Voters in Greece’s Jan. 25 parliamentary election rejected the hard, devastating capitalist austerity program imposed, for the past six years, by the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission on the working class in that country. This first electoral defeat of austerity in all of Western Europe opens up a new stage in the struggle continent-wide, especially in countries like Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Italy, where unemployment rates have ranged from 12 to 25 percent since 2010, and workers have been under fierce attack from the bankers and bosses.

Syriza, a Greek party whose electoral appeal grew enormously in the past few years, came in first with 36 percent of the popular vote and 149 of the 300 seats. Syriza’s leader, Alexis Tsipras, was named premier Jan. 26. Parties opposing austerity topped 52 percent of the vote. The two parties — New Democracy and Pasok — that had formed the previous government and had accepted and defended the policy of austerity, faced a crushing defeat. Together, they got only 33 percent of the vote.

The reasons for the popular anger over austerity run deep. Jobs have vanished: the unemployment rate in Greece is 27 percent, 50 percent for youth under 30. Wages, including the minimum wage, have been slashed along with pensions and health care. Hunger has increased along with suicides. The governments have raised taxes and fees rapidly and unpredictably, but Greece’s total tax income has fallen since the national economy has been rapidly declining. Greece’s output of goods and services is now 20 percent below the level in 2008, while the prices of basic necessities have risen 40 percent.

While European bankers and regimes touted austerity as the only way to solve Greece’s financial crisis, its debt actually increased. Bankers bought Greek bonds at 10 percent interest after they knew the IMF and the ECB were backing them. With 149 seats leaving it two short of a majority, Syriza brought in a small, right-wing but anti-austerity party called the Independent Greeks as a coalition partner to form a government.

In a speech in front of the University of Athens, Tsipras called the vote result “a victory for all peoples of Europe fighting austerity.” He went on to say, “It cancels the memorandums” that enforce Greece’s international loan agreements. He proclaimed that his government would negotiate a fair “mutually beneficial agreement,” that the two parties — New Democracy and Pasok — that had formed the previous government and had accepted and defended the policy of austerity, faced a crushing defeat. Together, they got only 33 percent of the vote.

The two parties — New Democracy and Pasok — that had formed the previous government and had accepted and defended the policy of austerity, faced a crushing defeat. Together, they got only 33 percent of the vote.

By G. Dunkel

G. Dunkel

Cops target people with disabilities

Inequalities spark resistance

Ukraine offensive

Black Liberation Month

Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

Paul Robeson - ‘Here I stand’

Alabama 1965-1966

Glenville Rebellion 1968

3

Hands off Boston bus drivers!

By Tony Murphy

The jury trial on trumped-up charges against union leader Steve Kirschbaum will begin on Feb. 2. After months of pretrial hearings and false starts, this founder of the Boston School Bus Drivers Union will be in court facing serious felony charges.

The United Steelworkers Local 8751 was already in a fierce fight against global union-buster Veolia, which locked out the union members and then fired four of its leaders in October 2013. As support grew for the campaign to reinstate the leaders — Kirschbaum, Andre Francois, Garry Murchison and Steve Gillis — Veolia resorted to reinstate the leaders – Kirschbaum, Andre Francois, Garry Murchison and Steve Gillis — Veolia resorted to court facing serious felony charges.

Everyone watching this case knows that the charges are fraudulent and are meant to break the back of this fighting, majority Haitian and Cape Verdean union. Two of the charges have already been dismissed. Of course, the obvious falsity of the charges is no guarantee of justice in the capitalist courts.

If an African-American youth can be gunned down or choked to death by police in broad daylight — with video footage of the event to boot — and the perpetrator is never charged for the crime, then a communist, anti-racist trade union leader can face a fabricated case and be in trouble.

That is why the letter seeking support from organized labor for Local 8751’s fight against Veolia was signed by both United Electrical Workers Local 1110 President Armando Robles and Boston Black Lives Matter organizer Damaniya Yancey.

Unions all over the country have responded to this letter with resolutions of support and donations. The Alameda County Labor Council in northern California recently passed a resolution urging support for Local 8751, calling it “as class conscious and as anti-racist a union that you will find anywhere.” This resolution follows one passed last year by the San Francisco Labor Council, which was initiated by Transportation Union Local 174, which represents that city’s school bus drivers.

This makes support from other school bus driver unions bicoastal — the New York School Bus Drivers Union, ATU Local 1881, issued a letter in October 2013 saying it “stands in 100-percent solidarity with USW Local 8751.”

Last year the Boston School Bus Drivers got support from Boston’s labor allies — the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, the Greater Boston Labor Council, Buillermakers

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Anti-racists dominate BART commish meeting

By Terri Kay

An overflow crowd of some 400 people packed the Bay Area Rapid Transit Board of Commissioners’ meeting here on Jan. 22, calling for dropping the criminal charges against the Black Friday 14 and BART’s demands for financial restitution.

Protesters spilled out into the large lobby, where a boisterous rally was held. Guards prevented many from entering the space.

The arrests occurred when the Black Friday 14, organized by the Blackout Collective, shut down the West Oakland BART station on Nov. 28 — so-called Black Friday. They linked themselves in a human chain from the rail cars to the benches in the station. Their purpose was to stop “business as usual” in opposition to the grand jury’s refusal to indict Police Officer Darren Wilson for killing Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo.

One of the 14, explained the goal of that action was “an economic boycott of the system that continues to terrorize and kill.” (tinyurl.com/mq4a4x)

BART has pressured Attorney Nancy O’Malley to pursue criminal charges against the 14, who are all Black, and to demand restitution of 700,000 dollars for the business that BART allegedly lost during the shutdown. Interestingly, there were many subsequent Bay Area protests against the grand jury decisions not to indict police officers who killed Michael Brown and Eric Garner. Those in the streets blocked freeways and intersections and closed down other BART stations. Despite the fact that the groupings at every protest were multiracial and many white activists were arrested, almost all of those facing charges for the actions are Black or other people of color, showing the inherent racism of the criminal justice system.

