn’t bode well.” (Atlantic Monthly)

Kinane emphasizes that hype in the commercial uses of drones are a diversion from military uses. Meanwhile, the do- mestic drone industry provides an indu- strial base — research, engineering exper- tise and production — for the Pentagon.

Stagnant and falling wages, alongside the increasing productivity of labor, have led, under capitalism, to the concentra- tion of extreme wealth in private hands at a scale unknown in history. The 62 richest people on earth now hold as much wealth as the poorest 3.5 billion. (Oxfam, Jan. 17) Five years ago, 388 super-rich held this criminal status. The staggering concentra- tion of wealth continues unabated.

One-fifth of paper value wiped out

The feature or the feature of capitalism that Karl Marx explained 165 years ago is asserting itself yet again. Capitalism — the economic system built on social produc- tion but private appropriation — has not even been able to solve the lurching cycles of boom and bust caused by overproduction. The overproduction of every commodity is immediately affecting their main customers.

The fall in the price of oil from more than $100 a barrel in June 2014 to below $30 today has received great attention. But a similar collapse has happened in industrial goods, steel, piping, sheet metal, coal, gold, aluminum, zinc and major food crops.

Since the New Year, stock markets around the world have been dropping inordinately. From New York’s Dow Jones and the S&P 500 to the main European stock exchanges in London, Paris and Berlin; to markets in Dubai, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Shanghai; together they have lost more than 20 percent of their value, entering what is called a “bear market.”

A fifth of all stock market wealth in the world has been wiped out. This may not immediately affect most workers. But the capitalists’ way of dealing with the loss of their speculative wealth is to immedi- ately turn to workers who have less than $1,000 or $400 to their name.

President Barack Obama’s State of the Union address highlighted a modest in- crease in service jobs at the lowest pay — from call centers to fast food restaur- ants. However, hundreds of thousands of workers in heavy industry, energy pro- duction, banking and financial services — from DuPont, Alcoa, John Deere and BP to Morgan Stanley — have already been laid off over the last year.

Bailout deepened the crisis

Capitalist economists, hesitant to use the term recession, have come up with a new term for such a long period without economic growth: “secular stagnation.” International conferences and numerous academic papers have been held on this topic. Secular stagnation is a nicely vague term that hides the reality. Capitalism, in order to expand, must find markets in which to sell its products at a profit. When it cannot do this, the entire global system goes into a spiral of crisis.

Bailouts have not succeeded in jump starting the economy. Years of almost zero interest rates to encourage giant loans supposedly to stimulate production may instead have made this capitalist downturn much worse.

A British paper quotes an official of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development: “The situation is worse than it was in 2007. The world faces a wave of epic debt defaults. Our macroeconomic ammunition to fight downturns is essen- tially all used up,” said William White, the Swiss-based chairman of the OECD’s review committee and former chief econ- omist of the Bank for International Settle- ments (BIS).” (Telegraph, Jan. 19)

‘Zombie’ ships

There is overproduction in commod- ities, from oil to finished products like toys, clothing and cars. There is even a glut of the huge container ships that move more than 95 percent of the world’s manufac- tured goods.

The shipping industry is facing its worst crisis in living memory after years of rap- id expansion fueled by cheap debt. The world fleet doubled in size from 2010 to 2013. (Reuters Business Insider, Jan. 20)

Competition among shipping compa- nies has pushed the building of a new generation of super-ships that can carry 19,000 containers, compared to earlier ships that carried just 5,600. It takes years to build such ships. Orders were placed when a full global recovery was expected after 2009.

Shipping corporations that financed their fleets with 60 percent debt and 40 percent equity have seen that equity become worthless.

Now “zombie” fleets accept freight at maverick prices just to keep going. But the owners have no hope of repaying the capital on their loans. Banks are afraid to pull the plug on these loans because then they would be forced to list the losses on their books.

The Baltic Exchange, which has set shipping rates for more than two centuries, says the situation its members face now is grim.

Giant’s felled by debt

Even giant multinational corporations that survived decades of past capitalist turmoil are now tottering. Years of almost zero interest spurred many of the world’s conglomerates to make loans to take out huge debts to invest in further expansion and mergers. But now that the price of commodities has crashed to one- half or even one-third of a year ago, the market value of these corporations has gone into free fall.