During the Commissioners’ meeting, two different groups of Black Friday 14 supporters unfurled banners and led chants, after which they were hauled out by police. Another group stood up to reveal T-shirts with messages supporting the 14. Because so many protestors spoke there, the official agenda was tossed out. Sixty activists, including some of the 14, took the floor and dominated the Commissioners’ meeting.

Supporters also presented a petition to drop the charges, signed by more than 11,000 people. At one point, the entire room full of protestors broke out singing “Which Side Are You On?” Finally, Commissioner Rebecca Salaman declared that she would draft a resolution to drop the charges and demands for restitution and present it to the next board meeting for approval.

The crowd declared victory and filed out of the room at 9 a.m. on Feb. 12 to make sure the resolution passes. Meanwhile, a court appearance for the 14 is scheduled on Feb. 4. Supporters are asked to come out in large numbers for both of these events.

Contact a Workers World Party branch near you:

workersworld.org

Oakland, Calif. Strong support for Black Friday protestors.
Rich versus poor = class struggle

By David Sole

Jan. 26 — President Barack Obama and the New York Times have apparently just discovered something every worker in the United States already knows: The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. In his Jan. 20 State of the Union address, Obama declared his intention to press for legislation that would help a shrinking “middle class” in the face of widespread wage stagnation. The New York Times followed with statistical re-ports of declining wages and the growing concentration of wealth in the hands of the richest few. (Jan. 26)

An Oxford International study revealed that “the richest 1%...control nearly half of the world’s total wealth” and the “80 wealthiest people...own $1.9 trillion...nearly the same amount shared by...7.5 billion people at the bottom.” (Business Day, Jan. 19)

These trends, however, have been going on steadily since the early 1970s. Unions, progressive publications and even the federal government have reported for decades on the deepening impoverishment of the majority of the population. The Occupy Wall Street movement burst onto the scene in October 2011, denouncing the power and privilege of the capitalist class and a large working class. To mention these forbidden terms, however, might promote class consciousness and lead to real class struggle.

By massive struggles of unions and uprisings of oppressed peoples over the past 100 years, a section of the working class was able to secure a more comfortable standard of living. Calling these working-class families “middle class” simply hides that they are part and parcel of the broader working class, all of whom are exploited by and enrich the capitalist class of billionaire bankers and corporate bosses.

As the capitalist system has reached an inevitable dead end, the ruling class is inexorably driven to continue expanding its wealth by driving down wages and eliminating workers’ benefits. Layoffs and mass unemployment are endemic.


Obama’s speech just lifted the corner of the curtain covering up these facts. His proposals, couched in “middle class” doublespeak, called for free community college tuition, greater tax breaks for lower income people and funds for child care. With the Republican sweep of both the Senate and House of Representatives, there is really no chance of this legislation being passed.

Republican hardliners in Congress lost no time in denouncing the Democrats’ proposals. Some Republican presidential hopefuls, however, picked up on the theme of growing income inequality. Mitt Romney vowed “to end the scourge of poverty” if he makes another bid for the presidency. (New York Times, Jan. 22) Both Jeb Bush and Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell are also cited as urging the Republicans to pay more attention to this issue. The less ignorant among the Republican right wing are realizing that the growing divide between the richest few and the impoverished working class might be dangerous to the success of their party.

The enormous power of the working class

Neither Obama nor the Democrats, both willing tools of Wall Street, really want to unleash the enormous power of an angry working class — the only thing that could really challenge the laws of rapacious capitalism. They serve their capitalist masters best by “keeping hope alive” among the working class that things might get better with time or another election.

But the statistics and graphs filling the pages of the New York Times and the vague references to stagnation and income inequality by Obama are no true measure of the suffering and despair growing among the millions and millions of workers and oppressed people who are increasingly impossible to survive. The class truth must inevitably find its expression in serious struggles.

If the past explosion of several years ago may have been the opening shot of this fightback. The current “Black Lives Matter” movement, led by African-American youth and joined by all other nationalities, is deeper, more militant and more widespread than Occupy was.

This current uprising is not only about the pervasive police murder of African-American youth. Ignited by the racist killings, it is fueled and sustained by the intractably high unemployment and low-wage jobs among young people. The “Fight for $15” movement merged with anti-racist protests around the U.S. on so-called “Black Friday.” Demands for jobs and education are seen widely among protesters.

This ongoing Black Lives Matter movement began just a month after the November election with its abysmally low turnout. What we are seeing today is only a prelude to mass uprisings among all sections of the working class that will shake the capitalist system to the core and threaten to bring the U.S. to its anti-worker system crashing down.

Gary Murchison, Steve Kirschbaum, Andre Francois, Steve Gillis

Continued from page 1

Local 29 and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2222. That support has now expanded to include the Massachusetts Nurses Association and Springfield-based Food and Commercial Workers Local 1549, both of whom have made donations.

Bus drivers join Black Lives Matter protests

Meanwhile, drivers have joined forces with Boston Black Lives Matter, turning out with placards when the organization called a Peoples State of the Union rally in front of Symphony Hall, while Mayor Martin Walsh was giving the State of the Union address on Jan. 13. Homeless advocacy groups joined the action as well.

That action was a first step in the expansion of Local 8751’s fight against Veolia from a “union struggle” to a “community struggle.” History shows that such struggles against attempts by the super-rich 1% to drive communists out of labor unions cannot afford to be isolated, since they are part of the broader struggle against racism.

The “red purges” of the 1940s and 1950s, when of Marxism and socialists were pushed out of labor unions, are widely seen as the obliteration of socialist unionism and the consolidation of business unionism — a trend that continues today.

What is not as widely recognized is how this red purge decimated anti-racist consciousness and mobilizing in the working class and were primarily being organized by communists.

The clearest example of this is the CIO’s attempt in 1946 to organize in the South. The campaign's leaders were clear that in order to succeed, they also had to fight racism and take on Jim Crow.

However, that campaign was crushed. Why? Because right at that moment, on the heels of the biggest strike wave in U.S. history, with 4,600 strikes in the year after the war, the ruling class launched a massive purge of communists in the labor movement, aided by many trade union leaders. That attack on leftists included the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947 and a host of other anti-union laws.

Racists in the South used this anti-communist frenzy as a cover for their goal of keeping the South segregated. Some accounts of this chapter of labor history describe how the vicious anti-communist frenzy strengthened the Klan and the police and silenced the people to that when Black Reconstruction was overthrown in the late 1870s.

The assault on Local 8751 in Boston represents a similar dynamic — an attack on communists in a union as cover for an attack on anti-racist solidarity.

In the 1970s, Boston’s African-American community won the right to desegregate schools. Ever since, that right has been under attack by a series of attempts to re-segregate the public schools.

The Boston School Bus Drivers union has always fought all these attempts — with rallies, coalition building and every available means. It is easy to see why Boston’s elite 1% want to kill this union. It is a progressive, anti-racist base among workers whose jobs are to transport students to and from school and who represent the very symbol of desegregation: busing.

However, the city establishment does not care only that communists in this union have played in opposing racist re-segregation of the schools. It also wants to smash the community belief that the fight against racism is central to the class struggle. This also explains why the corporate media is increasing trying to de-mystify the growing Black Lives Matter movement. It is critical to pack the court on Feb. 2. Say NO to union busting and racism!
Youth reclaim Dr. King in militant protests

DETOUR:

Rally highlights Selma, Ala.

This year’s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Rally and March commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Selma campaign that created the conditions for passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. A standing-room-only crowd gathered Jan. 19 at Central United Methodist Church in downtown Detroit. The 2015 rally was one of the largest since 2004, when the event was founded and organized by the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice. A broader alliance — the Detroit MLK Committee — now organizes the annual struggle-orientated event.

Among many speakers representing many organizations and struggles, people’s attorney Alice Jennings addressed the ongoing struggle for water in Detroit. Jennings was the lead counsel in the class-action lawsuit filed in bankruptcy court in July 2014, demanding the moratorium on water shutoffs and the adoption of a genuine affordability plan for residents. Jennings has filed an appeal in federal court after bankruptcy Judge Steven Rhodes refused to issue an order to halt the termination of services to the working people and poor of Detroit. Jerry Goldberg, of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition, spoke about the need to continue the struggle against the banks. He said 62,000 property tax foreclosures are coming up while the state government refuses to utilize hundreds of millions of dollars of federal housing assistance funds that could pay all delinquent residential tax bills and therefore avert this disaster. Goldberg called for an immediate moratorium on all foreclosures in Detroit. “We might be down, but we’re not out yet!” he exclaimed.

The march through downtown was led by African-American youth carrying a “Black Lives Matter” banner. Other banners and signs read, “Jail Killer Cops,” “Stop the Theft of Our Pensions” and “End Poverty, Racism and War.” placards featuring photos of Michael Brown, Aiyana Stanley Jones, Eric Garner and other victims of police violence.

The march past 36th District Court to emphasize the crisis of foreclosures and evictions in Detroit. It then was to go to the Wayne County Jail to illustrate the crisis of mass incarceration of American-American and Latina/o youth. The march continued, proceeding through the Greek Town entertainment and casino district, where people came into the streets to watch and photograph the marchers, who took up several blocks.

Then the march went to the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department headquarters, demanding a moratorium on water shutoffs and protesting the regionalization and attempted privatization of the publicly owned system, one of the largest in the U.S. Heading back to the church, demonstrators chanted “No justice! No peace!” “Black lives matter!” “I can’t breathe!” and other slogans.

— Abayomi Azikiwe

OAKLAND, CALIF.:

96 hours of direct action

Upwards of 7,000 people marched on Jan. 19, the culmination of 96 hours of direct actions in the San Francisco Bay Area to reclaim the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Starting with a rally at Grant Station (Fruitvale BART, renamed in honor of Oscar Grant), a several-mile march led by children wounded through Oakland’s eastside neighborhoods to the planned site of a development called Coliseum City.

Dubbing it a “March for Jobs & Economy,” organizers from the Anti-Police Terror Project made the connections between police violence and economic violence. An APTP press release said, in part: “We know well the grief that comes when brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, mothers and fathers are gunned down by those who are supposed to ‘protect and serve.’ We march to reclaim King’s legacy and demand an immediate end to the war being waged on Black people in America.”

Speakers included the Rev. Wanda Johnson, Oscar Grant’s mother; Cyndi Mitchell, sister of Mario Romero; and Dionne Smith, mother of James Rivera Jr. All three had been killed by police. Also speaking were Clarene Thompson, past secretary/treasurer of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10: Alicia Garza, co-creator of #BlackLivesMatter; and Robbie Clark of CAUSA Justa. Cat Brooks of ONYX emceed the event, along with Eric Clark.

The APTP has developed a number of demands around Coliseum City. They include: a local hiring policy that ensures 90 percent of the jobs go to Black people and those disenfranchised because they are on probation and/or parole; a Health Impact Assessment that lays out how many Oakland residents will be displaced as a result of this development and other undesirable outcomes; and a commitment to providing living-wage jobs with benefits to all employees of the Coliseum City project, from janitors to retail clerks.

The APTP is a project of the ONYX Organizing Committee. In coalition with other organizations, like the Community Ready Corps, the Alon Blueter Center for Justice, Workers World Party, Healthy Hoodz and the Idriess Stelly Foundation, it is working to develop a replicable and sustainable model to end police terrorism in this country.

— Terri Kay

HUNTINGTON, W.VA.

‘Black Lives Matter’

Nearly 300 marchers turned out in Huntington, W.Va., to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The march, coordinated by the local NAACP branch, was attended by diverse organizations and activists, including various churches and clergy as well as the Muslim Association of Huntington, the Marshall University Muslim Student Association, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, Workers and Students for Appalachian Socialism, Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) and Workers World Party.

This year’s march took on a far more militant tone than prior ones. This is partly in response to the recent movement against race and police terror that targets people of color and partly to the capitalist economic system not being able to provide a humane and dignified existence to the masses of working class and oppressed peoples throughout West Virginia and Appalachia at large. Marchers enthusiastically hoisted signs with slogans connecting these struggles: “Stop the racist war on youth. We need union jobs and free education,” “Dismantle the police state” and “Dr. King’s dream: End poverty, raise workers’ wages.”