Three of the largest and oldest gold and copper mining corporations, Freeport McMoRan, is in crisis after taking out big loans about three years ago to buy into oil and gas. Now, with the company’s stock has fallen from $60 a share to below $8, Freeport McMoRan, now valued at $4.8 billion, is carrying a debt of $20 billion, so it is slashing jobs and all capital spending. But in order to meet its debt payments, it is continuing to pump oil, even at extremely depressed prices. (New York Times, Jan. 28)

In previous price slumps, commodities producers immediately cut back. But this time they can’t. For these firms, having mortgaged their future to their creditors, they continue to flood the market, making their situation worse.

Capitalists blame their woes on China

The global glut of all commodities is currently being blamed on a slowdown in the growing economy of People’s China — the world’s second-largest and most rapidly growing economy.

The chaos and ruthless competition of the capitalist system is never blamed. For example, both U.S. and Ger- man corporations have exacerbated condi- tions in China at plants that are joint ven- tures. A decision by Volkswagen, GM and other major automakers to rein in their production in China due to a global glut in autos meant they first canceled workers’ bonuses at their plants. “The bonmes being scraped typically amount to more than half of the assembly-line workers’ take-home pay,” (Telegraph, Jan. 20)

These international corporate giants not only cut assembly-line workers’ take- homes, but they and other major Western firms also cut billions of dollars in major expansion plans they had in China and other parts of the world. Their decisions in China at plants that are joint ven- tures, announced more than three months ago, impacted on the Chinese stock market.

These abrupt cuts have spurred in- creasing efforts to further develop more stable links and trade among China, Rus- sia, Latin America and Africa. A Cuban article titled “Weathering the storms of the 21st century,” written days ago, said this rapidly developing trade was mutu- ally beneficial. By 2043, the value of bi- lateral trade between China and Latin America was 22 times what it had been in 2010. (Granma, Jan. 19)

In other words, the coming crisis will be, or what will spark it, can’t be predicted. But the urgency for workers to organize, to fight all forms of injustice, in- cluding a determined fightback is beyond dispute.
Anti-racists support Islamic Community Center

By Sara Flounders
Bayonne, N.J.

More than 200 people came out here on Jan. 25 to demand solidarity with the Muslim community in the face of a right-wing, racist attack on their application to build an Islamic community center on the site of an old warehouse.

A racist group, announcing they were supporters of Donald Trump and Pamela Geller, had said they would hold a protest at the Jersey City Zoning Board meeting to oppose an Islamic community center. The board had called the special session to consider the rezoning application for the center. The group’s letterhead and many neighborhood signs have attempted, through use of 9/11 and Twin Tower images, to frighten Bayonne residents.

The media in New Jersey had reported that the group was anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant, but they delivered a message of support from various community organizations.

The Jersey City Peace Movement and the International Action Center set up a Facebook event page, “Stand with our Muslim Neighbors,” and began making calls to area community activists two days before the rally. Veterans For Peace Chapter 21, N.J. Peace Action, Action 21 and Food Not Bombs immediately responded with their own round of calls and emails.

Gene Forrest, a Bayonne high school teacher and lifetime resident of Bayonne, also started reaching out in Bayonne with a Facebook page message to “Show Our Support for Islam.”

At the rally, some 50 signs with the slogan “No to racism and anti-Muslim bigotry” were quickly distributed.

Both sides packed into the zoning board hearing. The zoning application for the Islamic center was the only agenda item. The session lasted almost four hours and gave endless time for the opponents of the Islamic community center to treat the hearing like an inquisition.

The zoning board, a body that is all male and white, consists of one member who is a property owner, hardly represents Bayonne. They made no effort to rule out of order the insulting harangues made by opponents of the proposed center. Then, they declared that still another hearing would be needed for further questions on Monday, Jan. 30, at 1 p.m. Supporters of the Muslim community’s right to build their center pledged their continued solidarity.

Flounders is a 25-year resident of Jersey City, N.J.

MLK Day in

On Jan. 18, some 3,000 people marched 4 miles from downtown Oakland, Calif., through West Oakland, ending at the Bay Street Mall in Emeryville.

Advocates of Black, Seed, a Black queer liberation collective, shut down the Bay Bridge.