An African-American woman told this writer that West Virginia has no street named after Dr. King. Referring to the late Sen. Robert C. Byrd, she sarcastically exclaimed, “But we sure have enough buildings named after that racist KKK leader!”

— Benji Pyles

HUNTINGTON, W.VA.

‘Which side are you on?’

“Black Lives Matter” rang out from the pulpit of the famed Ebenezer Baptist Church to the streets of Atlanta on Jan. 19. That phrase was repeated in the impassioned remarks of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s daughter, Rev. Bernice King, at a packed interreligious service and again on the hundreds of signs and banners carried by many marchers in the annual parade.

In addition to contingents of union members, faith groups, students, progressive and community organizations, this year the youth injected creative and bold actions into the march in response to the police killings of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and others.

With their mantra of “We have a duty to fight for our freedom, we have a duty to win,” they dramatized the staggering impact on communities of color of police terror, mass incarceration, poverty and joblessness by staging several die-ins during the route to the King gravesite.

They sought to bring forth the legacy of the Martin Luther King Jr., who marched and confronted police and other racist authorities, was arrested and jailed, and disrupted the status quo, to the dismay of other leaders.

Led by many young women of color, they raised the role of Black women in the struggles of the past and present. Their signs named Black and transwomen also killed.

Upon reaching the end rally site on Auburn Avenue, in front of the graves of Dr. King and Coretta Scott King, they marched to the graves of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Marie, the young woman who initiated #BlackLivesMatter, delivered a powerful speech describing the intense conditions facing youth that compel them to rise up and fight back. She called for support, especially from the veterans of past struggles, and closed by asking, “Which side are you on?”

— Dianne Mathiowetz

DENVER

Huge march claims Dr. King

Denver’s annual MLK Day march was the largest, most serious and struggle-oriented in years, with as many as 50,000 marchers. Most were youth, who sang, chanted and lay down in the street during a die-in. Reclaiming Dr. King meant there were no speeches by politicians, expensive sound equipment or television screens.

In addition to community organizations, there were members of the Black Buffalo Soldiers, African-American Rodgers, the ACLU, NAACP, Jewish groups, numerous churches, teachers and high
People with disabilities are half of people killed by cops

Disability rights groups battle racist police murders

By Joyce Chediac

Disabled-rights groups are among the most energetic advocates of solidarity with African-American victims of police murder.

Some 34 disability activist groups across the country have signed a statement protesting the police murders of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, expressing solidarity with their families and communities, and urging all to do so. (tinyurl.com/qabbdn8, Aug. 15)

This statement’s authors are both national and local groups, including organizations from Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, California, New York State and New England. They include the National Council on Independent Living and four local independent living centers; several autism groups, including Autism Women’s Network; Little People of America; Queerability and other LGBTQ disability groups; and student groups; Help Educate to Advance the Rights of the Deaf; the Peoples With Disabilities Caucus of the Peoples Power Assembly; and Parents to Improve School Transportation.

The statement calls upon everyone to oppose “the criminalization and dehumanization of our citizens” especially of members of communities viewed as “other” to the American majority — young men of color, people with disabilities, LGBT individuals. 

For these communities, “statements such as ‘they didn’t comply,’ they were ‘bad kids,’ they were being belligerent, ‘they looked suspicious’ often warrant a death sentence.”

Half of people killed by police have disabilities

People with disabilities are themselves dramatically more likely to be killed by police. According to a 2013 report by the Treatment Advocacy Center and National Sheriffs Association, between 1980 and 2008 “at least half of the people shot and killed by police each year in this country had a mental health problem.” (tinyurl.com/mj5670a)

In many cases police were requested to requests for assistance from family or neighbors to get mental health care for the person.

People who, for example, are hearing impaired may be ignored by police during routine processing verbal information, or for other reasons of disability react unusually approached by police are much more likely to be targeted and arrested.

The Lead On Network statement cites such several such cases:

Keith Vidal, 18 years old, who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, was tasered, then shot and killed in North Carolina when his family called for the police to help calm him down.

Gilberto Powell, 22, who has Down Syndrome, was severely beaten by Florida police outside his home when a cop suspected he had a weapon and tried to grab him down. Powell did not understand and ran. The “suspicious” bulge in his pants was a colostomy bag.

Barry Montgomery, 29, diagnosed with schizophrenia and Tourette’s syndrome, and who is nonverbal, was beaten and tasered by California sheriff’s officers for 45 minutes when he was confronted about the smell of marijuana in his general area and did not respond. Montgomery sustained massive permanent injuries.

In capitalist society there are many forms of bigotry. There is often an intersection of racism and discrimination against people with disabilities. Disabled activists also cite the racist strangulation of Eric Garner, who told police 11 times that he couldn’t breathe. Police support for police in Garner’s case is now blamed for his own death because he was obese, asthmatic and had a heart condition.

Ethan Saylor died because of a "medical emergency." The coroner also blamed Down Syndrome and size for the death. (CNN, Dec. 4)

In the police murders of Saylor in 2013 and of Eric Garner in 2014, both victims were obese and were strangled by police who lay on top of them while applying pressure to their throats. Grand juries refused to indict police in both cases. Part of the social eunuching of the police in both cases was to blame both victims for their own deaths by citing their disabilities.

Garner, killed, then smeared at for his disabilities

Rampant racism and ableism have been especially vicious in the high-profile case of Garner, who has been ridiculed and blamed for his own death because he was obese and had asthma and a heart condition. Representative Peter King (R-New York), speaking on CNN, thanked the grand jury for its indigent on police officer Daniel Pantaleo, saying, “You had a 350-pound person who was resisting arrest. The police were trying to bring him down as quickly as possible.”

King claimed, “If he had not had asthma and a heart condition and was so obese, almost definitely he would not have died.”

Pantaleo’s attorney and police union officials made the same argument.

This view was expressed more crudely on PoliceOne.com. Comments on the site about the deceased Garner include, “This guy would have died going up a flight of stairs,” “He died because of his preexisting medical conditions,” and “His family should sue Papa Johns, Dominos, Pizza Hut, Burger King, McDonalds.”

Call issued to transform the system

The disabled community has responded in its Aug. 15 statement mentioned above by holding the system as a whole responsible, and calling for everyone to unite to fight for justice for all.

“When a system that is designed to protect and serve is seen as the problem, it is the problem. It is a catastrophic failure of the system, and it demands transformation. Such a failure represent a lack of leadership, corruption of institutions, and a distressing willingness to purposely and violently silence the voices of entire communities marked as different, non-compliant, and suspicious.”

“We have allowed problems of marginalization, exclusion, inaccessibility, dissemination, sexism and bigotry, problems that affect us all — to instead be addressed by a few, and have been content that it is a disability problem or a race problem or a gender problem or sexual problem rather than admit that it is a problem for all of us.

“As members of a community that supports justice and inclusion, we do not have the luxury to stand by when injustice is blatantly taking place in any form, nor should we be satisfied to wait for other communities to ask for our help. Civil rights of all races and justice are due to all. We will not remain silent.”

Detroit and Texas block interstate

One of the largest MLK Day marches in recent years — between 5,000 and 10,000 marchers, and some 100 monitors and demonstrators — took place in Seattle on Jan. 19.

Marching from Garfield High School in the Black community to the Federal Courthouse downtown, the demonstration protested the regime of racist police violence both locally and nationally, from Ferguson to New York.

A rally with entertainment was held in the morning after 16 workshops covering many political organizing, community, economic and labor issues. Then the march took off, stopping at two different jails. At the juvenile jail, a rally was held to protest the school-to-prison pipeline.

Another rally at the county jail focused on the disproportionate number of Black prisoners.

After the final rally at the courthouse, two groups of demonstrators blocked traffic to protest racist police murders. Interstate 90 was blocked in the heart of downtown; an area of I-15 was also blocked. Some 19 protesters were arrested.

— Viviana Weinstein

SEATTLE:

Protests block interstates

Detroit’s Central Methodist Church, set up here for MLK Day 2015, has been a staunch supporter of the Civil Rights Movement for more than half a century. (PHOTO: MONICA KISH)

Detroit student protests.

School students there were signs relating to Ferguson, Mo. Some protesters carried painfully personal signs about arrests, shootings and jailings of Black men by police. — Viviana Weinstein

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Paul Robeson gave voice to the trees and forests

By Henry Hagnis

If Paul Robeson were alive today, he’d be toasting and defending people’s hero Ramsey Orta (who filmed the police killing of Eric Garner) and roundly condemning the rigged-grand-jury decisions, escape hatching the police murderers of Garner, Tamir Rice and Mike Brown, in particular, and the countless other ones that indignantly join them.

Robeson would also point to the oppressive machinery of the state as being ultimately responsible for this continued outrage against the most vulnerable populations in society, easily determining that this practice is totally unacceptable!

And he’d heartily salute the valiant folks of Ferguson, Mo., especially the youth, for refusing to be intimidated by the concerted face of militarily armed and trained police, National Guard and intelligence personnel, dispatched to contain community residents and their supporters.

The state’s response to a crisis they created was to “send in the troops,” like those in Detroit 1967 — in a whole lot of ways!

Honoring the memory of Paul Robeson is no ceremonial gesture. Why? As a highly recognized and accomplished artist on many levels, he helped set a riveting standard about what creative people are “obligated” to do — if they are “organically joined to progressive needs of human kind — and, that is, to ‘fight for freedom or slavery.’” Paul Robeson devoted his life to humanity’s highest ideals in the most extraordinary ways. Few rive his fields of significance.

The essence of who this gentle giant really was is in his classic work, “Here I Stand,” issued by Beacon Press in 1958. This nugget Rutgers alumni clearly states his fight for justice to the world in the hostile atmosphere he endured as a member of the school’s football team and as a “here” student on campus.

In spite of tremendous pressure, Robeson distinguished himself as a student and as a human being in ways that are still mar veled. Gil Noble, the late host of the New York-based ABC show, “Like It Is,” did an exceptional documentary on him entitled “The Tall Reed in the Forest.” In it, he is interviewed and another outstanding one about Robeson around 1909, also called “Here I Stand.”

Both provide fitting tributes to an extraordinary artist who’d been deeply influenced by his dad and the historic period in which he grew up and greatly influenced.

Accolades and descriptions of his noted accomplishments are too voluminous to detail here, but we include some highlights that underscore his designation as a “Renaissance man,” who without hesitation offered his skills and talents in loyal service to the delight, liberation and advancement of people, in the millions, around the planet. The decades between the 1920s and early 1960s reflect his greatest works.

Never forgot his roots in the working class

As one of Harlem’s own, Robeson was a central and unavoidable figure in its glorious Renaissance. His connections to Langston Hughes, Hubert Harrison, Lena Horne, Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, Nella Larsen, Langston Hughes and Bert Benn modestly point to the magnitude of people he knew and interacted with, including Caribbean and African folk who rightly and proudly claim they knew him, too.

He and his spouse, Eslanda Goode Robeson, went to Spain in the 1930s to help boost the morale of U.S. volunteers in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade fighting with anti-fascist forces against Francisco Franco, who saw the world through Hitler’s eyes. Robeson generously supported the coal miners in their march for better wages and working conditions in Wales and Scotland. His roots lay deep with the common folk of his ancestry and with those around the world.

Once you heard his organically melodious baritone voice, in any language, you were never the same. Standing-room only throngs flooded his guest appearances in the Soviet Union in particular.

And when J. Edgar Hoover and Joe McCarthy tried to intimidate him during the anti-communist witchhunt in the 1950s, Robeson told them in effect “to speak to the hand.” The State Department took away his passport and encouraged promoters to cancel their contracts with Robeson. Yet his voice still reached Canada and England through the benefits of the technology of the time! With great dignity and determination he refused to bow to government pressure.

Robeson never backed away from his love and support of the Soviet people, expressing his open admiration for their struggleagainst the most vulnerable populations in society, easily determining that this practice is totally unacceptable for their struggle against the most vulnerable populations in society, easily determining that this practice is totally unacceptable.