Mega snow storm buries East Coast

Baltimore poor abandoned by capitalist government

Special to Workers World

The winter storm, driven by extra energy typical of this climate-change era, dropped 1 to 3 feet of snow from Tennessee to Connecticut between Jan. 22 and 24 as it jammed interstate highways, flooded Atlantic beach towns and closed cities along the Eastern seaboard.

Storm Jonas was no equal-opportunity disaster. The snow landed everywhere, but like 2003 Hurricane Katrina, the impact of this storm hit hardest the workers, the poor and the most oppressed communities. An example of disaster inequality? Look at the mostly African-American and very poor city of Baltimore, the home of the unpleasant cop killing of Freddie Gray and last spring’s rebellion.

The organizations that have been demonstrating regularly against police “impunity,” the People’s Power Assembly, knew that the storm would wreak havoc on residents of Freddie Gray’s neighborhood. When the snow stopped at 30 inches on Jan. 24, the Baltimore People’s Power Assembly and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized People’s Emergency Snow Brigades. The organizers called people to check on the health and safety of public housing residents. Young people went out to clear snow where residents needed help digging out. The PPA and volunteers from the Maryland Art Institute and Johns Hopkins University discovered conditions building toward a frozen version of Hurricane Katrina.

They found that residents both on the east side and in the community on the west side where police killed Freddy Gray had no food at home and no way to get out to get it. Many of the children depended on food served in school — and schools were closed on Monday, Jan. 25. Resi- dents found that local authorities “were doing exactly what they told the capitalists. There were no deliveries to people both on the east side and in the community on the west side where police killed Freddie Gray.”

Sharon Black, of the PPA, told Workers World, “The state and city had enough funds in the rainy day fund to provide emergency food, but the local authorities were doing exactly what they told the capitalists. There were no deliveries to people both on the east side and in the community on the west side where police killed Freddie Gray.”

“Now we demand that the mayor enact an emergency jobs program to hire unemployed youth and members of our community to help with clean up in the community itself, not just downtown.”

“We need a People’s Emergency Plan: Where do people go for food? What do workers do about lost wages? “Our members can speak directly to what is happening in the neighborhoods as we were in Gilmore Homes until late last night and have taken calls all day and night from desperate housing project residents.”

An hour before the PPA/SLCC demand for food distribution, Baltimore’s Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake announced at a briefing that although the city schools would remain closed on Jan. 26, recreation centers would distribute meals to youngsters. She touted a mayoral program that hired young workers to clear public sidewalks for seniors and people with disabilities who were unable to do so themselves and said the Baltimore city website had emergency numbers and instructions on how to get help.

What the mayor did not announce was a plan to ensure that everyone who needed help received it. Both the New York Times and Baltimore Sun reported that top city officials could not say when the snow would be cleared.

Sharon Black, of the PPA, told Workers World, “The storm exposed the failure of capitalist society to look after the needs of the people. The power of the state was used not to protect and serve the people, but to protect the property of the capitalists.”

Only popular organizations aided the community after massive snowfall.

The state and city had enough funds in the rainy day fund to provide emergency food, but the local authorities were doing exactly what they told the capitalists. There were no deliveries of emergency food, nor were urgent cases transported to hospitals.

“Now we demand that the mayor enact an emergency jobs program to hire unemployed youth and members of our community to help with clean up in the community itself, not just downtown.”

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MLK Day in

On Jan. 18, some 3,000 people marched 4 miles from downtown Oakland, Calif., through West Oakland, ending at the Bay Street Mall in Emeryville.

Advocates of Black, Seed, a Black queer liberation collective, shut down the Bay Bridge.
Haiti in turmoil as masses reject corrupt election

By G. Dunkel

Tens of thousands of Haitians took to the streets Jan. 22 to protest the scheduled second round of the fraudulent presidential elections. The demonstrators could hardly contain their glee when word spread that the opposition had won. They had de- fied both the vicious brutality of the cops and the “assurances” of U.S. diplomats that the first round had been fair. Fortunately, they were throughout the country, the largest of them in Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince.

The Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) cancelled the round without setting a new date.

The protesters raised new demands on Jan. 24. They now want President Michel Martelly to leave office immediately, even before his term ends on Feb. 7.