One of the community leaders to receive Cleveland Now! funds, having been part of the mayor’s peacekeeping after the King assassination, was the Black Nationalist leader Ahmed (formerly Fred) Evans. Evans’ Afro Culture bookstore and cultural center received a $40,000 grant for an African crafts program.

Evans: ‘We were ambushed’

Cleveland police, however, had harassed Evans prior to Stokes election, repeatedly threatening to shut down his bookstore. The election of a Black mayor or only intensified police antagonism toward the Black community and to Evans in particular. Evans and his group, the Republic of New Libya, felt increasingly threatened by the regular surveillance of his home by white police. They purchased weapons for self-defense.

The FBI reports — based on the word of a questionable informant — stated that Evans’ group was planning to assassinate moderate Black leaders on July 25. It became a hot topic at City Hall.

On the evening of July 23, City Councilman George Forbes and former Cleveland Browns’ defensive back Walter Beach met with Evans to try to calm down the situation and address his longstanding grievances with the police. As they spoke two unmarked cars faced Evans’ apartment to try to calm down the situation and address his longstanding grievances with the police. As they spoke two unmarked cars faced Evans’ apartment from opposite directions, both full of police, all of them white. Forbes’ attempts to get them to leave were unsuccessful.

Hours later the shootout between armed members of Evans group and police began.

Police claims that New Libya started the fight, firing on the surveillance vehicles and a tow truck, were presented as undisputed truth by the Cleveland Plain Dealer. Evans and his associates were alleged to have called for a tow to hose police into an ambush.

Facts contradicting the official version were later brought to light by Louis Ma son, a former Cleveland City Councilman.

Mason and Jerome Corsi in their report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, which later became the book, “Shoot Out in Cleveland.”

“We were ambushed, not the police,” Evans told Masoni and Corsi. By his ac
The Alabama freedom movement 1965-1966

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

With the release of "Selma," tremendous interest has been generated among youth activists about the struggle for voting rights that is reached its apex in March 1965. This campaign for the ballot in Dallas County, Ala., where Selma is located, did not begin when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference intervened in early January 1965. In fact, as the film mentions, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee members had worked in Selma for at least two years prior to SCLC’s arrival.

Prathia Hall, a SNCC field secretary, says in a later account in "Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts of Women in SNCC," “In early winter 1963, Selma field secretary for SNCC was beaten and jailed in Selma, where he and his wife, Colia, had been working alone. Immediately afterward James Forman, executive secretary of SNCC, went to South Georgia and said, ‘Come on, Prathia, we need you in Selma.’” (University of Illinois Press, 2010, p. 470)

Hall explains, "The members of the Dallas County Voters’ League had been working there for ages; they were part of a long-term movement struggle. They had done some voting rights work, and small numbers of schoolteachers and other middle-class black people had been registered. League members also had filed some related lawsuits.”

When SNCC workers arrived in the early 1960s, they worked with high school students living in the projects. Hall stresses, “The 1965 Selma Movement could never have happened if SNCC hadn’t been there opening up Selma in 1962 and 1963. The later, nationally known movement was the product of more than two years of very careful, very slow work.”

Malcolm X’s intervention

After Dr. King and SCLC went to Selma in early 1965, Malcolm X, the founder of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), spoke in early February at Alabama’s Tuskegee Institute, a historically African-American university 80 miles from Selma. Malcolm had broken with the Nation of Islam nearly a year earlier, pledging to work in an alliance with the Civil Rights Movement, particularly with the youth.

Fay Bellamy Powell, a former U.S. Air Force member, was recruited into SNCC in late 1964 and wound up in Dallas County, running the organization’s office and conducting press work. She found out, along with Silas Norman, also of SNCC, the details of Malcolm X’s itinerary at Tuskegee.

On Feb. 9, Powell and Norman arrived at the packed campus auditorium, which was standing room only. They got inside and spoke with Malcolm after his lecture, which consisted of an extended question-and-answer period.

These SNCC workers invited Malcolm to come to Selma the following day to address a group of youth working in the movement. Malcolm immediately agreed. They arrived at Brown’s Chapel A.M.E. Church on the morning of Feb. 10, and were swarmed by U.S. and European reporters.

Powell described this experience in the same book, “Each morning Brown’s Chapel would fill with those seeking to hear Malcolm directly, high and high school students. They were the core of the Selma Movement and took part in all the demonstrations. Usually these morning sessions were lively and noisy. On the day Malcolm spoke, although the church was packed with young people, there was no noise, no shuffling of feet, no coughing, no squirming. Only Malcolm’s voice could be heard.” (p. 474)

When Powell and Norman drove Malcolm to the Montgomery Airport, he said the OAAU planned to send organizers into the South and asked if SNCC would work with them. Powell reported, “Silas and I answered Malcolm’s question with an enthusiastic ‘Yes!’ and asked that he return in the not too distant future. Three weeks later, Malcolm was assassinated. That was a dream deferred.”

Roots of Black Panther Party in Alabama

After the Selma to Montgomery march, Stokely Carmichael contested and won the chairmanship of SNCC in May 1966. On June 5, James Meredith, who had desegregated the University of Mississippi in 1962, set out in a “March Against Fear” from Memphis, Tenn., to Jackson, Miss. Meredith was not only killed but wounded by a white racist in Mississippi. In response, SCLC, the Congress on Racial Equality and SNCC, pledged to continue the march to Jackson, the state capital.

During the march through the Delta region of Mississippi, Willie Ricks, now known as Michael Dada, mobilized sharecroppers and youth through the slogan “Black Power.” Carmichael used the slogan in a speech on June 16 after being released from a six-hour jail stint for defying the police over erecting tents for the marchers at a local school in Greenwood: “We have begged the president. We’ve begged the federal government — that’s all we’ve been doing, begging and begging. It’s time we stand up and take over. Every courthouse in Mississippi is going to be burned down tomorrow to get rid of the dirt and the mess. From now on, when they ask you what you want, you know what to tell ‘em. What do you want? The crowd shouted back ‘Black Power!’ Willie Ricks jumped to the stage and lead the chorus of chants saying: ‘Want Black Liberation? Pay for it!’”

Available at major online booksellers
By Sara Flounders

Few events expose the utter hypocrisy of U.S. politicians’ grand words about democracy so starkly as their praise for the recently deceased King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. For decades U.S. imperialism and all the imperialist powers have given political, military and diplomatic support to the corrupt royal family that rules Saudi Arabia, the world’s largest exporter of oil.

Heads of state abruptly changed plans and rushed to Riyadh to greet the 79-year-old new ruler King Salman. President Obama, British Prime Minister Cameron and accepted by Prince Charles, French President Hollande, Afghan President Ghani, Spain’s King Felipe VI, Turkish President Erdogan and Pakistani Prime Minister Sharif were all anxious to be assured of the regime’s continued support.

Saudi Arabia is an absolute and brutal dictatorship. The country is named after the royal Saud family that has expropriated the country’s fabulous oil wealth, and treats it as a wholly owned family asset. Their control is maintained by massive state-organized repression, all forms of political dissent and social organization, from political parties to trade unions, are banned under pain of death.

Executions by decapitation in public squares are held on average once every four days. Capital crimes include adultery, homosexuality, political opposition to the regime. Public stonings are also a common form of execution. Other punishments include eye gouging, limb amputation, tooth extraction, surgical paralysis and public lashings.

Wealth and poverty

Government departments are treat-ed as for-profit. Their operating budgets are unaudited and at the family’s personal disposal. Personal and state funds are completely commingled. All family members are guaranteed taxonomi-cal monthly allowances from birth, the amount depending on their proximity to the king’s inner circle. The Saudi family, with almost 4,000 members, receives direct privileges up to 30,000 others related by marriage.

The cabinet is made up of Saudi family members. The key ministries — interior, foreign affairs, the military commands, National Guard and regional governorships — are held exclusively by family members.

The government does not gather data on poverty, literacy, unemployment or health coverage. However, the Saudi newspaper Okaz reported in July 2012 that 60 percent of the population lived below the poverty line.

A third of the country’s population of 27 million are immigrants with no rights, no status and no social benefits, who make up 80 percent of the work force.

Saudi unemployment is estimated at 10 percent by the CIA World Factbook, but 20 percent among young men, 15 to 24, who lack needed skills. Women are not considered part of the work force.

Women enslaved

Women in Saudi Arabia have the low-est literacy in the region. More than 1.5 million migrant women work in domes-tics. In 2012 alone, a study from the Inter-national Trade Union Confederation on workers’ rights in Saudi Arabia reported alarming levels of child labor, discrimi-nation and forced labor.

All women, regardless of their class position, have no rights to employment, property or education. They cannot step one foot out of their homes unless covered head to toe in a long black abaya and accompanied by a male family member.

Women were arrested in Saudi and the West ignore the reality of Saudi women. For example, Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund, hailed King Abdullah as “a strong advocate for women.” (Washington Post, Jan. 23) U.N. World Food Program Executive Director Ertharin Cousin praised King Abdullah: “His leadership always stays in the front lines to look after the neediest.”

The king’s inner circle. The Saud family, including an Iranian-supported group called the Houthis, as well as al-Qaida in Yemen, were all supported by the U.S. military intervention in Yemen. “A dangerous situation just went from bad to worse with grave implications for our counter-terrorism efforts,” said Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), a member of the House Intelligence Committee. “Our relationship with the Yemen government has been vital in confronting [al-Qaida] and keeping the pressure on its leadership, and every ef-fort must be made to continue that part-nership.”

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Saleh ruled the country for 31 years. He supported the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. He signed on to Washington’s “war on terror,” particularly after the 9/11 attacks.

As a result, the U.S. military has been stationed in Yemen for over a decade, engaging in dozens of attacks.

In 2011, during the “Arab Spring,” more than 3 million people demonstrat-ed throughout Yemen. Some of the protests were attacked and dozens of people were killed and wounded. Saleh was ousted and Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi became president.

However, Saleh continued to allow the Pentagon free rein to return maximum profits to U.S. corporations. The Saudi military is the model of all the imperialist military forces in the region.

Until the 1970s, four U.S. companies were the sole owners of Saudi oil — free and clear of taxes and duties. As rev-olutionary upheavals in the region led many countries to demand full control of their resources, Saudi oil was carefully nationalized into a conglomerate called Aramco. Exploration, drilling, pumping, transport and the building of pipelines, ports and terminals were all structured to return maximum profits to U.S. corpo-rations. While the Saudi family can take immense wealth for themselves, the vast majority of these funds must be held in U.S. banks or be used to purchase U.S. materials.

Contras and terror militias

This opaque, unevaluated economy makes Saudi Arabia a perfect conduit for the flow of arms, military and secret agencies. At the same time, the U.S. State Department can claim that it knows nothing about the billions in Saudi funding that flow from the Nicaraguan contras in 1980 to ISIS in 2015.

When Congress denied funding for the recklessly confrontational President Ronald Reagan covertly arranged for the Saudis to send them weapons to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Saudi money was a key component in the CIA’s war against the}

By Chris Fry

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Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

By Fred Goldstein

On Jan. 21, the apartheid Zionist regime of Benjamin Netanyahu was authorized by the United Nations General Assembly to host the first-ever conference to address the rise of worldwide “anti-Semitism.”

A letter endorsing the conference was signed by the governments of 40 countries, including the U.S. and every member of the European Union. While the discussion on the conference contains references to the rise of extreme right-wing parties in Europe, the press coverage emphasized attacks on Jewish targets by Muslims in general. (New York Times, Jan. 24)

This is part of a campaign by the European imperialists and Israeli propagandists to fully equate the racist, scapegoating, anti-Semitic fascism of the opposing ruling classes with anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish acts carried out by oppressed Muslims. At the same time, it is an attempt to divert attention from claims now before the International Criminal Court in the Hague for Israeli war crimes committed against the Palestinian people during the 2014 attack on Gaza.

The imperialist and Zionist strategy is to stigmatize anti-imperialist resistance on the Jewish people by European fascism with the acts of reprisal, retaliation, terrorism, violence and murder against Zionism and colonial oppression.