Famni Lavalas, a progressive mass party in Haiti whose leader is former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, called the decision of the CEP a victory for de- mocray and the Haitian people. The electoral council’s credibility has already been placed in question in the United States and the so-called “core” group of France, Canada, the Organiza- tion of American States, the United Na- tions and the European Union.

Famni Lavalas said in a statement on its Facebook page Jan. 23 that it will con- tinue to support struggles throughout the country.

Massive protest inspires international support

The march on Jan. 22 went along the Delmas Road from the poorest neighbor- hood of Port-au-Prince to Petionville, where many of the rich and powerful live in sumptuous luxury. It then flowed back to the Champ de Mars, a large space in the center of Port-au-Prince.

The march was shadowed by the Com- munity for Intervention and the Main- tenance of Order of the National Police. CIMO is Haiti’s heavily armed national SWAT team, but that day it limited itself to firing in the air and using tear gas.

CIMO also cleared the streets of burn- ing barricades put out by the protesters on some fancy cars. Whenever CIMO set up a barricade, the protesters — with enthu- siastic support from neighborhood peo- ple — split up and went around the cops.

The protesters were so charged up that when CIMO personnel carriers pushed through the crowds, they pushed back, ac- cording to videos circulating on Facebook.

This massive protest by the people, firmly rejecting pressures from U.S. im- perialism and the Core Group that dictate how and who is chosen to lead the Haitian state, has inspired international support.

The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) issued a state- ment Jan. 21 denouncing electoral fraud in Haiti, calling for an end to the withdrawal of the U.N. forces known as Minustah and for the “cessation of any external interfer- ence from the international community against the will of the Haitian people.”

The Argentinian Solidarity Committee issued a call the same day, noting, “The Haitian people are in a critical battle at this moment fighting for sovereignty and the right of self-determination.” What makes this especially important is that Argentinians make up a significant portion of Minustah.

Ending electoral crisis while economy totters

There are two competing political po- sitions in the Haitian opposition over how to resolve this electoral crisis. There is no support for extending Martelly’s term af- ter Feb. 7. It is not going to be possible to organize elections before he is gone, and there are grave doubts about the fairness and validity of the parliamentary elec- tions, even though the Haitian Parlia- ment is meeting.

Jovenel Moïse, the candidate for Mar- telly’s PHTK party and his imperialist backers like the U.N., the Core Group and the U.S., would like a brief, cleaned- up and widely accepted second round against Jude Cédrin, candidate of the alternative League for Haitian Progress and Empowerment (LAPHEE). These two candidates came in first and second in the “official” counts. They’ve already spent over $100 million on this election and want to do be done with it.

PRP Desalin and Famni Lavalas, the parties that came in third and fourth in the “official” counts, take the position that the first round of the election was fraudulent. They want to repeat the whole election cycle, including parliamentary elections, where there were also serious problems.

Some political currents in this camp feel it is impossible to have fair and free elec- tions, and the country must be occupied by the U.N.’s Minustah troops.

During this very sharp and serious political crisis in Haiti, our country is being politically and strategically squeezed by global austerity.

The neighboring Dominican Repub- lic has expelled 129,000 people because they are Haitians or the children of Haitians. They have been round up in total- ly dilapidated, nearly waterless camps on the border. Many spent their lives in the DR. It’s more comfortable speaking Spanish than Creole.

Jovenel Moïse illustrates another eco- nomic problem plaguing Haiti. He is a banana exporter who, using $6 million in state loans, plus favorable rulings from local officials, was able to seize 2,371 acres driven by 600 farm families off their land. His plantation currently ships 400 truck-size containers of banan- as to Germany each week and must begin shipping 400 more a week within the next three years. That would only mean greater land grabbed and less production of food for domestic consumption, plus a bigger import bill and less need for farm labor. (otherworld- sarepossible.org, Jan. 21)

Currently only 13 percent of Haiti’s workforce is in formal, regular jobs, the econmey, never fully recovered from the earthquake of six years ago and in bad shape. The Haitian working class has not stopped struggling as hard as they can for real independence. Their struggle de- serves our support.

Pentagon, NATO plan renewed war in Libya

By Abayomi Azikiwe

Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Jan. 23 that the United States is preparing a renewed military campaign in Libya with its impe- rialist allies. Dunford’s narrative provides a rationale and political justification for a permanent imperialist occupation of the region, thus negating the right of self-de- termination for the states involved.