Making opposites equal: a big lie

The imperialist rules apply the same term to describe political acts that are diametrically opposite to one another. The term anti-Semitism is intended to equate, on the one hand, Greece’s pro-Neo-Nazis Golden Dawn, the undercover anti-Semites of the French National Front and German nationalist anti-Semitism, with the actions of the attackers with the suffering of their people. This association is deepened by the fact that Netanyahu and the Israeli regime repeatedly associate all acts with Israel and Zionist ideology. The only way to put an end to such anti-Jewish acts is for the imperialists and the Zionists to cease their aggression, which is the ultimate provocation and source of all violent resistance.

Rise of fascism and Islamophobia coincide

It is no accident that the rise of fascism in Europe today coincides with the rise of Islamophobia. In fact, Islamophobia is being used as a tool by the ruling class to divide and exploit the masses, much as the Nazis did in Germany, and to direct mass hostility toward the Jews.

For example, the 1933 law, which made it illegal to marry or have sexual relations with Jews, was enacted during the Great Depression. At the same time, the Nazis were carrying out the Holocaust, which is a link in the chain of mass murder and imperialism.

More recently, the Ukrainian right-wing, pro-U.S. puppet regime in Kiev was catapulted to power in a fascist-led reaction when the country was occupied by Nazi Germany and deportations were carried out in the Ukraine and other lands, including the Baltic states, which are now part of Russia. The anti-Semitism of the Ukrainian puppet government is a clear case of the neo-Nazi regime using anti-Semitism to stifle opposition to its rule.

The hidden relationship between the rise of fascism in Europe and the rise of Islamophobia was revealed in the recent resignation of a leader of the Patriotic Union, a left-wing group that is part of the Russian military frame.

The secularism charter, which was supposed to be based on a 1905 law separating church and state, was never implemented in France. Under such circumstances there may be many misguided but understandable reactions, such as the advocates of “secularism” who are now sponsoring a new law on “separating church and state.”

Saudia Arabia

progressive Afghan regime that began in 1979.

War on terror

Washington, it has also funded reactionary militias in Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon that have metastasized into a viciously sectarian and destabilizing force throughout the Middle East.

Prince Bandar bin Sultan, a former Saudi ambassador to Washington from 1983 to 2005, is considered a mastermind of Saudi terror network. He is now director general of the Saudi Intelligence Agency.

Saudi wealth also keeps other mili-

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Haiti

The disaster of 12 January 2010: 5 years!

By Isabelle L. Papillon

Reprinted with permission from Hart-liberté, Jan. 14-20. Excepted here, the full text is available at workers.org.

It was 4:43 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon when an earthquake of magnitude 7.3 struck Haiti for 35 seconds. This disaster occurred on a scale never seen before. The entire article is on workers.org.

The damage was estimated at 120 percent of Haiti’s gross domestic product and over 90 percent in total costs. Taking advantage of the absence of the state authorities, the major Western powers strengthened their guardianship of Haiti, and conflicts broke out for control of the international airport, which ultimately was taken over by the United States.

In the days and months that followed this unparalleled disaster, thousands of nongovernmental organizations invaded the country. They acted as they saw fit. Millions of dollars were wasted and some people got rich at the expense of victims. Five years after the earthquake of Jan. 12, 2010, more than 200,000 victims are still living in tents in several camps in Port-au-Prince, Les Cayes and Jeremie, in subhuman conditions, without water, without electricity, unemployed and without security and eviction (in camps for internally displaced people). In these IDP camps, people are plagued with lack of security, rape and thievery. Ten months after the earthquake, soldiers of the United Nations occupation forces (MINUSTAH) introduced a cholera epidemic into the country, resulting in thousands of deaths and 225,000 cases of illness.

Frankly, after five years, there is some reconstruction beginning on the offices of the Directorate General of Taxes (DGII) on John Paul II Street, which will house the Ministry of Interior and decentralized administration.

Continua de página 12

"No podemos dejar espacio a que se desarrolle y fortalezca el egoísmo y la codicia entre nuestros trabajadores. ¡Nos queremos y necesitamos mejores salarios! Entonces, la economía del país debe disminuir, no aumentar", dijo el sharecropper Deyo Løj.

Eso explica por qué la clase dominante de EEUU logró que el Congreso pusiera $11 millones en la creación de un programa falso para poder poner sus garras en Cuba bajo la cobertura de promover la “libertad de organizar sindicatos”. Lo que los patronos aquí realmente quieren es tener la selección de esclavos asalariados que deban vender su fuerza de trabajo en el mercado "libre", en lugar de que las/os trabajadoras/os sean los/as agentes de planificación que puedan decidir su destino socialista.
Isabel Rosado, un siglo de lucha independiente

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

Conocida simplemente como “Isabelita” o “doña Isabelita”, Isabel Rosado ha sido referente de la lucha por la independencia y soberanía puertorriqueña. Cuando el pasado 15 de enero unos res tos fueron sembrados en su ciudad natal de Ceiba, muchas fueron las memorias compartidas por miles de puertorriqueños/os tanto en las islas como en el exterior. Rafael Cancel Miranda, héroe nacionalista y ex prisionero político junto a Alicia Rodríguez, también ex prisionera política, se despide de su legado.

Más de un siglo de ser testigo del proceso colonizador y de las luchas del pueblo puertorriqueño por su total emancipación, Isabella, cuyo nacimiento se remonta al año 1903, sucedió a Isabelita la hizo integrarse al Partido y pasó más de 11 años en prisión. La primera fue en 1950, por violación a la Ley de la Mordaza o Ley 53, la primera legislación anti-sediciosa aprobada en Puerto Rico que finalmente se derogó en 1957. Esta ley estaba basada en la anti comunista Ley Smith estadounidense. Bajo esta ley no se prohibía toda activi dad independentista, incluyendo hasta la posesión y exposición de la bandera puertorriqueña. En esa ocasión Isabelita fue arrestada luego de la Insurrección de 1950, y gracias al apoyo que tuvo de ramos, 21 de marzo de 1937 lo que im

La verdad sobre los sindicatos en Cuba

Por Cheryl LaBash