Dunford referred to deepening inter-ventions: “You want to take decisive mil- itary action to check [the Islamic State of Libya].” Dunford stressed: “My perspective is we need to do more. Quickly to firing in the air and using tear gas. We’ve oppose all: Stolen elections, stolen wa- ter, stolen gas, any interference. Down with 1-2-16 (election)!”

Two rival regimes in Libya stem from a split in the political forces installed by U.S.-backed forces in Libya in 2011 in the wake of rebel intervention in Tripoli’s General Na- tional Congress and Tobruk’s House of Representatives have rejected its terms.

Some elements reject a foreign mili- tary intervention. If they maintain their position, it could signal a much more complicated and contentious tenure for the proposed force of 6,000 troops led by Italy and France, with terms when the country is militarily occu- pied by the U.N.’s Minustah troops.

A new ministerial regime was estab- lished in January, after lengthy, heated talks mediated by Kobler, a career Ger- man diplomat with experience in other imperialist war scenarios. Even if Kobler and his Western backers can pressure the rival regimes into accepting the “unity accord” that still leaves hundreds of armed militias roaming the country out- side the agreement.

The situation is far more unstable than at any time over the last four decades: The 1973 war fought between Egypt and Israel prompted an arms embargo and an economic crisis in the U.S. In 1978-79, President Anwar Sadat’s regime in Egypt, under U.S. pressure, signed a separate peace agreement with Tel Aviv, which nevertheless continued the Palestinian independence struggle.

Current discussions around North Africa and the Middle East are often focused on the roles of U.S., al-Qaida and other so-called “Islamic extremist orga- nizations.” Whatever the purported rationale, the imperialist countries are planning further intervention in Libya and the surrounding region, as anti-war peace forces in the U.S. and NATO countries should oppose all such moves.

"We oppose all: Stolen elections, stolen wa- ter, stolen gas, any interference. Down with 1-2-16 (election)!

Feb. 4, 2016

w orker.org
Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Recién comienza el año 2016 y ya pro-
mete ser uno lítico de definiciones políti-
cas para Puerto Rico. La gigantesca deu-
da pública de $73 mil millones de su-
impago sigue siendo el problema en que
se centran los medios noticiosos corpo-
rativos y no tomar medidas
que podían eliminar el sufrimiento a tantas
personas. La EAA ha estado plagada de corrupción y
Ricker quiso que la ciudad de
Detroit a la bancarrota. El administrador de emergencias, nombrado en virtud de
una ley que garantiza el pago de servicio de
la deuda a los bancos, colocó a las Escuelas
Públicas de Detroit en bonos impagables. Prioridad No. 1: Pagar a los bancos
Ahora, la principal partida en el pre-
supuesto del DPS es el pago del prestam
o servicio de la deuda se dispondrá, con un
aumento de hasta 74 por ciento del año
pasado, y con pagos de la deuda que rep
ieren de un 97 por ciento. Logró acordar
los bancos a las escuelas que pagan la deuda.
La crisis de la deuda pública de Puerto Rico
es un problema que enfrentan las escuelas
abierto por la ley de bancarrota que se
aplica en el caso de las escuelas el 13 de enero en el Tribunal Supremo.
Saharsky dijo: “El Congreso puede, de
hecho, revisar el arreglo actual que tiene
con Puerto Rico. Eso es así porque Puer
to Rico es un territorio de Estados Uni
do es que el Congreso el que hace las
decisiones que pueden significar la búsque
da de un consenso tan necesario en este
tiempo de lucha independentista.
Muchas figuras del independentismo han manifestado que este es el año crucial para la lucha por la soberanía e independencia. De hecho, nunca se han dado coordinaciones perfectas para facilitar la discusión amplia y abierta con el pueblo sobre la independencia. Es imprescindible un consenso tan necesario en este momento.
En el exhortaba al pueblo el que rechazara armar el pago de la deuda y la bancarrota, pidiendo además la unidad y la colaboración del movimiento independentista en una lucha conjunta.

Joubert-Ceci es miembro del Comité Boricua Filadelfia-Camden reciente
marcha de las escuelas boricuas en la diáspora para colaborar en la lucha por la independencia PR.